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Are businesses finally changing their approach to disability?

#MeToo Key figures discuss how the profession has reacted to the movement

Looking back Past prizewinners on their experiences since winning an award

Summer fun Some original and fun things to do with your summer

 **vital**

JULY 2018 | ICAEW.COM/VITAL



**Bright
young
things**

PRIZEGIVING 2018

The cream of this year's crop talk top tips on revision strategy and what it means to win a prize



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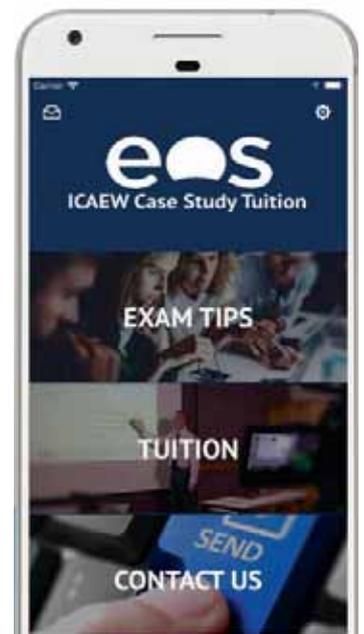
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July 2018 Issue 77



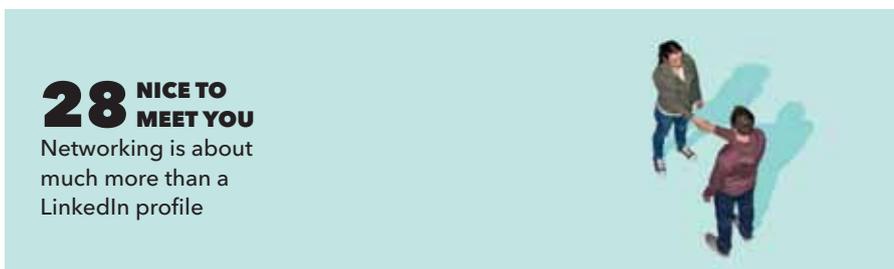
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The accountancy profession's reaction to the movement



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The prizewinners

Vital got a chance to speak to this year's crop of exceptional students who took home the prizes for their success during exams



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Welcome

to the July issue of *Vital*, which is one of my annual highlights, as we profile our fabulous prizewinners



As I am sure you will agree once you have read their amazing stories, that this year's crop of prizewinners are another bunch of outstanding and inspirational young accountants. It is always heartening to meet such positive young individuals and it makes me more optimistic than ever that the future of the profession is in the best possible hands.

Quite what that profession will look like when these young stars eventually take on senior leadership roles is hard to imagine, with so much change affecting all areas of both business and practice.

One thing that is certain is that the profession in recent years has continued getting stronger through its investment in diversity. From issues such as gender balance and senior female leaders taking more

high-profile positions, to its support for the LGBTQI communities within firms, to addressing BAME representation at board level, the profession has taken positive steps. This is encouraging for all concerned, but are we all doing enough to promote neurodiversity? Should we be thinking more about how we can encourage participation from those with different ideas and perspectives, including those with disabilities or those from non-traditional backgrounds, for example? Here we examine just how the profession is tackling this challenge. And we also consider how it is facing up to another major social shift, as we examine the impact of #MeToo and #TimesUp on all areas of the profession.

It is natural, at this time to think about interesting ways to make the most of your holiday. In this issue we serve up some ideas with a difference. Do drop me an email to let me know how you spent your summer, vital@icaew.com

Marie

Marie Lake
Vital Editor

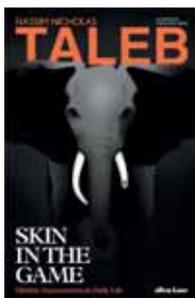
FROM THE FACULTIES



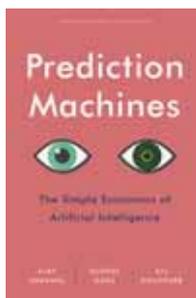
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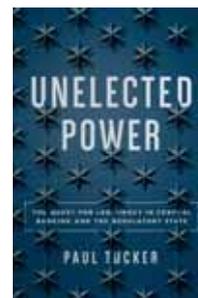
Chartech
Automation and artificial intelligence cause consternation, as people fear for their jobs. So how can the profession best prepare itself for the coming automation revolution?
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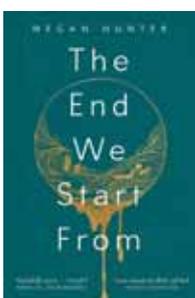
The author of *The Black Swan* completes his essay on uncertainty by re-evaluating beliefs about risk and reward.



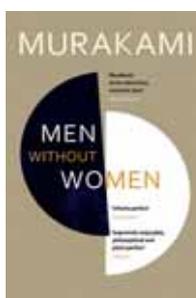
Three economists lay out in simple terms the economic factors and impacts of Artificial Intelligence.



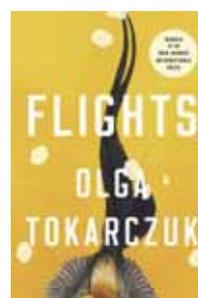
The former deputy governor of the Bank of England explores the question: to whom do central banks answer?



A new dystopian fiction in which ideas of family and motherhood are addressed as a biblical flood destroys London.



The idiosyncratic scribe explores, through seven short stories, the question of what it is to be a man and to be alone.



This hard-to-pigeonhole novel from the renowned author addresses, through various means, ideas of movement and travel.

Editor's picks

Tackle some big ideas through the mediums of fact and fiction with our selection of summer page-turners



Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2018, Kang uses the colour white as a theme to explore and reflect upon deeper topics.



Is democracy compatible with the new digital age? An investigation into what is at stake in the technological era.



Serial entrepreneur Sam Coniff-Allende draws inspiration from a golden age of piracy to create his own brand of innovation.

In Review

THE NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

We are pleased to announce that Esther Leung (Bristol and District Chartered Accountant Students' Society) has been elected as ICAEW Student Council chair 2018/19. Esther will be joined by Jake Holdroyd (Nottingham Chartered Accountant Students' Society), who is vice chair. Congratulations both. We look forward to an exciting year ahead. Our thanks to the outgoing officers Jessica Bernardez and Louise Hollington for all their hard work during their term of office. Discover how you can join a student society near you at icaew.com/studentgroups



NEW ICAEW PRESIDENT SWORN IN

ICAEW welcomed its new president for 2018-2019, as Paul Aplin (pictured left) officially took office in June.

At his investiture, Aplin said that he wants to improve access to the accountancy profession. "We need to recruit the best. Irrespective of background. Irrespective of school, irrespective of everything except talent, potential and attitude," he said in his keynote speech. "As a profession we know that return on investment isn't just about numbers and I want us to probe the barriers that too many still perceive are blocking their path to the profession."

As part of this, Aplin aims to help 10 young people from diverse backgrounds access the profession. The first was Khadijia, a student from Ghana who the ICAEW Foundation helped on her way to getting her 2:1 in accountancy at university.

Aplin will also focus on embracing digital technology and a connected global community during his year as president.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING: UK GAAP IS CHANGING

The current Financial Accounting and Reporting: UK GAAP exam is changing and will be available until September 2018. From March 2019, a new exam will be available which will cover micro- and smaller-entity accounting under FRS 105 and FRS 102. But don't worry, as long as you pass the Corporate Reporting exam and meet all other AQ requirements you will still be eligible for the Audit Qualification. Find out more at

icaew.com/examresources

COMPUTER-BASED EXAM UPDATE

All ACA exams are now computer-based, with the exception of the Case Study exam which will move in July 2019. You should prepare for your exams as you do normally and ensure you are familiar with the exam software. Get prepared at icaew.com/cbe



KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

2 July-6 August Exam booking open for September Professional Level exams
23-25 July Advanced Level exams

28 August-1 October Exam booking open for November Advanced Level exams

31 August Results are released for July Advanced Level exams

10-12 September Professional Level exams

24 September-29 October Exam booking open for December Professional Level exams

25 September Advance information for November's Advanced Level exams will be online

Book your exams via your online training file at icaew.com/trainingfile and for exam results visit icaew.com/examresults

It is essential that you book your exams early, as after the exam booking deadline no late bookings will be accepted. Keep updated with the key dates and deadlines you need in 2018 with the ACA planner at icaew.com/acaplanner

For all Professional Level exams taking place in September and December the fee will be £100 per exam.

ONE YOUNG WORLD

The One Young World (OYW) Summit is an annual event where the most valuable young talents are joined by world leaders to debate and share innovative solutions for pressing world issues. It will take place in The Hague this year from 17-20 October. After submitting the winning entry for our #ICAEWCharteredStar competition, ACA student Ali Qasim (Rothschild) will be ICAEW and Chartered Accountants Worldwide OYW Ambassador this year. To find out more visit icaew.com/charteredstar



ICAEW BUSINESS AND FINANCE PROFESSIONAL

You can now gain recognition from a membership organisation during your ACA training. With our new designation, the ICAEW Business and Finance Professional (BFP), you will have the right to use the BFP letters after your name, which helps you demonstrate your commitment to ethics, to your development and to professionalism. Find out more at icaew.com/becomeabfp

THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence is an increasingly important phenomenon within the accountancy profession. Find out about the rise of artificial intelligence, its impact on the profession and how it can be utilised by accountants at icaew.com/ai

USEFUL LINKS

Keep progress of your ACA training at icaew.com/trainingfile

Read our series of how-to guides on all aspects of ACA training at icaew.com/how-to

Discover the wealth of support CABA can offer you during your ACA studies at caba.org.uk



ANNA BOURNE THE LOWDOWN

International relationships manager, ICAEW

Can you briefly describe your role?

I joined ICAEW three years ago as the international relationships manager responsible for business development in Eurasia, with a focus on Russia and Kazakhstan.

What's the best part of your job?

