

Tomorrow's Accountants

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An Internet article, "The Speed of Change in Business and the Impact of New Technology," describes a series of expected future changes due to technology. The article notes that "Around the world, an innovation in digital technology is copyrighted on average every three (3) seconds! Computers today are 8,000 times less expensive than in 1966! If motor vehicle technology advanced at this same rate, a BMW would now be worth \$2, and it would travel 600 miles on a tablespoon of petrol. These statistics can be frightening or exciting, depending on your approach to business."(p.1, 3/2/2001) <http://www.goki.net/gkn/comments/speedofchange.htm>

In this rapidly changing, technologically enhanced work environment, future accountants must develop and execute personal professional growth and development plans. No time in the historical past has required such rapidly changing and expanding knowledge for accounting professionals. The rate of change is accelerating at an extraordinary, unprecedented pace. Those members of the accounting profession who do not conscientiously plan and strive to keep up with technological and accounting advancements will soon lack basic functional technological skills, thus making themselves prematurely obsolete and unemployable.

Some employers of future accountants will provide some professional development activities for their employees. Other employers will expect future accountants to "get the instruction book, video, software, Web address or CD-ROM" and learn the new technology or software on their own time. All employers will expect their accountants to learn at least some new technology on their own. Only individual accountants can assume the personal responsibility for maintaining currency in their fields.

Tomorrow's accountants should consider someone they know today who has not embraced computer technology. For this example, his name will be "Abraham." The decline in his own skill level in technology is hurting this individual. Probably, the readers of this article know several "Abrahams." Abraham does not send or receive e-mail messages, cannot prepare an Excel worksheet, and is incapable of finding needed information on the Internet. Abraham cannot use the "company" computer to input or retrieve data, to help customers, to locate inventory, or to review his personal pension account. Abraham wonders why he is being "downsized" after many long years of valued service to the company. By not executing a personal professional growth and development plan, Abraham has gradually, albeit unknowingly lost his ability to contribute positively to the future of his company. He has become a "dinosaur," a "relic," and a "has been." This phenomenon of human obsolescence will become even more pervasive in the 21st century unless the "Abrahams" in the workforce learn the importance of maintaining currency in their respective fields. New accountants may easily predict the future by looking at Abraham; indeed, they must maintain their own skill levels to avoid becoming "tomorrow's Abraham."

Given the rapidity of changes, it is no longer possible for most people to maintain a general knowledge about all accounting and all types of available technology and

software. Therefore, they must concentrate on certain aspects of accounting, technology, and software that would prove most appropriate for their purposes. Half the battle in finding the right new technology or new accounting information is for the users to determine what is worth their time to explore and what is not. A good way for them to begin this exploration is by their selecting some appropriate journals and magazines, on-line newsletters, and Web sites to read to obtain some general information about current accounting and technological developments. They may decide from this overview reading that they need to study more detailed reference manuals, to purchase improved software packages, to attend development classes, or to try other media to enhance their skill level further.

This article endeavors to help new accountants develop a list of Web sites and significant site branches to visit on a ROUTINE BASIS to help maintain learned skills. Due to their vast informational resources, accuracy, authoritativeness, and completeness, the author carefully extracted these Web sites and significant site branches from an abundant quantity of choices. These sites are not appropriate for a few quick clicks, but instead require SERIOUS READING, EXPLORATION, and STUDY on the part of the users. Most of these sites have copious links. By reviewing appropriate links according to their accounting specialty, interest, need, and knowledge level, new accountants can keep abreast of major changes in the field. Beginning with this provided list of Web sites, over time users may adjust this list to their individualized needs. New accountants will likely find some of these sites more helpful and appropriate for individual needs than others. They may eliminate the least helpful sites and add new ones as they discover them. When the list becomes too extensive to manage, they should again eliminate some of the least helpful ones. Having more sites than time to study may discourage the new accountant from studying any of them.

One should plan a specific time each day to read and study a specified number of sites. Discipline is important. For example, perhaps each morning, one reviews four of the selected sites and its associated links thoroughly. The users must remember that some sites may be updated daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. They must develop plans for selected sites and the frequency of needed visits to each respective site. By being diligent in carrying out the study plan, new accountants will soon realize that their plans have developed into effective habits.

