

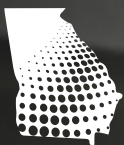
Current Accounts

The Georgia Society of CPAs

Meet Your New GSCPA Chair: James Underwood

**Delivering Certainty and
Support: New Tax Relief for
Georgia's Agriculture Sector
and a Call for Federal
Disaster Filing Reform**

**Artificial Intelligence and Expert
Witnesses: Navigating the Legal
and Ethical Challenges**



**The Georgia Society
of CPAs**

JULY/AUGUST 2025 *Volume XV, Issue 4*

THOUGHTS OF CONSTANT DUE DATES MOTIVATING YOU TO...

A man and a woman are hiking in a grassy field. The man is in the foreground, wearing a brown jacket and glasses, looking towards the right. The woman is behind him, wearing a yellow and black jacket, also looking towards the right. They are both wearing backpacks. The background shows a line of trees and mountains under a bright sky.

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The Possibilities are Endless

I am honored and excited to step into the role of the 2025-2026 chair for The Georgia Society of CPAs. It's a privilege to serve such a dedicated, accomplished and forward-thinking community of professionals. As I take on this new responsibility, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to continue to contribute to our society's growth and impact.

Being a 3rd generation CPA and having my grandfather and father serve as President of the GSPCA means that I have been around the profession and GSPCA my entire life. I am grateful for the friends who have become family and am thrilled that my wife and children can continue to have the same incredible experiences.

I would like to thank my family who continuously support me in the roles I take on. Without them and their support, none of this is possible.

I would also like to thank our immediate past chair, Kathryn Fletcher, for unselfishly giving her time and expertise to our profession. It was an incredibly challenging year and she handled it with grace and a smile on her face. Thank you for your service, for guiding me as I step into this role and most importantly, for being a great friend.

CPAs have gotten a bad perception in the marketplace as being overworked, deadline driven and undervalued. I want to help spread the message that there is so much more to our profession. Getting your CPA opens the door to endless possibilities like a fulfilling career in public accounting, private industry or anything else in the business

world. CPAs have been and will continue to be the most knowledgeable and trusted business professionals; we just need to tell a better story.

The role of incoming chair is critical to ensure that we continue to offer the high-quality programming, advocacy, education and networking opportunities our members rely on. I take that responsibility seriously and will work closely with our leadership, staff and committees to make sure our financial strategies align with our long-term goals and the evolving needs of our membership.

As we look ahead, our profession continues to face rapid changes from technological disruptions like AI and evolving regulatory landscapes. The profession will continue to see mergers and acquisitions, investment from private equity and shifts in client and business expectations. We will work hard to be a knowledgeable resource for all of you on these changes.

I also want to hear from you — our members. Your insights, feedback and ideas are essential to helping us make the most effective decisions. Whether you have suggestions for new ideas, ways to increase member engagement, or concerns, I welcome your input.

Together, we can ensure that The Georgia Society of CPAs remains strong, sustainable and ready for the future. Thank you for your trust and for the work each of you do daily to elevate our profession. I look forward to a year of meaningful progress and shared success. Now, let's get out there and tell a great story!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James K. Underwood'.

JAMES K. UNDERWOOD, CPA, CFP®

A portrait of James Underwood, a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark plaid blazer over a white button-down shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark wall with green foliage and a wooden pillar.

MEET YOUR NEW
GSCPA CHAIR:
JAMES
UNDERWOOD

by NATALIE ROONEY

*Traditions passed down from generation to generation make for special stories.
For James Underwood, CPA, CFP®, the family tradition seems to be leading the GSCPA.
Get to know your newest GSCPA Chair.*

Growing up in Atlanta, James Underwood's life was closely tied to the accounting profession and GSCPA, but he almost didn't major in accounting. And that was just a little ironic considering his father, James L. Underwood, served as the 1999 – 2000 GSCPA President, and his grandfather, Harvey Ogletree, served as the 1977 – 1978 GSCPA President.

When the younger Underwood was in the process of choosing a major in at the University of Georgia, he turned to his dad for advice. "I asked him if I should major in accounting or finance," Underwood recalls. "He pointed out that if I ever wanted to work in finance, I could do it with an accounting degree, but that it would be a lot harder to go the other way."

It was sound advice, and it led Underwood to declare accounting as his major and to go on to earn his CPA. "My dad was absolutely right," Underwood says. "Going the accounting route offers endless possibilities to what you want to do in the business community."

Underwood's father was probably both excited and relieved that at least one of his children was finally following in his footsteps. "There were three other partners at my father's firm, and each partner had two or three kids. I was the youngest and the only one to choose accounting. They might have thought all hope was lost by that point," Underwood chuckles.

With his undergraduate and master's degree from UGA under his belt, Underwood began his career on a traditional public accounting path at KPMG, staying four years and relishing the experience and exposure to many different facets of accounting and business.

Underwood ultimately decided his personality was more suited to the personal financial planning and wealth management side of the profession. Today, he is a wealth advisor with Focus Partners Wealth, and although he didn't stay in public accounting, he has never once regretted becoming a CPA. "The designation is so highly valued. When people see CPA, they think you're incredibly smart – even if you aren't," he laughs. "It elevates your trust level with anyone in business. They expect it from you. Being that trusted person is one of the things I love about being a CPA."

THE GSCPA FAMILY

Underwood wasn't even a year old when he attended his first GSCPA convention with his parents. Growing up, the annual GSCPA convention was a much-anticipated family vacation, a tradition he has carried on with his own children, son Bruns (9) and daughter Mary Collier (6).

This year will mark Underwood's 26th GSCPA convention, but he admits the view is a little different now that he's there as an attendee. "When I was young, I'd see the CPAs going into the meetings while I was at the pool," he says. "Now my kids are running

New Chair continued on page 8



“When I was asked to serve as chair, I was incredibly humbled. I want to make everyone who came before me proud.”



around outside, and I’m the one inside! But I wouldn’t have it any other way. It is ingrained in our family life.”

Underwood even chose his college freshman roommate because of another longtime GSCPA connection. “Both of my roommate’s parents were CPAs and past GSCPA Chairs, so we would see each other at conventions and events,” he says. “Our families were friends, and we decided to room together.”

Underwood describes the GSCPA and its members as an extension of his family. “It has been so cool to know every Chair over the years and to see all of the different members as they’ve grown and stepped into leadership roles,” he says. “When I was asked to serve as Chair, I was incredibly humbled. I want to make everyone who came before me proud.”

RESHAPING THE PERCEPTION OF CPAs

Underwood is on a mission this year to help reshape how people view the accounting profession. “All people seem to hear is the horror stories of long hours, deadlines, and crunch times,” he says. “What that perception fails to convey is how great an opportunity being a CPA is, regardless of whether you’re in public accounting or industry. I want people to know that being a CPA sets you up for a lifetime of incredibly fulfilling work.”

Underwood says ask any CPA what they love about what they do, and they’ll tell you about the work they do for clients, but beyond that, it’s the relationships formed with the clients themselves. Personal financial planning professionals are often the first or second phone call after an individual passes away or another life-changing event occurs.

“These are relationships that are decades in the making and often evolve from client to friend,” he says. “You show up and the atmosphere is like you’re going to an old friend’s house rather than to a client’s office. That feeling is incredibly rewarding.”

Underwood says people also need to hear more about the personal side of the profession. “There’s another part to the story, and it’s how being a CPA can provide a great life for you and your family,” Underwood says. “That’s the message we need to push.”

FAMILY TRAVELS

While Underwood hasn’t strayed far from his roots and still lives in Atlanta, travel is a shared family passion, and creating a lifetime of travel adventures is what they love most. “We’re trying to get the kids exposed to the world, so they become well-rounded individuals,” he says.



fast facts with gscpa chair james underwood

FAVORITE SPORT TO WATCH

College football

FAVORITE SPORT TO TAKE PART IN:

Golf. “Although I’m terrible!” The Underwoods also spend a lot of time these days at the baseball and softball diamonds – their kids’ favorite sports.

YOUR BEST JEOPARDY CATEGORY

Anything math related

THE LAST TIME YOU DRESSED UP FOR A COSTUME PARTY, YOU DRESSED AS...

A duck hunter

FAVORITE BOOKS:

For Parenting:

The Opposite of Spoiled: Raising Kids Who Are Grounded, Generous, and Smart About Money

For General Financial:

The Psychology of Money: Timeless Lessons on Wealth, Greed and Happiness

For General Life Advice:

Die With Zero: Getting All You Can from Your Money and Your Life

FAVORITE MUSIC GROUP

Just about everything!

AT A PARTY, YOUR FAVORITE SMALL TALK TOPIC IS

“If I’m not getting cornered answering financial questions, I love talking about my favorite trip!”

Underwood, his wife, Shannon, and the kids, recently returned from an epic adventure in New Zealand. “Every time we turned a corner we thought we were seeing the most beautiful view,” he says. “Then we’d go further down the road and the view was even better.”

They have traveled to Canada, as well, and every summer they enjoy a trip to Charleston with their extended family. And of course, there’s the not-to-be missed GSCPA annual convention – this year to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands where Bruns will tally his 9th and Mary Collier will tally her 6th GSCPA convention

They are also a family of foodies, and during the weekends, you’ll find them in the kitchen or at the grill whipping up something delicious. Underwood says the kids enjoy watching food and bake-off competitions on television, but that has created some pretty high expectations. “Sometimes we find ourselves critiqued by our own in-house food judges,” he laughs.

CONNECTING WITH GEORGIA CPAs

As he looks at the year ahead, Underwood says serving as GSCPA Chair is, “an absolute honor.” He’s looking forward to meeting CPAs around the state and talking about a concept close to his heart: for CPAs, the possibilities are endless.

“There’s so much going on in the profession,” he says. “I want to help communicate those issues, hear CPAs’ questions, and tackle the issues important to them. This profession can be hard. If we continue to remind ourselves of the great benefits that come from the work we do for our clients, and how financially rewarding this profession can be, we reframe the perception and that gets people excited about being CPAs.”

As for the family tradition of serving as GSCPA Chair, will we see Bruns or Mary Collier leading the GSCPA someday? Mark your calendar and check this space in 30 years or so.

NATALIE ROONEY is a Colorado freelance writer who has been writing for CPA societies for over twenty years. She can be reached at natalie.g.rooney@gmail.com.

Delivering Certainty and Support: New Tax Relief for Georgia's Agriculture Sector and a Call for Federal Disaster Filing Reform

by **TOMMY JONES AND DON COOK**

In a move that provides both critical support and long-awaited tax relief for Georgia's agricultural community, Governor Brian P. Kemp recently signed into law three important pieces of legislation designed to help farmers and timber producers recover from the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene. For CPAs who serve clients in Georgia's agriculture and forestry sectors, or who operate in disaster-prone regions, these developments underscore the growing need for permanent, predictable and streamlined tax relief in times of crisis.

GEORGIA LEADS WITH STATE-LEVEL AGRICULTURAL TAX RELIEF

At a signing ceremony attended by First Lady Marty Kemp, Agriculture Commissioner Tyler Harper, Georgia Forestry Commission Director Johnny Sabo, constitutional officers and members of the General Assembly, Governor Kemp praised the resilience of the state's farming and forestry community. "Our farmers and foresters are tough people," said Governor Kemp. "Their commitment to moving forward after all they've faced is an inspiration to us all. There is still more work to be done, but I'm proud to sign these bills and deliver on our promises to the men and women who are the backbone of our state."