I enjoy the travel aspect and the countries in which I work as well as the chance to co-operate with international experts, teachers, academics, officials and business leaders. I get a great deal of job satisfaction in playing some practical part in supporting, through our work, the globalisation of financial services and seeing the positive results this does deliver.

What do you find challenging?

Aside from some of the political and cultural aspects, the most challenging part of the role is to keep pace with the broader developments across ICAEW.

What is the key to your success?

People are the key to success in any business so building reliable relationships seems to me to be the most important thing.

How do you keep a work/life balance?

I always try to plan a week or two (or three) in advance, including work meetings and social events. I try not to put work over family where I can.

How do you relax outside work?

I love reading, films, music and travelling as you can imagine. In terms of sport I love yoga and have to follow Arsenal as my husband is a big Arsenal fan.

My childhood ambition would change most days. One day I'd want to be a 100m sprinter, the next a world-renowned musician and another day a businessman. It's fair to say that to varying degrees I've experienced at least a glimpse of most of my childhood dreams and feel fortunate for doing so.

My current role looked like one I could make my own, and was a useful move in terms of career development. Having real responsibility for delivering reporting controls and influencing culture.

My favourite thing about my job is the people. Lots of technical challenges and commercial dilemmas require thought and careful decision making, but ultimately it's people that make it happen, and your relationships with people are crucial to success.

There are many different keys to my success - there isn't a single silver bullet. But the most important thing is probably persistence and perseverance.

The most important quality in junior staff is, as well as persistence and perseverance, the ability to be organised. Also, presenting solutions rather than problems demonstrates a willingness to take ownership. This is important throughout one's career I think.

I might sound like a broken record but an entrepreneur needs perseverance and persistence. Have those two things and you can do anything. Assuming they have an eye for talent or an unfulfilled market need, other important qualities would be an ability to take advice and to delegate.

I don't think I'd change much in my career. I enjoyed my previous career as a professional musician and pianist (and still do). But I got into accountancy in my mid to late 20s, and would probably have got into it sooner if I had known that's where I'd end up. ●

A successful team member will work towards a common goal and leave self out of it

Performing at a gig really lets me be in the moment and forget about my worries

The biggest challenge is the pressure to deliver to deadlines

The Boss

George Acquah, marine finance manager, Rolls-Royce, on hitting the right note





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Bright young things



The outstanding prizewinners from the 2017 Professional and Advanced Level exams took time out from the ceremony to talk to Danny McCance

MIHIR PATEL**PRIZES**

First place and the Howitt prize; the Whinney prize; the Quilter prize; the Plender prize; the Peat prize

WORK

PwC, London, UK

How does it feel to be a prizewinner?

It's a great reward after a good few months of studying. Coming out of the exams it's not really something you expect. I'm still not entirely sure how it happened, but I'm really happy. Passing all 15 exams is just a great achievement. When I first started the ACA I don't think I realised how challenging it would be so to pass with these results and win prizes adds to the achievement.

What made you want to become a chartered accountant?

I know some members of ICAEW and they told me about the benefits. It's a great qualification from an institute that's respected globally. It gives you a strong set of skills and a well-rounded understanding of business. It's useful in all career paths.

How did you find the transition from university?

It's quite a steep learning curve. I started with Accounting and Principles of Taxation - I'd never seen debits or credits before. I'd looked at financial statements in the past but I didn't have a strong understanding. Another challenge is studying while working.

How did you approach revision?

I tried to do some in the mornings before I went to work and closer to the exams I'd leave at six, so I wasn't studying too late. I'd spend time studying on the weekends and focused on understanding the methods and principles being applied. In the exams this helps me remember key points. I started the question bank about five weeks before exams and spent a fair amount of time debriefing the answers, trying to understand what the examiners are looking for. It's also important to have some downtime.

Did you have plenty of support?

It was nice to have a large peer group at PwC as you're all going through exams at a similar time. If you have difficulties you can discuss them. The tutors at Kaplan were fantastic and

whenever I had a question I knew they'd be able to resolve it. My friends and family have been really supportive as well.

How did you relax?

I like swimming and if the weather was good I'd play some golf. I recently started playing squash. Just seeing family or going for dinner with friends, and anything else that's a distraction is nice.

Did you do computer-based exams?

The first six were and they went OK. When you're doing written exams you've done that before and know what it's like. The Certificate Level computer-based exams are a different format, but a good way to cover a lot of the foundation material.

Did you have a favourite exam?

I enjoyed Corporate Reporting. The financial reporting-style questions involved technical analysis, which I liked. I enjoyed working through the impact on the financial statements, doing the calculations and explaining the treatment. Strategic Business Management and the Case Study also provide a nice balance as they offer the commercial tools, business knowledge, and report writing skills.

Were you made aware of support from Chartered Accountants Benevolent Association (CABA)?

Awareness and support on wellbeing and mental health is really good. When you're doing exams, it can get quite intense and challenging so it's nice to have a support network or resources available, such as CABA, to help with wellbeing.

"I didn't realise how challenging it would be so to pass with these results and win prizes adds to the achievement"



FIONA SCOTT

PRIZES

First place and the Whinney prize

WORK

RPG Crouch Chapman*, London, UK

What made you want to become a chartered accountant?

When I was at university I went to an ICAEW presentation. They were describing the variety of jobs when qualified and, after looking at some of the other accountancy bodies, I decided that ICAEW was the one for me. I liked the values that came through strongly. I always felt fortunate that a firm would support me to do exams that would benefit them but also give me lifelong skills and a qualification.

What made you choose to study accounting at university?

At A-levels my favourite subjects were Maths and English Literature. I

“It’s a small portion of your life. That’s easy to forget when you go from work to study and can’t see the benefit at the time”

suppose I wanted something that combined both of those, the ability to communicate well with a numerical element.

Is there a particular area that interests you?

I was in audit at my previous firm and have gone into an audit role in my new firm. The great thing about audit is the variety of sectors you come across. That’s what maintains my interest.

How did you approach exams?

The way I got through them was by starting work early, but making sure I still made time to see friends, exercise and to see family. I think it’s important to realise that it’s a small portion of your life, although that’s quite easy to forget when you go from work to studying and can’t really see the benefit at the time. I would say approach your tutors as often as you need to. Personally I like to listen to music to aid my concentration, but no words. Initially I worked best in the evenings but later on I found that it was more beneficial to start early.

Who provided support to you during the exams?

As well as my family, the partners and staff at my previous firm supported me, many of whom I consider friends and will continue to keep in touch with. I hope to offer guidance on the Case Study to the students coming into my old firm as well as at my new firm.

*The name of the company given is where the prizewinner was working at the time of the exam. Fiona now works for Lubbock Fine.



HARRIET BAKER

PRIZES

First place and the Watts prize; the Spicer and Pegler prize

WORK

Deutsche Bank, London, UK

What does the prize mean to you?

It means that I made the right career choice. I did Classics at university and both of my parents are lawyers. When I picked accountancy it was surprising to my friends and to my family.

What made you make this choice?

Coming from an arts background I thought the ACA would give me knowledge of the business world, get my maths up to scratch and give me business acumen.

How do you think your route into the ACA benefitted you?

I got accepted onto an internal audit internship at Deutsche Bank, which in my mind was the number one internship. I got a graduate job from the summer internship. After I graduated I went back to Deutsche

Bank and started the ACA. I looked into the Big Four but felt at the time the banks were a high-profile industry having a big impact on the world and our lives. I thought working in a global investment bank would be an interesting way to get the ACA and also help me to understand how finance and business works in a massive organisation.

How did you approach revision?

I never work in the evenings - it's banned. From the weekend before Kaplan starts to the weekend of exams I do 10 hours on Saturday and 10 hours on Sunday. This allows me to have a social life in the week. My sister has her A-levels coming up and we tend to revise together. That's a massive motivator and helps with revision stress.

Do you have a dream job?

Yes, I have two dream jobs. The first is to be the chancellor of the exchequer. Politics is definitely something I'm interested in and could see myself going into. My other one is something in the arts industry, so the finance director of the Royal Academy of Arts or the British Museum.

JOLYN LAY SHIAN TAN

PRIZES

First place and the Knox prize

WORK

PwC, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

What does the prize mean to you?

It's a symbol of what I've managed to achieve. I didn't have much time to study as I was working and studying at the same time, but it is a great symbol of recognition.

Did you find the PwC training contract beneficial for you?

Yes definitely. I did a degree in Accounting and Finance at Warwick University first, so after that I continued with the remaining ICAEW papers that I hadn't done before.

What resources did you find useful?

The study materials, the past exam questions and the real life examples.

What was your revision technique?

I would understand the concept first and then just practice. I'd look through my notes and try to understand, not just memorise what they were saying. I'd just ask why.

Why did you decide to become a chartered accountant?

When I did my high school exams I took an accounting paper, which was not part of my core subjects. I liked the concepts that I learnt. I wanted to be an actuary at first. Accounting was my second choice but then I got a scholarship. When I did my degree the interest just developed from there. I studied with Sunway University in Kuala Lumpur.

Why ICAEW?

I'd heard from university lecturers and from talks given by ICAEW that the qualification is application-based rather than knowledge-based. I like that concept. I heard that ICAEW is more interested in training you with real-life scenarios in the exams.



BEN WADE

PRIZES

Highest non-public practice student and the Roger Lawson prize

WORK

National Audit Office, London, UK



“When you’re revising you have to make sure to take a break and have some time to switch off ”

Do you feel like all your hard work has paid off?

Yes, it was a bit of a surprise. I think I was happy just to pass and get the Professional Level out of the way. It’s really nice to have this achievement.

Who did you tell first?

I told my partner, I thought she deserved the message first. She had to put up with me revising every night for months.

Why did you choose to become a chartered accountant?

Before this I did a PhD in Biochemistry, something completely different. I came to the end and was happy that I’d chosen to do it but I just wanted a change. I was looking for roles that would train me. I did

quite a lot of research and doing the ACA was so well recognised.

What area interests you the most?

At the National Audit Office we implement the audit and at the moment I’m enjoying working there.

What’s your revision strategy?

