2025 Future Ready Accountant Report

The intelligence era: Accounting's shift to AI and insight

Wolters Kluwer

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Foreword

The accounting profession continues to evolve at unprecedented speed. The rise of artificial intelligence, cloud integration, and client expectations for deeper insight are reshaping what it means to deliver value. This year's *Future Ready Accountant* report builds on last year's global foundation — once again drawing insights from firms across North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific — to provide a data-driven view of the trends shaping the profession today and the strategic opportunities that lie ahead for firms of all sizes.

The findings are clear: firms are embracing transformation over tactical response. Advisory services are becoming essential. Talent strategies are maturing. Investment in technology, particularly AI and automation, is accelerating. These shifts aren't just operational. They signal a broader redefinition of firm purpose, long-term strategy, and client engagement models that drive meaningful results.

At the same time, regional nuance remains essential. This report highlights both the universal drivers of change and the distinct challenges faced by firms in different markets. Whether navigating regulatory complexity, scaling through M&A, evolving service models, or responding to generational shifts in the workforce, one theme holds true: future-ready firms are those that adapt with clarity, confidence, and intent.

We are proud to offer this report as both a guide and a catalyst — not just to understand the trends, but to act on them. We hope the insights shared here empower your firm to take its next strategic step toward long-term success.

Jason R. Marx
CEO, Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting

Executive summary

Success in tax and accounting today is about building smarter, more resilient firms. This year's report explores how professionals are evolving their strategies, embracing technology, and deepening client relationships to drive sustainable success. Whether leading a small practice or managing a large firm, the data reveals what's working, what's changing, and where the profession is headed.

From AI adoption to advisory expansion, the trends are clear: firms that invest in operational efficiency, client-focused service, and modern infrastructure are pulling ahead. Success increasingly depends on building integrated technology ecosystems, developing agile teams, and aligning strategy with scalable systems.

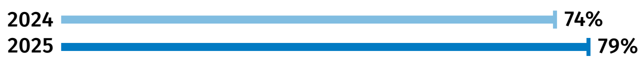
→ Growth with purpose: Strategy over scale

Firms are shifting from chasing growth to building strategic resilience — prioritizing client engagement, operational efficiency, and performance stability. By investing in cloud platforms, system integration, and AI, they're laying the digital foundation to sustain growth and deliver long-term value.

Firms worldwide outperform last year in revenue and profitability

Firms reporting increased revenue

Firms reporting improved profitability

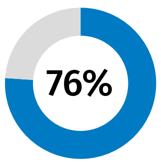


→ AI as a core capability: From curiosity to confidence

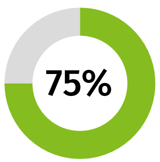
AI is no longer experimental — it's essential. Firms are embedding AI into daily workflows, unlocking productivity, client value, and strategic insight. Agentic AI is emerging as a game-changer in advisory, planning, and compliance.

77% of firms plan to increase AI investments over the next three years

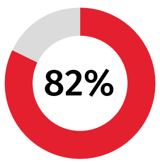
North America



Europe



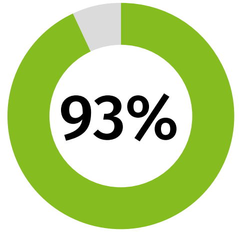
Asia-Pacific



→ Advisory-first engagement: Elevating value through data and AI

Advisory services are becoming the foundation of modern client engagement. Firms are using data and AI to deliver proactive, personalized guidance that drives loyalty and growth.

93% of firms now offer advisory services — up from 83% in 2024 — with nearly half planning to expand offerings in the next year.



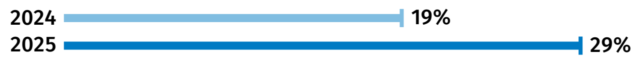
→ Future of work: Building resilient teams through technology and culture

Accounting firms are rethinking how they attract, develop, and retain talent. The shift from reactive hiring to strategic enablement is reshaping roles, workflows, and culture. By investing in flexibility, automation, and skill-building, firms are fostering workplaces where people thrive and strong, sustainable performance follows.

Shifting talent concerns emphasize focus on technology and enablement

Developing advanced technical skills

Staff demands for advanced technology



Global Key Findings

77% of firms expect evolving tax laws to affect operations; 73% also cite client demands and technology as challenges.

43% of firms have expanded advisory service offerings, and 47% plan to do so in the next year.

35% of clients are asking firms to provide strategic business advice.

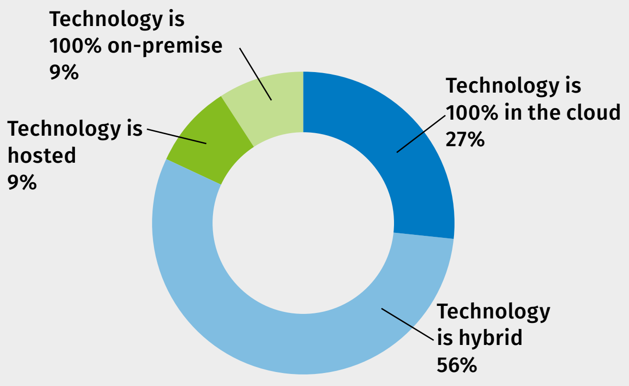
52% of firms adopted or expanded cloud-based solutions.

47% of firms plan to increase workflow automation and enhance digital communication with clients.

4x AI adoption has more than quadrupled in one year, rising from 9% to 41%.

87% of professionals whose technology is highly integrated (at least 75%) experienced revenue growth.

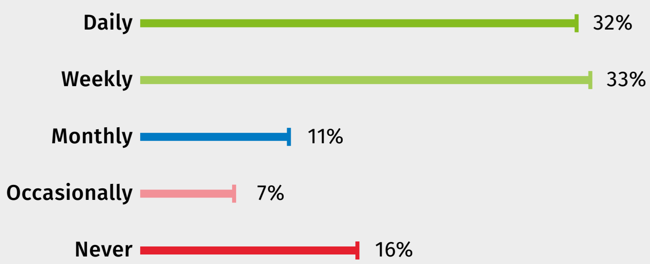
How technology is deployed in the firm



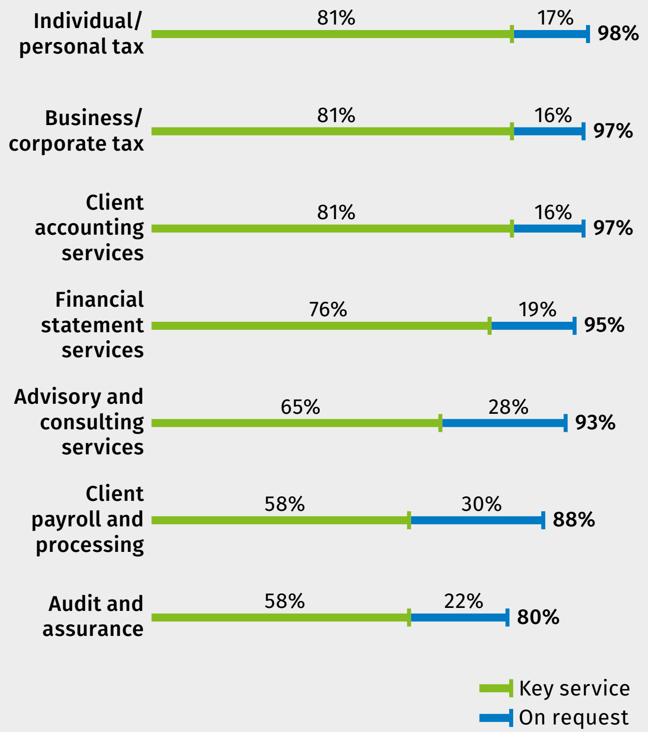
How integrated is firm technology

Frequency of advanced AI usage

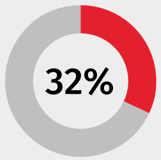
Advanced AI refers to generative and agentic systems that create and act



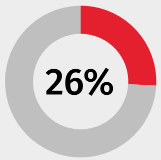
Services currently offered



Firms receiving private equity investment in the past three years



Firms reporting that they have merged with another firm



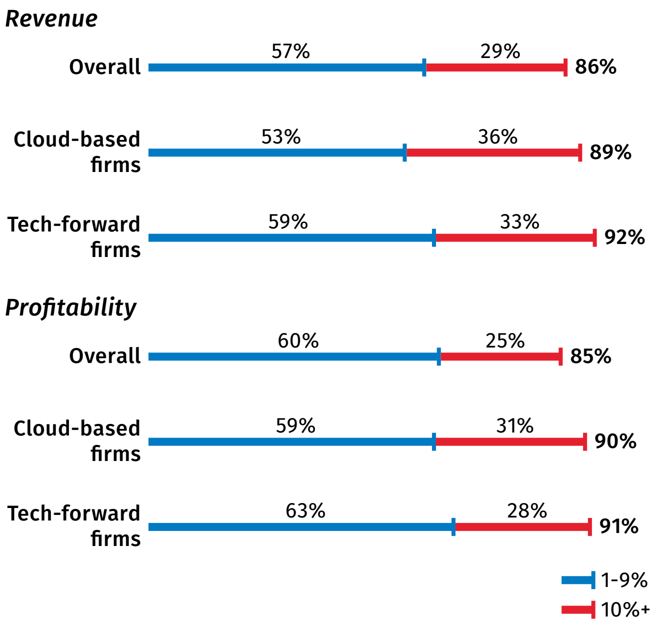
Key trends for U.S. firms

Digital maturity drives growth and profitability.
U.S. accounting firms report year-over-year improvements across multiple key metrics, with cloud-based and tech-forward firms consistently outperforming. Over 80% of firms report increases in revenue (86%) and profitability (84%). Cloud-based firms are 24% more likely to report high growth, while tech-forward firms are 14% more likely, with 92% reporting improved profitability, and 70% saying advisory is a key service. By contrast, mainstream firms struggle to keep pace, with lower integration levels, slower AI adoption, and less interest in strategic growth opportunities like private equity.

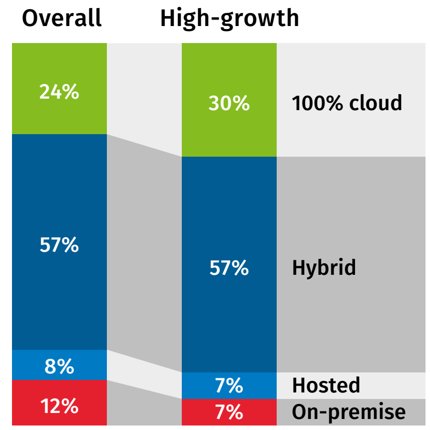
AI-powered tech is embedded and expanding.
AI is powering improvements throughout the firm. From tax research to predictive insights and compliance monitoring, 70% of firms use AI at least weekly, and 78% plan to increase investments in the next three years. High-growth firms are more likely to recognize the value of AI-powered tech; 45% plan to increase their investment by 10% or more (vs. 24% of non-high-growth).