The centerpiece of the tax relief package is House Bill 223, which brings a suite of targeted tax provisions:

- Exempts federal crop loss and disaster payments from Georgia state income tax, giving producers relief at the state level to match the aid received at the federal level.
- Establishes a reforestation tax credit, incentivizing timber producers to replant and restore what was lost during the storm which is essential for both economic recovery and environmental health.
- Authorizes local governments to temporarily suspend timber harvest taxes, supporting cleanup efforts by reducing the immediate tax burden on producers.
- Expands the Georgia Agricultural Tax Exemption (GATE) to temporarily include building materials for repairing and rebuilding poultry houses, livestock shelters, greenhouses and other critical infrastructure.

These changes represent more than just tax relief. They're a commitment to restoring economic stability and supporting long-term resilience across Georgia's agricultural backbone. As tax professionals, CPAs are essential advisors to farming and forestry clients. With these new provisions now in place, CPAs should take time to familiarize themselves with the changes, advise clients proactively and ensure proper documentation for any claimed exemptions or credits.

ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

In addition to HB 223, Governor Kemp also signed:

- Senate Bill 201, which strengthens consumer protections in the wake of natural disasters. The bill improves transparency and accountability in post-disaster contractor agreements, helping property owners avoid fraudulent or exploitative repair contracts.
- House Bill 143, which shifts the responsibility for agricultural water metering equipment installation and maintenance back to the state. This adjustment, championed by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, relieves a financial and logistical burden from farmers already dealing with the challenges of rebuilding.

These legislative victories reflect a coordinated approach by state leaders to not only address immediate disaster recovery needs but also strengthen the long-term operational and financial sustainability of Georgia's agriculture industry.

DISASTER FILING RELIEF: FEDERAL REFORM STILL NEEDED

While Georgia's efforts are commendable, natural disasters don't stop at state lines — and neither should tax relief. CPAs across the country continue to face significant uncertainty when disaster strikes, especially when it comes to IRS filing deadlines and federal tax relief.

The Filing Relief for Natural Disasters Act aims to solve this problem by empowering the IRS to act more quickly when disaster strikes. Currently, the IRS can only extend tax deadlines once a federal disaster declaration is issued, often days or even

weeks after a state has declared an emergency. This delay leaves both CPAs and their clients in limbo, struggling to make critical filing and payment decisions without knowing whether relief will come.

Two bills currently before Congress would address this:

- H.R. 517, which has already passed the U.S. House of Representatives, and
- S. 132, its companion bill in the U.S. Senate.
- These bills would:
- Authorize the IRS to grant deadline extensions based on state-declared disasters, rather than waiting for a FEMA-backed federal declaration.
- Provide faster certainty to affected taxpayers and reduce unnecessary compliance stress.
- Support CPAs and tax professionals by allowing more reasonable lead time to adjust schedules and workloads in the wake of a disaster.

As CPAs, your voice is crucial. Your firsthand experience with the complexities and pressures of disaster-affected tax seasons makes you a powerful advocate for change.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you or your clients have ever been impacted by a natural disaster, now is the time to make your voice heard. Legislative staff value real-world stories from professionals who work directly with affected taxpayers.

When communicating with your federal representatives:

- If speaking with House members:
“Thank you for your support of H.R. 517, the Filing Relief for Natural Disasters Act. Your vote helped move this common-sense reform forward.”
- If speaking with Senators:
“Please support S. 132, the companion to H.R. 517. This bill empowers the IRS to act immediately when a governor declares a disaster—giving taxpayers and practitioners certainty and reducing last-minute filing chaos.”

Other talking points include:

- The CPA profession has long advocated for permanent disaster tax relief to ensure consistency and fairness.
- Every year, CPAs must navigate filing season chaos due to late or limited IRS relief.
- Faster action means better planning, less stress, and improved outcomes for all stakeholders.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR CPAS

Tax professionals don't just interpret the law — they help shape it. Whether you serve agriculture clients in Georgia or maintain a broader national tax practice, the need for timely, coordinated disaster relief is a shared priority.

- Review Georgia's new laws and reach out to affected clients.
- Stay informed on H.R. 517 and S. 132. Don't hesitate to share your perspective with your members of Congress.



call to action for cpas

REVIEW Georgia's new laws and reach out to affected clients.

STAY INFORMED on H.R. 517 and S. 132. Don't hesitate to share your perspective with your members of Congress.

COLLABORATE with peers through your state society or national organizations to keep the pressure on for permanent, proactive tax relief measures.

- Collaborate with peers through your state society or national organizations to keep the pressure on for permanent, proactive tax relief measures.

In the face of disasters, both natural and economic, CPAs are the trusted voices of calm, guidance and stability. Let's use that voice not only to support our clients, but to advocate for a tax system that better supports them, too.

STAY INFORMED

Lastly, for more on legislation and representation or to locate your local representatives, visit www.gscpa.org. If there are any questions on the above information, contact Don Cook, vice president, legislative affairs at 404-504-2935 or dcook@gscpa.org.

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DON COOK is the vice president of legislative affairs at The Georgia Society of CPAs. He is responsible for legislative advocacy on behalf of the CPA profession in Georgia. Don is a registered lobbyist in the state and works on grassroots training for GSCPA members while providing education on why members should strongly consider supporting the GSCPA-PAC.



Artificial Intelligence and Expert Witnesses: Navigating the Legal and Ethical Challenges

by TEDDY BROWN, CPA, CFF®, MAFF, CVA, CFE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly become an integral tool across various sectors, including accounting and consulting practices, as well as expert witness testimony. Although AI offers substantial efficiencies, its integration into expert testimony, particularly in financial and technical fields, must be approached with caution. Recent cases, notably the “Matter of Weber” in New York, the Minnesota Deep Fake Litigation (Kohls v Ellison), and the Harbor Freight Tools Matter (Ferlito v Harbor Freight Tools USA) demonstrate both the opportunities and limitations inherent in the use of AI by expert witnesses.

Understanding these cases is crucial for professionals who rely on expert testimony, particularly forensic accountants, financial experts, and attorneys who are increasingly considering the integration of AI.

CASE STUDY: THE MATTER OF WEBER

In the Matter of Weber, a New York court addressed allegations of fiduciary breaches related to trust administration. To quantify damages, the Objectant hired a financial expert who utilized Microsoft Copilot, an AI tool, as a secondary check for his calculations. However, this reliance contributed significantly to the expert's eventual disqualification.

Key judicial findings in the Court’s ultimate decision identified critical deficiencies:

- **Deviation from Standard Practices:** The expert admitted neglecting industry-standard calculations due to time and cost constraints.
- **Inadequate Qualifications:** The court deemed the expert unqualified due to gaps in education, experience, knowledge, skill, and training, resulting in a lack of familiarity with the required financial methodologies.
- **Misunderstanding of Damage Types:** There was confusion about whether the calculations represented lost profits or capital losses.
- **Reliance on AI-driven Calculations:** While not the sole basis for disqualification, reliance on Microsoft Copilot raised concerns about the reliability of AI in critical analyses and how it should be employed.

The ruling emphasized that open-source AI tools, though helpful in certain tasks, remain unreliable for complex analytical functions required in expert testimony. Notably, AI tools are particularly troublesome when asked to perform math. While the large language models (“LLMs”) these tools use have now, in many instances, employed a form of a calculator in the backend, the way in which the LLM is designed to function is to do a highly sophisticated version of “crowd-sourcing” to arrive at the answer. If the inputs to the LLM indicate that $2 + 2$ is 5, the AI tools may accept that as truth rather than performing the calculation. This creates what are colloquially called “hallucinations.”

Instead of critical analysis, AI tools should be utilized as supplementary aids rather than primary analytical resources.

CASE STUDY: MINNESOTA DEEP FAKE LITIGATION

Another significant example arose from the Minnesota Deep Fake Litigation. Here, the state engaged Jeff Hancock, Director of Stanford's Social Media Lab, to provide expert testimony against a legal challenge to oppose new legislation banning AI-generated "deep fakes" in elections. In November 2024, Hancock faced a Daubert motion, alleging reliance in his report on academic studies later discovered to be "AI hallucinations," entirely fabricated references generated by AI.

The Daubert motion highlighted critical concerns:

- **AI Hallucinations:** Alleged fabricated studies undermine the credibility of the expert's report.
- **Reputation Risks:** Sanctions were sought against Hancock and the state, raising broader concerns about their professional reputations.
- **Irony of Errors:** Hancock previously authored works identifying "deep fake" dangers, yet fell victim to similar AI-induced errors.

In December 2024, Hancock's Counsel filed a motion admitting the inclusion of AI hallucinations as an "honest mistake". In January 2025, the Court granted the Daubert Motion against Hancock, citing the irony of the "AI expert's" failed use of AI. The case is currently sitting with the 8th Circuit of Appeals regarding the Court's initial refusal of a preliminary injunction.

These events demonstrate how litigants are increasingly scrutinizing the use of AI in expert reports, particularly regarding citation accuracy and factual reliability.

CASE STUDY: HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS MATTE

A recent example (April 2025) arose following the Minnesota Deep Fake Litigation, and the judge took some keys from the Minnesota case. Here, Harbor Freight was being sued based on the faulty design of an axe. The Plaintiff engaged an expert to discuss the proper design of the axe. In deposition, that expert stated he utilized ChatGPT to "confirm his findings" after he authored his opinion, stating he was "quite amazed" that ChatGPT confirmed what he had already authored. Harbor Freight filed a Daubert motion under FRE 702, alleging reliance on ChatGPT violates the utilization of reliance on peer reviewed methodologies.

The Daubert motion was denied for the following reasons:

- **The Expert was Qualified:** Based on experience, education, training, knowledge, and skill, the expert was qualified.
- **ChatGPT was Used After Authorship:** It was determined that the use of ChatGPT was used only after the opinion was formed, and did not impact or result in a modification of the opinion.
- **The Expert was Prone to Hyperbole:** Throughout the expert's deposition, it was noted that he was prone to hyperbole when describing his work. It was determined this did not make his work any less reliable.

In the ruling, the court cited the Minnesota Deep Fake Matter stating that in that instance, the expert used AI for authoring the report, including citing non-existent supporting documents. In the Harbor Freight Matter, the court determined that utilization of ChatGPT or other AI technologies to enhance their "independent judgement" is permissible. These events demonstrate how courts are looking to each other to understand how to handle the use of AI.

BENEFITS OF AI IN EXPERT TESTIMONY

Despite evident challenges, AI tools provide valuable support in expert workflows, especially through closed-source platforms. These benefits include:

- **Document Management:** AI efficiently categorizes and indexes vast volumes of documents.
- **Enhanced Search Capabilities:** Improved retrieval of information from complex data formats (PDFs, images, videos).
- **Summarization and Timeline Creation:** Quick generation of accurate summaries and timelines to streamline case preparation.

Properly integrated, AI tools significantly enhance workflow efficiency, enabling experts to dedicate more focus on complex analytical and interpretive tasks.

IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING AI PITFALLS

AI hallucinations, a significant risk illustrated by the Minnesota Deep Fake litigation, occur when AI tools produce plausible yet entirely fabricated information. Preventing such errors requires rigorous verification:

- **Cross-Verification:** Colleagues should independently confirm sources cited by AI.
- **Customized AI Settings:** Users should customize AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to explicitly request citations or verify sourced information.
- **Dedicated AI-Checking Tools:** Utilize tools designed to detect AI-generated content, thereby reducing reliance on potentially flawed AI outputs.
- **Limiting AI Usage:** Refrain from using AI to directly generate citations or detailed analytical content, thereby reducing the risk of inaccuracies.

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Professional ethics further underscore the responsible integration of AI tools. Ethical obligations include transparency about AI's role in expert testimony, rigorous data verification, and maintaining client confidentiality. Experts should remain aligned with professional and ethical standards, such as the AICPA's Code of Professional Conduct and the General Standards section, which applies to all members of the profession.