Though there is considerable overlap, the chosen Web sites and significant site branches presented below lend themselves to categories according to their major emphasis. These categories include accounting, technology, accounting technology, professional and governmental organizations, and downloads & lookups. None of these category listings are exhaustive or complete. The author, through careful selection and pruning, provides new accountants a general well-rounded overview of the accounting profession. Readers should particularly note the selection of professional organization sites not only for their organizational activities and interests, but also for the wealth of current accounting information available at these sites and their respective links.

Accounting

<http://accounting.about.com/>

This is an excellent site for links in the accounting profession. Some of the link categories include accounting news, accounting software, CPE, students, women,

training, universities, online magazines, and many more. This is a helpful site for one to explore current happenings in the accounting field.

<http://accounting.pro2net.com/accountingstudents.xml>

Accounting students can find a variety of information at this site. It also includes links to other area of interest to accounting students including human resources, law, and financial planning. This site has articles, tips, salary ranges, and other information for students. It also includes special links for accounting students interested in tax, information systems, international accounting, management, and other specializations.

<http://www.accountantsworld.com/>

This is a useful site for links to relevant accounting information. The print is small because it contains so many links on the home page. A very few of the many links include: articles, a tax center, career information, state accounting societies, financial planning, and much more. This is a quality site for updated information.

<http://www.controllermag.com/>

This site helps all those interested in various aspects of accounting, especially controllers. The site includes the current issue of the *Controller Magazine* and a keyword search for articles in the magazine archives. The site has added features such as a Buyer's Guide and links to other suggested sites.

<http://www.onlineaccountant.org/>

Recognizing outstanding accounting Web sites on a monthly basis, this site also provides links to the sites it recognizes. Some of the criteria for selection include information value, layout, ease of use, presentation, and popularity. This site presents a good one to review occasionally for prescreened links of interest to accountants.

<http://www.pro2net.com/>

This is an excellent site with lots of links to information in accounting, law, human resources and finance. It includes articles in each of these areas and has special links designed just for students.

<http://www.taxsites.com/>

One of the about.com sites contains a wealth of information about accounting as well as taxes. On 2/18/2001, this home page has twenty link categories for tax sites and eighteen for accounting. Among the tax link categories are tax software, federal tax law, publishers and CPE, and academia. A few of the accounting link categories included academia, certification, financial reporting, international accounting, managerial accounting, auditing and fraud, information systems, and governmental and not-for-profit accounting. As a further description, the link to governmental and not-for-profit accounting has thirty-three subcategories. This is an excellent site for links to current information on line in the various accounting fields.

Technology

<http://home.about.com/compute/index.htm>

Computing/Technology is one of the many about.com Web sites. This site provides copious links other Web sites. It includes subgroups such as tech news, hardware, software, programming, operating systems, communication/network, and careers as well as links to other about.com sites.

<http://www.cnet.com/>

This home site includes links for computer hardware, software, electronics, and other topics as well as other reviews, free downloads, and finance and investing information. It is one of several good sites to help the user keep up with ever-changing technology.

<http://www.informationweek.com>

Using this site, one may keep abreast of technological innovation and technology news. With free subscription, this site provides a number of articles each week.

<http://www.infoworld.com/>

This is another good site for a user to keep abreast of technological innovation and technology news.

<http://www.pcworld.com/>

The home page for *PC World* includes links for reviews, news, features, downloads, headlines, and more. To keep up with ever-changing technology, a practicing or aspirant accountant will find this a helpful site.

<http://www.techweb.com/>

Users may read about the latest technology news with this site which features numerous articles and link to other technology sites.

<http://www.winmag.com/>

For current information on Microsoft Windows, this site is an excellent stop. The site includes reviews, instructions, tips, special reports, advice, and numerous other categories of information.

<http://www.zdnet.com/>

This is a site for technology information. It includes technical news, articles, new product updates, investing, help, and “how to” among its numerous subcategories.

<http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/>

The home page for *PC Magazine*, it has many good links on updated PC information. Includes articles, downloads, reviews, and more, it is one of several good sites to help one keep up with changes in technology.

Accounting Technology

<http://toptech.aicpa.org/>

This site helps practicing accountants keep pace with changing technologies. Including the current top ten issues, applications, and the top five emerging technologies, it is information technology as applicable to practicing accountants.

<http://www.accountingsoftwarenews.com/>

Accounting Software News provides current information on software packages. It helps readers select the right accounting package.

<http://www.accountingweb.com/>

Requiring free registration, this site offers free training in accounting and technology. Providing daily accounting news, tutorials to download, and much more, this is a good Web site to keep accountants updated in their field and in the technology of their field.

