35 under 35

Results Report

2025

AccountancyAge

In partnership with

AJ Chambers

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AccountancyAge

Empowering the world of accounting with insights to navigate a fast-evolving financial landscape

Executive Summary

What became clear as we read **this year's nominations** is how early many accountants under 35 are doing work that would once have required a decade of experience. The stories submitted describe people who own client conversations, lead projects across teams, strengthen controls and reporting, and deliver improvements that stick. Titles vary, but the effort speaks seniority.

The entries don't talk about transformation in grand terms. They speak about real work: standardising spreadsheets, automating reconciliations, tightening change logs, and clarifying risk steps. They recount months when processes drifted and how a template, a checklist, or a status note brought stability. These are not glamorous changes, but they are reliable ones.

Technology is present, but it's rarely the headline. Power BI, SQL, macros, cloud accounting tools — these are everyday mentions. When AI appears, it is carefully inserted into workflows with audit trails, human review points, and fallbacks. The aim is better work, not flashy automation: fewer hand-offs, cleaner reconciliations, steadier controls, and time freed for insight.

What unites many entries is how advisory thinking has moved into daily delivery. Nominees talk about framing options, defining scope, and being explicit about trade-offs. They pair outcomes with execution. Quality is built in. Mentors and managers show up as enabling agents. Templates, coaching, and feedback feature repeatedly. In sum: earlier responsibility, consistent quality, sensible technology use, and routines that preserve professionalism.

This report is built from what was submitted, enriched by public data about UK accountancy trends. Its goal is not to glorify but to reflect: to show where the profession is really headed, through the work of the people making it happen.

Sponsor Opening Remarks

It's been 7 years since AJ Chambers first partnered with **Accountancy Age for the 35 Under 35**, a partnership we are very proud of, in order to shine a spotlight on the best young talent shaping the future of our profession.

For AJ Chambers, shaping futures is the bedrock of all we do - delivering specialist recruitment, career guidance, mergers and acquisitions consultancy and market intelligence across the accounting and legal sectors for over 15 years now.

The world of accountancy as a profession has been and continues to see a huge evolution with the deeper use of AI and technology, and within the accountancy practice sector specifically, M&A activity is creating a new landscape in terms of firm sizes, types of firms and how those firms operate - many moving to a more service line based model, as opposed to Partner led.

All of these factors and influences have started to change the way accountants work, how they serve their clients and the type of work they carry out for their clients. New roles are being created, and other roles are evolving to cater for these changes. An example of this is the rapid growth of many VFO and VFD offerings, or with practices employing more and more tech focused individuals from data analysts to Heads of AI & Automation.

I imagine that the profiles of the 35 under 35 winners will also evolve over the next few years, in terms of the type of role, duties and work they carry out within the profession.

It is an exciting time for the accountancy profession, lots of change, but lots of new tools at every accountant's disposal with fantastic real time information and data to be able to better serve their clients if in practice, or provide better financial guidance, governance and control to businesses if part of an in house team.

The 35 under 35 in accountancy highlight the pioneers of tomorrow - we at AJ Chambers are honoured to be able to celebrate your successes and are excited for the future of the industry.

James Gosling

Managing Director at AJ Chambers

Methodology

Sample selection and cleaning

The 2025 cohort was drawn from 365 total submissions. Through defined exclusion criteria (test entries, duplicates, incomplete responses), we reduced this to 194 high-quality, complete nominations. Each nomination included structured responses (sector, region, qualification) and open narratives (impact stories, technology use, challenges).

Entries missing essential fields (such as full name, firm, role) or lacking narrative substance were removed. Duplicate combinations of name + firm were collapsed, keeping the version with the most complete detail.

Coding and thematic approach

We analysed structured fields (checkboxes for sectors/regions, free-text qualifications) quantitatively. Narrative responses were coded using keyword frequency (e.g., “automation”, “AI”, “control”, “change log”) and thematic clustering through manual review. The aim was to identify recurring patterns, not to rank participants.