Experts must clearly communicate the utilization of AI in reports, ensuring client awareness and consent, particularly when sensitive or confidential information is involved. This approach mitigates risks of unauthorized information disclosure, maintaining compliance with stringent confidentiality requirements.

Witnesses continued on page 14

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Visit www.gscpa.org for conference details and to register.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE AI INTEGRATION

Given the complexities outlined, experts are advised to adopt clear, disciplined strategies:

- **Preliminary Tasks:** Restrict AI to foundational tasks (e.g., document sorting, preliminary summarization).
- **Transparent Methodology:** Clearly outline the AI's use and limitations in expert reports and client communications.
- **Continuous Human Oversight:** Ensure that complex analytical tasks and conclusions remain under human verification and control.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Experts must continually educate themselves on AI advancements, ethical standards, and judicial precedents to responsibly leverage emerging technologies.
- **Institutional AI Policies:** Organizations should implement robust AI usage guidelines, backed by regular training to ensure compliance and mitigate risks.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND INDUSTRY GUIDANCE

The outcomes of cases such as Weber and the Minnesota litigation will significantly shape the use of AI in future expert testimony, establishing precedents that influence judicial expectations and ethical norms. Adverse outcomes may prompt greater caution in AI implementation, potentially setting back adoption or redefining standards for verification and reliance.

As AI continues to evolve rapidly, legal and accounting professionals should maintain proactive engagement, staying up-to-date with best practices, ethical guidelines, and court decisions that influence AI use. Collaborative dialogue among industry professionals, technologists, and policymakers will facilitate AI advancements while mitigating risks.

CONCLUSION

The Matter of Weber and the Minnesota Deep Fake Litigation clearly illustrates AI's profound implications for expert witness testimony. Although AI offers significant efficiency enhancements, relying on it without rigorous oversight and verification poses considerable risks. Responsible integration of AI, emphasizing transparency, rigorous verification, ethical compliance, and ongoing professional education, ensures that these tools complement rather than compromise professional expertise and credibility. Ultimately, maintaining diligent oversight and clear ethical guidelines will safeguard experts and attorneys, preserving trust in expert testimony and judicial outcomes.

TEDDY BROWN, CPA, CFF®, MAFF, CVA, CFE serves as the Managing Director, Damages and Forensic Accounting at iDS, leading the charge in forensic accounting and commercial damages. Teddy transforms complex financial data into insights that empower clients and counsel alike. Teddy is a seasoned expert across sectors such as healthcare, construction and manufacturing. His expertise in commercial disputes, fraud investigations and asset tracing establishes him as a go-to expert witness.

Turning Financial Insight Into Business Foresight: Empowering Your Company for Strategic Growth

by **ROBERT STEPHENS, CPA**

For countless businesses, from local "Main Street" companies to burgeoning mid-market firms, the aspiration to achieve "Wall Street" worthy financial acumen often feels out of reach, perceived as the exclusive domain of large corporations. Yet, as financial professionals, we know that the fundamental principles driving market-leading enterprises are universally applicable. The true challenge, and indeed the immense opportunity, lies in transforming raw financial data into powerful business foresight. This journey goes far beyond mere compliance and historical reporting; it's about unlocking the true potential of a company's numbers to drive strategic decision-making and sustainable growth.

THE UNTAPPED RESOURCE: A COMPANY'S NUMBERS

As businesses expand, the need to scale up operational capabilities, including financial management, becomes paramount. Moving beyond simply counting — the realm of basic bookkeeping — to understanding the meaning behind the numbers and actively utilizing them to navigate the business forward, becomes a critical priority.

The most valuable, and often untapped, resource within any business is its own financial data. While many business owners meticulously track sales and expenses, the true power lies in the ability to interpret what those numbers mean, to identify patterns and to leverage that understanding to make better, more

informed decisions. This ability to extract insights and translate them into actionable strategies is a true profit multiplier. It allows businesses to identify inefficiencies, optimize resource allocation, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and ultimately, achieve sustainable growth and increased profitability.

At its core, understanding a company's financial landscape involves navigating through three distinct perspectives: hindsight, insight and foresight. As trusted advisors, guiding our clients and companies through these lenses is paramount.

HINDSIGHT (THE REARVIEW MIRROR)

Just as a driver periodically checks the rearview mirror, businesses must regularly examine their past financial performance. Hindsight is about understanding "what happened." This entails reviewing historical financial statements — income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements — to identify trends, pinpoint past successes and acknowledge areas that required improvement. It's about learning from the past, recognizing patterns in revenue generation, cost structures and profitability. For accountants, this is our foundational expertise: ensuring accuracy, compliance and the clear presentation of historical data. While essential for accountability and identifying historical anomalies, relying solely on hindsight is akin to driving while only looking in the rearview mirror; it offers limited guidance for the road ahead.



INSIGHT (THE DASHBOARD)

Moving beyond the rearview mirror, insight is about understanding "what is seen right now." This is a dashboard that combines the financials with operating metrics, providing a real-time snapshot of a company's current financial and operational drivers. It involves analyzing key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that reflect the present state of operations. Are current profit margins where they should be? Is cash flow sufficient to meet immediate obligations? What's the current burn rate? For accountants, this means transitioning from purely historical reporting to the active monitoring and analysis of current data. Insight provides the immediate feedback loop necessary for making informed decisions in the present. It helps companies understand the immediate consequences of their actions and adjust their course in real-time. However, even with a perfectly functioning dashboard, anticipating what's coming next is crucial.

FORESIGHT (THE WINDSHIELD)

This is where our value as strategic financial professionals truly shines: turning financial insight into profound business foresight. Foresight is about understanding "what is anticipated," using historical data and current understanding to project future financial outcomes and strategically plan for growth. It's looking through the windshield, anticipating challenges and opportunities and proactively charting a course for success. This isn't about crystal ball gazing; it's about leveraging financial data to create accurate forecasts, build robust budgets and modeling



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SESSION K3: DYNAMIC FORECASTING AND BUDGETING: FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

Speakers: Robert W. Stephens Jr., CPA and Denise Kennedy, CPA

As business conditions evolve rapidly, finance leaders in industry must move beyond traditional budgeting cycles. This session will explore practical approaches to dynamic forecasting and budgeting that help CPAs anticipate change, align financial plans with operational realities, and improve decision-making. Learn how to implement rolling forecasts, integrate real-time data, and support your organization with forward-looking financial insights.

See page 34 or visit www.gscpa.org for conference details and how to attend.

different scenarios. Foresight empowers business leaders to make proactive, rather than reactive, decisions, positioning their companies for sustainable growth and a more favorable future. For accountants, this involves moving beyond counting and reconciliation to sophisticated financial modeling, scenario planning and strategic advisory.

KEY PILLARS FOR CULTIVATING FINANCIAL FORESIGHT

Guiding our clients and internal teams towards financial foresight rests on three critical pillars:

Visibility: Transforming Data into Understandable Information

Standard financial statements, often dense with complex terminology and extensive line items, can be daunting for even seasoned business leaders. Our role is to transform this raw data into easily consumable financial information. This involves creating custom dashboards, simplified reports and clear visual representations that highlight the most critical financial metrics. The goal is to provide business leaders with immediate clarity and confidence in their financial understanding, enabling them to make more informed decisions quickly and effectively. When a company truly sees and understands its numbers, it unlocks the ability to identify opportunities and mitigate risks with precision. This requires us to be adept not just at producing numbers, but at communicating their story.

Valuation: Establishing the Groundwork for Future Success and Exit

Every business owner envisions a successful future, and for many, that includes a favorable exit. A strong financial foundation is paramount to achieving a robust valuation and a smooth transaction. As accountants, we play a crucial role in working proactively to establish the groundwork for understanding and optimizing key financial components – revenue streams, profit margins, and cash flow. By meticulously analyzing and improving these areas, we help businesses build a compelling financial narrative that resonates with potential investors or buyers. This strategic financial preparation not only facilitates a more favorable valuation when the time comes to sell, but also ensures the business is operating at peak efficiency, maximizing its inherent value on an ongoing basis.

Strategic View: Providing an Experienced Financial Perspective

Growing businesses often reach a point where the expertise of a dedicated CFO becomes essential, but the cost of a full-time executive is prohibitive. This presents a prime opportunity for accountants to step into a more advisory capacity, offering the invaluable "view" of an experienced financial professional as an integrated part of the leadership team. This means providing strategic guidance on financial planning, risk management, capital allocation and growth strategies. This is where a fractional CFO can

offer a fresh, objective perspective on financial performance, challenging assumptions, identifying blind spots and ultimately helping leadership make sound decisions that drive profitability and long-term value. Having a fractional CFO partnership will help ensure that financial strategy is aligned with business objectives.

In today's dynamic business environment, simply knowing the numbers is no longer enough. The differentiator lies in the ability to transform that financial insight into powerful business foresight. As accountants, we are uniquely positioned to empower our clients and companies we serve to do just that: provide the expertise, visibility and strategic perspective needed to confidently navigate the future and achieve their highest potential. By embracing this strategic shift, we elevate our role from bean counters to indispensable CFO Navigators in sustainable business success.

ROBERT STEPHENS, CPA is a partner with Mauldin & Jenkins where he leads their client accounting and advisory practice. Robert received his BBA in accounting from the University of Southern Mississippi and brings his 30+ years of experience to growing privately held businesses and non-profit organizations as a fractional chief financial officer.

Demystifying AI Chatbots: Choosing the Right One for the Task

by **CALVIN WONG, CISSP**



By now, you've likely heard of artificial intelligence chatbots like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Copilot. Maybe you've even used one. They're no longer experimental novelties — they're fast becoming indispensable tools in many professionals' digital toolkits, CPAs included. With so many options, each with its own strengths and quirks, the question becomes: which one is right for your needs?

Today's professionals value clarity, efficiency and results. Whether it's summarizing a dense report, brainstorming ideas or drafting content for client communications, AI chatbots, when used appropriately, can help us get there faster. Not all chatbots are built the same, and knowing which one to turn to can save you time and frustration.

Let's break down the leading AI chatbots and explore their strengths (without diving too deep into the technical weeds.)



CHATGPT: THE CREATIVE COLLABORATOR

Developed by OpenAI, ChatGPT has quickly become one of the most recognized names in this space — and for good reason. It excels at generating content, whether you're drafting an article, creating a client-friendly explainer, or polishing an email.

What makes ChatGPT stand out is its ability to adapt to tone and context. It writes fluently and persuasively, making it a go-to for content-heavy tasks. It also integrates with a growing number of tools and plug-ins, allowing users to connect it with services like Slack, email and calendars. It has slowly become an all-rounder throughout its iterations that can handle most things capably. I've tried coding programming languages, converting foreign languages and using it as a technical colleague in my tech support endeavors.

For CPAs looking to brainstorm article ideas, generate plain-language summaries of complex topics or even prep presentation notes, ChatGPT is a strong choice. It's like having a clear-thinking editor at your side — one that doesn't take lunch breaks.

As one of the current leaders, alternatives include all of the leading chatbots and alternatives listed in this article.



CLAUDE: THE CONTEXT KEEPER

Anthropic's Claude chatbot is lesser known but quietly impressive. Claude shines in its ability to digest and respond to large documents. If you need help summarizing a lengthy policy, parsing a 100-page report or analyzing a bulk dataset in natural language, Claude can manage it gracefully.

It also tends to be thoughtful in its responses, offering nuance which is particularly valuable when you're dealing with sensitive or regulatory content. While it may not match ChatGPT's creativity for writing tasks, it brings a calm, considered voice to analytical or policy-heavy discussions.

Think of Claude as the detail-oriented colleague who takes the time to read the entire document before weighing in. For projects that require memory and sustained attention, Claude delivers. For the longest time, it has been the cream of the crop for writing capabilities.

