

Auditors need to get with the times

Global connectivity, smart machines and new media as drivers that are likely to influence the global need for accountants over the next decade, research by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) has found.



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A series of round tables held by ACCA and Grant Thornton in seven countries across the world, including South Africa, has revealed a series of highly diverse opinions on the current and future position of audit. The discussions looked at the role audit plays in developed and developing countries. It also questioned the usefulness of audit by different players.

Shorter reporting timetables

Auditors need to look at how they can use technology to deliver a high-quality audit in a more efficient and timely manner.

Where there is change, there is greater demand for assurance in general and audit in particular, and for the two to be provided in new ways that make use of new technologies.

Novel funding models may require novel assurance services. Stakeholders expect auditors to exploit new ways of working to drive efficiencies so that reporting timetables can be shortened while continuing to improve audit quality.

The next generation of investors may want different information

Audit providers should listen carefully to users, and understand who they are, what information they use, and what they use it for.

A report, [*The Future of Audit*](#), shows that in countries where auditing is still developing, it is valued far higher than in countries where it has been long established.

In developed countries there are strong views that while the audit and assurance process are important it is neither timely nor offered insights as to where businesses could have done better.

For instance, while the traditional approach might reassure regulators and company bosses, its usefulness to investors is shrinking all the time, prompting questions over its future.

Why should investors have to wait?

Business leaders expect information in real time, so why should investors have to wait months for the audit reports?

Investors want insights on how a company could have addressed risks better or where they could have maximised profits. There's a belief that the audit process should evolve to allow auditors to provide more valuable insights about a wider range of measures, the report says.

The roundtables shows that while there are advantages to developing global rules, standard setters should be sensitive to the fact that countries are evolving at a different pace.

Auditors will need to keep their skills up to date to respond to the challenges created by heightened expectations of the profession. The digital age creates opportunities and threats.

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