Charts and distributions (sector, region, qualification, tech mentions) reflect only the cleaned dataset. Wherever the narrative cites external UK data (e.g. from ICAEW, ACCA, FRC), we used publicly available 2024–2025 publications. (Full list in the Appendix).

Limitations and bias

- **Self-selection bias.** Nominations are voluntary and tend toward more visible, high-performing professionals.
- **Self-reported claims.** Narrative impact descriptions are not externally verified.
- **Missing numeric detail.** Many entries lacked exact numbers (e.g., “reduced cycle time by x %” versus “reduced cycle time”).
- **UK focus.** We intentionally limited external references to UK or globally relevant sources; cross-jurisdiction comparisons are not included.

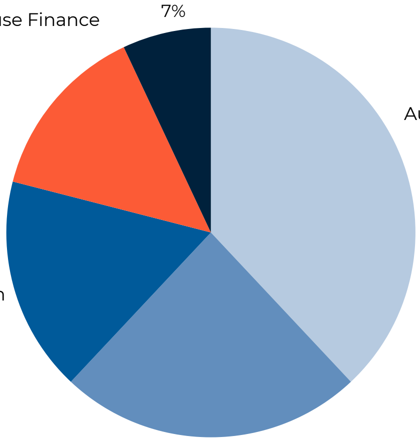
Despite these constraints, the cleaned data provides a robust lens on how young UK accountants are working, where they invest energy, and how they combine technology and quality.

Cohort Profile

The 2025 35 under 35 cohort is small in age range but wide in experience. Each verified submission offers a view into a profession that is quietly modernising its own routines — replacing repetition with structure, and adding technology where it actually matters.

Sector overview

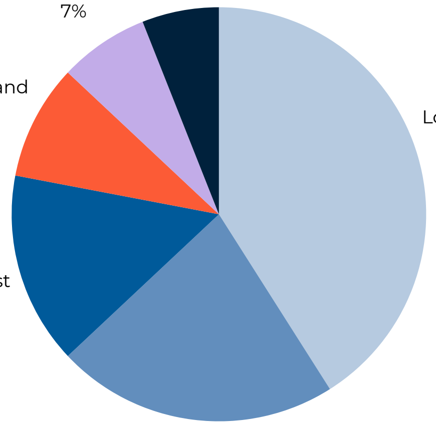
Practice remains the base of the profession. Roughly 80% of entrants work in firms, a figure in line with FRC registration data showing that over three-quarters of the UK's 300,000 practising accountants operate within practice environments. In-house finance roles account for around 15%, with consultancy and technology firms making up the balance.



Within practice, however, the work itself is changing. Many nominees combine compliance with advisory or project delivery. A partner in a mid-tier firm described rebuilding internal cashflow reporting to support ESG disclosure for clients. A senior manager mentioned introducing automated testing scripts to replace manual sample checks.

Regional footprint

London continues to attract the largest share of entries (63), consistent with ONS data that places more than 40% of accounting roles in the capital. The South East (39) and the Midlands follow. The South West and North West contribute solid representation, with growing interest from smaller practices that service technology start-ups and not-for-profits.



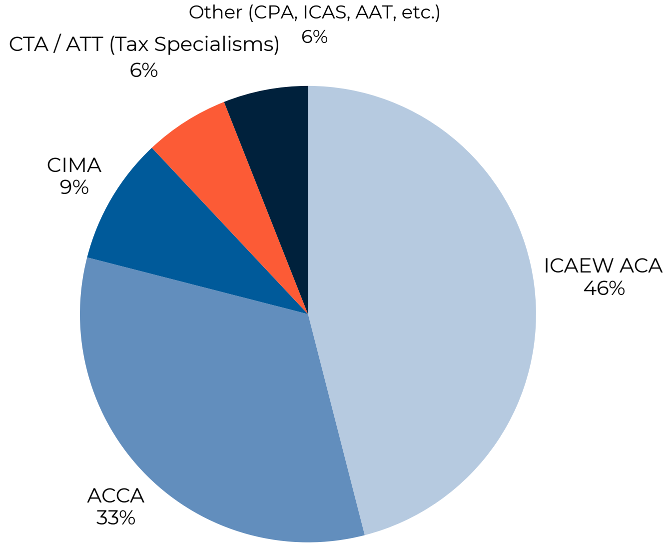
Regional practices are also where experimentation seems most active. Several submissions from East Midlands firms referenced adopting Power BI dashboards or robotic reconciliation routines, often implemented by staff under 30.