Alternatively, try out DeepSeek. Its writing simulates human writers very well and is a new, interesting option.



GEMINI: THE GOOGLE-SAVVY RESEARCHER

Formerly known as Bard, Gemini is Google's AI offering that plays well with the Google ecosystem. If you live in Google Docs, Gmail, or Google Sheets, Gemini's integration makes it a convenient companion.

Gemini excels in real-time research and pulling in web-relevant context. It's particularly handy when you're trying to gather background information, verify data points or organize scattered thoughts into a rough draft. It's less about flair and more about utility. Its integration with Android devices is its most appealing and progressive side, developing multiple apps in the phone ecosystem that allows users to quickly use AI powered tools.

For CPAs working within Google Workspace who want quick, connected insights across tools, Gemini fits naturally into the flow. It's the pragmatic researcher in your corner.

Alternatively, Perplexity is great for research and those that aren't tied to Google.



COPILOT: THE MICROSOFT INSIDER

Copilot, Microsoft's AI assistant, is woven into familiar apps like Word, Excel, and Outlook. Its tight integration makes it the best fit for professionals who already spend their day inside Microsoft 365. Though the launch was lackluster, they have recovered in recent months to provide more features and connectivity between apps that was promised before debut.

Need to build out a spreadsheet based on meeting notes? Copilot can do that. Want a first draft of an engagement letter in Word? It's there. For repetitive tasks or structured documents, it's highly efficient. Ask it to summarize your day, it will pull Outlook's meetings and get you a list like your very own personal assistant.

If you already use Microsoft, then this may be an option that you can trust a bit more than others. Just keep in mind that Microsoft CoPilot is still powered by ChatGPT.

WHICH ONE SHOULD YOU USE?

Here's the good news: you don't need to choose just one. Each chatbot has a distinct personality and strength, and the most productive professionals will start to develop a sense of which to use when.

If you're:

- Writing an article or email?
Start with ChatGPT, CoPilot, or Claude.
- Summarizing a long policy or report?
Claude or DeepSeek is your go-to.
- Doing research or gathering insights across the web?
Gemini, Perplexity, or ChatGPT is your ally.
- Working inside a Document or Spreadsheet?
Copilot for Microsoft or Gemini for Google Workspace.

Much like choosing the right tool from your financial software stack, picking the right AI assistant is about understanding the task at hand.

FINAL THOUGHTS

To be fair, these aren't the only options out there, GitHub Coding is great for coding, Jasper AI for marketing, Meta AI for open source development and also AI glasses, Notion AI or Otter.ai for notetaking and meeting notes respectively.

AI chatbots aren't replacing professionals — they're empowering us to work smarter. For CPAs navigating increasing demands and tight schedules, these tools offer a way to streamline repetitive tasks, enhance communication and stay ahead of the curve.

Start simple. Use one chatbot to draft your next client newsletter or ask it to summarize your meeting notes. Over time, you'll build confidence and intuition around which tool suits your style best.

And if you're wondering, yes, this article was drafted with the help of ChatGPT. Of course, I managed the entire process and re-wrote some of the parts to provide more information. AI is a tool, and we are now the managers of those tools.

CALVIN WONG, CISSP, director of information technology, plans and executes information technology for the Georgia Society of CPAs, overseeing new technology integration, infrastructure maintenance and updates. He is also the liaison between the Society's third-party technology vendors.

Keep Your Best Leaders: Four Keys to Build a Flourishing Leadership Pipeline

by **JON LOKHORST, CSP, CPA, PCC**

Grant was an early-career transfer into the accounting profession. After starting out in another field following his college graduation, he was enticed by the promising opportunities offered by a large local CPA firm in his home state. The firm's leadership was impressed by Grant's prior work and life experience, along with leadership qualities they said would put him on a fast-track for advancement within the firm. Grant accepted the firm's offer with those expectations of advancement in mind, later finding a reluctance to even revisit the conversation from the recruiting process about leadership opportunities.

Sensing a dead-end with that firm, Grant left and eventually pursued an opportunity with a similar-sized firm in another state. Once again, the firm's leadership was impressed by his background and said they anticipated moving him quickly into greater responsibility and opportunities for advancement. Unfortunately, Grant later encountered the same type of resistance from this firm's leadership, which wasn't open to further discussion about the opportunities they offered in the interview stage.

Thinking a larger firm might provide more realistic leadership opportunities, Grant then moved to a regional firm which said they wanted to fast-track him into their leadership ranks. To his surprise and dismay, he felt stonewalled again when the firm later seemed to forget that the conversation had even taken place. After these experiences with a lack of clarity, communication, and follow-through, Grant no longer works as an accountant.

Although Grant isn't his real name (it's been changed for confidentiality reasons), the story is true. And he's not the only

promising CPA leader who's left their firm, or the industry altogether, due to similar circumstances, an often-overlooked factor in the leaky pipeline challenges of the accounting world. Beyond a cautionary tale like Grant's, recent surveys highlight the high risk of turnover at the manager level.

LEADER RETENTION CONCERNS

Recent Gallup research found managers more likely than non-managers to be disengaged at work, burned out, looking for a new job, and feeling like their organization doesn't care about their well-being. Among managers surveyed, 55 percent indicated they were watching for or actively seeking a new job, a significant uptick from 44 percent who said that in 2019. In a similar study, Gallup found that engagement declined most among managers under age 35 and for female managers.

More specific to the accounting industry, CPA Trendlines cited research from Live Data Technologies indicating that over 82 percent of accountants who left the profession had at least six years of experience, compared to 71 percent of accountants leaving the profession in 2021.

Similar concerns arose from last year's Accountants Annual Professional Satisfaction Survey by Randy Crabtree of Tri-Merit Group and Hank Berkowitz of HB Publishing and Marketing. They found only 17 percent of managers were highly satisfied with their careers. The directors and senior manager group scored only somewhat better, with 24 percent responding with a highly satisfied rating. Among the factors diminishing career satisfaction: a lack of support in dealing with difficult clients, work-related mental and physical health challenges, a lack of positive firm culture,

and limited variety in client and work responsibilities.

Amid these intense challenges, what can you do to keep your best leaders? You simply can't afford to lose them. Nor can you allow ambiguous, unfulfilled promises to discourage people like Grant from staying on board for opportunities that don't materialize. Here's a more intentional structured approach to building a flourishing leadership pipeline that produces future leaders from within the organization: Identify Them, Engage Them, Develop Them, and Empower Them.

IDENTIFY THEM

Identifying your best leaders can be as simple as answering the question, "Which leaders are you most afraid of losing?" Seek input throughout the organization, focusing on individuals currently serving in leadership roles, as well as potential future leaders. Take note of those with the strongest influence and rapport among their coworkers. Watch for signs of initiative, one of the first indicators of leadership potential. At the same time, ensure these individuals are aligned with your organization's mission and values.

For a more structured assessment, create a leadership competency model that outlines expectations for leaders at each level in your organization. Include core technical skills, but don't stop there. Address crucial nontechnical skills, such as strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, stakeholder management, and the ability to develop others. One of my public accounting clients created a grid with a column for each leadership level, showing the progression required for leaders to advance from one level to the next.



Conduct a pipeline analysis, identifying leadership succession needs over the next several years. Look at each position, anticipating when significant transitions in leadership will occur. Identify the next individual, or potential individuals, in line for each role. These individuals are likely to be your best leaders.

ENGAGE THEM

After noticeable improvements in the early stages of the pandemic, employee engagement has been on the decline over the past three years. The top two causes identified in Gallup's report are unclear expectations at work and feeling disconnected from the mission and purpose of the organization. If these factors are problematic for the workforce as a whole, they are doubly problematic when experienced by your best leaders.

Assign leaders meaningful work that enables them to see how they contribute to your organization's mission, purpose and strategic plan. Seek their input on opportunities to make an even greater impact. Recognize their contributions to ensure they feel appreciated. Cultivate a positive, healthy culture that reminds them why they enjoy working in your organization.

DEVELOP THEM

According to Gallup's research, a lack of opportunities for development ranked third among causes for the drop-off in employee engagement. In addition, only 48 percent

of managers surveyed said they strongly agree that they have the skills needed to be exceptional in their current jobs. Imbedding leadership development in your culture will provide a competitive advantage in your retention efforts.

Engage your best leaders regularly in career path conversations, with a realistic view of what it takes to get promoted in your organization. When appropriate, include them in discussions about the pipeline analysis described above. Highlight their current readiness for promotion and identify gaps that need attention. Work with them to create an individual development plan, offering a variety of growth opportunities, both formal and informal.

Provide stretch assignments with exposure to complex business challenges, giving regular feedback on their performance. Invite them to shadow senior leaders, expanding their understanding of leadership at higher levels within the organization. At the same time, protect them from being overwhelmed with a too-heavy workload, as your best leaders are also the go-to person when others assign work.

EMPOWER THEM

Let your best leaders lead. Entrust them with ownership of important projects, and the decision-making that is required. Encourage them to innovate, experiment, and even fail at times. Allow increasing levels of autonomy, providing the resources they need to succeed. Reward their success

by including them in bigger decisions affecting the team or organization, as appropriate. Challenge your best leaders to develop their leadership outside of the workplace, too, through charitable or community involvement.

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO KEEP YOUR BEST LEADERS

In today's rapidly changing business environment, keeping your best leaders requires a proactive, intentional approach. By identifying, engaging, developing, and empowering your best leaders, your leadership pipeline will flourish, producing the leadership you need for long-term success and viability as an organization.

An earlier version of this article was published in the Minnesota Society of CPAs Footnote magazine.

JON LOKHORST, CSP, CPA, PCC, is a leadership speaker, trainer, coach, and author of *Mission-Critical Leadership: How Smart Managers Lead Well in All Directions*. Jon works with organizations to develop leaders everyone wants to follow, build teams no one wants to leave, and deliver exceptional results. Jon is a frequent speaker for CPA events and facilitates training programs for emerging leaders. You can reach him at jon@yourbestleadership.com.



Day in the Life: Mark Koziel, CPA, CGMA AICPA's New President and CEO

In 2025, a new CEO of the American Institute of CPAs and Association of International Certified Professional Accountants took the reins from long-time leader Barry Melancon, CPA, CGMA. So you can get to know him a little better, Mark shares what an “average” day can look like for him as he settles into his new leadership role.

As the CEO of a global organization, I've already found myself with a very full travel schedule. In this job, there is rarely a day that's the same. As of day 42 as CEO, I've visited three of our offices, including London for CIMA Council, Durham, N.C., and New York City for staff meet-and-greets and other meetings. Today, I am in NYC.

5 A.M.: Wake up and get the day started. Typically, I first catch up on overnight emails, then check the day's headlines (global, then profession). Next will be any social media to catch up on and respond to.

5:45 A.M.: Head to the office. Today I'm in NYC, so it's a quick walk from where I typically stay.

6 A.M.: Grab my cup of coffee and get to work answering the highest-priority emails from what I reviewed in the morning.

7:30 A.M.: Today is an unusually late start for my first meeting — a briefing from our team in North Asia. I've been checking in with each region as I get up to speed on their top priorities, how we can help them in their roles, and discovering their greatest areas of growth. I usually schedule these meetings in the time zone most suitable for the region and, today, they selected this later time.

8:30 A.M.: Town Hall final run-through before we go live later today. The AICPA Town Halls were created by Erik Asgeirsson,

president and CEO of CPA.com, and me in 2020 during the pandemic to help members stay informed of critical issues. Back then, the big topic was the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Now it's the Washington, D.C., landscape and tax. We started with about 400 attendees back in April of 2020. That quickly grew to about 1,000 attendees when I left in August 2020. Now there are over 10,000 attendees per session. The popularity and audience growth are just amazing. This run-through is to make sure we all have our topics set and, more importantly, includes a time check so we stay on time.