Advisory becomes a client expectation.
Advisory services are no longer optional; 94% of U.S. firms offer advisory or consulting services, and 63% consider them a key service. Almost 90% of firms use client data to uncover advisory opportunities, and proactive contact is common, with 69% reaching out to clients at least monthly. Meanwhile, firms are using predictive models and alerts to help provide the personalized, strategic guidance that advisory clients need.

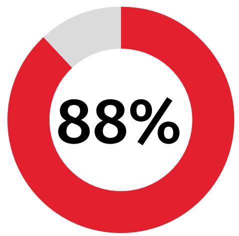
U.S. firms report revenue and profitability gains, led by cloud and tech-forward firms



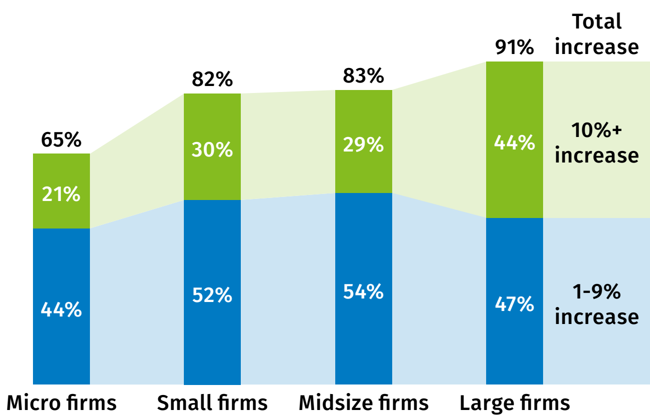
U.S. high-growth firms are more likely to operate fully in the cloud



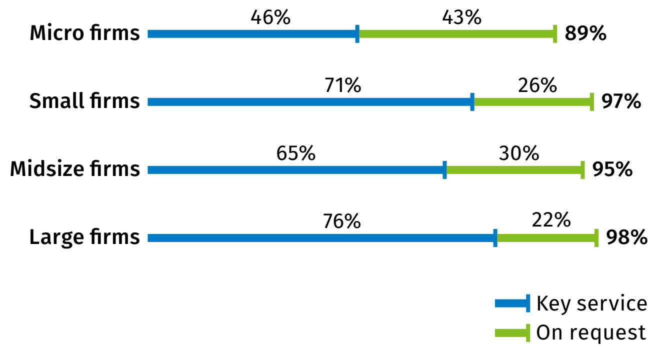
U.S. firms leveraging client data to proactively offer advisory services



U.S. firms planning to increase AI investment



U.S. firms offering advisory as a key or on-request service



Growth with purpose: Strategy over scale

Key insights:

- **Firms report accelerated growth:** 83% report higher revenue and 79% improved profitability, up from 72% and 67% in 2024, respectively.
- **Strategic priorities are diversifying:** While revenue growth remains the top goal, firms are strongly focused on efficiency, client service, performance stability, and market expansion.
- **Digital maturity drives scale:** High-growth firms are 21% more likely to use AI daily, 38% more likely to be fully cloud-based, and 53% more likely to have highly integrated systems.
- **Talent and tech are growth enablers:** Firms are embedding workforce development and technology investment into broader strategies for sustainable success.

Firms across all regions are reporting surges in growth. Globally, 83% of firms reported an increase in revenue, up from 72% in 2024. Profitability is also trending upward, with 79% of firms reporting gains. This momentum is consistent across regions; Asia Pacific (APAC) and North America lead with 84% of firms reporting revenue growth, followed closely by Europe at 80%.

Nearly one in four firms qualify as high-growth firms (reporting revenue growth of 10% or more). These firms are spread across all regions and firm sizes, demonstrating that high performance isn't limited by scale.

Industry-wide shift toward sustainable, resilient strategies

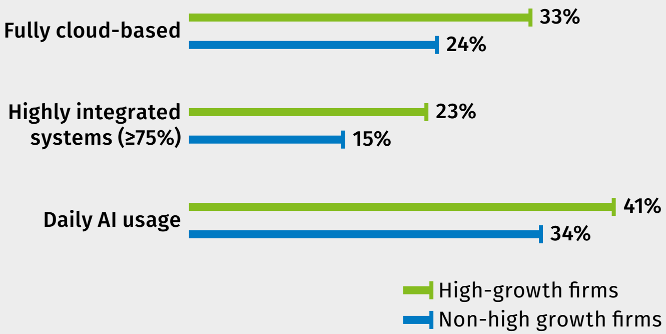
As growth continues, firms are looking inward. Revenue growth remains the top organizational goal, but it is no longer the clear leader. Firms are focusing on a more strategic and balanced mix of objectives, including improving client service and engagement, optimizing operational efficiency, maintaining current performance, and expanding their client base.

Top goals for 2026	
1. Increase revenue/growth	38%
2. Improve client service and engagement	35%
3. Optimize operational efficiency	33%
4. Maintain current performance and activity	32%
5. Expand client base in current or new markets	30%

The narrow gap between the top goals suggests that firms are no longer chasing growth for growth's sake; they are focusing on building the operational resilience to sustain it. High-growth firms are leading the way, integrating cloud platforms, automating workflows, and using AI to streamline operations and personalize service. These capabilities streamline workflows, improve decision-making, and personalize advisory at scale.

High-growth firms are building digital resilience

High-growth firms are 38% more likely to be fully cloud-based, 53% more likely to have highly integrated (≥75%) systems, and 21% more likely to use AI daily.



Client engagement becomes a growth engine

As client expectations evolve, firms are adapting. Improving client service and engagement is among their top global priorities, and is the leading focus in APAC. This shift reflects a move toward deeper, more strategic relationships based on personalization, speed, and advisory value. Firms are looking to elevate the client experience by providing services that are proactive, insight-driven, and aligned with long-term needs.

Efficiency enables scale and innovation

Operational efficiency is both a necessity and a growth lever. Among European firms, it ranks as the No. 1 priority. With staffing and budget pressures, firms are seeking ways to simplify processes and improve output without overextending resources. This often includes deploying cloud platforms, automating workflows, and integrating systems. These efficiency efforts not only improve productivity, they create space for innovation and better client service.

Performance stability reflects operational maturity

Maintaining current performance now ranks among the top five goals globally and appears across all regions; a notable change from last year. It also ranks highest among micro firms. In today's climate, holding steady is not a sign of caution, but of maturity. Firms are focused on protecting teams, ensuring service quality, and delivering consistent client experiences to build trust while weathering uncertainty.

Talent and tech investment fuel growth readiness

Just outside the top five goals, talent development and technology investment play a vital supporting role. Rather than standalone objectives, they are integrated into firm-wide strategies that support client service, efficiency, and scalable growth.

Essential insights

Firms are no longer pursuing growth in isolation; they're building the foundation to sustain it. High-growth firms are combining smart goal-setting with digital infrastructure — cloud, integration, and AI — to position themselves for success. Other firms can follow their lead by aligning strategic priorities with technologies that turn goals into outcomes.

Expert Voices

Q ***What is the most important strategy for firms looking to achieve high levels of growth?***

If firms want to grow, they need to solve the real problems clients face today — things like data overload, hiring challenges, or clunky systems. Services like analytics, HR support, and software integration help you stay relevant, valuable, and stickier to clients.

Kyle Turriff
Director of Technology Consulting, RLB Digital
Canada

People, processes, technology, and talent. Putting technology at the service of the best talent, accompanied by KPIs (indicators) to measure results and personalize services, something we see as increasingly valuable for clients. When needs are particularly specialized, we work with the best partners to offer each client the best solution in each case.

Carlos María Ruiz García
CEO, Sincro
Spain

Achieving growth requires a multifaceted strategy that begins with alignment. Growth means different things — increased revenue, continuous improvement or expanded service offerings. Shift your mindset to view technology as an opportunity. Leverage data in decision-making and build strategic partnerships to extend your firm's capabilities.

Kimberly Ellison-Taylor
CEO, KET Solutions, LLC
United States

How U.S. firms are driving growth: Smart strategy that goes beyond the bottom line

Insights on high-growth firms:

- **Digital maturity is a clear differentiator:** High-growth firms are 30% more likely to have all their tech in the cloud, and 16% more likely to describe their firm as tech-forward.
- **Tech investments are a higher priority:** High-growth firms are more likely to prioritize investments in integration, data analytics, and business intelligence capabilities.
- **Transform operations intentionally:** Nearly half of high-growth firms have reengineered operations by automating workflows, integrating data, and expanding services to support growth.

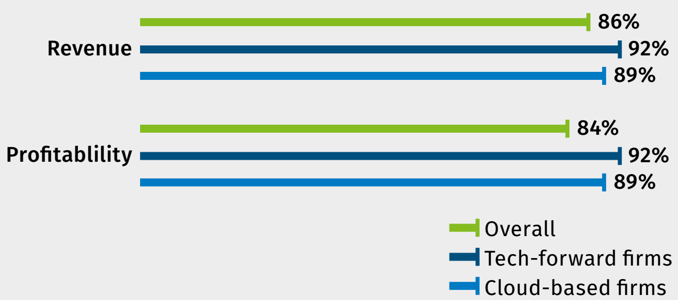
U.S. firms report strong year-over-year growth, aligning with global trends. While firms across all regions report strong performance, U.S. firms are outperforming the global benchmarks in several key metrics: 86% of U.S. firms report YoY revenue increases and 84% report improved profitability (up from 77% and 74% in 2024).

This continued growth — even while facing ever-complex challenges — suggests that growth is no longer just about expanding the client base or adding services. It's about building internal systems and digital foundations that enable consistency, scalability, and client satisfaction. As competition intensifies, firms that evolve their operations while maintaining high-quality service are setting a new standard for performance.

Digital maturity is a clear growth driver

Technology has become one of the strongest predictors of firm success. **High-growth firms** (year-over-year revenue growth of 10% or more) are far more likely to operate at least partially in the cloud and define themselves as tech-forward. **Cloud-based firms** (tech stack that's 100% in the cloud) show strong performance, with 36% qualifying as high-growth compared to 29% overall. Likewise, 33% of **tech-forward firms** (innovators or early adopters of technology) fall into the high-growth category.