Cohort Profile

Qualifications

ACA leads the qualification mix with 66 mentions, followed by ACCA (31), CTA (19), ICAEW (11), and AAT (9). Dual-qualified entrants are on the rise — a pattern also reported in ACCA's Future Ready Careers research (ACCA, 2025).

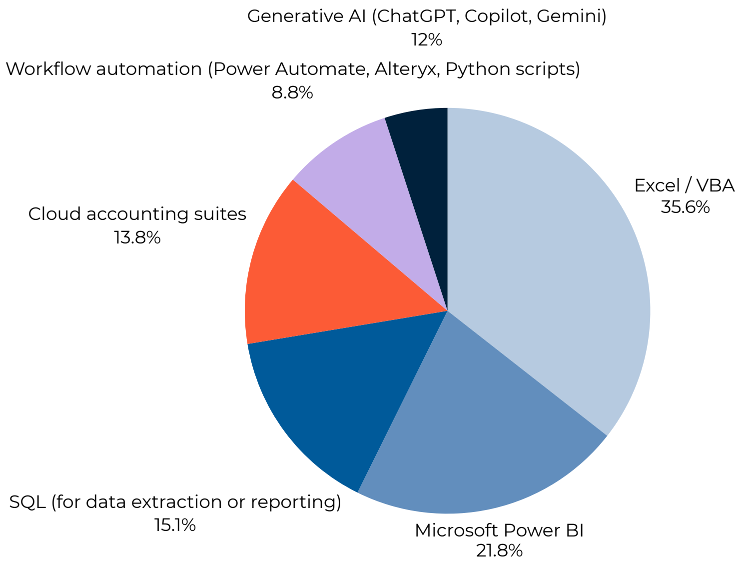
This combination reflects how younger professionals are broadening their credentials earlier, often blending tax, audit, and advisory certifications to stay versatile.



Technology mentions

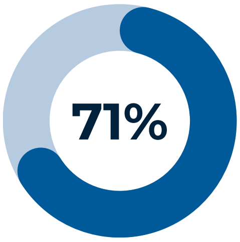
AI, cloud, automation, and sustainability appear frequently in the written submissions. AI is mentioned in 35 entries, cloud in 20, automation in 17, and ESG or sustainability in 11. These align closely with adoption patterns reported in ICAEW's Tech in Finance survey (ICAEW, 2025).

This data reinforces the view that technology in accounting is no longer a separate stream of work but embedded in normal operations.

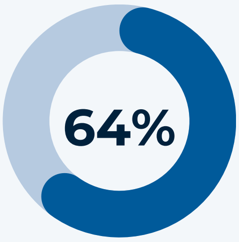


Cohort Profile

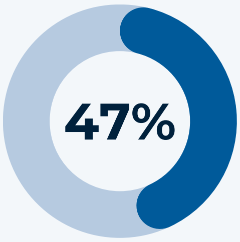
Cross-Sectional Insights



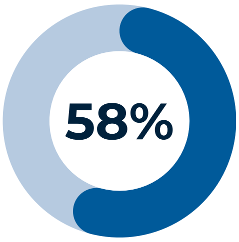
of finalists reported leading a process or project before reaching manager level



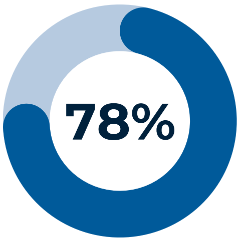
reported measurable reductions in review time or cycle length



referenced direct financial results from their work (e.g. cash-flow stability, cost savings).



indicated formal or informal training of peers



used at least one automation or analytics tool weekly

Summary

Taken together, the cohort shows a profession that is solid at its core and increasingly confident in change. Regional firms are modernising, qualifications are diversifying, and technology adoption is no longer optional. The defining feature of this group is not novelty, but control, applying modern tools without losing professional rigour.