9 A.M.: I'm double-booked, so I quickly stop into a breakfast celebration for my

executive assistant, Donna Wolf, who is retiring at the end of the month. I then join a Zoom meeting with the Audit & Finance Committee to discuss audit-related matters, final Association financial statements, internal audit reviews and what will be presented at the April live board meeting. This call runs much of my morning, to approximately 11:20 a.m.

11:30 A.M.: Immediately following the Audit & Finance meeting, I hustle to the other side of our office to the studio to record a congratulatory video message for the president-elect of a state CPA society who will be named president at an upcoming annual meeting. I was invited to attend live but unfortunately had a conflict, so they asked if I could record a video. It is someone I know well, and I am more than happy to do so.

NOON: Following the recording, I make my way to an informal luncheon with the office staff. I share a quick introduction about my thoughts on the future of our organization and the profession. I thank the team “live” for all the things they do for our members, and we share some pizza, wings and cake (with my picture on it!). It’s been a really great experience getting to meet all the people who have largely been thumbnail video boxes on my computer screen.

1:30 P.M.: After the announcement of my return to the Association, we had several requests for interviews from the media that cover our profession. This was the first week in which my schedule was able to accommodate some of these requests, so today I’m speaking with Courtney Vien, senior reporter at CFO Brew.

2 P.M.: Quick check-in with my assistant to see if she needs me for anything or if there are any pressing matters to discuss.

2:30 P.M.: The AICPA Town Hall starts in 30 minutes, so I head back to the studio to get set up for sound and prepare for the show. At this time, all presenters are on video in a green room

waiting for the start and nailing down final instructions.

3 P.M.: Erik Asgeirsson kicks off the Town Hall. I’m up first to discuss feedback I’ve received from members both on the road and through the AskMark@aicpa-cima.com inbox. At a prior Town Hall and in several articles after, we’ve asked members to reach out to me directly to provide feedback on the profession. I present the results to the audience and am followed by our D.C. team with an update on BOI, the IRS, DOGE and other D.C. topics. The last session focuses on Quality Management and new requirements about to be introduced in audit. To finish, we open it up to questions from the audience. On this day, there are 11,400 participants.

4 P.M.: I return to my office to join another Zoom meeting with the Association’s firm services team to discuss the agenda and topics for the Major Firms Group meeting in July.

5 P.M.: Time to catch up on emails and any calls I need to make before leaving the office for the day.

6:30 P.M.: I take a walk around NYC, clear my head and figure out where I want to grab a quick dinner.

8 P.M.: I head to the Carnegie Club, where I have a scheduled cigar call with an IT confidante that I check in with regularly. We usually talk once per week, and he helps me sort out any IT challenges I may be dealing with.

9:30 P.M.: I grab a glass of red wine and do a final review of text messages, emails and social media. I choose a Zinfandel from Grgich Hills Estate in Napa.

10 P.M.: Call my wife, Maryann, to check in on her day, fill her in on mine and discuss our schedules for the next few days and weekend.

10:45 P.M.: Final check of current events and profession news headlines.

11 P.M.: Lights out.

about mark

JOB TITLE

President & CEO, American Institute of CPAs, and CEO, Association of International Certified Professional Accountants

ORGANIZATION SIZE

AICPA & CIMA, together as the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (the Association), advance the global accounting and finance profession through our work on behalf of approximately 600,000 AICPA and CIMA members, candidates, and registrants in 188 countries and territories.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

Most recently, I was president and CEO of Allinial Global, an association of independent accounting and advisory firms with 268 member firms worldwide. I started there in 2020 after 14 years with the Association (previously the AICPA), where I served in a number of roles, including executive vice president of firm services.

ALMA MATER

Bachelor of Science in accounting from Canisius University (Buffalo, NY) in 1991.

FAMILY

Wife, Maryann, and son, Ben

PETS

Dog, Ozzie

HOBBIES

In my down time, I enjoy the beautiful mountains of North Carolina (home); spending time with my wife, Maryann, and my family; and boating, golfing and smoking — both a fine cigar (with a glass of wine) and BBQ.

Member News



PROMOTIONS

HDWK is proud to announce the promotion of **Rhett Stacey, CPA**, to Tax Manager.

Warren Averett CPAs and Advisors is pleased to announce **Baron Wells, CPA**, was promoted to Senior Manager in the Audit Division and supports the firm's Alternative Investment and Employee Benefit Plan practices. **Bobby Farley, CPA**, was promoted to Senior Manager in the Transaction Advisory Services Practice. Additional promotions include: **Addie Spinos**, Supervisor Audit; **Elvis Macedo**, Senior Associate Audit; **Jackson Elliott**, Senior Associate Audit; **Mariam Moreno**, Senior Associate Audit; **Molly Silva**, Senior Associate Audit; **Will Griffin**, Supervisor Information Technology; **Ian Wolff**, Senior Associate Tax.



FIRM NEWS

Mauldin & Jenkins is pleased to announce its expansion into the Greenville, South Carolina market by merging in Bradshaw, Gordon & Clinkscales, LLC. This merger adds seven new partners and 42 professionals.

Mauldin & Jenkins Atlanta office announces the retirement of Jeff Fucito. Jeff leaves a lasting legacy of exacting standards, passion, service and commitment to others.

Mauldin & Jenkins Macon thanks partner Linda Corty for an outstanding career spanning four decades with the firm. Her time will be defined by exceptional leadership, client dedication and significant professional contributions.



IN MEMORIAM

John F. McMullan, Atlanta, Ga.

Thank You, GSCPA Annual Partners

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GSCPA Silver Partners



Partner with GSCPA

Imagine marketing your business to thousands of the top accounting and finance professionals in the state of Georgia. When you market with The Georgia Society of CPAs that is exactly what you will be doing! With the support from companies like yours, we will fulfill our core purpose and deliver amazing value to our members.

We have 25 conferences throughout the year with unique sponsorship and exhibit opportunities. These conferences provide a unique opportunity to network with our members in person and begin a strong business relationship.

Each conference focuses on a specific area of practice within the accounting profession so no matter who you are trying to reach, there is definitely a fit! We also offer several different advertising options.

Whether you are looking to advertise a new product or service line, raise awareness about your business solutions or looking to promote a sponsorship with The Georgia Society of CPAs, we have a solution for you.

For questions or more information on partnering with GSCPA, please contact Emily Smith at 404-504-2947.

FOOD INSECURITY FACTS

1 IN 7 GEORGIANS

14.9% of Georgians (including children) are at risk of food insecurity. A household that is food insecure has limited or uncertain access to food.

1 IN 5 CHILDREN

19.6% of Georgia children are currently experiencing food insecurity and hunger. Children facing hunger are more likely to experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills and have more social and behavioral problems.

1 IN 10 SENIORS

Over 10% of seniors are currently experiencing food insecurity in Georgia.

60% ARE WORKING

60% of Georgians visiting food pantries work, but don't make enough for them to pay for all their essential needs.

HEALTH IMPACT

52% of people in Georgia purchase inexpensive, unhealthy foods to stay within budget. 36% of families across the state have to buy food that won't go bad quickly. 59% of adults in food-insecure households have had to choose between food, housing or medicine.



GEORGIA ACCOUNTING FOOD FIGHT

AUGUST 4-15, 2025 | VIRTUAL GIVING IN 2025

The 12th annual Georgia Accounting Food Fight is bringing together Georgia's accounting firms and industry accounting departments in a friendly competition to raise funds for Georgia's food bank network in partnership with Feeding Georgia, and this year, we're keeping it virtual due to more value in monetary donations with partnerships with grocery stores. To reach our 2025 goal of \$275,000, we need every accounting firm and industry accounting department throughout Georgia to participate. Last year's competition broke records again by raising \$347,591.16, equating to nearly 1.4 million meals for Georgia's food banks.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Conduct a virtual fund drive from August 4-15. Everything is made simple. Monetary donations can all be made online through a fundraising page for you or your team. Each dollar contributed will count as four points (\$1 = 4 points). Everything you raise stays local and benefits your regional food bank, but the glory is statewide! Whichever team raises the most points per employee will win the Grand Prize Food Fight Hero Award, and the team with the highest total points overall will win the Grand Prize Hunger Champion Award. Other awards are given in different size categories.

GIVE VIRTUALLY

Food banks have decided to continue using the virtual donation format for the Georgia Accounting Food Fight this year, limiting participation in the competition to fundraising monetary donations only. The food banks will not collect food donations or encourage volunteering teams as part of this competition.

REGISTRATION BEGINS JULY 1

Please help us make the most significant impact possible when a record number of Georgians are food insecure. GSCPA is proud to partner with food banks in your community. To register for the 2025 Georgia Accounting Food Fight, please visit feedinggeorgia.org/georgia-accounting-food-fight for more details and to complete the registration form.

The Educational Foundation Golf Tournament Raises Scholarship Funds

The Educational Foundation (Foundation) of The Georgia Society of CPAs (GSCPA) recently hosted golfers at Eagle Watch Golf Club, Woodstock, Ga., for the Annual Golf Tournament. Golfers and attendees spent the day networking and enjoying the beautiful weather while raising over \$17,000 for scholarships and programming to assist Georgia college students. This year's tournament saw over 80 players in attendance.

The competition started with a welcome by GSCPA Chair Kathryn Fletcher, a shotgun start, and a standard scramble. The day concluded with a lively 19th-hole party at the clubhouse. Afterward, Educational Foundation staff liaison Callie Hammond thanked sponsors and, with the assistance of the golf pro, presented prizes to the top three scoring teams and the two individuals closest to the pin and with the longest drive.

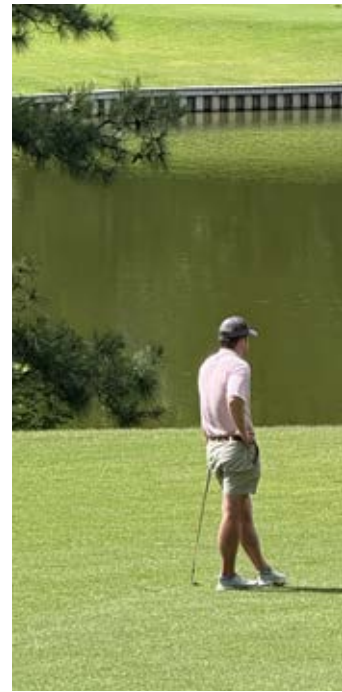
The Foundation Cup, or "tournament within the tournament," allowed sponsors coming in at the Double Eagle, Thirst Quencher, Eagle, 19th Hole and Birdie sponsor levels to compete for bragging rights and trophies to display in their office. The CRI team won the Foundation Cup this year.

The Foundation would like to thank all golfers, attendees, sponsors and supporters!

The golf tournament began in its current form in 2013. After a decade of playing, donations and support, the tournament has raised over \$235,000!

Established in 1957, the Foundation helps students achieve their goals of becoming CPAs by identifying the best and brightest individuals entering the profession and providing them with the help needed to complete their education.

If you want to donate to the Foundation, please visit foundation.gscpa.org or call the Member Services Department at 800-330-8889 ext. 2986. The Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization; all donations are tax-deductible.



thank you sponsors

DOUBLE EAGLE SPONSOR



THIRST QUENCHER SPONSOR



19TH HOLE SPONSOR



EAGLE SPONSORS



BIRDIE SPONSORS

Carr Riggs & Ingram
Frazier & Deeter
Mauldin & Jenkins
McNair McLemore Middlebrooks & Co.
Rushton
Sterling Seacrest Pritchard
TaxConnex



1st Place: Source Advisors



2nd Place and Foundation Cup Winners: Carr, Riggs, & Ingram



3rd Place: Rushton



PASSION LED US HERE

GSCPA Welcomes New Board Members

The Board of Directors is The Georgia Society of CPAs (GSCPA) governing body comprising the chair, chair-elect, secretary, treasurer, immediate past chair, and nine directors. The chair, chair-elect, secretary and treasurer are the officers of GSCPA. The secretary is the non-voting member, and the CEO of GSCPA holds the position. The nine directors are elected for two-year terms, staggered for continuity.