Digital leaders in the U.S. outperform on growth

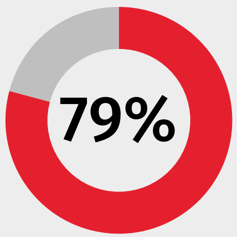


Cloud-based and tech-forward firms are reaping the benefits of agility, scalability, and client-centric service models. Firms with integrated, tech-forward systems can respond faster to regulatory changes, streamline workflows, and deliver more tailored advisory services. These firms use technology to automate tasks, enhance decision-making, and create strategic value for their clients Read more in How U.S. firms are driving results with technology.

Barriers to growth vary by firm size

Despite strong year-over-year growth, U.S. firms face challenges that could slow momentum. Four of the top five barriers remain unchanged from last year; keeping up with evolving tax laws and regulatory changes is the top-ranked challenge for the second year in a row. Client expectations and talent also remain top concerns. While pricing and competitive pressures dominated previous years, economic conditions, including inflation and budget constraints, entered the top five in 2025.

U.S. firms that expect keeping up with regulatory changes to impact their firm.

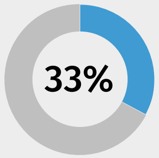


Diving deeper into the data, there are significant differences in growth barriers, depending on firm size.

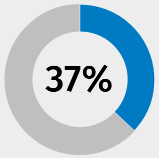
Micro and small firms (under 20 FTE) are expanding their offerings but struggle to maintain quality under growing demand. Operational pressure, including client management and staff burnout, is especially acute at this level.

Micro and small U.S. firms expecting challenges with accurate, on-time work to significantly impact their firm.

Micro firms

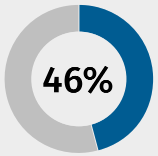


Small firms



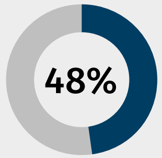
Midsize firms (20-49 FTE) grapple with macroeconomic uncertainty, evolving client demands, and internal training needs as they try to scale while maintaining flexibility. Without the nimbleness of smaller firms or the infrastructure of large firms, they're particularly vulnerable to growth plateaus unless they invest in talent, technology, and advisory services.

Midsize U.S. firms expecting that managing client expectations will significantly impact their firm.



Large firms (50+ FTE) are focused on integrating technology at scale while tracking changing market conditions and preparing staff to meet evolving tech demands. With growth comes complexity; many large firms will need to prioritize digital transformation and workforce development to sustain momentum.

Large U.S. firms expecting challenges in adopting advanced tech to significantly impact their firm.



Future outlook: Growth strategies are shifting

U.S. firms are increasingly focused on optimizing internal operations, improving client experiences, and leveraging technology to drive efficiency. While revenue growth remains important, the emphasis is shifting toward making that growth scalable and repeatable.

As with barriers to growth, a more nuanced story becomes apparent when growth strategies are analyzed by firm size:

Micro firms (1-4 FTE) are concentrating on client service and revenue retention.

Small firms are aligning strategies to operational challenges, prioritizing efficiency, engagement, and talent development.

Midsize firms are looking to expand services and market reach and are most likely to prioritize hiring and capacity building.

Large firms are investing in scalable infrastructure and expanding their advisory capabilities.

Top U.S. goals by firm size

Micro firms

1. Improve client service and engagement
2. Increase revenue/growth
3. Maintain current performance and activity levels

Small firms

1. Increase revenue/growth
2. Optimize operational efficiency
3. Improve client service and engagement ***and*** Attract, retain, and develop top talent

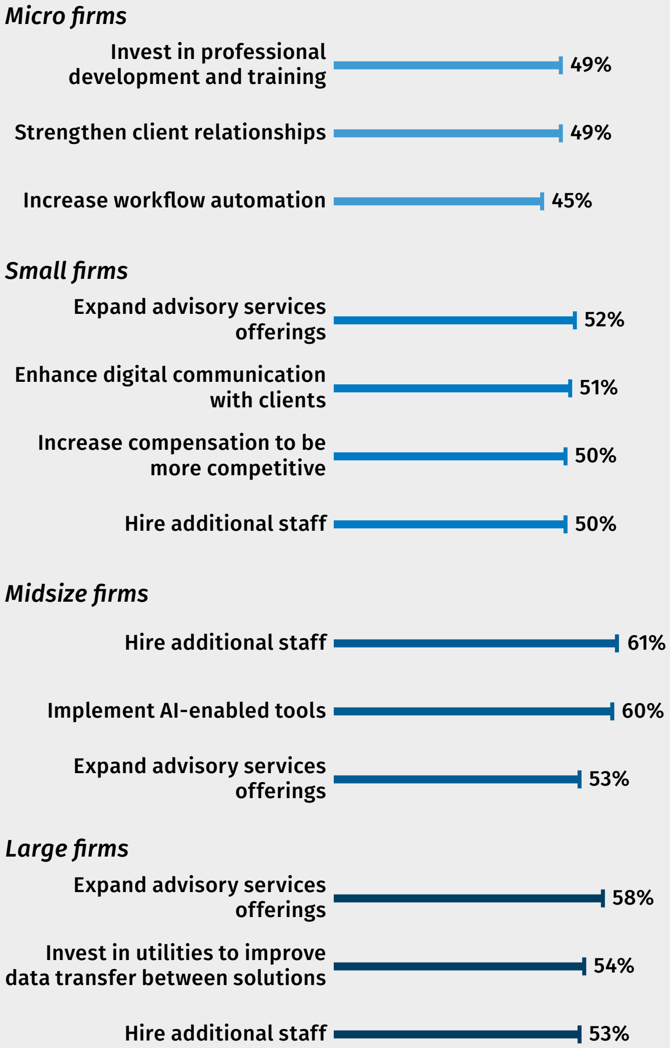
Midsize firms

1. Increase revenue/growth
2. Improve client service and engagement
3. Expand client base in current or new markets ***and*** Expand service offerings ***and*** Attract, retain, and develop top talent

Large firms

1. Increase revenue/growth
2. Improve client service and engagement
3. Expand client base in current or new markets

Top planned changes to drive performance across U.S. firm sizes



To support these goals, firms are evolving their operations. Many are redesigning workflows, investing in automation and AI, and shifting to flexible work models that improve staff and client experiences. These changes point to a more strategic, long-term approach to growth, one that builds firm resilience and enhances value delivery at scale.

To grow sustainably, firms must balance revenue growth with optimizing operations, elevate the client experience, and evaluate if embracing strategic risk is part of their growth strategy.

Essential insights

In 2025, growth is no longer measured exclusively by top-line revenue; it includes smarter operations, digital maturity, and client-centric strategies. High-growth firms are setting the pace by investing in cloud platforms, integrated systems, and data-driven advisory services. For U.S. firms, the future of growth lies in balancing revenue expansion and operational excellence, leveraging technology, talent, and client insight to build scalable, future-ready practices.

Expert Voices

Q ***What makes you most optimistic about the future of tax and accounting?***

Accountants have always provided essential financial and compliance insights to individuals and business owners, helping their clients succeed and reach their goals, even amid shifting trends and challenges. Previous 'existential IT threats' such as the transition to PC accounting products, the dot-com era, and the remote work ramifications of the COVID pandemic, highlight how our profession has quickly adapted, become more productive, and continued to thrive.

Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP
Director of Firm Technology Strategy, Rightworks
United States

Our industry's commitment to promoting the public interest, to client service excellence, and to the next generation of leaders. I absolutely recognize the pressing challenges we face today, but what is just as important is that we've faced similar challenges before, in different contexts, and emerged stronger. The common denominator of the tax and accounting industry is commitment. Over the years, the industry has 'met the moment' of the time, continuously adapting to guide clients through complexity and uncertainty. I am confident that it will continue to do so.

Kimberly Ellison-Taylor
CEO, KET Solutions, LLC
United States

Private equity, mergers and acquisitions: Navigating new paths to growth

Key insights:

- **Private equity momentum is building:** 32% of firms globally received PE funding in the past three years, and 34% plan to pursue it in the next year, reflecting growing reliance on external capital.
- **Partnerships are the top strategy:** 50% of firms favor joint ventures, making it the most popular growth approach across all regions.
- **Tech maturity drives investment:** 38% of U.S. firms say infrastructure significantly influenced investor interest, especially among cloud-based firms (53%).

With rising competition, firms are turning to mergers, acquisitions, and private equity as growth strategies. Over the past three years, 32% of firms globally received private equity, 27% acquired a firm, and 26% merged. These moves offer access to capital, broader market reach, and faster innovation, especially important amid talent and regulatory pressures. For firms aiming to scale, these investments can unlock growth opportunities, but they may bring challenges such as reduced control, cultural differences, and added pressures to meet investor expectations.

Expert Voices

There is a time and place for private equity in our industry. I can say that the most important choice isn't the most dollars or the easiest deal. It's most important to find the right partner that is a value add to your business and strategy. PE shouldn't only be a succession or liquidity plan, they need to bring more to the table.

Sean Grant-Young
National Director, Tax, Baker Tilly Canada
Canada

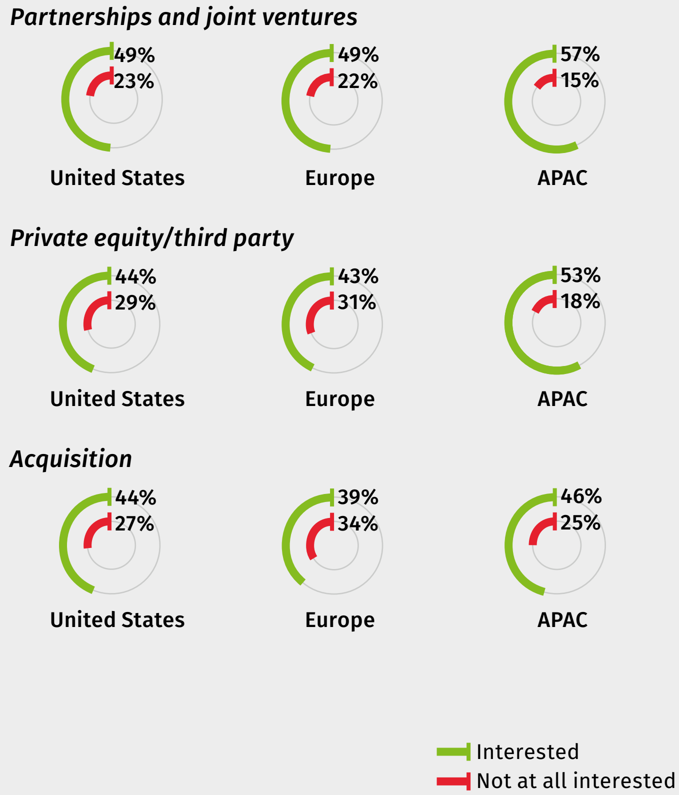
Strategic growth accelerates through investment and partnerships

The pace of organizational realignment is gaining momentum with firms across all regions. Plans for the next year show strong momentum, with 34% of firms intending to pursue private equity in the next year, 32% planning acquisitions, and 30% preparing for mergers. Forming partnerships or joint ventures stands out as the most favored strategy — chosen by 50% of firms — making it the leading approach across all regions and firm sizes.