I like to be organised and plan and so started as early as I could. I broke the topics down into facts I needed to know and then I just remembered those facts. The best thing was doing past exams and question practice. They were my go-to resource.

How did you find the exams?

They were tough. I think they were tougher than I’d anticipated. I had friends that had done the ACA and

they complained a lot about the exams. I thought they couldn’t possibly be as bad as they said but then they were. But you get so much support that it really helps with managing the workload.

What are your top tips?

Just to know that after a few months the exam stress will be over and they can get their lives back. I think when you’re revising you have to make sure to take a break and have some time to switch off.

And how did you relax?

I’ve just got married, so between the exams I was wedding planning, but more generally I would just take some time to watch TV or read a book and relax.

SARAH NAZAR**PRIZES**

First place Business Planning: Banking

WORK

Lloyds Banking Group, London, UK

***How does it feel to be a prizewinner?***

I still don't think it's quite sunk in. It was a shock when I first found out I'd won. I was on holiday in Sri Lanka with my family when I found out. I then received lots of messages from my friends asking if I'd just won a prize. It was quite a surreal moment.

How were the exams?

I found them tough. I just wanted to pass, that was always the intention, so this was just a big bonus.

How did you approach revision?

It always helps me to plan revision well in advance. It means I can approach the exams knowing I've done as much as I could. I'd made sure I'd done all the practice questions and done some papers to time.

What resources did you find useful?

The question bank was useful. The exam I won the prize for was a fairly new exam, Business Planning: Banking. There wasn't an extensive list of questions, but there was enough to give me an idea of what the examiner was looking for.

How has your route to the ACA benefitted you?

I'm on the Lloyds Banking Group Finance Graduate scheme - choosing that was in part because of the ACA being included. It's always nice being able to put things into practice at work but sometimes you need extra background knowledge. I definitely saw when I started the programme I struggled to grasp some of the technical aspects but now, having almost finished the qualification, I feel I grasp things a lot more easily.

What is your top tip?

Believe in yourself. It's easy to tell yourself you've done badly when you come out of the exams, which I was quite guilty of, even with this one. But this just goes to show that if you work hard you can have faith that it will pay off - and it has.

"It's always nice being able to put things into practice at work but sometimes you need extra background"

ILYANA IBRAHIM

PRIZES

Joint first place and the Spicer and Pegler prize

WORK

Independent, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



How did it feel to win a prize?

I felt I was getting something for all my hard work.

Why did you choose to become a chartered accountant?

I chose it, and particularly ICAEW, because there is a demand for the qualification in Malaysia. This programme from college offered an internship in between the course. I thought this was a good opportunity because you're exposed to the business world while you're studying. I felt this was good for me compared to other courses I'd looked at.

How do you approach revision?

I focus on the question bank. I question everything, and make sure I fully understand practice questions. If I don't understand anything I'll ask my friends or my lecturers. I'm only satisfied when I fully understand, if not then I won't rest.

Who do you go to for support?

My family is definitely my support system. Even when I'm very busy studying before my exams, they are understanding of my situation and support all my decisions.

How were the exams?

I found that the exams were relatable to what I did using the question bank, so I was prepared. That was a real relief. They were quite challenging but I found them doable.

What resources did you find useful?

The practice software on the ICAEW website was helpful because I could practice online and so I knew what to expect during my exams. I can complete the computer-based exams because I tend to type faster than I write. In class we'd tend to do things on paper and I'd write really slowly, but when I did it on my laptop it would be fast, which saved time.

What do you do to relax?

I watch Korean dramas and also participate in the student council at my college. I have time when I space out from my studies. I organise events or deal with student council issues. This takes my mind off exams so when I come back to studying I can focus.

"This was a good opportunity because you're exposed to the business world while you're studying"

THOMAS ALDRED**PRIZES**

Joint first place and the Railton prize
Joint ninth place in the Professional
Level annual order of merit

WORK

PwC, Milton Keynes, UK

What did you think of your results?

I was very pleased. All the hard work had paid off. The preparation with all the different methods, for instance the question bank and practice with friends and tutors, all paid off.

What does the award mean to you?

Getting the final result and being able to top it off with the award win gives distinction from just passing.

How did you approach the exams?

I wanted to make sure I knew the underlying content. The ones that were more mathematical required question practice and if they were more word-based I could discuss them with colleagues and small



groups. This was a different way to do it to add some variety, rather than just doing one thing all the time.

What made you pursue this career?

I've always been good with numbers and it seemed like a good career path to follow. At the same time it seems that accountants are becoming more integral in business and I thought studying as a chartered accountant would be a good start to a career.

How did you find the transition from university?

The biggest challenge was balancing work and study, you've got a day job so you're working quite long hours and then you've got to revise for exams in the evening or weekends. The actual exams are similar to those at university so I didn't find them too difficult.

Do you have a dream job?

It's early days so I'd like to progress at PwC. Long term I'd like to become a partner or a FTSE FD, depending on where my career takes me.

HELENA DYER**PRIZES**

Highest non-graduate and the
Simon Morris memorial prize

WORK

Deloitte,
Nottingham, UK

How did it feel to be a prizewinner?

It was a bit surreal. I just wanted to pass. You feel quite proud of yourself and what you've done.

What was your revision technique?

Getting into a routine. I knew every night I wanted to do X, Y and Z. I could say "that is the point at which I'm going to stop," otherwise it can spiral out of control. I also made sure I had time to prepare. I can't cram at the last minute.

How did your route to the ACA benefit you?

I'm a non-graduate and it's been amazing. I went to university for the first term and I couldn't see the practical aspect of what I was doing.

That helped me to decide that I needed and wanted to work.

What resources did you find useful?

The question bank helped in terms of making sure I knew exactly what was expected and ensuring I was able to apply what I was learning to the questions and get past practice in. I studied with Kaplan and their resources were also good.

Were you made aware of support?

At Deloitte we talk about mental health quite a bit. CABA spoke to the students as part of the induction stage to introduce the idea that there is that support network. When you're studying and working it's important everyone knows what is out there.

How did you unwind during exams?

I'm quite sporty so I did a lot of training for a marathon. I ran the Nottingham marathon in September. It was really rewarding, it was something I'd always wanted to do. My motivation was to do the revision and then go for a run for a bit. It was a way to de-stress and switch off, which is important.



Then & now

We catch up with our prizewinners from the past 10 years, as they share their career highlights, what winning meant to them, and their ambitions



★
2008
First place and
the Knox prize

AYUSH GUPTA

Financial planning and analysis manager, General Electrics Bangalore, India

How did you end up in your current role?

I qualified in 2010 and after that I spent about two years with Barber & Company. In 2012 I moved back to India. I joined a company called Fortis Healthcare, one of the largest private hospital chains in India. I worked for about two years in their corporate headquarters, in the financial planning and analysis division. After that I was offered the opportunity with GE.

How has the ACA helped with the transition?

During the qualification and at Barbour & Company there was a lot of analytical work, so it was always very useful, analysing huge sets of data and trying to see what is and isn't making sense in the business and drawing conclusions. That was very helpful experience. In terms of the transition from the UK to India, it was a different experience working in the UK than it is now. It's been exciting, and it adds value to your CV.

How was the transition from practice into industry?

The environment is very different. What I learned in practice and during my qualification was very helpful to me in what I'm doing at work.

What does the prize mean to you now?

At the time it was a great matter of pride for me and my family. They flew from India to the UK to attend the ceremony. When I was interviewing, it was given a lot of emphasis that I'd won a prize during the ACA. It will stay with me forever.



★
2010
First place and
the Spicer and
Pegler prize

LEAH HAGEN (MCGIMPSEY)

Senior manager, corporate development, Rocky Mountaineer Vancouver, Canada

When did you relocate to Canada?

I started with Deloitte in 2009 and in 2012 I moved to Vancouver. I worked in the transaction services group in London and joined the same group in Vancouver. I was fortunate to move to a different country with a job that I knew and a network I could call on. After about two-and-a-half years I then spent a year with start-up Westcoast Management Services as director of financial strategy. I joined Rocky Mountaineer in February 2016 and have been here ever since.

How has your training helped?

When you go through the training it's quite frankly hard work, but it's amazing to look back. Without the technical foundation it gives, you can't really progress. At Rocky Mountaineer, I do a lot of strategy development and connecting the dots within the business, really looking at the bigger picture. I wouldn't be able to do this without that technical foundation, as I'd miss so many of the details and more granular elements. When we hire now, we want to see someone we know has those technical capabilities, and the easiest way you can tell is if they've got a designation, so you know there is a standardised format to what they've learned.

What inspired the job move?

I'd had a number of years advising on sections of transactions, or even full transactions and some corporate finance work. However, I'd never seen the early stages in terms of developing the strategy

or the integration from the company side. I was quite motivated to do that in a business, to see the more complete side that you might miss out on as an adviser.

What does the prize mean to you, eight years on?

It genuinely set a standard for me and I came away thinking I can perform highly if I put my mind to it, and I can be in that top tier. It really set the stage for me and gave me confidence to always strive for that. Now, I will always look to perform highly and be in that top tier.

"I do a lot of strategy development and connecting the dots. I wouldn't be able to do this without that technical foundation"



★
2010
Highest placed
non-public practice
student*

TOM ROSS

Chief financial officer,
the BHSF Group
Birmingham, UK

How did you end up in your current role?

I took a bit of a circuitous route. I left the National Audit Office quite soon after qualifying to pursue a career in teaching, as it was something I'd always wanted to do. I took a year-long teacher training course at the University of Birmingham but felt that it wasn't for me after all, despite it being my dream. I'd actually enjoyed myself more in accountancy. I took a role with Deloitte as an assistant manager in the audit department to get myself back into the profession. I'd been there for about 12 months before making the move to BHSF.

How was your move from practice into industry?