WHAT DOES THE GSCPA BOARD DO?

Develops and approves the Society's strategic plan and monitors its implementation and results.

- Oversees matters affecting GSCPA as they relate to policy.
- Adopts the annual budget.
- Proposes amendments to the bylaws.
- Addresses other matters related to GSCPA and the accounting profession.

HOW DO I BECOME A BOARD MEMBER?

GSCPA is always looking for members who would like to volunteer to serve GSCPA as an Officer, Director or Leadership Council Member-at-Large.

Visit www.gscpa.org under Volunteer Opportunities for more information. If you have any questions, please contact the Member Services Department at 800-330-8889, extension 2986.

your gscpa board members

OFFICERS 2025-2026

Chair

James K. Underwood

Chair-Elect

Cromwell S. Baun

Treasurer

Clay L. Pilgrim

Secretary

Boyd E. Search

Immediate Past Chair

Kathryn M. Fletcher

STATEWIDE DIRECTORS 2025-2026

First of a Two-Year Term

Nicholas D. Rider, Sr.
Michael W. Thompson
Jonathan R. Tomberlin
Theresa Treadwell Scales
Ian M. Waller

Second of a Two Year Term

Jason Blair
Geoffrey M. Rhines
Susan M. Tillery



MICHAEL W. THOMPSON

Michael is a principal with CLA and specializes in working with privately held businesses and high net worth families in the accounting and tax fields.

Michael has become a trusted business advisor to many privately held business owners in the areas of strategic planning, day-to-day management, tax, and financial consulting. He has extensive experience in the real estate industry representing some of Atlanta's premiere commercial and residential real estate developers, management companies and investors. Michael also has many successful experiences working with high-net-worth families to

maximize wealth transfer and assist beneficiaries in understanding the responsibilities of good stewardship for future generations.

Michael received his B.S. in accounting from Berry College where he played four years of collegiate tennis. He is an active alum, currently serving on the College's Board of Visitors and Planned Giving Council.

Michael currently serves on the Major Gifts and Planned Giving Council of Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities and served two terms as Board Chair of the Summit Counseling Center, and over 10 years as a Director of the Buckhead Coalition. He is also a member of The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.



JONATHAN R. TOMBERLIN

Jon is the managing partner of the Forvis Mazars Atlanta office and has approximately 25 years of experience providing audit and consulting services to clients in the financial services industry as well as SEC filings and compliance. Prior to becoming managing partner, he was the National Industry Leader for financial services. In 2022,

Jon was the recipient of the Financial Services Leadership Award which honors one partner annually for outstanding leadership and significant contributions.

Jon began his career with the firm more than 25 years ago in the Financial Services Practice. He has significant experience performing external and internal audit engagements, including audits of internal

controls over financial reporting. He has been involved in numerous financial institution audit and consulting engagements for both private and public companies. In addition, Jon has experience with merger and acquisition accounting, including accounting for acquisitions of failed financial institutions, as well as open bank acquisitions.

He frequently presents at both internal and external seminars and has served as one of the firm's internal technical trainers.

Jon is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and Georgia Bankers Association Bank Accountant Committee. He is involved with Boy Scouts of America, his church's executive committee, and The Georgia Society of CPAs Financial Institutions Task Force.

Jon is a graduate of University of North Carolina at Asheville, with a B.S. degree in accounting.



THERESA TREADWELL SCALES

As the Controller at the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Robert W. Woodruff Library, Theresa oversees accounting and finance operations, audit, financial reporting and treasury functions. The Library supports the teaching, learning and research missions of four institutions of higher education that

comprise the world's largest consortium of historically black colleges and universities: Clark Atlanta University, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College and Spelman College.

Her career highlights include advancing to Vice President and Accounting Manager in the banking sector where she spent the majority of her career, serving as an inaugural Financial Reporting Manager for The State Accounting Office, and holding the position of Associate Vice President – Accounting/Budget at the Georgia Student Finance Commission. Prior to her current role, she was the

Associate Vice President of Finance and Business Services at Clark Atlanta University.

Originally from Missouri, Ms. Treadwell Scales graduated with honors from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Mo., with a B.S. degree in accounting. She is an active member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and The Georgia Society of CPAs. Her passion and dedication to the CPA profession is evident through her volunteer work on the Leadership and Business & Industry Advisory Councils, AICPA Foundation Scholarship Committee and various task force committees. Recently, she was honored as the 2022 Outstanding Member in Business & Industry by GSCPA.

Outside of her professional life, Ms. Treadwell Scales is passionate about staying connected with family and friends, maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, volunteering at her church, and participating in charitable walks. She is a grateful and proud mother of two sons, Treavor and Tylor, a daughter-in-law, Brianna and a daughter-in-law to be, Khail.

GSCPA Recognizes Its 2025 Award Recipients

The Georgia Society of CPAs recognizes its members' hard work and dedication yearly through awards.

From education to industry, GSCPA members are what make the Society unique.



2025 DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD

Charles Hall, CPA, CFE

Presented by Kathryn Fletcher at the 2025 Spring Leadership Council

At The Georgia Society of CPAs Spring Council Meeting, Charles Hall was honored with the Distinguished Member Award, a recognition of his exceptional contributions to the accounting profession and his decades of service to the CPA community.

Charles has been a guiding force in the accounting and auditing field for forty years, working closely with CPA firms across the U.S. to address complex accounting and auditing issues. Until his retirement in July 2023, Hall served as the quality control partner for McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC for 15 years, where he played a critical role in upholding high professional standards and mentoring emerging professionals.

A CPA since 1987 and a Certified Fraud Examiner since 2004, Hall has built a

distinguished career focused on serving local governments, nonprofits, and commercial entities. He earned his Master of Accountancy from the University of Georgia in 1984 and has since become a trusted voice in the industry.

His professional affiliations include the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, The Georgia Society of CPAs, and the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. Hall's leadership has extended to key roles within the GSCPA, where he is a former member of the Peer Review Committee and a past chairman of the Governmental Accounting and Auditing Committee.

Beyond his practical expertise, Hall is also a prolific author and educator. His works — such as *The Little Book of Local Government Fraud Prevention*, *The Why and How of Auditing*, and *Audit Risk Assessment Made Easy* — are widely used by professionals

seeking clarity and insight in their practice. He also contributes to respected industry guides published by Thomson Reuters.

Charles shares his knowledge generously through his blog, CPAHallTalk.com, and his YouTube channel, CPA Hall Talk, where he continues to engage and educate the next generation of accounting professionals.

“It is a true honor to celebrate Charles Hall as the recipient of this year’s GSCPA Distinguished Member Award,” said Kathryn Fletcher of Draffin Tucker. “His dedication to the accounting profession is unmatched. An inspiring intellect and a generous mentor, Charles has not only led with wisdom but has also shared it freely; transforming complex topics into accessible knowledge through his writing and teaching. He is a true leader, educator, and friend, and we are all better for his unwavering commitment to quality and excellence.”

Ray Pippin of McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC echoed this praise: “I am thrilled to congratulate my good friend and colleague, Charles Hall, on receiving this well-deserved award. Having known and worked with him for many years, I can say without hesitation that Charles exemplifies the very best of our profession with his deep expertise, unwavering integrity, and his commitment to mentoring others. This award is a testament to his outstanding career, and I can think of no one more worthy of such a distinction.”

With this Distinguished Member Award, GSCPA celebrates not only Charles’ technical excellence but also his dedication to integrity, mentorship, and the continuous improvement of the accounting profession.



2025 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

Kendra LaFleur, CPA

Presented by Kathryn Fletcher at the 2025 Spring Leadership Council

At the recent Spring Council Meeting of The Georgia Society of CPAs, Kendra LaFleur was presented with the prestigious Public Service Award in recognition of her outstanding dedication to community service and leadership within the accounting profession. The Public Service Award recognizes a GSCPA member who has significantly contributed to local, state, regional, or national public service activities.

Kendra LaFleur, a Director at Forvis Mazars, has built a remarkable career over the past 14 years, specializing in the nonprofit and higher education sectors. But it is her work beyond the office that truly sets her apart.

A dynamic and engaged leader, Kendra currently serves as Chair of the AICPA's Emerging Professional Initiatives Committee and remains an active and influential member of the GSCPA. Her passion for public service is evident in her role as Board Treasurer for Girls on the Run Georgia and her current position as Interim Executive Director for Impact on

the Move, organizations focused on youth development and community engagement.

Her contributions have not gone unnoticed. She has been named a 40 Under 40 honoree and is a graduate of the esteemed AICPA Leadership Academy, further affirming her status as a rising leader in both the profession and her community.

Kendra is also a proud alumna of Georgia State University, where she earned dual degrees and made her mark as a standout member of the women's track and field team — a testament to her discipline, drive and perseverance.

The GSCPA Public Service Award is a fitting tribute to Kendra's unwavering commitment to using her skills and influence to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Her journey continues to inspire professionals across Georgia and beyond to lead with purpose and give back to the communities they serve.

As an outstanding CPA and GSCPA member, The Georgia Society of CPAs is honored to present the 2025 Public Service Award to Kendra LaFleur.

And the nominees are...

To nominate an individual for a GSCPA award, please complete the award nomination form available at <http://bit.ly/AwardsGSCPA>

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS

December 31, 2025

CONTACT

Callie Hammond, 404-504-2953

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

The Meritorious Service Award is the highest award presented by GSCPA in recognition for outstanding service to the profession. The individual shall have given superior service to the profession, or could be recognized for a single accomplishment that came to fruition during the course of one year.

PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The annual Public Service Award recognizes a member who has distinguished himself or herself in public service activities at the local, state, regional, or national level. Recent activities have included traditional public service via such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce and United Way. Nominees have also been leaders in less traditional areas, such as health care and disabilities, urban development initiatives, education, youth programs, and cultural activities.

OUTSTANDING MEMBER IN INDUSTRY

This award recognizes a member in industry who has made significant contributions, professional and civic, that reflect the values and ideals to which CPAs in this practice area should aspire. Nominees are required to be a GSCPA fellow member in good standing and be employed in practice in industry.



2025 OUTSTANDING MEMBER IN INDUSTRY AWARD

David Golden, CPA, J.D., LL.M.

Presented by Kathryn Fletcher at the 2025 Spring Leadership Council

At The Georgia Society of CPAs Spring Council Meeting, David Golden was honored with the Outstanding Member in Industry award, a recognition of his significant contributions, professional and civic, to the ideals and values of the industry practice area of accounting.

David Golden is a current partner at Troutman Pepper Locke, an international law firm. David works diligently in a variety of complex matters relating to state and federal taxation of corporations, partnerships, individuals, tax exempt entities and industrial development bonds. His years of professional experience enable him to provide a full range of trust and estate planning services. David has been working with Troutman for the vast majority of his career, over 40 years.

Some of David's significant professional achievements include developing litigation strategy and participation in the litigation of AT&T v. Collins, in which Fulton County Superior Court and the Georgia Court of Appeals, in a case of first impression, sanctioned the use of the unitary method of apportionment, representing a multimillion dollar state tax savings to AT&T.