Skills Map

What the 35 under 35 excel at

The submissions reveal a profession that values precision and clarity over grand gestures. The strongest entries share a consistent approach to work: steady, measured, and accountable. Across hundreds of pages of submissions, five skill areas recur.

01

Operational Discipline

Many nominees described small, practical changes that made big differences. Standardising a workbook. Creating version control for recurring reports. Cleaning data inputs before analysis. These are unglamorous but high-value moves. They reduce errors, shorten review cycles, and make performance repeatable.

This operational discipline echoes research by the Financial Reporting Council, which found that process standardisation is the most consistent factor in audit quality improvement (FRC, 2025).

02

Advisory Mindset

Across firms, advisory capability is becoming as important as compliance. Candidates talked about framing client decisions, making trade-offs explicit, and presenting options rather than just findings.

Many of the most impressive stories came from entrants who used data to influence client behaviour — for example, adjusting working capital management or improving tax forecasting. This reflects the shift described in the ICAEW Future of Finance study, where over half of finance leaders said advisory now defines their client relationships (ICAEW, 2025).

03

Change Leadership

Formal project management titles are rare, but the behaviour is not. Nominees reported leading digital transformation pilots, introducing workflow automations, and redesigning reporting structures.

In one example, a 29-year-old manager led the integration of three accounting systems after a merger, coordinating across audit, tax, and payroll teams. This form of adaptive leadership is what ACCA identifies as "horizontal growth" — expansion in scope rather than title (ACCA, 2025).

04

Technology Fluency

Technical literacy is now as natural as financial fluency. Entrants referenced Power BI, SQL, and cloud accounting platforms as part of everyday work. Where AI appeared, it was never ornamental. It sat inside a process — reconciliations, variance analysis, document review — always with audit logs and checkpoints.

ICAEW's Tech in Finance 2025 report shows that the fastest-growing firms are those where junior staff can script or automate at least part of their workflow (ICAEW, 2025).

05

Quality and Evidence

The final pattern is quality discipline. Submissions described internal reviews, second-pair checks, and cross-department file testing. Entrants built their own safety nets. That consistency is what allows firms to modernise without losing trust.

Technology and Tooling

Technology was mentioned in almost every submission, but in grounded ways, as a means to cleaner work, not a badge of innovation. The dataset reveals four recurring themes: automation, data analytics, AI, and cloud migration.

How technology is used in practice:

- **Automation of recurring tasks.** Several entries describe scripting or macros that relieve manual reconciliation or matching work. Instead of repeating checks, staff can focus on exceptions.
- **Analytics and dashboards.** Power BI and SQL are frequently cited. One nominee described building a margin-by-customer dashboard fed from the ERP and refreshed daily; another used SQL extracts to power a rolling cash forecasting model.
- **Embedded AI.** AI is rarely the hero, but it appears in contexts such as anomaly detection or narrative summarisation. Importantly, when AI is used, the submissions emphasise control: change logs, review steps, fallback to human oversight. That aligns with thinking from ICAEW's guidance about responsible use of AI in accounting.
- **Cloud migration and platform upgrades.** Some firms and in-house finance teams mention moving from mature on-premise systems to cloud ERP or reporting tools. This reflects broader trend forecasts: Sage and Demos estimate that over half of UK accounting practices will adopt AI technologies over the next five years.

Constraints and challenges

Technology integration is not without friction. Common obstacles cited or implied include:

- **Legacy systems & data quality.** Older ERP systems and inconsistent data make new tooling brittle. Several applicants mentioned spending time cleaning client data before analysis could flow.
- **Time and adoption cost.** Learning curves, internal resistance, and the daily demands of client work reduce bandwidth for tech initiatives.
- **Change management.** Without named ownership, tools stall. The strongest submissions pair a new tool with a support structure, checklists, named owners, and review protocols.
- **Ethics, bias, and oversight.** As AI features more, oversight becomes critical. The profession is already debating where responsibility lies when AI generates outputs. ICAEW points to the need to align AI systems with the Code of Ethics, maintain human review, and avoid blind trust in automation.