It was strange at first. Particularly at the Big Four, which have their audit manuals and methodologies, you know where you are all the time. Then I went into a role where my first job was to complete the FRS 102 transition as well as implement some new insurance regulations (Insolvency II). It was quite unstructured compared to what I was used to and I was left to my own devices, but I enjoyed it and haven't looked back. Also the culture is different, we're not the average organisation in terms of outlook. As a not-for-profit with a rich history, it's a different sort of place and I think I fit in well with the organisation, so was very happy to find myself here.

How does your training help in your day-to-day?

The ACA itself is a great qualification to

have. Inherent in the process you go through for the exams and in gaining the practical experience is a lot of problem solving and thinking on your feet, understanding different businesses, different requirements and making judgements off the back of that. I think the transferable skills the ACA gives you are extremely useful.

What do the prizes mean to you now?

They tend to smooth the path with recruiters - their eyes light up when they see the prizes on the CV. Would I be anywhere different if I didn't have the prizes? Probably not, as it's the strength of the ACA itself that got me where I am. I'm still very proud, but I think I'm more proud of having the ACA because of the difference it has made to my life. It's not all about prizes though. I've worked with many fantastic people, few of whom had prizes, and they're all top accountants.

**Tom was also awarded the Roger Lawson prize, the Little prize and the Cassleton Elliott prize*

"I'm proud of having the ACA because of the difference it has made to my life. It's the strength of the ACA that has got me where I am"



★
2013
Joint first place and
the Watts prize

EVILENA ANASTASIOU

Internal auditor,
Bank of Cyprus
Nicosia, Cyprus

When did you start your current role?

I qualified with BDO in January 2016. In March I started working as an internal auditor in the Bank of Cyprus. After the financial crisis of 2013, I wanted to work for an organisation that had a significant role to play, both in strengthening the Cypriot economy and in restoring the markets' confidence.

What's it like?

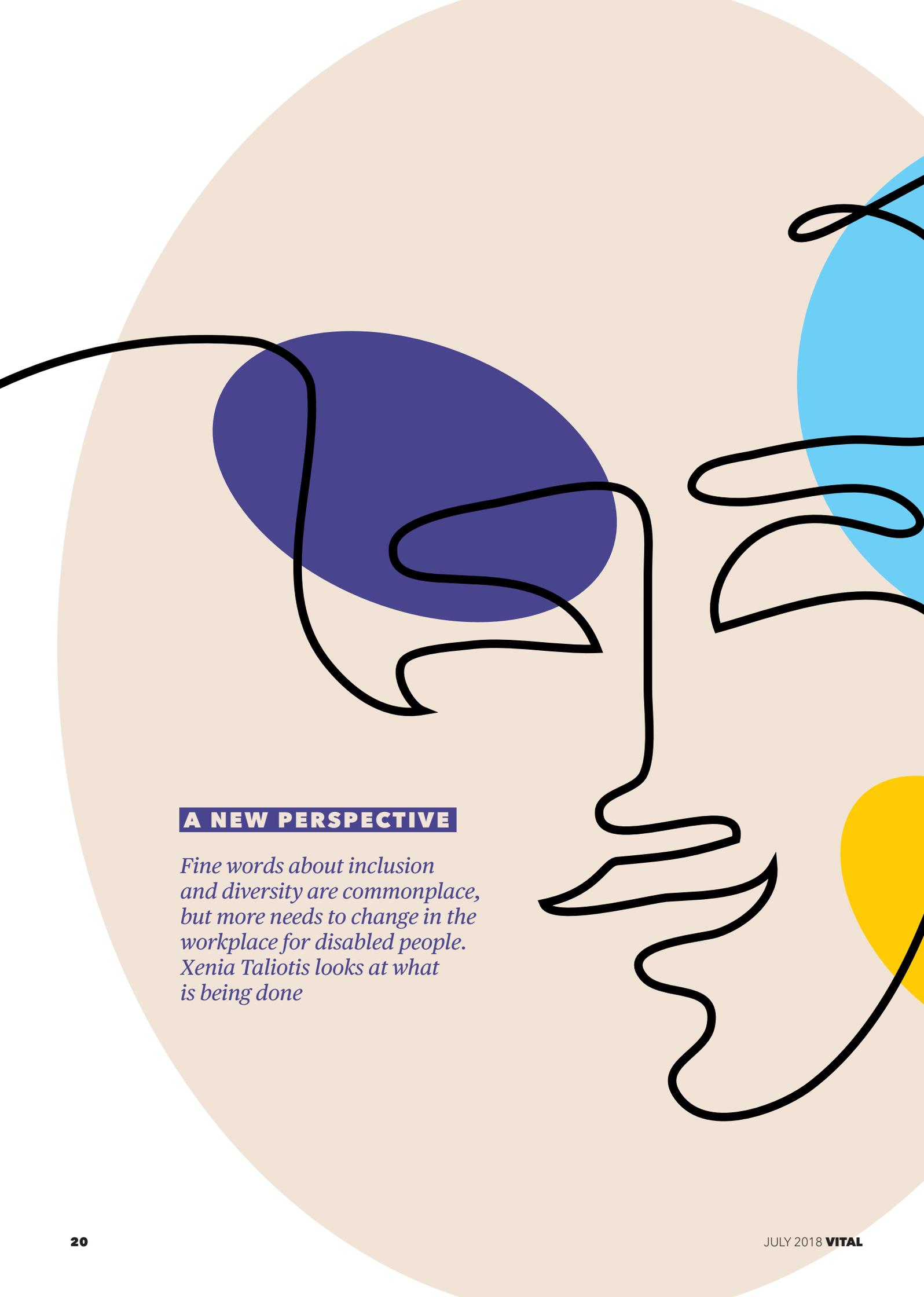
I work in the group internal audit in the investigations unit. The main body of our work entails the examination of different issues, such as allegations or suspicions of fraud, misconduct or breach of the Bank's policies and regulations. No two days are the same. The unit is one of the most qualified in the island. I have also qualified as a Certified Fraud Examiner.

Five years on what does this prize mean?

Getting qualified is hard work and it's very rewarding to have your efforts recognised. The prize is a memory I cherish. It reminds me that persistence, commitment and patience are key to achieve one's goals.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Although plans are made to be changed, I would like to stay at the Bank of Cyprus for the foreseeable future. In five years time, I see myself maturing professionally and progressing within the Bank. For me it's very important to work for an organisation that I deeply care about, where I am valued and where I have ample opportunities for personal and professional growth and development.



A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Fine words about inclusion and diversity are commonplace, but more needs to change in the workplace for disabled people. Xenia Taliotis looks at what is being done

comfortable about revealing it to their colleagues. “Hidden” conditions - chronic pain, epilepsy, mental illness - are even more misunderstood than obvious disabilities says Richard Lane, who was until recently head of communications at disability charity Scope. “Disability is still stigmatised but while most people can understand the challenges that those who are visually or physically impaired may face, they are not so able to comprehend that someone who is epileptic or bipolar may need to work differently, or have time off for appointments. Sympathy can be in short supply.”

In 2009, a 21-country study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showed that disabled people were twice as likely to be unemployed as those without disability and that those in work, unless highly educated, were more likely to hold part-time and/or low-paid positions. Individuals with mental or intellectual difficulties fared worst - they were three to four times more likely to be without a job, to work in segregated settings and to have longer and more frequent periods of unemployment.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) *Labour Force Survey*, published last June, showed that in the UK the gap between the employment prospects of those who have a disability and those who don't has barely budged since 2009, resting at 31% (49% of people with a disability are employed versus 80% of those who are not disabled) - a story that is repeated in many other countries.

In the US it's 45% according to 2016's Bureau of Labor Statistics report (28% of disabled 16- to 64-year-olds work, against 72% of non-disabled) and in Europe - taken as a whole - it's about 20%, based on figures from 2011. At a country level this breaks down to 37% at its worst - in the Netherlands and Hungary - and 2% at its best, in Luxembourg.

However, there are companies that are doing much more than paying lip service to the pledges made in their corporate commitment manifestos, companies that are genuinely working towards diversity and inclusivity (D&I) in their workplaces.

In Austria - where quotas apply and companies with more than 24 employees are legally required to ensure that disabled people make up 4% of that workforce - Bank Austria is leading the way.

Speaking to *The Guardian* last year, Matthias Raftl, head of media relations, said the bank saw quantifiable results from actively pursuing diversity and inclusion. “We have exceeded the legal limit by some

Responding to a 2011 World Health Organisation report on disability, the late Professor Stephen Hawking said: “We have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities.”

Hawking felt that global governments could “no longer overlook the hundreds of millions of people with disabilities who are denied access to health, rehabilitation, support, education and employment, and never get the chance to shine.”

While work is being done in this area these imperatives are still to be fully realised. Governments and employers can and do still overlook disabled people. Opportunities can be limited and often those with disability are consigned to employment that is very often far beneath their skills and capabilities.

If you doubt that then consider how many disabled people you work with. How many disabled people have you ever worked with? In a 30-year career in media and journalism I have worked with so few people who had a disability I was aware of that I remember the name of every one - all four of them, all of whom had mental health problems.

Of course not all disabilities are apparent and not all those who have a disability feel

Mark Russell, inclusion and diversity project administrator KPMG, chair of KPMG's Disability Network

"I'm registered blind and for years I allowed my concerns that no other employer would accept my disability to get in the way of my career prospects. It had been so ingrained in me that people with disabilities should be grateful for being given a job, that I didn't really consider the value I was bringing to the company I worked for.

"When KPMG took my previous company over, I must admit, I did have some sleepless nights about what the changes would mean for me, but as it turned out, my fears were totally unfounded. I have enormous support and I've been helped to develop in a totally different direction. I've moved out of desktop publishing and now work with the inclusion and diversity team as well as being chair of our Disability Network.

"The reality is that people are only as disabled as their environment allows them. KPMG provides the right equipment, environment and, crucially, support to enable people to develop and reach their potential. Our leadership team is totally committed to making KPMG a truly inclusive and diverse place to work. That starts from creating an open and honest culture, from proving to staff that they have nothing to fear by talking about their support needs and by showing that preconceptions are often misconceptions."

margin - 7% of our workforce is disabled - but we won't stop there. The company as a whole benefits from becoming more inclusive. People with disabilities who work in the right job give 100% and when given the opportunity to create their own success stories, strongly identify with the company."