Tech-forward and cloud-based firms are driving this movement. These innovators are significantly more likely than their peers to pursue private equity, acquisitions, or strategic alliances, reflecting a greater appetite for transformative growth.

While 45% of firms list private equity or third-party investment as a preferred approach, 28% have no interest, with resistance strongest in Europe (31%) and North America (30%). These figures highlight a growing divide: for many, investment is now mainstream, but it's not a universal strategy.

Interest in pursuing investment strategies

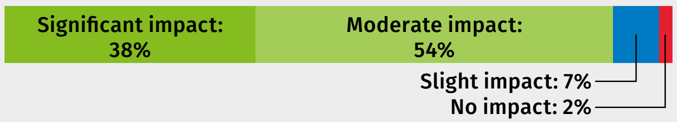


Strategic investment trends for U.S. firms

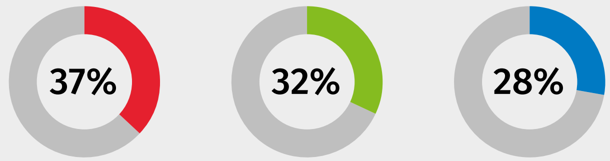
U.S. firms are embracing a wide range of growth strategies, but interest varies dramatically based on technology maturity. Tech-forward firms are significantly more likely to be interested in pursuing strategic investment opportunities, including private equity (54% vs. 44%), acquisitions (54% vs. 44%), or partnerships (60% vs. 49%). This gap reflects the growing role of technology in determining firm strategy and readiness for structural change.

Technology is also a clear asset in execution. Overall, 92% of U.S. firms say their technology infrastructure positively contributed to attracting M&A or PE opportunities, including 38% who say it did so significantly. By contrast, 5% of mainstream firms say tech had no influence, compared to just 1% of tech-forward firms. These figures reinforce a powerful trend where tech-forward firms are not only more attractive to investors but also more prepared to scale and integrate effectively.

Impact of technical infrastructure on investment opportunities for U.S. firms



Strategic growth activities by U.S. firms in the past three years



Investment strategies come with advantages and risks

U.S. firms see different advantages across investment paths. PE is most often valued for enabling capital investment in technology (36%) and financial resilience (35%). M&A, meanwhile, is viewed as a route to greater competitive positioning (31%) and operational efficiency (30%).

Yet risks remain top of mind. The most frequently cited concern for both PE and M&A is loss of control over firm decisions. Other perceived drawbacks include pressure to meet growth targets, cultural misalignment, and potential client dissatisfaction. While tech-forward firms appear more comfortable managing these challenges, mainstream firms may face greater disruption, particularly without the systems or change management in place to absorb rapid growth.

Essential insights

Private equity, M&A, and consolidations are shaping the future of firm growth, and U.S. firms are leaning in. While some remain cautious, innovators are confidently leveraging structural growth to advance their strategies. As investments accelerate, firms with modern infrastructure and a bold strategic vision will be best positioned to attract investment and scale effectively.

Expert Voices

Q ***How have private equity investments changed the landscape of the accounting profession?***

PE investments in our industry have unlocked a hidden value for firms, pushing the industry to become corporate-focused and investing dollars in offshoring, AI, and technologies to become more efficient and profitable. Though it is too early to tell how PE investments will affect our industry, we can see a focus on efficiency and accountability. I don't see huge changes in client service or culture in the short term, but if the focus on profitability is the main driver long-term, then both culture and client service will be affected.

Jason Kadow
Regional Managing Partner & Director Corporate Development, Sorren
United States

Private equity is forcing accountability within acquired practices, many of which have operated for decades as 'collegial' partnerships. PE-driven business metrics identify areas of opportunity and growth as well as service lines and clients the firm should NOT be pursuing. PE is also changing the overall funding model by providing capital for much-needed technology investment and hiring of personnel, which is absolutely necessary for firms that want to grow.

Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP
Director of Firm Technology Strategy, Rightworks
United States

AI as a core capability:
From curiosity to confidence

Key insights:

- **AI usage is now routine:** 72% of firms use AI weekly, with 35% using it daily, signaling a shift toward operational reliance and embedding AI into routine workflows.
- **AI is exceeding expectations:** 73% of regular users report improved client service, decision-making, and efficiency.
- **AI investments are rising:** 77% of firms plan to increase AI spend, with 40% of large firms targeting double-digit growth.
- **Advanced AI is being operationalized:** 40% of firms use it for tax and audit research, while 38% are using AI assistants.

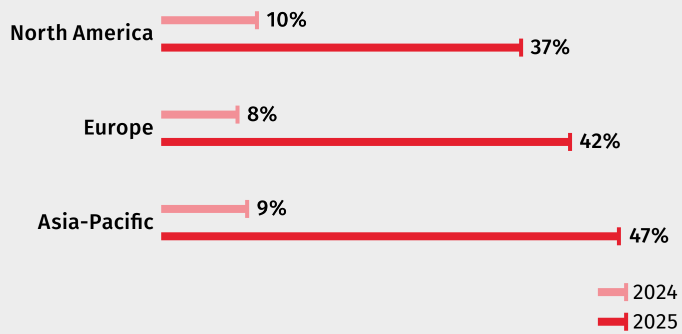
AI is no longer emerging or a future consideration — it's essential. AI has rapidly shifted to become a core part of day-to-day operations for firms of all sizes. Global sentiment and regular usage have sharply risen since 2024, with 72% of firms now using AI at least weekly, including 35% that use AI daily.

This sharp uptick signals a shift in mindset. Firms have moved from exploring AI to actively embedding it in workflows. As trust grows and results materialize, AI is playing a central role in helping firms operate efficiently, plan strategically, and deliver more value to clients.

AI adoption and what's next

Implementation is accelerating: 41% of firms have adopted AI-enabled tools in the past three years, and 47% plan to deploy them within the next 12 months, a significant jump from just 9% in 2024. With growing familiarity and ease of use, firms are shifting from trial to integration, making AI a core component of their workflow.

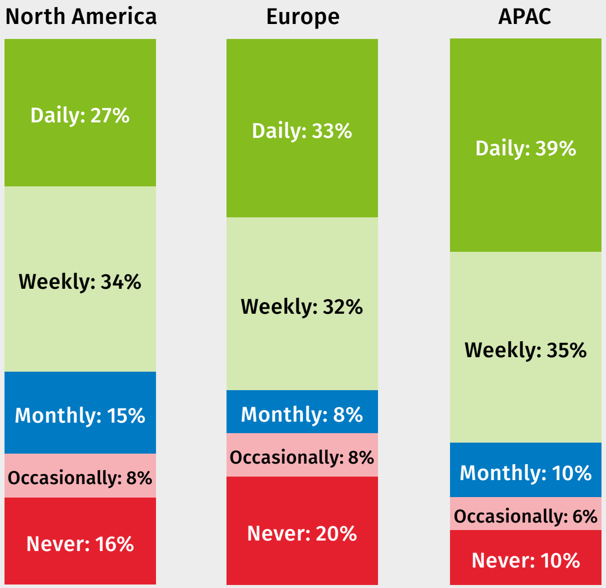
Implementation of AI-enabled tools has quadrupled over the past year



Satisfaction is also on the rise. Among firms that use AI regularly, 73% report it delivers better or much better results than expected, particularly in improving client service, financial insights, and increased efficiency. These outcomes are driving confidence in AI adoption.

How often advanced AI is used in professional role

Advanced AI refers to generative and agentic systems that create and act.



Overcoming AI implementation challenges

Even with rising adoption, firms still face meaningful challenges when implementing or expanding AI. Top concerns globally include privacy and security risks (41%), lack of staff experience with AI (39%), and data quality issues (38%). These challenges reflect the complexity of integrating AI into regulated environments where sensitive information and accuracy are paramount.

Many firms continue to face practical challenges with AI implementation. Nearly one-third of firms point to the need for continuous monitoring and updates, along with system integration issues. Cost and skepticism also remain significant barriers, with 27% citing high implementation costs and an equal share, especially among micro and small firms, questioning AI's benefits.

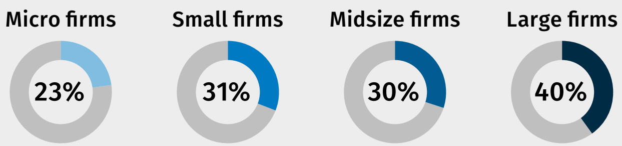
Yet, these concerns are not deal-breakers. Many firms are finding success by starting small, focusing on clear use cases and partnering with trusted providers. As AI tools become more intuitive and firms build confidence, implementation barriers will continue to diminish, even for smaller firms. For firms ready to move forward, investing in education, transparent communication, and cross-functional alignment will be critical to unlocking AI's value.

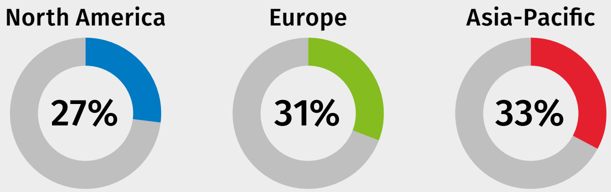
AI investment is accelerating

The outlook for AI investment is strong. More than three in four (77%) firms expect to increase their AI spend over the next three years. Among large firms, 40% are planning double-digit increases, signaling a clear shift from experimentation to long-term commitment.

Firms are grounding these investments in performance. As tools mature and use cases expand, they are seeing measurable returns, especially in areas like automation and decision-making. More than just adding tools, firms are embedding AI into their processes and service models. AI is becoming not just another tool, but a core enabler of competitive advantage.

Globally, 30% of firms are planning to increase investment in AI by more than 10%





Expert Voices

Q How has advanced tech driven firm growth, and what key implementation risks are often missed?

More companies need to have investing in technology as a priority goal. With the rapid developments in both AI technology and cybersecurity, it is extremely important to have modern and up-to-date technology in the business to handle data securely and correctly in our fast-paced environment.

Carina Hedrum
Owner, PBAB (Accounting and Auditing)
Sweden

Whilst a cautious approach has appropriately been adopted, the incremental benefits of AI adoption are palpable, and the augmented model of service delivery has been mutually beneficial in terms of both effectiveness and efficiency.