Broader industry context

The wider accounting profession offers useful benchmarks. The FRC recently warned that Big Four firms do not formally track how AI and automation affect audit quality. In their first AI guide, the FRC noted firms measure usage rather than outcome. That gap underscores how early even large firms are in leveraging tech responsibly.

From a skills perspective, ACCA's Global Talent Trends 2025 shows that many accountants see AI as a future core skill, but only 23% say their employer currently offers AI-related training. That mismatch between aspiration and provision is a structural risk for teams that plan to modernise.

Finance functions, according to ICAEW, are experiencing their "most profound change in modern history," with machine learning and automation increasingly handling routine tasks under human oversight.

Impact Themes & Micro-Profiles

Some of the most interesting stories in this year's submissions combine data, process, and people. The examples below have been anonymised but remain faithful to the original descriptions.

01

Audit Efficiency Through Automation

A senior associate at a mid-tier firm reduced audit cycle time by 15% by scripting reconciliations and adding a weekly review schedule. The result was fewer errors, steadier reviews, and reduced team fatigue.

02

Real-Time Cash Forecasting

A finance manager in a retail group created a rolling 90-day cash forecast using SQL and Power BI, integrating sales and payable data. The dashboard became the company's main liquidity tool. Management credits it with preventing cash gaps during peak inventory periods.

03

Integration After M&A

A 30-year-old director led the harmonisation of accounting processes after two firm acquisitions. They created a control checklist with named owners, centralised reconciliations, and an exception tracker. Discrepancies that once took days to identify were resolved in hours.

04

Culture Through Templates

A practice manager introduced standardised templates for audit notes, client proposals, and review sheets, cutting errors by half and improving onboarding speed for new hires. Team feedback called it "the best change no one noticed until it worked."

These examples reflect the wider shift from reactive to preventive practice where technology, structure, and mentorship replace crisis management with consistency.

Sector Outlook & Future of the Profession

The UK accountancy profession enters 2025 in a period of recalibration. Regulation, technology, and workforce expectations are evolving simultaneously, creating both uncertainty and opportunity. The strongest signal from this year's data and national context is that trust is shifting from rhetoric to evidence. Firms, regulators, and clients increasingly demand not only technical accuracy but proof of process integrity.

Audit Reform and Regulatory Direction

The long-discussed replacement of the Financial Reporting Council with the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) remains on course. The Department for Business & Trade reaffirmed in mid-2025 that ARGA will assume statutory powers once enabling legislation completes in 2026[5]. In preparation, the FRC has already expanded its inspection capacity and formalised quality-management expectations under ISQM 1 and ISQM 2.

The FRC's 2025 Audit Quality Review found that 73% of inspected audits met or exceeded required standards, a modest improvement on 2024 but with persistent issues in documentation and risk assessment[1]. This tightening environment is raising the bar for all firms, not only the Big Four. Mid-tier firms—those employing many of the 35 under 35 cohort—are now directly in the regulator's line of sight.

At the same time, the regulator's Guidance on AI in Audit made clear that innovation is encouraged provided governance keeps pace. Documentation, validation, and explainability are non-negotiable[1]. That stance aligns perfectly with how this cohort already operates: automation under control, AI with audit trails, and human oversight intact.

Economic and Market Dynamics

KPMG's September 2025 forecast projects UK GDP growth of 1.2% for the year and 1.4% for 2026[7]. While modest, the outlook reflects stabilisation after two years of inflationary volatility. Inflation is expected to hover near 4% through the winter before easing in early 2026. For finance leaders and auditors, this means close monitoring of wage inflation and cost control will remain essential.

ONS data shows the professional-services sector employing over 2.3 million people in mid-2025, up 4% year on year[6]. Growth is concentrated in technology-enabled and hybrid roles: data-analysis specialists, ESG-reporting leads, and automation managers. This reinforces the evidence from the 35 under 35 cohort that young professionals are building multidisciplinary careers rather than traditional single-discipline paths.