<http://www.electronicaccountant.com/>

The *Electronic Accountant* is an electronic magazine and a useful Web site for information for accountants. It includes numerous links to other sites. One may access articles from *Accounting Today*, *Practical Accountant*, *Accounting Technology*, and *Financial Planning & Investment Management* from this site. The site also has numerous other features, including links to the latest news of interest to accountants.

<http://www.excelco.com/>

Selling a service that helps purchasers select the best accounting package for their individual situation, this site also provides some free information on accounting software.

Professional and Governmental Organizations

<http://accounting.rutgers.edu/raw/fasb/mail.html>

The home page of the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) provides links to exposure drafts and research projects.

<http://www.aicpa.org/index.htm>

The AICPA home page displays the many links offered by the site. Examples of these links include articles, conferences, congressional and Federal affairs, etc.

<http://www.aicpa.org/nolimits/index.htm>

From the AICPA home page, this linked site is specifically for accounting students and their needs.

<http://www.aicpa.org/pubs/index/htm>

This branch off the main AICPA site lists links to online accounting publications. These links include the *Journal of Accountancy*, *The CPA Letter*, *The Practicing CPA*, *The Tax Advisor*, and *InfoTech Update*.

<http://www.aicpa.org/pubs/jofa/joahome.html>

A branch off the main AICPA site includes the *Journal of Accountancy Online*. The site includes the current *Journal of Accountancy* and links to *the Journal of Accountancy* archives.

<http://www.imanet.org/>

This home page for the Institute of Management Accountants describes the organization, publications, and two professional exams: the Certified Management Accountant and Certified in Financial Management. This is an excellent organization for management accountants, finance professionals, and students.

<http://www.imastudents.org/>

Society of Accountants offers a number of links from their home page. These links include accountancy legislation, Federal affairs, the market place, and professional development.

HYPERLINK "http://www.rutgers.edu/Accounting/raw/gasb/mail/html"

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Rutgers University hosts a number of nonprofit home sites including the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The site provides GASB exposure drafts and governmental accounting standard summaries.

HYPERLINK "http://www.theiia.org" <http://www.theiia.org>

Home site for the Institute of Internal Auditors, the site includes articles, membership information, and Certified Internal Auditor exam particulars.

Downloads & Lookups

HYPERLINK "http://download.cnet.com/" <http://download.cnet.com/>

On this site, there is a search box to indicate the download being sought. Additionally, the categories of downloads show subcategories under each category. Some of the categories of these downloads are business & finance, utilities, software development, desktop enhancements, home and education, drivers and system files, and others. The site describes the download choices and rates them for users. It also provides information about the number of download occurrences and about the size of the files. The user also receives notification of the freeware status as opposed to demo status and of the cost of full version. Readers should exercise caution when considering downloading files.

HYPERLINK "http://shareware.cnet.com/" <http://shareware.cnet.com/>

Shareware provides an Internet search of more than 250,000 downloadable shareware files. One should exercise caution and carefully check out a site before downloading files.

HYPERLINK "http://www.clipartconnection.com/"

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When looking for a particular type of clip art, a user would like this site. It includes a search box to enter the desired art. Using the words "fire hydrant" as an example on 2/18/2001, the user received twelve free fire hydrant clips as the first of 3210 clipart

options. The site does have a small annual membership fee for access to the full collection.

HYPERLINK "http://www.control-z.com/pages/my_glossary.html"

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Craig Duckett has compiled a “gateway” to collections of specialized glossaries and dictionaries. Categorized by groups are such reference headings as thesauruses, symbols, encyclopedias, computer acronyms, and TechWeb. Also Duckett provides alphabetical listings such as “Computer Dictionary,” “Investor Words,” “Internet Terms,” “Management Jargon,” “Messaging & Network Security,” and “Municipal Bond Terms.” For all those with problems understanding the “techie” language (Geekese) or genre terms (as in the accounting fields), this is a good reference site to visit and to bookmark (to save having to key in such a long address).

HYPERLINK "<http://www.ixquick.com/>" <http://www.ixquick.com/> or

HYPERLINK "<http://askjeeves.com/>" <http://askjeeves.com/>

These two search engines help users locate information on the Web. Through the use of both these engines, an inquirer will probably get positive results for most searches.

The author of this article hopes you enjoy the wealth of information provided by these sites. If you would like to recommend other sites or provide additional comments, please e-mail her at HYPERLINK "<mailto:dclary@gw.uscs.edu>"

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