Liam Telford
National Tax Technical Director, RSM Australia
Australia

New technologies require new skills. Although many companies are investing in AI solutions, there is a lack of parallel training measures. Without early training and team involvement, frustration and operating errors are likely to occur. Added value does not come automatically from the use of tools, but from intelligent integration and the redesign of processes.

Thomas Thissen
Partner, Thissen & Marks (Tax Advisors)
Germany

Advanced AI is unlocking high-value activities

Firms are adopting advanced AI, which includes both generative and agentic systems, to enhance core operations and unlock new efficiencies. Agentic AI can initiate actions, adapt to changing information, and collaborate across workflows. These capabilities are especially valuable in areas like client service, compliance monitoring, and strategic planning, where speed and context matter.

Currently, 40% of firms globally use advanced AI for tax, accounting, and audit research, with firms in Asia Pacific (APAC) leading this area at 44%. Internally, 38% of firms use AI for productivity tasks like document summarization and meeting transcription.

These tools are improving internal operations, documenting internal knowledge bases, speeding up onboarding, and freeing up senior staff for strategic initiatives. AI is also becoming an asset in marketing, with 31% now using advanced AI to generate marketing content. Among large firms, that number rises to 40%, while 41% of Midsize firms are planning further implementation for marketing tasks.

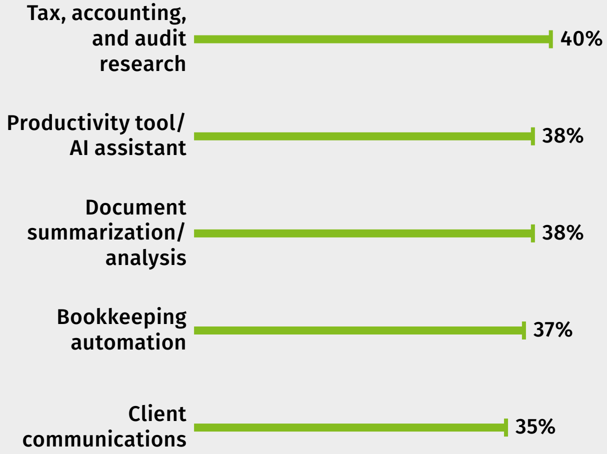
AI is elevating client engagement

Firms are increasingly turning to AI to strengthen client engagement. Just over a third of firms (35%) are using AI to enhance client communication through timelier interactions that are tailored to the client's needs.

Firms are also starting to use advanced AI to deliver more data-driven and proactive advisory services. While 29% of firms are currently using AI to generate predictive insights based on client data, 37% intend to do so. AI tools enable firms to deepen relationships, respond faster, and have higher-value conversations with clients.

As AI adoption grows, this broader application reflects a growing confidence in AI's role across the firm. Whether improving technical accuracy, streamlining communications, or boosting brand visibility, advanced AI is helping firms operate with more agility and insight. Its impact is no longer limited to isolated tasks; it is becoming a foundational part of how firms deliver value.

How firms are using advanced AI



Essential insights

AI has entered a new phase in accounting — one defined by trust, frequent usage, and measurable impact. It helps firms meet client needs, optimize operations, and overcome industry headwinds. Agentic AI represents the next wave of intelligent automation. To stay competitive, firms must prioritize ongoing AI adoption, upskill their teams, and view AI not as a replacement but as a trusted tool that unlocks sustainable growth.

Expert Voices

Q ***What role do you see Agentic AI playing in the future of tax and advisory over the next 5-10 years?***

It will allow more complex tax planning to be done more effectively, efficiently and affordably. It will allow greater access to practical tax planning for all people with greater guardrails to steer clear of the 'grey areas'.

Sean Grant-Young
National Director, Tax, Baker Tilly Canada
Canada

In the very near term, I believe AI agents will allow tax vendors to provide a customized client request list for tax clients, including providing automated reminders and responses to the client for data ingress. The AI agent will then process this information into the return and then notify the reviewer that the return is ready (and include a listing of recommendations to minimize tax burden for the accountant to consider for the client).

Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP
Director of Firm Technology Strategy, Rightworks
United States

Agentic systems are proactive and can specialize in specific tasks, which is very attractive for the tax and fiscal advisory sector. AI is evolving at breakneck speed, but I find it hard to see real agentic AI (operating in practice with the desired results) in the short term, when many firms are still not adequately integrating generative AI. It is one thing to use AI, and quite another to use it properly, complying with regulations, and addressing security, privacy, data handling, etc.

Carlos María Ruiz García
CEO, Sincro
Spain

How U.S. firms are driving results with technology: From efficiency to intelligence

Insights on high-growth firms:

- **AI is a growth lever:** 70% of high-growth firms use AI at least weekly, and 87% plan to increase investment.
- **Cloud adoption drives scale:** High-growth firms are 10% more likely to have expanded cloud technology in the past three years. Today, 86% operate in the cloud, vs. 81% industry-wide.
- **Tech investments are strategic:** High-growth firms prioritize AI-enabled tools, workflow automation, and data-driven intelligence.

Technology adoption is no longer a question of "if" — it's a question of how fast and how cohesively. Firms are increasingly divided between tech-forward and everyone else, and this gap is driving measurable performance differences. Tech-forward firms are growing faster, serving clients more effectively, and building more resilient operations. Those lagging behind risk losing competitive advantage and client trust as the profession continues the digital-first evolution.

Cloud platforms, automation, and AI are now foundational elements of modern firm strategy. But the real differentiator is integration. High-performing firms are connecting their systems to enable seamless data flow, reduce manual work, and unlock the full potential of AI. Integrated ecosystems eliminate friction and empower smarter, faster decision-making across the business.

Cloud and automation are the new normal

As firms aim to streamline workflows, enable secure collaboration, and lay the groundwork for automation and AI, they continue to leverage cloud technology to achieve these goals. Currently, 81% of U.S. firms are at least partially in the cloud, with hybrid technology stacks being the preferred choice.

As firms look to the future, cloud maturity is essential for advanced capabilities like predictive analytics and intelligent workflow optimization.

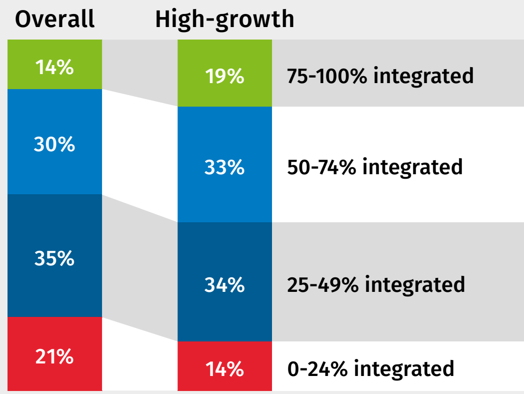
Integration as a strategic enabler

More than just connecting systems, integration is a catalyst for real-time decision-making and operational agility. Integrated tech stacks are redefining how firms operate by streamlining workflows, reducing manual errors, and unlocking firm intelligence.

Only 14% of high-growth firms report low tech stack integration (less than 25%), compared to 21% of all firms.

Meanwhile, 19% of high-growth firms have connected 75% or more of their systems. This deep integration allows them to respond quickly to change and deliver more consistent, data-informed service.

System integration drives high growth for U.S. firms



Firms continue to prioritize simplifying complexity, with 73% citing system integration for workflow optimization as a highly valuable tech feature. Seamless connectivity is no longer a luxury; it's a strategic imperative that fuels efficiency and intelligence.

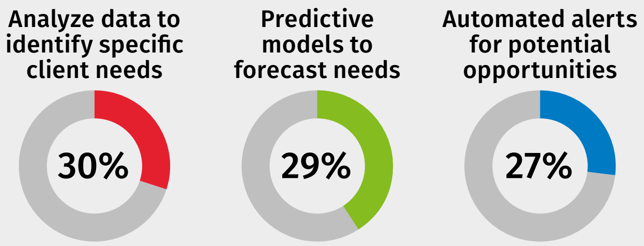
Data is a key driver of intelligence

Central to forward-looking strategy, data helps firms deliver personalized insights, drive smarter engagement, and uncover advisory opportunities (a theme explored further in Advisory-first engagement).

High-growth firms are leading the way. They are more likely to use predictive models (29% vs. 24% overall) to anticipate client needs and use automated alerts (27% vs. 24%) for more responsive service. But the real shift is happening internally: U.S. firms are also leveraging internal firm data to boost client satisfaction, identify new revenue opportunities, drive insights into their operations, and refine service offerings.

While just 8% of firms say they don't analyze their own data, that number climbs to 18% among mainstream/late adopters of technology. For those looking to compete in a tech-driven market, firm intelligence — not just client insight — is emerging as a critical lever for performance.

How high-growth firms are using data to drive intelligence

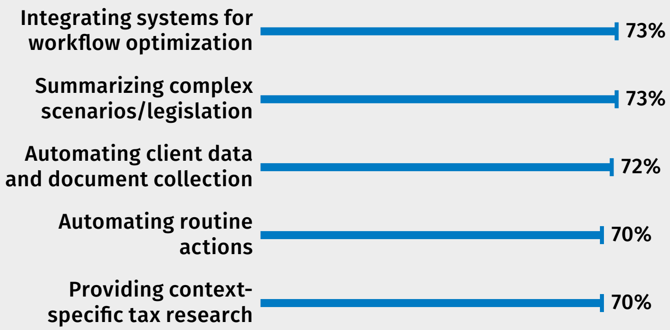


Current and future tech investment priorities

Firms are drawing a clear line between today's efficiency-focused tools and tomorrow's intelligent, connected ecosystems. As priorities shift, future investments target technologies that enable deeper insights, seamless integration, and scalable innovation.

When asked which technology-enabled capabilities are most valuable to their daily work, results haven't shifted much from last year's data, especially when looking at the top use cases for AI and GenAI. In their current tech stack, U.S. firms overwhelmingly prioritize foundational tools and functionality over flashy features, looking to reduce friction, eliminate manual work, and help deliver faster, smarter service.

Tech-enabled capabilities most valued by U.S. firms



Future tech investments, however, are building toward intelligence; firms are doubling down on what they value from their current tech stack to support strategic growth. Top investments combine automation, AI, and analytics to create smarter operations. Planned investments for the next 12 months center around AI-enabled tools (47%), workflow automation (47%), data analytics and business intelligence (44%), API utilities (44%), and cybersecurity upgrades (42%). These decisions reflect a clear intent: to create a technology environment that's not only efficient but also proactive, personalized, and secure.