Paul Modley, client partner at global talent acquisition specialists Alexander Mann Solutions, makes his living from getting that message across to employers. "The deeper and wider the talent pool companies recruit from, the greater the rewards. Diversity drives business forward. It creates a fertile environment for innovative thinking. Beyond that, there is the tangible asset of the people themselves, and the skills and abilities they bring."

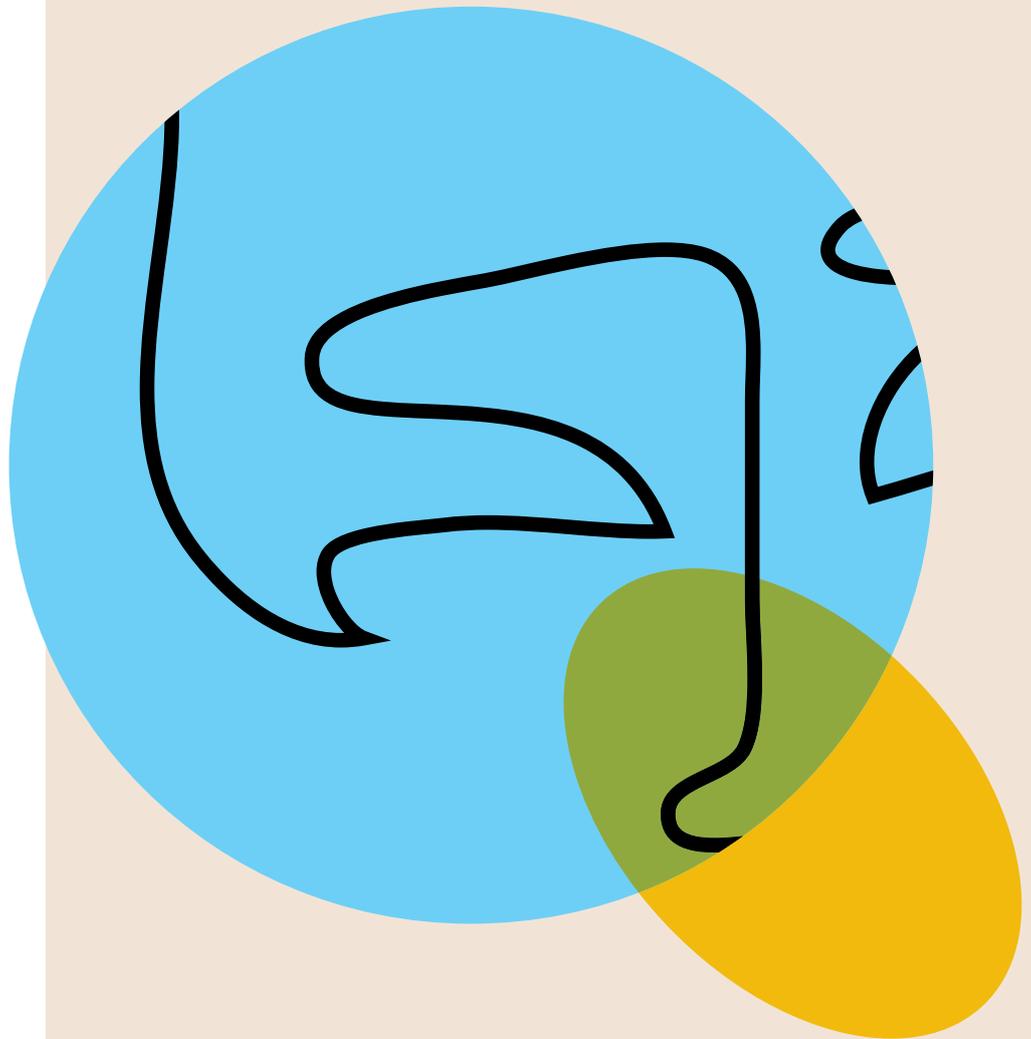
While generalisations are best avoided, Modley says that individuals with certain neurodiverse conditions do have specific strengths over neurotypical colleagues. "Some people with autism demonstrate above-average levels of concentration, reliability, conscientiousness and persistence, and an innate ability for 'bottom-up', or data-driven, processing and for finding patterns in mass data. Others on the spectrum typically have superior spatial-reasoning skills and can

view things from multiple perspectives."

Many global brands - Microsoft, Google, Amazon among them - are making concerted efforts to recruit and manage high-functioning neurodiverse people with these talents appropriately and so currently employment prospects for these individuals exceed those for people with other disabilities.

Within the profession, initiatives from EY and KPMG have won the praise of neurodiversity charities worldwide. "We launched our Neurodiversity Programme three years ago because we are committed to enabling all our employees to reach their full potential, no matter where they are on the cognitive, physical or psychosocial scale," says Lori Golden, who leads EY's abilities initiatives in the US.

"To make this possible, we needed to create a supportive eco-system that would help people who are on the spectrum flourish. Those who join the programme go through a different recruitment and training process and report to specially trained managers and coaches. They work in specially adapted offices, with suitable lighting and minimum disruption and their jobs are totally non-client interfacing. They're involved in data-crunching, pattern-recognition, analytics, robotics and cyber-developments."



KPMG, meanwhile, has set up its Workability and Be Mindful networks, for those with physical and mental challenges, respectively. Tony Cates, vice chair and partner at KPMG UK and sponsor for the firm's Disability Network, says the firm is actively encouraging staff to discuss their health issues, whatever they might be.

"We launched Be Mindful in 2015 to help our whole workforce live a mentally healthy life," says Cates. "There is still a legacy of reticence within the workplace, of people not feeling confident to discuss their health issues, particularly mental health. People who feel unable to voice their concerns, or who think they'll be stigmatised and sidelined if they ask for support, may reach crisis point. We're rolling out mental health training for our partners as a preventative measure so that they can spot any warning signs and intervene if necessary."

The firm has also doubled the number of disabled people it employs, up from 1.4% in 2014 to 2.8% this year but, says Cates, it wants to do better. "I don't think anyone would deny that the workplace across all sectors has a way to go before it can call itself fully inclusive, but things are changing. I hope the realisation that disabled people are an asset will gather momentum. Disability is a fact of life: sooner or later, in one form or another, either temporarily or permanently, it will affect most of us. The workplace has to accept and accommodate that."

Occupational psychologist and neurodiversity specialist Nancy Doyle is CEO of Genius Within, a social enterprise that helps people with neurological conditions find work, and helped create the BBC's highly-acclaimed *Employable Me* series, which showed the heartbreaking reality of being a disabled job-seeker. She says employers are still seeing the disability, rather than the ability.

"Regrettably, so many employers don't go beyond their first impression. They may go through the motions of finishing the interview, but they'll have made up their mind and disengaged the second they saw the wheelchair, heard the stammer, or registered the tick. Unconscious bias is one of the greatest impediments to inclusion, and something that must be addressed before it has a chance to develop."

There are problems, too, in how the world assesses and recruits talent, says Doyle. "People can't get onto any kind of training course without GCSE Maths and English, so their development and opportunities are snuffed out while they are still in their teens."

Modley agrees: "Rigid legacy recruitment and minimum qualification requirements

"Diversity drives business forward. It creates a fertile environment for innovative thinking."

do not always support the needs of this valuable group of people - many of whom are not 'wired' to absorb and regurgitate knowledge in order to pass exams. Employers must consider how they can best engage with neurodiverse talent and tailor how these individuals are supported through the recruitment and assessment process and beyond if they are to reap the benefits of a truly diverse workforce."

Conscious and unconscious bias can exist at the earliest stage of the hiring process. A job specification that unnecessarily asks for a driving licence will automatically eliminate candidates with epilepsy, or who are visually impaired.

Adjustments have to be made, says Modley, to reflect the "social challenges" that neurodiverse candidates face. Employers need to understand and accept that social conventions don't apply to many neurodiverse people, who may well find shaking hands, making small-talk or participating in group assessments impossible. Once in the workplace, people with autism will need a quiet space to work away from fluorescent lighting. Their managers will need to understand how to mentor them: clear and succinct written or verbal instructions work best, while hypothetical or abstract questions may flummox them.

"Organisations we work with report success once they understand the 'basics' such as building routine, providing an unchanging work environment and being aware of unwelcome stimulants such as noise and lighting," says Modley.

"Employers who learn how to communicate with their neurodiverse talent soon reap the benefits that a diverse and inclusive workplace can bring. Businesses need to integrate diversity into their working practice and identity, and the sooner they do that, the better. Diversity is good for business, for individuals, for society and for each nation's bank balance.

"A five percentage point rise in the employment rate among disabled adults below pension age would raise £6bn for the exchequer by 2030? There's every reason to make D&I happen and none to refrain from doing so." ●

DISABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Lisa A Zaccardelli, and Niklas Mirbach from Globalaw explain the law governing disability

UK: The Equality Act 2010 protects against discrimination due to a disability, including during recruitment and employment. Employers must make "reasonable adjustments," covering how employment is structured, removal of physical barriers and providing extra support.

US: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide those with disabilities equal employment-related opportunities. However, the Fair Labor Standards Act authorises employers to pay wages less than minimum to people with disabilities.

Germany: The law requires that companies with more than 20 and fewer than 40 employees employ at least one disabled individual. Failure to meet this quota results in a monthly fine. The workplace has to be adjusted to the needs of disabled employees who also have protection concerning notice and additional holiday time.

France: The minimum legal requirement is 6% of the workforce in companies of 20 or more being disabled. Employers can choose to pay a monthly contribution to the association for the professional integration of disabled persons in lieu of failing to meet their quota.

China: The minimum quota here is 1.5% of the workforce, with employers having to pay a penalty for any breach.

Zimbabwe: Discrimination is punishable by fine or up to a year in prison.