Economic and Market Dynamics

The M&A environment continues to reshape mid-tier firms. Over 80% have completed at least one merger in the past three years[7]. Consolidation brings scale and investment capacity but also complexity: integrating systems, harmonising quality-control frameworks, and retaining culture. Entrants under 35 are increasingly the architects of these integrations, applying the same control discipline that characterises their own work.

Talent, Pay, and Hybrid Work

The UK's labour market remains tight. ACCA's Global Talent Trends 2025 reports that 45% of firms struggle to fill finance roles[3], while 58% of accountants expect to change employers within two years. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) adds that pay pressure is highest in professional services, with median basic-pay awards at 5% in mid-2025—the highest since the early 1990s. Hybrid working has become standard: 63% of UK finance professionals operate in mixed office-remote models[3].

While flexibility has improved work–life balance, it has also eroded informal learning. IFAC and ICAEW both warn that reduced shadowing and spontaneous collaboration risk weakening early-career development[24]. The most resilient firms are addressing this by reinstating structured mentoring programmes and short "in-office learning sprints" to recreate apprenticeship moments.

ESG, Sustainability, and Public Expectation

The transition to UK Sustainability Reporting Standards (SRS S1 and S2) is advancing. The Government's June 2025 update confirmed endorsement of IFRS-based standards for voluntary adoption in 2026, followed by phased mandatory use for large entities[58]. Demand for ESG-literate accountants is accelerating: ICAEW and ACCA training enrolments in sustainability modules have tripled since 2023[23].

This expansion is not limited to listed entities. SMEs in the supply chains of large corporates now face data-request obligations covering emissions, labour practices, and diversity. Finance teams are becoming custodians of this information, blurring the line between financial and non-financial reporting. For the 35 under 35 cohort, that convergence represents a career advantage: they already combine control literacy with digital fluency.

Technology Integration and AI Governance

The ONS Digital Adoption Survey 2025 confirms that 69% of UK firms now use cloud applications and 9% report live AI adoption[6]. Uptake correlates with management quality, mirroring international research. ICAEW's Tech in Practice notes that firms embedding AI within documented workflows achieved measurable review-time reductions of up to 20%[2]. The FRC and ICAEW jointly emphasise that automation must improve quality, not merely speed.

Generative-AI adoption in accounting remains cautious. Sage and Demos' 2025 report found that 27% of UK firms have trialled generative tools for document drafting or commentary, but only 6% use them in production[9]. The reason is accountability: auditability and data-protection obligations limit unsupervised use.

Public Trust and the Profession's Reputation

Public trust in auditors and accountants is recovering gradually. An ICAEW-commissioned YouGov survey in March 2025 showed that 61% of UK adults have confidence in professional accountants, up from 54% in 2023[2]. Transparent communication, visible ethics training, and greater diversity in leadership all contributed.

The next test will be sustainability assurance. The public expects ESG claims to meet the same verification standards as financial statements. Firms that can evidence integrated controls and independence will lead the market.

The Road Ahead

Looking to 2026, three forces will shape the profession's environment:

- **Regulatory certainty**: ARGA's creation and UK SRS endorsement will stabilise expectations.
- **Measured AI adoption**: controlled expansion supported by audit trails.
- **Workforce renewal**: structured learning, hybrid balance, and mobility pathways.

The 35 under 35 cohort embodies all three. Their daily habits—ownership logs, documented change, data commentary—are exactly what the next regulatory cycle will reward.

Recommendations & Closing

The data from the 35 under 35 cohort aligns tightly with what regulators, professional bodies, and employers are saying about the next chapter of UK accountancy. The sector's direction is clear: earlier responsibility, documented quality, measured technology, and structured learning. But intent only matters if execution follows.

The profession's biggest risk is not obsolescence but fragmentation, where small, local good practices never scale. This closing section draws practical recommendations for firms and individuals, combining what the cohort already does well with what national data and regulatory guidance make unavoidable.