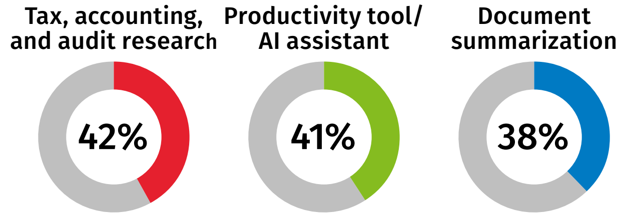
AI is embedded and expanding

Artificial Intelligence is now firmly embedded in day-to-day firm operations, with usage expanding rapidly across firm sizes. While larger and high-growth firms lead adoption, micro firms AI usage is climbingn as adoption becomes more regular.

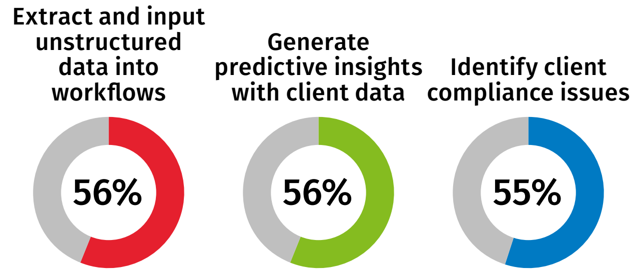
With nearly half of U.S. firms planning to invest in AI-enabled tools over the next year, it's worth examining how usage is evolving. Current applications remain steady, focused on boosting efficiency and streamlining repetitive work. Document summarization, workflow support, and tax-related research are among the most common day-to-day functions.

How U.S. firms are using advanced AI today

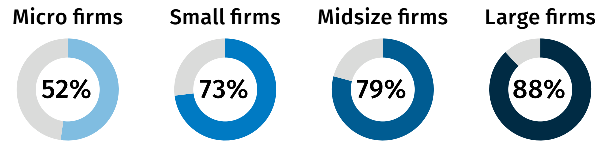
Top use cases today



AI capabilities U.S. firms are likely to adopt



70% of U.S. firms use AI at least weekly, with adoption increasing by firm size



Looking ahead, firms expect AI to play a greater role in reducing burnout and delivering intelligent insights. By automating manual tasks and filtering data more efficiently, AI and GenAI are helping firms focus on work that drives strategic value.

Importantly, none of these use cases are designed to replace professionals. Rather than automating expertise, AI is enabling staff to focus on higher-value, more strategic contributions by automating manual and time-consuming tasks. As explored further in the Future of work chapter, firms increasingly see AI as a tool for relieving pressure, improving engagement, and helping professionals do more fulfilling work.

Overcoming barriers to tech adoption

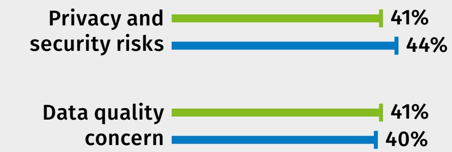
Examining what's holding firms back from investing in technology reveals an interesting picture. While firms report persistent barriers to adopting new technology, their investment and adoption of advanced tech is accelerating.

The most common concerns — largely unchanged from last year — include system integration complexity, data privacy and security issues, a lack of skilled personnel, implementation costs, and inconsistent data quality. However, over 80% of U.S. firms now operate at least partially in the cloud, and 70% report using AI at least weekly, a sign that firms are deciding that the benefits of tech adoption outweigh potential risks. High-growth and tech-forward firms in particular are investing more heavily in advanced technologies, seeing benefits from those investments in productivity, integration, and client service.

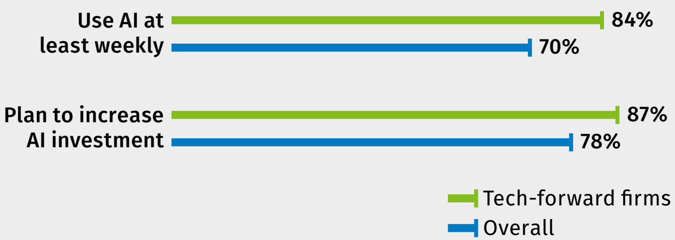
While mainstream firms remain more skeptical, expressing greater distrust toward AI and doubting potential benefits, their hesitance hasn't stalled adoption altogether. Those firms that move past resistance and focus on execution will unlock the full value of their technology investments.

U.S. tech leaders advance AI adoption despite concerns, suggesting AI benefits outweigh potential risks

AI adoption barriers remain consistent, even among tech-forward firms.



However, tech-forward firms have significantly increased their AI usage and plans for future AI investment.



Essential insights

Technology is no longer a back-office function; it is a growth engine. U.S. firms that treat tech as a strategic enabler are building more efficient, scalable, and client-centric operations. By investing in AI, integration, and cloud-based platforms, high-growth firms are positioning themselves to anticipate client needs, reduce complexity, and lead the profession into a new era of intelligence.

Expert Voices

Q ***What advice would you give to firms that are hesitant to adopt advanced technology?***

Embrace technology. The pace of technology is only going to increase. Technology, including AI, is already transforming industries and reshaping the future. In fact, most vendors have already included AI-driven processes in their solutions, so firms are already using AI in the finance, billing, practice management, and tax systems or soon will be. Further, clients expect the best solutions and skilled team members to be available to help them remain competitive. Whether it is automating routine tasks or providing deeper insights into client requirements, AI can unlock significant efficiencies and enhance service offerings.

Kimberly Ellison-Taylor
CEO, KET Solutions, LLC
United States

Firms that are averse to AI or slow to adopt are going to be at a competitive disadvantage to firms that are progressive in implementing AI. I would advise firms to start slow but start now. I believe once they realize how much AI will help them, they will fully embrace it.

Jason Kadow
Regional Managing Partner & Director Corporate Development, Sorren
United States

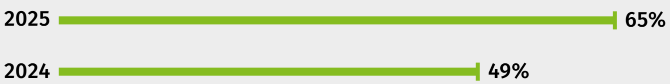
Advisory-first engagement:
Elevating value through data and AI

Key insights:

- **Advisory services are nearly universal:** 93% of firms now offer them as a key service or on demand, up from 83% in 2024.
- **Data is powering personalization:** 87% of firms use client data to uncover and tailor advisory opportunities.
- **AI is enhancing advisory delivery:** 41% of high-growth firms report better-than-expected results from AI in improving client guidance.
- **Strategic guidance is in demand**: 43% of firms expanded advisory offerings in the past three years, and 49% plan to expand services in the next year.

Firms around the world are embracing a more consultative, client-focused business model.

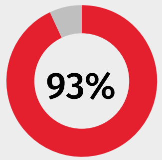
Across all markets, more firms offer advisory as a key service



Notably, only 7% of firms say they do not offer advisory services, a significant decrease from 17% in 2024.

This growth reflects not just client demand, but a deliberate evolution in how firms deliver value. Rather than focusing exclusively on compliance and transactional work, they are investing in deeper partnerships with clients. This shift is particularly strong among small, midsize, and large firms, where 70–73% now consider advisory a core service.

Firms providing advisory either as a core service or upon request



Expert Voices

Advisory-first isn't just a service model, it's a mindset shift that redefines how firms create value. As professionals harness AI and data to anticipate client needs, and scale insight, they're evolving from compliance-focused roles to strategic, consultative partners.

Firms that invest in technology and training foster growth by empowering their teams to think critically, act proactively, and deliver strategic advice to clients. AI-powered advisory services aren't just a differentiator; they're a growth engine driving long-term partnership and sustainable success.

Joel Morris
Vice President, Research and Advisory, Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting
United States

Rising demand for strategic guidance

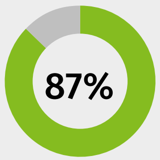
As client expectations evolve, firms are stepping into a more strategic role. Compliance alone is no longer enough — clients expect insight, responsiveness, and long-term partnership. In the past three years, 43% of firms have expanded their advisory service offerings, and nearly half plan to do so in the next 12 months. The trend is especially strong for firms in the APAC region, where 50% have already made advisory expansion a priority.

This momentum reflects a growing recognition that strategic guidance is not just a value-add, it's an expectation. Firms that formalize their advisory services by building repeatable processes, investing in tools, and training staff are better positioned to meet client needs and drive sustainable growth.

Data-driven advisory in practice

Behind this momentum is a shift toward smarter, more personalized service delivery.

Firms leveraging client data to identify advisory opportunities.



Whether using data analytics to identify client needs, tailoring client outreach based on client feedback or analyzing transaction history, firms are putting data to work in practical, results-driven ways.

Firms can offer more relevant recommendations and support by taking a data-informed approach to client needs. These firms are leveraging AI to elevate their role from compliance processors to trusted advisors.

AI amplifies the advisory experience

Artificial intelligence is transforming advisory services by enabling more proactive, personalized, and high-value client guidance. By streamlining information analysis, AI frees up time for deeper advisory conversations and allows firms to shift from reactive responses to proactive insights — an increasingly important differentiator.

Among firms using AI regularly, 41% of high-growth firms report much-better-than-expected performance from AI in improving advisory services, compared to 27% of non-high-growth firms. These firms are using AI to analyze client data, anticipate needs, and tailor communications, elevating the value they deliver across every interaction.

Barriers to advisory growth

Despite widespread adoption, many firms still face challenges in accessing and leveraging data to expand advisory. Key barriers include lack of skilled personnel, system integration complexity, and the cost and effort of processing data, each cited by more than a quarter of firms globally.

Overcoming these obstacles requires targeted investment in team development, automation, and data strategy. Firms that streamline internal systems and upskill staff will be better equipped to offer advisory at scale. Formalizing advisory offerings can also help by turning one-off insights into repeatable, high-value services.

Essential insights

To build client loyalty and drive growth, firms must deliver impactful advisory services. This means using data and AI to anticipate client needs, standardize delivery, and invest in staff development. As clients seek more strategic support, advisory services are no longer optional — they're central to modern client engagement.

Expert Voices

Q ***What skills should professionals prioritize to become effective advisors?***

AI has not changed but rather has perhaps re-emphasized the importance of traditional attributes and skills such as critical thinking, judgement, and agility. I personally welcome the industry becoming more consultative, as it means we are delivering greater value to clients.

Liam Telford
National Tax Technical Director, RSM Australia
Australia

Resilience and adaptability are key, as is accepting that everyone (and not just tax professionals) must understand that lifelong learning will inevitably be part of our professional careers. Along with the technical skills associated with tax professionals, it is essential to work on and enhance soft skills (communication, leadership, teamwork, and adaptability).

Carlos María Ruiz García
CEO, Sincro
Spain

Technologies such as AI and automation should act as co-advisors and supplement services with data-driven insights. This can be ensured with tax data cubes / data lakes and the connection of additional analytics tools. In this way, technology can proactively prepare consulting topics on a daily basis and deliver added value in a knowledge society democratized by AI.