#METOO & THE PROFESSION

The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements lifted the lid on how workplace sexual harassment was being perpetrated across industries and sectors

The #MeToo movement led many to question the different forms harassment can take and culminated in #TimesUp, a campaign and legal defence fund focused on combating sexual harassment in the workplace.

According to a recent survey by the Institute of Management Accountants 48% of women and 7% of men reported having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. In March, a SourceMedia survey of accounting and tax professionals found that 34% of women across the profession had been sexually harassed.

“Many women have experienced sexual harassment, but it’s an incredibly low number who actually report it. To say it’s not going on is like putting your head in the sand,” says Thom Dennis, director of disruptive change consultancy Serenity in Leadership.

“Generally those who question the need for change are people who have never experienced any kind of discrimination,” believes Sarah Churchman, diversity leader at PwC. “Understanding their privilege and the need for equality is a real eye-opener for people in positions of power,” she says. This could be dealt with through appropriate training, something that PwC offers to its senior staff. “A lot of our training involves helping leaders to understand how privileged they are if they have never had to worry about their gender or background,” she says.

“Many organisations with a long heritage were originally set up by men; so often their environment and culture tend to work in favour of men. Our job is to unpick that heritage and support people who are different,” she adds.

Across the profession, #MeToo

“It’s better to have a policy in place and not have to use it, than need it and not have it”

prompted firms to overhaul their policy to ensure that employees felt protected in the work environment. “Following the #MeToo campaign the firm reviewed our current policies around sexual harassment and in doing so we have made it clearer which behaviours are unacceptable, how to report such behaviours and what support is on offer,” explains Edleen John, inclusion and diversity lead at KPMG.

This discussion was also going on at PwC. “When #MeToo kicked off, one thing our senior partner did was put a memo out to the staff to say that it’s not something we as an organisation would tolerate,” Churchman says. The partner also advised staff who felt that they needed to talk about inappropriate behaviour to confidentially call the firm’s speak-up helpline.

EXPLICIT AND MEANINGFUL

In its report on ending workplace sexual harassment, also published in March, the European Human Rights Commission recommended that the government consider introducing a requirement for employers to publish their sexual harassment policy, along with steps on how they are implementing and evaluating it and ensuring that it “explicitly addresses their obligations under the Equality Act 2010”.

This review and introduction of preventative measures is one that Rob Kelly, director of boutique accountancy firm Marriot and Kelly, also believes is crucial, no matter the size of the firm. “We discussed #MeToo, and have created better communication and preventative measures. It’s better to have a policy in place and not have to use it, than need it and not have it,” he says.

Making this policy explicit and meaningful for staff is crucial. One way to do this is ensure that all staff are familiar with the policy and what it means to them. For example, Cardiff-based accountancy firm EST flags up its own sexual harassment policy to new staff to highlight its importance.

“During induction, we highlight our policy on sexual harassment. We also explain that everyone’s tolerance level is different – about body language and picking up the signals,” explains Matthews. “We encourage people to consider unconscious bias, and how the things that we say might be perceived, as well as how we perceive others.”

In addition, some firms offer specific training that aims to develop more of an awareness of how behaviour in the workplace might be perceived in order to create and maintain a healthy work environment for staff. According to Churchman, unconscious bias training is offered at PwC, while employees at KPMG can benefit from this alongside other up-to-date training around workplace behaviours. “Our Beliefs, Biases and Behaviours training teaches our people how to recognise where unconscious bias may exist, and our More than Meets the Eye training encourages our people not to make assumptions based on face value,” explains John.

OPENING UP THE DISCUSSION

Another key factor that many firms are working hard to create is a culture in which employees feel comfortable and confident. It is this that Lucy Cohen and Sophie Hughes, founders of accountancy firm Mazuma, aim to create for their employees: “We have policies and training

FIRST PERSON

Fiona Wilkinson, ICAEW deputy president

How do you feel the #MeToo movement has affected the profession?

Here at ICAEW we have a good culture. We have a very strong, approachable director of HR. I think our employees feel confident that they can raise any concerns and that they will be taken seriously. I think our culture is open.

Have you spoken to those in the profession about what they’re doing?

Most firms and businesses have good policies, it depends how they’re put into practice. The workplace has changed dramatically in the last few years. That’s not to say bad behaviour never happens, but the culture now is that you will say something. Our Diversity Advisory Group (DAG) has been running for three years. It has given us a focus as to what we’re doing in these areas. It’s enabled us to bring issues to the attention of executives, we signed up for Women in Finance for example, which means that we are now setting gender equality targets at ICAEW. Such initiatives bring relevant issues to the forefront.

Is there a plan among senior executives to discuss sexual harassment regularly?

We don’t talk about sexual harassment as a specific subject, but all of our executive directors, including the chief executive, come to every Diversity Advisory Group meeting. They’re engaged with issues across all diverse communities and were very receptive to joining the Women in Finance charter.

Is there more to be done by the profession?

We’re still working on things, and more than just women’s issues. We have been looking not just at gender, but race, sexuality and disability.

in place as standard,” explains Cohen. “But we also aim to build a culture that enables people to feel comfortable and thrive.”

This is also championed by Ballards, a firm that recognises the importance of dialogue and inclusion within the workplace. “We promote values of being forward thinking and innovative in everything we do,” explains Steven Jones, business development director of the Worcestershire-based firm. “The board spend a lot of time creating an open dialogue and an inclusive, flat management culture. Equality in the workplace is a natural by-product of this.”

Making open communication the norm, and calling out and discussing questionable behaviour - intentional or otherwise - is one way that Mazuma also hopes to create a safe and open environment for staff. Cohen recalls an incident she had with a former colleague, who she thinks had an issue with having a female boss. Cohen called him out on his behaviour straight away - he was reprimanded. “I think it’s always best to address these problems immediately,” she explained.

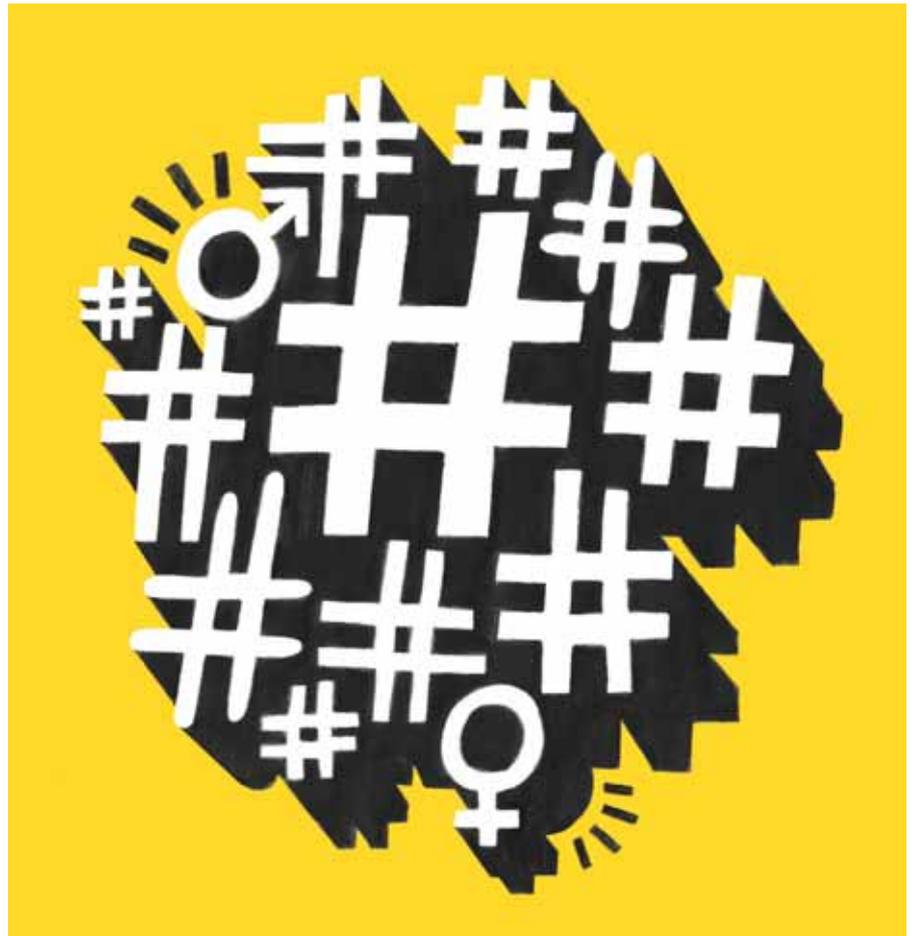
While she points to the fact that Mazuma may be slightly unusual in the fact that it has an all-female board and 65% of its staff are female she also highlights the importance of the open culture at the firm. “We have a forthright and open discussion policy. People can talk about anything as long as it’s relevant and not offensive.”

Addressing misconduct or inappropriate behaviour directly is also an approach championed by EST accountants. “We encourage employees to feel in the first instance that they can raise the problem themselves informally with the person responsible; we would advise they explain clearly that the behaviour is not welcome or it makes them feel uncomfortable,” she says. “However, if they don’t feel they can do that, then we would refer them to a line manager or director who will provide confidential advice and assistance,” says Matthews.

A WIDER ISSUE

While sexual harassment and inappropriate workplace behaviour is something firms need to be aware of and actively help to protect against, it is a part of a wider issue involving gender diversity and equality. “In my experience, there has been no harassment in the workplace, although I have heard people say that if they’re the only younger woman in the room then they’re automatically asked to take minutes,” says Jessica Bernardez, former ICAEW Student Council chair.

Bernardez says that although there may be an element of the behaviour addressed



“We encourage employees first of all to raise the problem themselves informally”

at large by #MeToo in the profession, it is nothing like that in other industries portrayed in the media. She considers gender issues more broadly, and points to other factors in the discussion of equality, such as the gender pay gap, that run alongside the movements.