He has served as Bond Counsel preparing all required bond documents to enable owners of manufacturing facilities, warehouses and office buildings to obtain significant property tax abatements. He has successfully negotiated the value of a closely held business with the District Counsel's office of the IRS where the liquidation value of the business was far in excess of the going concern value. He has designed a creative compensation package permitting the owner of a successful small business to attract and reward qualified personnel while retaining

100 percent ownership in the business. David's dedication to the accounting, financial and law profession spans decades, leaving significant impact to all those he serves.

The Georgia Society of CPAs is not the only organization to recognize David's significant career achievements, professional reputation and dedication to clients. *Law & Politics* and *Atlanta Magazine* named David a "Super Lawyer" in Estate Planning & Probate (2004–2021). David was named *Best Lawyers in America*®, a peer-reviewed recognition, in the areas of Trusts and Estates (2018–2025) and Tax Law (2024–2025), and *Georgia Trend Magazine* consistently names David in the "Legal Elite" in Taxes, Estates, and Trusts (2004–2013, 2015, 2020–2022).

David chose to pursue a career in law after completing his Bachelor of Science at The Ohio State University. He attended University of Georgia School of Law, passed the Georgia bar exam and was admitted to legal practice in 1984. David's commitment to education lead him to Emory University School of Law, where he earned his Master of Laws.

In addition, David is a licensed Certified Public Accountant. He is a member of the American Bar Association and the Atlanta Bar Association where he has served on the Board of Directors and the Taxation Section. David was a member of the IRS Advisory Committee from 2010–2013.

The GSCPA Outstanding Member in Industry award is a natural fit to honor David's outstanding service to his profession, his education and his clients.



NAVIGATING THE AI FRONTIER SERIES FOR CPAs

Future-Proof Your Career!

Artificial intelligence is transforming the accounting profession. CPAs who embrace and leverage AI will gain a competitive advantage—while those who don't risk being left behind.

An opportunity to stay ahead of the curve with our expert-led AI courses designed specifically for financial professionals. What event attendees will gain:

- ✓ **Clarity & Confidence in AI** – Demystify AI, understand how it works, and discover its real-world applications in accounting.
- ✓ **Boost Efficiency & Accuracy** – Automate repetitive tasks, reduce errors, and enhance productivity.
- ✓ **Leverage AI for Business Growth** – Learn how AI can streamline operations, improve client service, and drive profitability.
- ✓ **Practical, Hands-On Learning** – Go beyond theory with actionable insights and real use cases tailored for CPAs.

AI ISN'T THE FUTURE—IT'S THE PRESENT.



**NEW AI
SERIES
FOR GSCPA
MEMBERS**

Live Stream Only | 2 hours CPE Credit | \$79 Members/\$99 Nonmembers

The Big Picture for CPAs | October 24 | Event Code: LS10008

Generative AI in Practice: Boost Efficiency and Profitability | November 21 | Event Code: LS11005

Mastering Microsoft Copilot for CPAs | December 5 | Event Code: LS12005

Ethical AI Practices for CPAs: Ensuring Responsible Use | December 19 | Event Code: LS12006

Southeastern Accounting Show

Tuesday, August 19 - Wednesday, August 20, 2025 | Atlanta Marriott Northwest at Galleria, Atlanta, Ga.

Event Code: 13085 | Up to 18 Hours of CPE Credit

Are you looking for one event where you can explore the newest accounting standards, upcoming tax changes and leadership inspiration? Do you also want to network with peers to strengthen your connections and create new ones? Then look no further than the 2025 Southeastern Accounting Show! GSCPA offers everything you need in one conference. With four tracks of curated content, you'll gain exclusive insights, develop valuable skills and walk away with distinct guidance to grow at your own pace.

VIRTUAL PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Monday, August 18, 2025 | 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

\$180+ value for \$99 for SEAS attendees

Mastering Microsoft Copilot

Tommy Stephens, CPA, CITP, CGMA, K2 Enterprises

AI continues to grow by leaps and bounds. One AI platform leading the way for businesses is Microsoft's Copilot. Copilot's strong data privacy and security foundation, coupled with its deep integration with Microsoft Office apps and services creates a tremendous value proposition for businesses of all sizes. Participate in this session to learn the best ways of using Copilot to achieve the results you desire. From creating effective prompts, to using Copilot to analyze data, to relying on Copilot to help you manage your email burden and summarize meetings, you will learn the skills necessary to truly master Copilot and maximize your ROI on your AI investment.

Add the 4-hour virtual pre-conference workshop to your SEAS registration for only \$99 for SEAS attendees. Only registrants of the Southeastern Accounting Show are eligible for the discounted price (\$99) for this CPE course. Regular 4-hour course fees (\$180+) apply to those not registered to attend SEAS.

GENERAL SESSIONS

The Future Is Human: Build Your Talent Game Now

Jeremy Wortman, Ph.D., HRD Initiatives, LLC

98% of managing/senior partners say that it is critical that their firm be open and successful in 10-15 years. When asked, "How important are your firm's employees to that long-term success?" They say absolutely critical. However, when then asked, "What is your firm's talent management strategy?" You hear crickets. Over 90% of firms say they have little to no formal talent management strategy. During this session we will explore a simple, yet comprehensive model to help firm leaders create their talent management strategy to achieve the firm of the future.

Boom, Bust or Bounce Back? Making Sense of the Economy and Markets

Patrick Maffett, CIMA, AIF, MBA, Synovus

Explore the forces shaping today's economy and financial markets in this timely and engaging session. Break down key economic indicators, market trends and potential scenarios—boom, bust or bounce back—to help you make informed decisions. Whether you're planning ahead or navigating uncertainty, walk away with insights to help clients and organizations navigate uncertainty with greater confidence.

OPTIONAL MORNING SESSIONS

Build a Scalable (and Sellable) Firm Through Advisory Services

Adam Lean, The CFO Project

Attendees will learn how to incorporate CFO advisory services in their firms in such a way that allows the firm to be both scalable (increase revenue without a substantial increase in cost) and sellable (allowing the firm to generate a consistent stream of revenue that does not depend on the firm owner).

Become an Ethical Leader to Drive Crucial Business Results

Jon Lokhorst, CSP, CPA, PCC, Your Best Leadership LLC

Rarely do leaders set out to commit fraud, destroy culture or engage in unethical practices. Unethical behavior usually evolves over time when leaders lack a strong personal foundation. Explore six research-based ethical perspectives to shape your foundation for ethical behavior. Discover the underlying principles, beliefs and values that influence your decision-making when ethical issues are present. Apply these principles to real business situations as you learn how being an ethical leader is more challenging (and important) than you think.

TO REGISTER

Visit www.gscpa.org or call 800-330-8889, Option 3. Early registration fee ends July 19 so act fast!



GSCPA IS EXCITED TO PRESENT THE SHOW IN A NEW LOCATION THIS YEAR!

The Atlanta Marriott Northwest at Galleria offers an exceptional meeting space with state-of-the-art technology that is easily accessible with plenty of on-site parking. Prepare to meet us in this new space!

Accounting & Auditing

Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) Update from a Private Company Council (PCC) Member

GASB, Yellow Book, and Uniform Guidance Update

Today's Audit Landscape

Quality Management Standards: How Will Peer Review Be Affected?

Follow the Money and Catch the Fraudster!

Implementing AI-Powered Audit Tools: Risks and Rewards

From Framework to Function: Blockchain-Enabled Crypto for Treasury, Payments and Beyond in 2025

Using AI in Front to Back Process, Risk and Controls

Tax

JJ The CPA's Federal Tax Update

Current Status of State Taxes

JJ The CPA's Individual Tax Update

Hot Topics in Tax Including Conservation Easements and International Tax

Tax Talk with Art and Anson

Department of Revenue Update

Estate Planning Update: Strategies, Surprises and What's Ahead

IRS Operations: The Path Ahead

Business & Industry

Cybersecurity Playbook for CPAs in Corporate Accounting

The U.S. Economic Outlook

Why Guessing Breach Costs is Risky: Use Quantifiable Risk Instead

The CPA's Guide to Excel Data Analysis: Turning Numbers into Knowledge

From Paychecks to Policies: What Changed This Year? Employment Law Update

Tech Talk with Calvin Wong

Dynamic Forecasting and Budgeting: From Reactive to Proactive

Where is My Golden Parachute? Key M&A Insights for Business Owners Preparing for a Successful Exit

Trending

50 Reasons to Fire a Client or Employer: Capturing a Work Life Balance in Your Life

Mastering Microsoft 365 Copilot: Tools for CPAs

Beyond the Buzzwords: Leadership That Actually Works

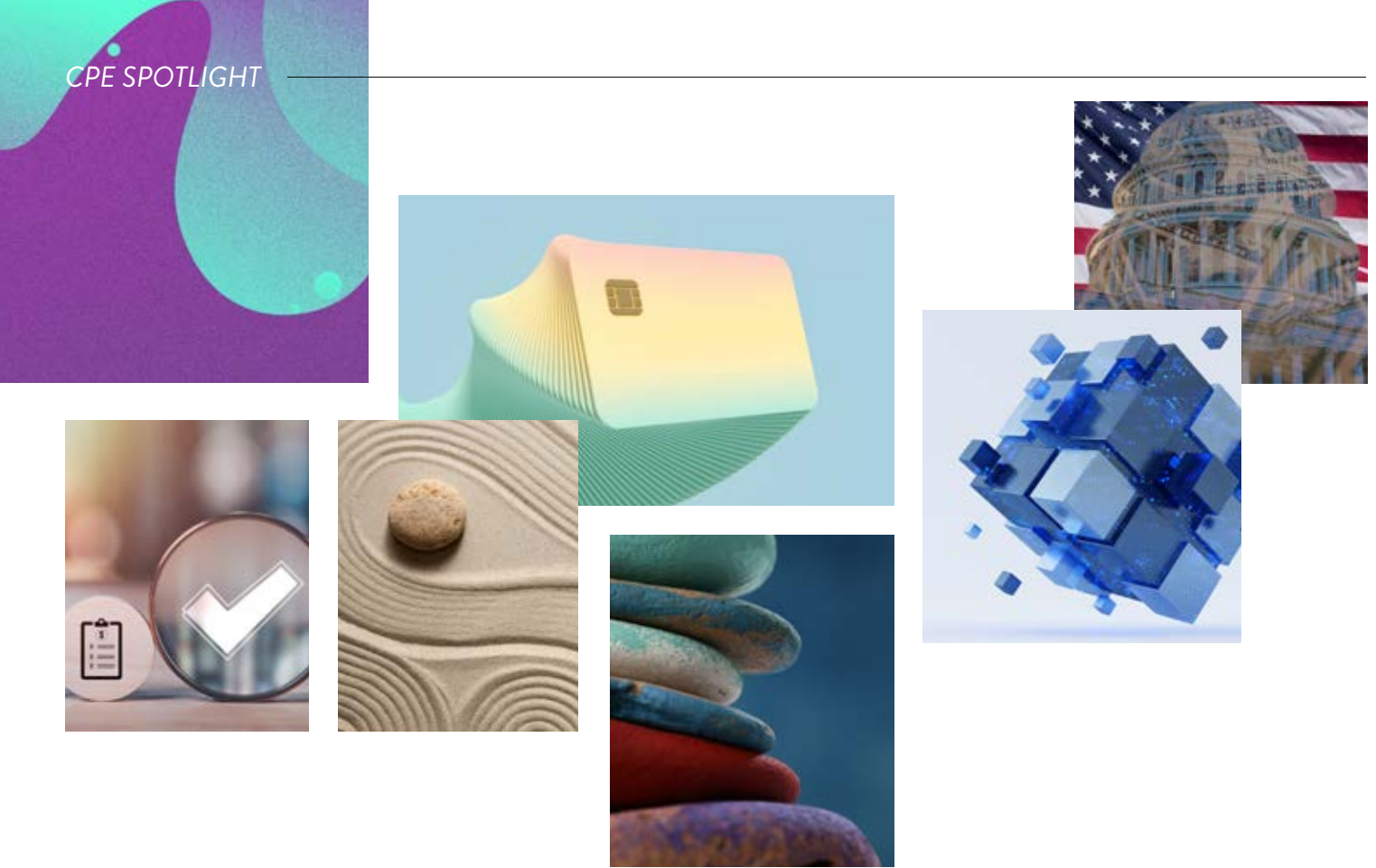
Aging Solo: A Care Planning Approach for Peace of Mind

Keep Your Best Leaders: Four Keys to Build a Flourishing Leadership Pipeline

Private Equity & Business Succession Planning: Myths & Momentum

Recruit, Retain, Repeat: Tackling Talent Challenges in a Shifting Landscape

Rightsizing: The Key to Profitability Without Burnout



2025 GSCPA Conferences

Hear from the experts and deepen your knowledge of topics that interest you and directly benefit your clients by attending a GSCPA conference. Conferences range from one to two days and cover a variety of interest areas to enhance your role as a CPA. Attendance options include virtual via live stream and in-person. For more information or to register for these events, visit www.gscpa.org.