Thomas Thissen
Partner, Thissen & Marks (Tax Advisors)
Germany

From compliance to connection: How U.S. firms are redefining client engagement

Insights on high-growth firms:

- **Advisory is a growth priority:** 66% of high-growth firms prioritize advisory services, leading the shift toward strategic client support.
- **Client-focused changes drive growth:** Over half of high-growth firms focused on enhancing client communication (53%) and strengthening client relationships (58%) in the past three years.
- **Insights are data-driven:** High-growth firms are more likely to use predictive models and alerts to anticipate client needs and uncover advisory opportunities.

Client expectations in the U.S. are evolving. While compliance and accuracy remain foundational, clients seek strategic guidance, forward-looking insights, and stronger partnerships. U.S. firms are responding by rethinking their role and shifting from transactional execution to long-term collaboration.

Technology is accelerating this shift. Real-time data and predictive tools allow firms to anticipate client needs and deliver meaningful insights. Those that adopt a proactive, relationship-first mindset gain loyalty and unlock new growth opportunities.

Responding to demand with business-centric services

Business-focused services are reshaping the way U.S. firms meet client needs. While traditional offerings like individual tax services remain widespread, business-focused services are increasingly driving growth. Client accounting services are a key service for nearly three-quarters of firms, and business tax compliance is a key offering for 78%.

Advisory and consulting services continue to gain traction, especially among tech-forward firms. Many are also expanding into high-value service lines such as payroll, cryptocurrency, and international VAT/GST, using integrated systems and analytics to scale these offerings efficiently. This pivot toward higher-margin, advisory-focused work strengthens business relationships and positions firms for more sustainable growth.

Advisory becomes a client expectation

As firms respond to changing client needs and shifting market demands, advisory services are gaining prominence. In the U.S., 63% of firms consider advisory a key service, up from 52% in 2024, while 94% offer some form of advisory or consulting. This growth reflects a broader industry trend toward deeper, relationship-driven client engagement. However, U.S. firms remain slightly behind their global peers in advisory adoption.

Tech-forward firms are leading this shift, as 70% now consider advisory a key service, compared to 57% last year. Revenue from advisory work has also risen year-over-year, climbing from 10% to 13%. To differentiate themselves, firms must look beyond the service label, focusing on client engagement, communication, and data-driven insights to stand out.

Using data to drive insightful conversations

Client data is quickly becoming the backbone of advisory services. A majority of firms (88%) are using data analysis, transaction histories, and client feedback to uncover trends, identify opportunities, and personalize recommendations. High-growth firms are effective in this area, with 29% leveraging predictive models and 27% using automated alerts to stay ahead of client needs, compared to 24% of firms overall using either approach.

Firms are analyzing their data to improve client satisfaction, identify revenue opportunities, and tailor services to meet evolving needs. This shift from reactive reporting to proactive strategy is reshaping how firms engage with clients and deliver value.

Top ways U.S. firms use client data to support advisory service offerings
1. Tailor advisory outreach based on client feedback
2. Identify client needs through data analytics
3. Analyze transaction history
4. Predictive models based on client behavior patterns

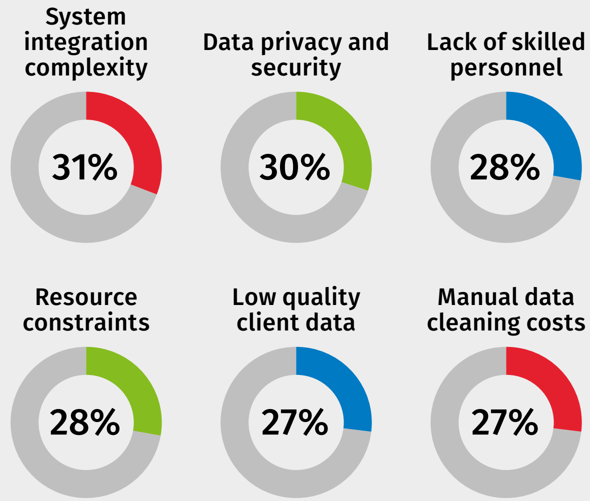
Barriers to better client service and engagement
Firms still face significant challenges as they work to evolve client relationships. For small firms, managing client expectations remains a top concern. As demand for more personalized, proactive service rises, resource-constrained firms often struggle to keep pace, especially those limited by outdated systems or staffing shortfalls.

Talent remains a persistent barrier. Even the best technology can't support high-touch advisory without the right people. Many firms lack the internal capacity to scale service offerings or build client relationships in a more strategic, data-driven way. Read more about staffing constraints in Future of work.

On the technology front, poor system integration and data quality issues limit firms' ability to personalize insights. Many report difficulty leveraging data strategically due to the complexity of integrating data analytics into existing systems or security concerns. In fact, 30% cite privacy and security concerns as a top obstacle to strategically leveraging firm and client data. And while 36% of firms report low client demand for advisory, this may reflect communication gaps or internal confidence more than disinterest.

These challenges aren't insurmountable, but they require more than tools; they require coordinated investment in systems, skills, and strategy.

Data access challenges limit strategic decision-making for U.S. firms

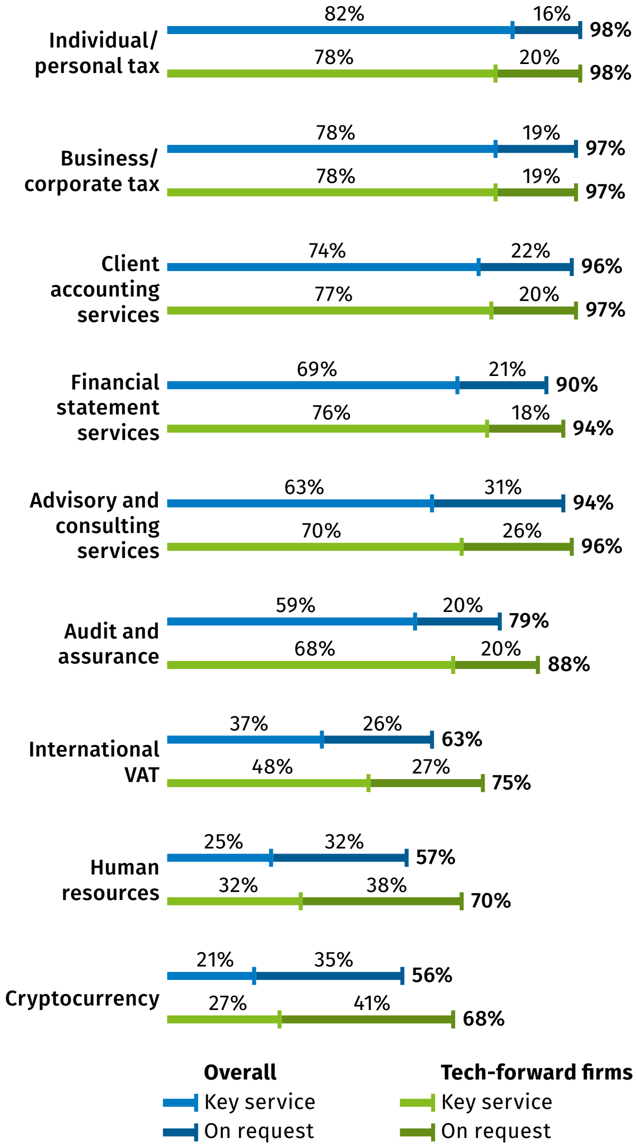


Essential insights

U.S. firms are shifting from transactional services to relationship-driven advisory models emphasizing insight, strategy, and proactive engagement. High-growth firms are showing the way by expanding their advisory service offerings, communicating proactively, using data to drive insight, and investing in the tools and talent to make it all work. The firms that succeed in 2025 and beyond will be those that strengthen their relationships, anticipate client needs, and deliver value that extends well beyond compliance.

Tech-forward U.S. firms prioritize high-value services as core offerings

Top firms offerings as key services or by request



Future of work:

Reimagining talent for a tech-enabled future

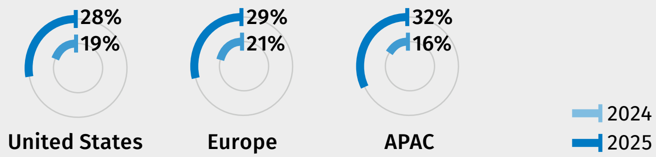
Key insights:

- **Talent strategy is evolving:** 31% of firms globally now prioritize advanced technical skill development, up from 27% last year.
- **Technology expectations are rising:** Staff demand for better tools surged to 29%, a 10-point increase year-over-year.
- **Workforce strategy is being redefined:** Attracting and retaining skilled professionals dropped more than 10 points, signaling a shift toward long-term enablement.
- **Firms are investing in adaptability:** Flexible work models, re-engineered workflows, and tech-enabled upskilling are central to future-ready staffing.

The way accounting work gets done is changing — and so is the workforce behind it. Clients expect firms to work at the speed of insight, deliver answers proactively, and pivot as conditions shift. To meet expectations, firms must redefine how humans and intelligent systems collaborate and rethink the roles, workflows, and skills that drive performance.

This evolution demands more than hiring. With talent pipelines under pressure and generational shifts reshaping career expectations, the old strategy of “hire cheap, scale fast” no longer applies. Future-ready firms are moving away from reactive hiring models toward a more holistic approach that prioritizes talent development, meaningful career paths, and technology fluency.

Staff demand for advanced technology adoption is growing



By reallocating human capacity to high-impact work and automating the rest, firms are redesigning roles. The result is a smarter, more resilient workforce built for speed, insight, and long-term engagement.

The new priorities: From recruitment to retention

Talent concerns are expanding from hiring and retention to enablement and growth. While workload balance, training, and attracting talent remain top concerns, firms are now placing greater emphasis on tech readiness.

This year, 31% of firms globally cited developing advanced technical skills as a top staffing challenge, up from 27% last year. Staff expectations for better technology tools also surged (29%, up from 19%). Meanwhile, attracting and retaining skilled professionals dropped over 10 points each year-over-year, signaling a shift from short-term recruitment to long-term transformation.

Smart firms are adjusting their strategies accordingly, investing in skills development, well-being, and systems that support environments where people can thrive.

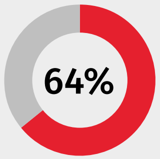
Strategic shifts shaping U.S. workforce focus

Across the U.S., firms are recognizing that staff experience is client experience. Excessive manual work, burnout, and lack of flexibility are no longer viewed solely as HR issues; they are business risks. Only 54% of firms say staff perform “very little unnecessary manual data entry,” highlighting the persistent burden of outdated processes.