Bernardez pointed to ways in which firms are approaching hiring and promotions procedures. “I’d previously spoken to a member of the Big Four who said that they have a procedure in place where if they look at a list of people going for a promotion and there’s not enough women on the list, then they go back to the people that created the list and say “have you really thought about this?”

However, Bernardez was wary of such behaviours becoming over pronounced with firms in some way “discriminating the other way” and points to the importance of rewarding merit. But, this sort of proactive stance will at least help with some of the gender imbalance in

executive positions and hopefully could go some way in changing gender-based power structures that may lead to misconduct and ultimately abuse.

DEFINING THE SOLUTION

It is important, too, that firms do not become antiquated or fall behind in terms of what is considered acceptable workplace behaviour. “The world’s changing constantly and we all have a duty to be up to date on what is and isn’t acceptable,” agrees Cohen. “We’re all going to slip up sometimes, we’re not all knowledgeable about everything all the time. You don’t know what you don’t know. But if someone informs you and you look at it and think actually yes, I was wrong I’m going to make an effort to change, that’s fine.”

If one thing is certain, #MeToo and #TimesUp made people sit up and acknowledge the problem of sexual harassment. This acknowledgement will hopefully lead to a future in which such behaviour is far less common, and dealt with far more rigorously. “It’s about safe proofing the future, and starting now to really make a difference when it is needed,” agrees Matthews. ●

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Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the All-New Ford Fiesta range: urban 36.2 – 67.3 (7.8-4.2), extra urban 54.3 – 80.7 (5.2-3.5), combined 46.3 – 74.3 (6.1-3.8). Official CO₂ emissions 139-97g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Regulation 715/2007 and 692/2008 as last amended), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Information correct at time of going to print.

THE REAL SOCIAL NETWORK

Step away from the screen and connect with others face to face, says April Warriar, audit supervisor at RSM UK, and you'll soon notice the advantages

In a world increasingly reliant on social media and high-speed fibre optics, the only networking some find themselves doing is accepting a LinkedIn request. This, however, needs to change. Networking involves far more than clicking accept and scrolling through a profile. It should be about exploring interpersonal networks outside of your comfort zone. It may only take one inspirational person to kick-start your motivation, expand your horizons or enrich your life in both a professional and personal capacity.

The biggest advantage to networking is building a support system. You could meet someone to phone for technical advice, future business opportunities, or career guidance - the possibilities of what people can contribute are endless.

The new relationships you can develop through networking can have a positive

The new relationships you can develop through networking can have a positive influence on your career

influence on your career. The adage that your network determines your net worth, while not always the case, has a ring of truth. The broader and more diverse your network, the better it will serve you in the future - provided that you nurture and continue to expand it.

An obvious, but still important, point is that regular attendance at professional and social networking events (even around your own office) will help increase your profile and build your reputation as someone who can offer help, support and advice to others. And through networking you may find inspiration, innovation and new angles that you may not have encountered before. Everyone is unique and speaking to new people may help you discover a new perspective.

Some people choose not to network because they don't feel safe in an



environment where they are faced with meeting new people, and struggle to find a common ground for conversation. There are, however, some easily adopted strategies for approaching uncomfortable scenarios. Below are some of the tactics that will help you approach any networking event with the confidence to start making some lasting connections:

- Doing some brief research on the event in advance will help you understand what to expect and hopefully give you an idea of some of the people you might encounter. This can help to calm some of those initial nerves, and means you're not going to encounter any surprises.
- If you're likely to have one-to-one time with someone at an event, especially with an individual at a more advanced stage of their career, go prepared with a

few questions. A simple one to start with is "how did you get to where you are today?" Not only will this help with the nervousness of engaging someone new, but also it will help you get the most out of the discussion.

- When you first arrive at an event, try to overcome the fear of approaching a circle and introducing yourself. A way to go about this is to remember that everyone is in the room for the same reason. Also keep in mind that it's very likely the people you are approaching faced the same fear only moments before.
- The best advice is to be natural. It is important to realise that people will be interested in getting to know you and may be able to tell if you're playing a part. Even if you don't feel confident speaking to people just remind yourself

that everyone has something to offer.

The best way to get better at networking is to go out and do it, and the only way to build a strong network is to meet and connect with new people. While these are just some introductory tips on ways to approach an event, networking is one of the most valuable skills you can have and is something everyone can improve upon and perfect. ●

Meet and network with fellow ACA students by exploring the student societies and events near you at icaew.com/studentgroups or icaew.com/events

SUMMER PLANS

Summer is here and Vital has some bright ideas about how to enjoy it

MAKE YOUR ESCAPE

Alongside price search websites such as Booking.com and Kayak, which allow you to look for deals on specific trips, there are also services such as Scott's Cheap Flights and Jetsetter that provide regular emails offering inspiration and deals. Scott's trawls for "mistake fares" posted by different airlines so, if you've left things late or don't have a particular destination in mind, there is a fair chance of finding a great deal.

Another option is Hitlist. The app is designed to match you with the perfect holiday by firing suggestions at you based on a preselected home location. It provides you with the opportunity to see a range of holidays you might not have previously considered.

But why not check out one of these off-the-wall adventures instead?



DESERTED ISLAND DISCS

What about a little wellness retreat in the insanely beautiful Adriatic? Obonjan, a 136-acre private island off the coast of Northern Dalmatia, Croatia offers something between a luxury resort and a wellness retreat. Sleeping options include forest lodges, luxury tents and sun lodges. To while away your time on the island you can choose from a variety of wellness activities, spa treatments, watersports and workshops on all things wellness, not to mention the island also plays host to a variety of music events and parties. (tinyurl.com/ObonJ)



FESTIVAL FAVOURITES

A beach break may be great for some, but others may enjoy the eclectic lure and buzz of a festival. Plus, there are health benefits from listening to some great music (see *Tips for better mental health*, overleaf). End of the Road, Green Man (above) and Bestival are all on in the UK throughout August, but the list of great music festivals around the world is endless. Sziget Festival in Hungary, Atlas Electronic in Morocco, Jazz Middelheim in Belgium, Felabration in Nigeria and the world-famous Burning Man festival in the US are just a few options for festival lovers.

LOUNGE MUSIC

If you're not ready to commit to a full weekend (or more) of music, then late booking app Dice offers the perfect way to pick up deals on events, while Sofar Sounds (see page 34) offers unique music opportunities. Currently in 350 cities around the globe, enter a lottery and if you win you get sent the details to a secret gig location. (tinyurl.com/AppSofar)



THE BEE'S KNEES

If spending time with insects is your ideal break, then this three- or five-day residential beekeeping trip in Confolens, Central France, is for you. Experiences include three to four hours of daily workshops on all things apiary related. If that's not enough, packages include accommodation and three meals a day. Costs start from €379, excluding travel. (tinyurl.com/13Beekeep)

THE NUCLEAR OPTION

Want more risk? Responsible Travel offers a five-day trip to Kiev, with a visit to the site of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The trip takes in the abandoned city - a kind of bizarre open museum to nuclear meltdown - and a night in a hotel built for scientific advisers. The group trip, which includes accommodation and tours in both Kiev and Chernobyl and flights from the UK, starts at just over £1,000 per person. (tinyurl.com/RTChernobyl)

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

For an adventure, but with lashings of luxury, check out Black Tomato's quad bike to Kubu experience. Spend six days in jeeps and on quad bikes hightailing it across the plains of Botswana and glamping in a "1920s style Jack's Camp". Then head to Kubu Island, home to the world's largest flamingo colony, and take survival lessons with native bush trackers. At £4,000 per person (excluding flights) glamour doesn't come cheap. But that's what makes it a once-in-a-lifetime experience. (tinyurl.com/BTKubu)

CONSERVATION STARTER

The Hermanus Whale Festival in South Africa at the end of September offers an "interactive eco-marine village tent" focused on conservation, alongside talks on marine animals including (unsurprisingly) whales, sharks and penguins. (tinyurl.com/HWfestival)



WITHOUT A PADDLE

If you don't need music to be the focus of your festival experience, then check out Tuck Fest, North Carolina's premier outdoor lifestyle festival. Held at the US National Whitewater Center, the festival offers all sorts of activities - rafting, stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking, biking and obstacle courses - as well as the usual food and live music you'd expect. (tinyurl.com/TuckFest)

GET CREATIVE

Although more learning might be the last thing on your mind right now, acquiring a new skill can help regenerate those achy mind muscles and use up some of that holiday allotment. One of the following options could be a good place to start.

ROOTING AROUND

Ethnobotanist and wild food educator Robin Harford - the man behind Edible London foraging courses - runs a variety of workshops, retreats and foraging walks across the country. The aim of the courses is to help educate people on plant uses as well as encouraging them to reconnect with nature. Why not take a walk on the wild side, and pick up some handy diet tips, on a fun day out? (tinyurl.com/ForageWalk)

SPEND SOME DOUGH

For those not interested in foraging but still interested in eating, then maybe a bakery course will suit you. East London bakery E5 Bakehouse offers a range of



courses from sourdough making to a jam, butter and pickles course. For the more adventurous, or those wanting to become master bakers, it offers a baking retreat in Alpujarras, Southern Spain. (tinyurl.com/BakeAPJ)

GOING UP A GEAR

The Bamboo Bicycle Club provides weekend workshops in which you construct your own bamboo bicycle. Plus, you get to walk, or hopefully ride, away with your very own bespoke bicycle. The advantages of bamboo are it's an eco-friendly and light-but-strong material. The benefits for you are a fun weekend learning new skills, oh, and a new way to get to work. (tinyurl.com/BambooBuild) ●

CABA

TIPS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Laura Little, learning and development manager at CABA, considers some ways to help manage mental health

Managing your mental wellbeing can be tough. There are so many factors that can alter how we feel on a daily, if not hourly basis and keeping yourself in check can be difficult. Work is often the primary cause of strain due to its demanding nature and the need to sometimes work long hours. Therefore, it's really important to find the time for a little rest and relaxation.

Here are some of our recommended ways to unwind and improve your mental wellbeing.