SOUTHEASTERN ACCOUNTING SHOW ***NEW LOCATION!***

August 19-20, 2025 | In-Person
Atlanta Marriott Northwest at Galleria

FRAUD AND FORENSIC ACCOUNTING CONFERENCE ***NEW LOCATION!***

September 18, 2025 | Live Stream or In-Person
GSCPA Office, Alpharetta

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS CONFERENCE

October 16, 2025 | Live Stream

ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING CONFERENCE

October 23, 2025 | Live Stream

GEORGIA TAX FORUM ***NEW LOCATION!***

November 5-6, 2025 | Live Stream or In-person
GSCPA Office, Alpharetta

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY CONFERENCE ***NEW LOCATION!***

November 19-20, 2025 | Live Stream or In-person
GSCPA Office, Alpharetta

GOVERNMENTAL A&A CONFERENCE

December 11, 2025 | Live Stream



READY FOR THE NEXT ANYTHING

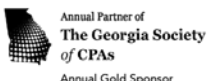
At ADP®, accountants are not just supported – they're valued. We're here to help you and your clients thrive as business needs evolve.

Trust ADP to help you get things done faster, so you can stay ahead of whatever comes next.



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Proud Silver Partner of the GSCPA

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“CPACharge has made it easy and inexpensive to accept payments **via credit card**. I'm getting **paid faster**, and clients are able to pay their bills with **no hassles**.

– Cantor Forensic Accounting, PLLC

Trusted by accounting industry professionals nationwide, CPACharge is a simple, web-based solution that allows you to securely accept client credit and eCheck payments from anywhere.



22% increase in cash flow with online payments



65% of consumers prefer to pay electronically



62% of bills sent online are paid in 24 hours

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BUSINESS SERVICES



Poe Group Advisors is the leading accounting firm intermediary in the Industry, owned by CPA, Brannon Poe. We have a proven 5-step process that ensures favorable terms and a seamless guided transition for both buyer and seller. If you are interested in selling or buying email info@poe-groupadvisors.com

Accounting Practice Academy (APA)

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TEST RESULTS

Upon completion of the test, your answers will be graded and within two business days you will either receive an Event Acknowledgement stating you passed the test along with certificate of attendance or an email stating you did not pass along with a link to retake the test.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this test, please contact the CPE Department at 404-504-2985.

ATTRIBUTION

The self-study test is developed and written by Lowell Mooney, CPA, Ph.D., professor of accounting at Georgia Southern University.

JULY/AUG 2025

TEST NO. CA250708

1. (A) (B) (C) (D)
2. (A) (B) (C) (D)
3. (A) (B) (C) (D)
4. (A) (B) (C) (D)
5. (A) (B) (C) (D)
6. (A) (B) (C) (D)
7. (A) (B) (C) (D)
8. (A) (B) (C) (D)
9. (A) (B) (C) (D)
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MEET YOUR NEW GSCPA CHAIR: JAMES UNDERWOOD

1. According to the new GSCPA Chair, James Underwood, what is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a CPA?
 - A. The prestige of public accounting firms
 - B. Forming deep, lasting relationships with clients
 - C. Access to global travel opportunities
 - D. Consistent working hours and low stress
2. Which of the following best reflects James Underwood's goal as GSCPA Chair?
 - A. To increase CPA salaries across Georgia
 - B. To reshape public perception of the accounting profession
 - C. To require CPAs to attend more conventions
 - D. To create a national CPA holiday

DELIVERING CERTAINTY AND SUPPORT: NEW TAX RELIEF FOR GEORGIA'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR AND A CALL FOR FEDERAL DISASTER FILING REFORM

3. All the following are provisions included in Georgia House Bill 223 EXCEPT:
 - A. A reforestation tax credit for timber producers
 - B. Exemption of federal disaster payments from Georgia income tax
 - C. Temporary expansion of GATE to include rebuilding materials
 - D. Reimbursement of all storm damage costs to farmers by the state
4. Which of the following statements is TRUE concerning Senate Bill 201?
 - A. It enhances protections for property owners against fraudulent post-disaster contractors.
 - B. It provides tax refunds to farmers for previous storm damage.
 - C. It increases the state sales tax on agricultural equipment.
 - D. It shifts water metering responsibilities to private contractors.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EXPERT WITNESSES: NAVIGATING THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES

5. What is the most important lesson for CPAs from the Matter of Weber regarding AI use in financial analysis?
 - A. CPAs should always use open-source AI tools for efficiency.
 - B. AI can replace the need for experience and credentials.
 - C. Relying on AI without adhering to standard methodologies can undermine credibility and disqualify expert testimony.
 - D. Microsoft Copilot is more accurate than other AI tools.

6. What is the main risk CPAs should recognize when using AI tools in litigation support or expert testimony?
 - A. AI tools are only useful in tax-related cases.
 - B. AI-generated errors (hallucinations) can lead to disqualification or sanctions.
 - C. Courts encourage the use of AI for expert analysis.
 - D. Most AI tools come with pre-verified data.

TURNING FINANCIAL INSIGHT INTO BUSINESS FORESIGHT: EMPOWERING YOUR COMPANY FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH

7. According to the article, which of the following best captures the CPA's evolving role in a client's financial journey?
 - A. Preparing accurate tax returns and reconciling bank statements
 - B. Serving primarily as a cost controller and regulatory compliance officer
 - C. Offering outsourced bookkeeping services and quarterly payroll reports
 - D. Transitioning from historical reporter to strategic advisor through foresight and financial leadership

DEMYSTIFYING AI CHATBOTS: CHOOSING THE RIGHT ONE FOR THE TASK

8. When using AI chatbots, the author recommends that you:
 - A. Replace human decision-making with AI efficiency.
 - B. Use only one chatbot for all tasks to simplify workflows.
 - C. View AI chatbots as a tool to manage, not as replacements for professional judgment.
 - D. Avoid using AI for any client-facing communication.

KEEP YOUR BEST LEADERS: FOUR KEYS TO BUILD A FLOURISHING LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

9. All the following are strategies recommended in the article to engage and retain top CPA firm leaders EXCEPT:
 - A. Rotate managers across departments quarterly to reduce boredom
 - B. Connect leadership work to the firm's mission and strategic plan
 - C. Provide stretch assignments and meaningful feedback
 - D. Include high-potential leaders in pipeline and career planning discussions

DAY IN THE LIFE: MARK KOZIEL, CPA, CGMA — AICPA'S NEW PRESIDENT & CEO

10. What insight does Mark Koziel's daily routine offer for CPA firm leaders?
 - A. Delegation is more effective than engagement.
 - B. Leadership requires intentional communication, flexibility, and visibility.
 - C. Successful CEOs avoid social media.
 - D. Leaders should limit travel to stay focused on internal operations.

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From Moultrie, Georgia to the Gold Dome: A CPA's Perspective on HB 148

by **MICHAEL THOMPSON, CPA**

Please Note: The views and interpretations reflected below are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect an expression of opinion on the part of The Georgia Society of CPAs.

Growing up in Moultrie, Georgia, I was not sure what career I would pursue, but I knew I wanted to go to Berry College in Rome, Ga. to help me find my way. While at Berry, I found my focus in an accounting major, leading me to move to Atlanta after graduation to pursue a career in public accounting. I chose to start with a local firm and had a fulfilling 30-year career serving the local Atlanta market.

Of course, life has a way of evolving, and when my partners and I decided to make the strategic move of coming together with CLA in 2018, I found myself navigating the world of a national firm with a much broader scope and new levels of responsibility.

One of those responsibilities came in the form of addressing the CPA pipeline crisis, an issue that has become impossible to ignore. At CLA, we created an internal task force to dig deep into licensure and workforce challenges, and I was honored to be selected as Georgia's representative to that group. We were tasked with identifying forward-looking solutions to strengthen the future of the profession. For me, it was more than a professional obligation, it was personal.

In 2024, I reached out to Don Cook and Boyd Search at The Georgia Society of CPAs. At that moment, I knew I wanted to learn more about what Georgia was doing to address the issues facing our profession, particularly around creating additional pathways to CPA licensure. What I found was incredibly encouraging. Don and Boyd were not just aware of the challenges — they had data, context, insight and, more importantly, they had a vision for Georgia's path forward.

That vision became House Bill 148.

From that first conversation, it was clear to me that Georgia was ahead of the curve. HB 148 was not reactive to the current situation; it was a strategic step forward. It proposed an additional pathway to

CPA licensure: a bachelor's degree with the required accounting coursework, two years of relevant experience and successful completion of the CPA exam. It was a practical, high-quality option that aligned with how firms are already evaluating talent and afforded students achievable career paths.

The entire process was collaborative. I was able to serve as a sounding board, provide input and share feedback from my CLA colleagues across the country. GSCPA didn't just want support, they wanted dialogue. They valued the voices of practitioners, educators and firm leaders alike. That kind of inclusivity is rare, and it was exactly what we needed to move forward.

Watching HB 148 move through the General Assembly was like getting a front-row seat to the policymaking process. I saw firsthand the effort, thoughtful negotiations and sheer determination it took to get it across the finish line. I witnessed Don, Boyd and Kathryn Fletcher (GSCPA 2024-2025 Chair) speak with passion, clarity, and purpose to lawmakers and stakeholders at every step.

When the bill was recently signed into law by Governor Brian Kemp, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride, not just in the legislation itself, but in the process that led us there. It was smart policy, crafted by people who care deeply about the future of the profession. For someone who started out in a local Atlanta based firm, it's been a remarkable experience to help shape something this significant on a statewide level and to ultimately impact national change. I genuinely believe HB 148 is a blueprint for other states, and I'm proud that Georgia had the courage to lead.

The CPA profession is evolving. HB 148 proves that with collaboration, commitment and a shared vision, progress is not only possible — it's achievable. I'm grateful to have had a role in that progress, and I look forward to seeing the next generation of CPAs benefit from it!



MICHAEL THOMPSON, CPA is a principal with CLA and specializes in working with privately held businesses and high net worth families in the accounting and tax fields. He has extensive experience in the real estate industry representing some of Atlanta's premiere commercial and residential real estate developers, management companies and investors. Michael received his B.S. in Accounting from Berry College where he is an active alumnus, currently serving on the College's Board of Visitors and Planned Giving Council. Michael currently serves on the Major Gifts and Planned Giving Council of Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities and served two terms as Board Chair of the Summit Counseling Center, and over 10 years as a Director of the Buckhead Coalition.



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