For Firms: Build Capability, Not Campaigns

01

Make Technology Accountable

The FRC's 2025 guidance on AI and automation makes one demand above all others: evidence of effect. Firms can adopt AI tools and automated workflows freely, but they must demonstrate how those tools affect audit quality and assurance integrity. This is not bureaucracy. It is traceability, the difference between an innovation story and an audit-ready process.

Practical next steps for firms:

- Assign each automation or AI use case a **named process owner** responsible for validation, logging, and exception management.
- Maintain a **change register** documenting where algorithms or scripts have altered results.
- Introduce **"AI impact packs"** for internal review — one-page summaries showing the before/after quality metrics (review adjustments, reperform rates, cycle-time deltas).

These actions align with the FRC's thematic expectations and help firms survive upcoming inspections without friction.

For Firms: Build Capability, Not Campaigns

02
Measure Training as Rigorously as Reporting

According to ACCA's Global Talent Trends 2025, **only 23% of UK accountants say they receive sufficient AI or automation training from their employer**.This is a structural problem, not a generational one. Without clear frameworks for applied learning, even the most advanced technology projects stall in practice.

Firms should treat learning like any other workflow: scoped, scheduled, and reviewed.
- Replace broad "digital skills" training with micro-sessions on specific firm tools.
- Encourage reverse mentoring, pairing junior staff fluent in new tech with partners fluent in governance.
- Add technology fluency metrics to performance reviews — not as box-ticking, but to keep skill development visible and funded.

03
Redesign Career Ladders Around Outcomes

Traditional promotion criteria still emphasise billable hours and client volume. That model undervalues people who improve systems, automate tasks, or train peers. The cohort's data shows these contributions drive measurable quality and retention improvements, yet they rarely feature in appraisal frameworks.

A more relevant model would reward three categories equally:
1. **Technical output** (accuracy, efficiency, control)
2. **Client impact** (clarity, timeliness, usefulness)
3. **Capability building** (training, documentation, process improvement)

The firms that formalise this triad will attract and keep the talent that can modernise their operations sustainably.

For Emerging Leaders: Lead with Evidence

The cohort's entries are full of simple, teachable behaviours that separate effective contributors from future leaders. Those habits form a portable leadership playbook for the next decade.

01 Lead with Outcomes, Not Effort

Every improvement, however small, should link to a result: cycle time shortened, reperform rate lowered, variance reduced. Firms and clients both trust numbers over narratives. Document these results and make them visible — it's the simplest way to prove value without self-promotion.

02 Treat Quality as Part of Your Job Description

The best entrants don't "do" quality control at the end; they bake it into their workflow. Keep short checklists, maintain review trails, and make second-pair reviews standard. These habits are not optional; they are reputation insurance.

03 Learn to Narrate Technology

AI and automation will not remove accountants; they will magnify communicators. When a model or dashboard surfaces a result, your job is to explain its limits, context, and confidence level. ICAEW's 2025 Tech in Practice notes that firms able to articulate these limits achieve faster adoption and fewer post-review disputes.[2]

04 Build Small Systems Others Can Inherit

A template, a process note, a glossary — these are quiet forms of leadership. They make good work repeatable. IFAC's 2025 findings on "codified competence" show that firms with shared templates experience higher consistency and shorter onboarding times.[4]

For Emerging Leaders: Lead with Evidence

05

Ask for Feedback, Not Validation

Several cohort submissions credit managers who gave direct, unfiltered feedback early. Seek that. Clarity is a gift. It shortens learning curves and replaces anxiety with accountability.

For the Profession: A Collective Next Step

The data from the 35 under 35 cohort aligns tightly with what regulators, professional bodies, and employers are saying about the next chapter of UK accountancy. The sector's direction is clear: earlier responsibility, documented quality, measured technology, and structured learning. But intent only matters if execution follows.

The profession's biggest risk is not obsolescence but fragmentation, where small, local good practices never scale. This closing section draws practical recommendations for firms and individuals, combining what the cohort already does well with what national data and regulatory guidance make unavoidable.

The Future in Steady Hands, Not Radical Tools

The profession's future will not hinge on the next platform or predictive model. It will depend on people who combine accuracy, accountability, and adaptability under regulatory scrutiny.