Take your full holiday allowance

This may seem like a straightforward tip, but it's amazing how many people don't take their full holiday allowance each year. Holidays provide you time to not only relax, but an opportunity to have fun too. Participating in pleasurable activities is great for mental wellbeing as it increases serotonin levels, boosting your mood.

Tune out (but in)

Many people use their holidays to attend music festivals, which is a great idea. Music releases dopamine into the brain, which stimulates enjoyment. So whether it's singing along in the car or at a full-blown festival, give your mood a boost with a musical interlude.

See the funny side

Laughter helps you feel calmer. Research shows it reduces stress hormones and blood pressure, whilst boosting the immune system and triggering the release of endorphins. Whether it's a quick trip to the comedy club or 10 minutes on YouTube, always make time for laughter!

For more information and tips on wellbeing, visit caba.org.uk CABA provides free independent support for ACA students and past and present ICAEW members and their families.



1

1 Trono inflatable chair

This inflatable lounger doesn't require a pump and is ready for you take a pew on in seconds. **€79**

2 Moonshades cork sunglasses

This innovative Hungarian company has created these unique, resilient and eco-friendly shades made with cork. **\$100**

3 H2O Ninja Mask X full face snorkel mask

Anyone that has used a cheap snorkel will know it's a distraction. This mask is sure not to limit your field of vision. **\$108.74**



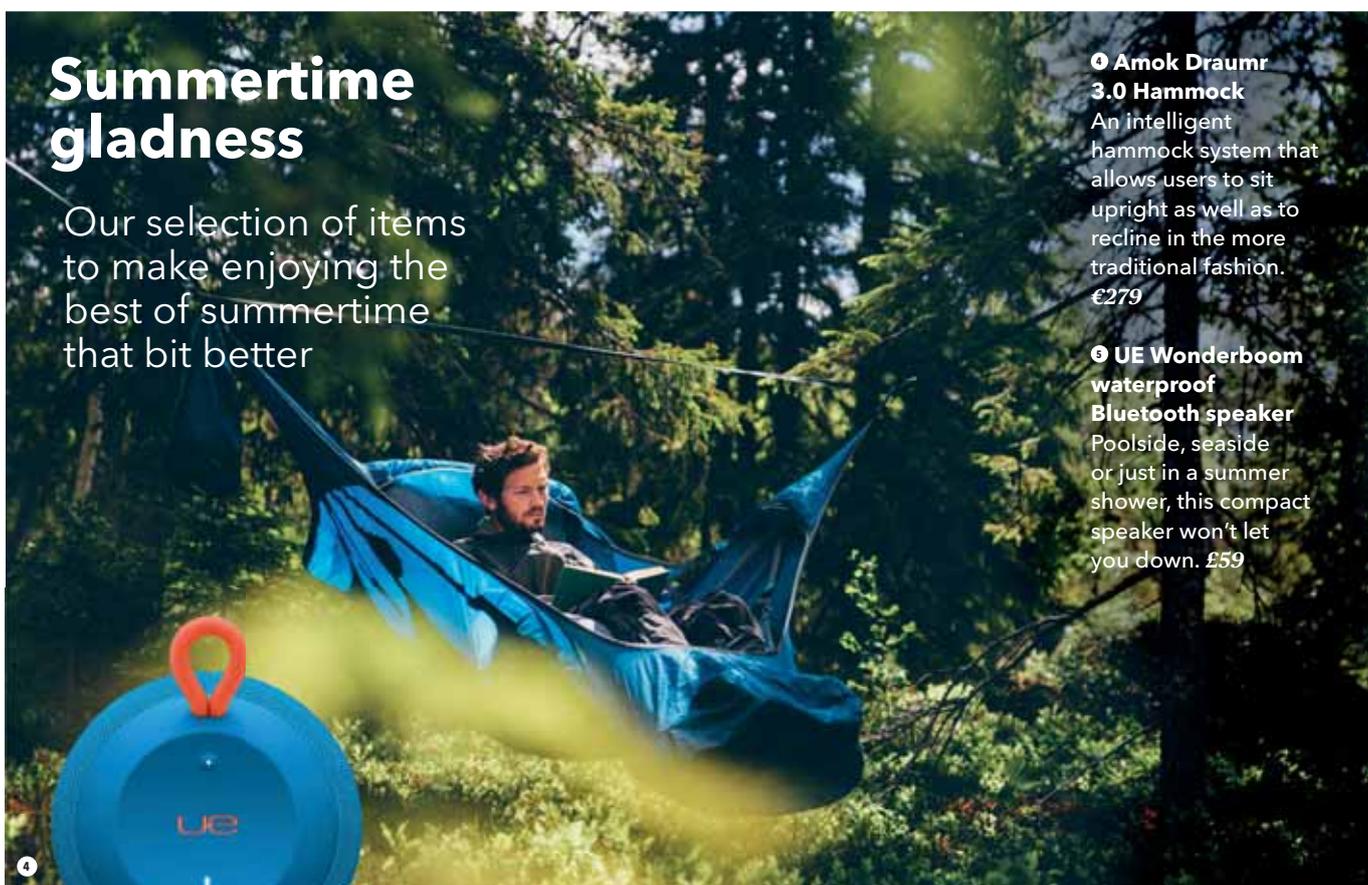
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3

Summertime gladness

Our selection of items to make enjoying the best of summertime that bit better



4 Amok Draumr 3.0 Hammock

An intelligent hammock system that allows users to sit upright as well as to recline in the more traditional fashion. **€279**

5 UE Wonderboom waterproof Bluetooth speaker

Poolside, seaside or just in a summer shower, this compact speaker won't let you down. **£59**



4



6

6 Sombra Shade portable sun shade

Providing that extra bit of comfort and protection for when the sun really starts shining. **\$89**

7 Aloha splash proof travel bag

Bags in a variety of prints that protect your belongings from light rain or - and who among us has not had this problem? - drink spillage. **\$42-\$48**



7



Gig economics

A secondment led Patrick Dobson, head of finance at innovative entertainment start-up Sofar Sounds, into the media start-up world

Tell us about Sofar Sounds

It's a high-growth technology-enabled experiences start-up born out of the modern phenomenon of massive gigs in which people pay £150 and they're at the back of an arena with a pair of binoculars. A headhunter approached me and I thought no one was doing anything similar to promote intimate music gigs in unique spaces, such as people's living rooms. That, and the fact that Richard Branson had just invested in Sofar Sounds, led me to leave Vice Media. I was happy there, but joining an earlier stage business at the beginning of its life was very cool.

Have you always wanted to work at a start-up?

I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur. In the absence of my own good idea the next best thing is to get involved in another business

early and shape the future of it. The role pacifies my entrepreneurial itch.

What are your responsibilities?

One of the beauties of joining an early-stage business is having as much responsibility as you want. I'm in an unusual position in that I only qualified five years ago and yet have almost complete autonomy to run quite a big finance team and make some big decisions.

There must be challenges?

We're so busy and, with so much growth, you find you're hiring behind where we need to be. You've got to constantly identify the problems ahead of time, rather than dealing with them when they're right in front of your face. We're at capacity and yet I've got to find time to interview and hire new people.

What was Vice Media like?

A mixture of luck and engineering my own luck. I qualified with Smith & Williamson in London and moved from audit into tax but really regretted my move. I realised that I enjoyed audit and getting out and meeting clients, whereas with tax I was more desk bound. I engineered my own luck by ensuring Vice was a client of mine. It was growing very fast at the time and I did a three-month secondment in the finance team. I was 25 years old, only just qualified, and was managing a seven-person team with no real clue what I was doing. It was a case of learn by doing and learning through my mistakes. I got to the end of the secondment and got offered a full-time finance controller role.

And the move to industry?

I'd never considered a move out of practice and especially not into the media and entertainment space. But I was very lucky. I got a chance to dip my toe in. I would say to anyone, if they get a chance to do a secondment they should. It's a good way to experience more than what you are used to without risking too much of your career progression.

What's next for you then?

Last week I signed papers investing in Vetbox - a subscription business for pet owners who want to save money. The founder is a friend and was looking for some angel investors, so I gave him some money and will help advise. I think it's really exciting that accountants can add value to young growing companies. I recommend that people build a personal and professional network so you can offer advice to these kinds of companies.

Would you consider establishing a business along those lines?

That's a really good question because I have definitely considered setting up my own practice advising young companies particularly on the fundraising process, which I'm going through now. It's very pressured and technical, and fundamental to start-ups' survival. At the moment I'm loving working for Sofar Sounds, but within two to five years I'd probably think about setting up my own business, perhaps in the consumer industry or an advisory business to other companies. ●



ACA exams are changing

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR ACA STUDENTS

All ACA exams will eventually move from paper to computer-based, so getting to know the new format in advance of your exam is crucial to success.

Complete the five steps below to ensure you are fully prepared and have everything you need for the day of your exam.

- 1 Read the exam guidance
 - 2 Watch the exam webinars
 - 3 Use the practice exam software
 - 4 Review the sample exams
 - 5 Read the Instructions to Candidates
-

Here is a summary of the exams moving to computer in 2018 and 2019.

PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

March 2018 Business Planning: Taxation
Business Strategy and Technology

June 2018 Business Planning: Banking
Business Planning: Insurance

ADVANCED LEVEL

July 2018 Corporate Reporting
Strategic Business Management

July 2019 Case Study

Guidance, support and resources are available to you at [icaew.com/cbe](https://www.icaew.com/cbe)

HELPING YOU SUCCEED SUPPORTING YOUR WELLBEING GIVING YOU BACK CONTROL

You're expected to shine at work, pass your exams and still find the time to lead a normal life. So, from the moment you begin your ACA training, you can access all our services – for free and in the strictest confidence.

- Emotional support
- Health and carer support
- Financial assistance
- Business start-up support
- Debt advice
- Personal and professional development courses
- Legal advice
- Wellbeing zone
- Career coaching



Watch our 1 minute wellbeing hacks and find out more about how we can help you by visiting: caba.org.uk/student-wellbeing

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All calls are strictly confidential

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