To reduce friction and improve productivity, firms are turning to AI. Automation is easing repetitive tasks and freeing up time for higher-value work. High-growth firms are leading the way, deploying AI tools to support client service and employee experience.

Flexibility also plays a central role in this transformation. Hybrid models now dominate, with just 8% of firms fully in-office. Nearly two-thirds (64%) plan to increase virtual engagements, further supporting the shift toward remote-ready teams and more adaptable work environments where people can thrive.

Firms planning to increase virtual engagements



Tomorrow’s talent strategy

The talent challenges U.S. firms face today won’t disappear tomorrow. Finding professionals with the right blend of skills remains a top concern, especially for midsize and large firms navigating growth and rising client expectations. As highlighted in How U.S. firms are driving growth, talent availability remains a bottleneck for expansion.

Firms that treat people as strategic assets will be best positioned to succeed. In the past three years, nearly half invested in professional development and training, and more than one-third hired new staff. Even more plan to do so in the year ahead, emphasizing training in professional skills and emerging technologies. The firms that thrive will build cultures of learning, empowerment, and adaptability to create workplaces built to evolve with the profession.

How U.S. firms are preparing talent to meet evolving demands

Essential insights

The future of firm staffing in the U.S. is human-centric, tech-enabled, and culture-driven. High-growth firms are demonstrating that it’s not just about recruitment, it’s about creating an environment where people want to stay, grow, and lead. By reducing friction through automation, supporting hybrid models, and investing in skill development, forward-thinking firms are redefining what it means to be future-ready.

Expert Voices

Q ***What advice or strategies would you suggest for firms?***

Across the profession, there is more work demand than firms can deliver upon, and we all know staffing will continue to be an ongoing issue for the near term. Firms will need to optimize technology to not only meet this demand, but to grow their practices. I sincerely believe that accountants leveraging AI as virtual assistants and using it within accounting process automation will drive the next wave of innovation allowing all of us to get more 'meaningful' work done.

Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP
Director of Firm Technology Strategy, Rightworks
United States

Focus on training and change leadership. The successful integration of AI into the firm’s growth mindset is not just about the technology itself, it is also about ensuring team members are ready to embrace it. Education about AI, training for new skills, and proactive change leadership are key to fostering a culture that is not only comfortable with AI tools but will seek ways to maximize its capabilities. Firms that invest in educating and upskilling their team members are far more likely to see successful AI adoption.

Kimberly Ellison-Taylor
CEO, KET Solutions, LLC
United States

Closing statement

This year's report highlights a key message: the profession is evolving as firms recognize that progress depends on how they operate, rather than features or isolated solutions. Staying competitive requires operating models that connect technology, data, and people into a unified system.

Leading firms are turning data into trusted decisions with connected ecosystems that move information once and use it multiple times. With cloud as the backbone, integration as the strategic enabler, and AI as a seamless part of daily workflows, professionals spend less time on rework and more time applying judgment where it matters most.

Familiar challenges persist: regulatory complexity, rising client expectations, and finite capacity. But answers are clearer. Complexity decreases with integrated tools and a single source of truth. Capacity expands when automation and responsible AI clear bottlenecks and surface insights in context. Trust deepens when security is built in, work is transparent, and advice is timely and explainable. None of this replaces expertise; it elevates it.

The future-ready firm will feel different. Work is orchestrated, not chased. Unified workflows shorten cycle times and improve quality. Talent thrives as intelligent agents handle routine tasks so professionals can focus on higher-value work. Client relationships are built on clarity, not paperwork and waiting.

At Wolters Kluwer, we are committed to making this future practical so professionals are elevated and clients can trust every interaction. The next era of professional services is unfolding, and we're proud to help lead the way.

Cathy Rowe
Senior Vice President & Segment Leader,
Professional Market
Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting North America

Meet the experts

Kimberly Ellison-Taylor is the CEO of KET Solutions, LLC, a consulting firm focused on business growth, innovation, strategy, transformation and inclusive leadership. A sought-after keynote speaker, she has been recognized as one of Accounting Today's Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting and Forbes Top 200 CPAs in America.

Sean Grant-Young, National Director of Tax at Baker Tilly Canada, supports tax experts and their clients by leading nationwide tax advisory initiatives, driving regulatory awareness and innovation in tax practices amid an ever-shifting technology and regulatory landscape.

Carina Hedrum, Managing Director for PBAB Redovisning och Revision AB in Sweden, has a demonstrated history of working with developing companies to digitize their operations. She is skilled in K2, corporate social responsibility, accounting, entrepreneurship, and strategic planning.

Jason Kadow, Managing Regional Partner & Director of Corporate Development at Sorren, brings a wealth of expertise in valuations, mergers and acquisitions, and tax strategies to helps U.S. clients tackle complex financial challenges, including facilitating business sales and optimizing tax outcomes.

Roman H. Kepczyk, CPA is Director of Firm Technology Strategy for Rightworks in the U.S., is focused on helping firms throughout North America effectively use information technology and accounting applications to transform their practices by optimizing their workflows.

Joel Morris is Vice President of Research and Advisory at Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting. Recognized for his ability to lead through transformation, he is responsible for accelerating the division's digital content business with AI-driven, integrated Research and Advisory solutions.

Carlos María Ruiz García, CEO of Sincro in Spain, is passionate about humanistic leadership. He helps companies navigate the complicated waters of today's business environment so they can focus on their core business. Sincro is a company driven by and for people.

Liam Telford, National Tax Technical Director at RSM Australia, commenced his career with the Australian Taxation Office before moving on to roles in industry and professional services across Australia and Asia.

Thomas Thissen, tax advisor and Partner at Thissen & Marks Steuerberater PartG mbB in Germany. He was co-founder of TaxwizeAI, focusing on research and consulting automation, and co-organizes the Tax-AI Community, helping to shape Germany's tax industry future.

Kyle Turriff, Director of Technology Consulting at RLB Digital in Canada, works as a Fractional CIO and advisor to firms and their clients across Canada and the U.S. He helps teams make smarter tech choices, develop automations and build PowerBI Dashboards.

Methodology

The *Future Ready Accountant Survey* received validated responses from 2,768 tax and accounting professionals from firms of all sizes. The survey was conducted online for Wolters Kluwer by Dynata, a leading international research organization from 23 April to 27 May 2025.

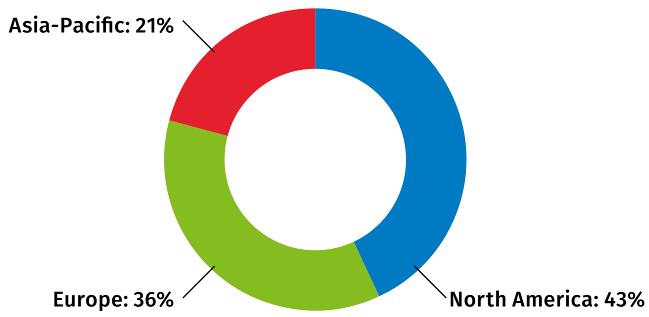
Additionally, tax and accounting experts from each global region participated in qualitative interviews. Their perspectives are included in the report.

Regions and countries represented: Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore), Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom), and North America (Canada and the United States).

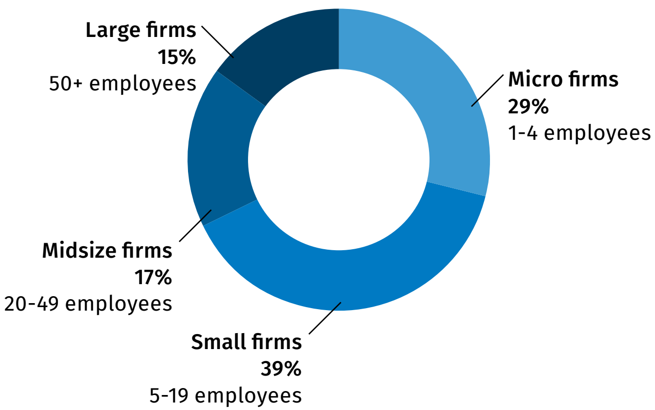
About the *Wolters Kluwer Future Ready Accountant Report*

The *Future Ready Accountant* report from Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting examines how client expectations, technology, and other factors are affecting the future of accounting across core areas. The Report examines the results of the *Future Ready Accountant Survey* from a global and regional perspective, and explores how accounting firms are preparing to address these issues, and more.

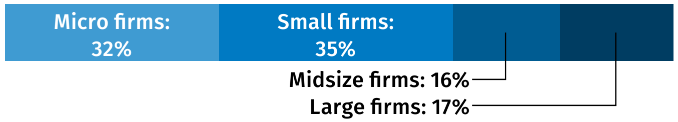
Global response by region



Global response by firm size

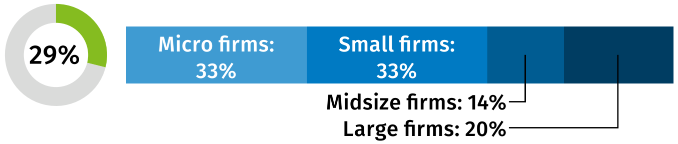


U.S. response by firm size



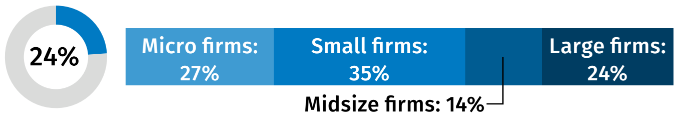
High-growth firms

Report year-over-year revenue growth of 10% or more: 29% of U.S. firms are high-growth firms.



Cloud-based firms

Store and access all software and data entirely in the cloud: 24% of U.S. firms are cloud-based firms.



Tech-forward firms

Identify as innovators or early adopters They actively explore and implement technology ahead of peers, often through partnerships or early testing: 64% of U.S. firms identify as tech-forward firms.

Stay ahead of the curve with technology built for the future.

Find out how the CCH Axcess™ Suite can help your firm embrace innovation and achieve long-term success.

→ Learn more

Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting — a division of Wolters Kluwer — is a leading provider of tax, accounting, and audit solutions, enabling professionals and businesses to deliver better outcomes.

Wolters Kluwer (WKL) is a global leader in information, software solutions and services for professionals in healthcare; tax and accounting; financial and corporate compliance; legal and regulatory; corporate performance and ESG. We help our customers make critical decisions every day by providing *expert solutions* that combine deep domain knowledge with technology and services. Wolters Kluwer reported 2024 annual revenues of €5.9 billion. The group serves customers in over 180 countries, maintains operations in over 40 countries, and employs approximately 21,600 people worldwide.