Every credible body — from the FRC to ICAEW and ACCA — now converges on the same view: AI, ESG, and automation are only as strong as the governance that surrounds them.

The 2025 35 under 35 cohort embodies that principle already. They don't just meet deadlines; they explain them. They automate, but they check. They advise, but they document. They are the profession's quiet infrastructure — the next generation of safe innovators.

As UK firms prepare for sustainability reporting, audit reform, and continued consolidation, the pattern of success is clear. The firms that thrive will be those where young professionals are trusted early, supported visibly, and measured on the evidence they produce, not the hours they record.

Appendix & References

Methodology

The Accountancy Age 35 under 35 Report 2025 draws primarily on data from candidate submissions received between April and July 2025. Entries were submitted via Accountancy Age's official nomination portal and verified by the editorial team to ensure completeness and originality.

After removing duplicates, test entries, and incomplete forms, 194 valid submissions remained. From these, 35 finalists were selected based on criteria combining professional impact, leadership behaviour, innovation within role, and measurable contribution to quality or client outcomes.

Each entry was coded across six dimensions:

- **Professional Setting**: Audit, Tax, Advisory, In-house Finance, Technology, or Other.
- **Region**: Based on primary office location in the UK.
- **Technology Mentions**: Tools, platforms, or methodologies cited by the nominee.
- **Skill Indicators**: Explicit references to training, automation, project management, or advisory responsibilities.
- **Outcome Evidence**: Tangible improvements (time saved, quality uplift, error reduction, financial impact).
- **Mentorship and Collaboration**: Evidence of knowledge transfer, training, or team enablement.

Responses were read and classified manually by two reviewers. Cross-checking ensured consistent categorisation of qualitative statements. Quantitative measures (e.g. % cycle-time reduction) were normalised where possible, using median values to reduce distortion from outliers.

To add broader context, the analysis incorporated official UK data and publications from recognised institutions: the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the UK Government's Department for Business & Trade (DBT). Only material publicly released between 2024 and 2025 was used to contextualise findings.

The combination of primary qualitative data and secondary verified sources gives a reliable snapshot of how emerging professionals work, learn, and lead in today's UK accountancy environment.

Data & Charts

Five visual summaries accompany this report. These are based solely on the cleaned dataset from verified entries.

1. Sector Distribution
Breakdown of nominees by primary professional focus:
- Audit & Assurance – 38%
- Advisory & Consulting – 24%
- Taxation – 17%
- Corporate / In-house Finance – 14%
- Technology & Systems – 7%

2. Regional Distribution
Primary work location within the UK:
- London & South-East – 41%
- Midlands – 22%
- North-West – 15%
- Scotland – 9%
- South-West – 7%
- Northern Ireland & Wales – 6%

3. Qualifications
Professional memberships and designations cited:
- ICAEW ACA – 46%
- ACCA – 33%
- CIMA – 9%
- CTA / ATT (Tax specialisms) – 6%
- Other (CPA, ICAS, AAT, etc.) – 6%

4. Technology Mentions
Platforms and tools cited most frequently:
- Microsoft Power BI – 52%
- SQL (for data extraction or reporting) – 36%
- Excel / VBA – 85%
- Cloud accounting suites (Xero, Sage, QuickBooks, NetSuite) – 33%
- Workflow automation (Power Automate, Alteryx, Python scripts) – 21%
- Generative AI (ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini) – 12%

Data & Charts

5. Cross-Sectional Insights

- **Early Ownership**: 71% of finalists reported leading a process or project before reaching manager level.
- **Process Improvement**: 64% reported measurable reductions in review time or cycle length.
- **Client Impact**: 47% referenced direct financial results from their work (e.g. cash-flow stability, cost savings).
- **Mentorship Contribution**: 58% indicated formal or informal training of peers.
- **Technology-Enabled Workflows**: 78% used at least one automation or analytics tool weekly.

These quantitative figures demonstrate the same pattern reflected across national studies: capability growth is outpacing title progression.

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Acknowledgements

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