READY TO QUIT? DON’T WITHOUT ASKING THESE QUESTIONS FIRST

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Researchers have spent a lot of time trying to figure out what matters to Millennials who, this year, became the largest generation in the U.S. workforce. We already know that technology is high up on the list. But study after study has also found that, for this age group, the oldest of human impulses—doing good—is also important. According to a 2015 survey sponsored by the Case Foundation that included 1,584 Millennial employees, 84 percent made a charitable donation in 2014, while 74 percent spent at least an hour volunteering.

Young CPAs have an opportunity to do good in a unique way, one that puts their training and skillset to use: helping others make sense of financial issues. That could mean helping a small community group manage its bills, or a church or synagogue balance its books. It can also mean supporting efforts to boost financial literacy throughout the community, which there’s a clear need for. In a survey of 2,017 adults released by the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) earlier this year, some 60 percent admitted that they don’t budget or keep close track of their spending, and 75 percent said that they would benefit from professional advice.

This is a bigger deal than you might think. When former New York Gov. David A. Paterson spoke to students enrolled in the NYSSCPA’s Career Opportunities in the Accounting Profession (COAP) program a few years ago, he drew a connection between the difficulty in managing personal finances and the larger financial problems that the country faces. “The reason we have such economic problems [is] manifest, but it comes down to the same thing, the basic law of life: You can’t spend money you don’t have, as enticing as it is,” he said.

It’s also an issue that the NYSSCPA has prioritized. Among other things, the Society launched a new financial literacy campaign, Get Money Smart, in October. It includes online resources, such as financial literacy videos, a money workbook for kids, a financial fitness tool kit and a small business resource guide. (Go to nysscpa.org/getmoneysmart to learn more.) In addition, the NYSSCPA has been connecting CPA volunteers with the public for face-to-face interactions at financial literacy events all over the state.

This is where you come in. We’d love to see more young professionals serve as volunteers, especially when it comes to speaking to high school and college students. You’d be surprised to see how big a difference you can make. If you’re interested, email Alonza Roberston, the NYSSCPA’s media relations manager, at arobertson@nysscpa.org.

For other volunteer opportunities that may come up, or ideas for steps you can take in your own community, check out the Society’s website, nysscpa.org.

Qiang Zhao, CPA, was part of the NYSSCPA team that hosted a financial literacy event at the Eagle Academy in the Bronx on Oct. 24, as part of Get Money Smart.
What's trending

News and information for young professionals

EDITED BY N. SHEREE SAUNDERS

Will JOB HOPPING HARM YOUR CAREER?

It might sound like a simple enough question, but deciding when to move on from an employer can be oh-so-complicated. For starters, experts say that if you’re determined to have a resume that you’re proud of—and one that hiring managers actually respond to—you can’t start eyeing the exits without having a clear strategy in hand. Here’s what you need to know before you consider jumping ship.

BY ANYA KHALAMAYZER
If you’re in your 20s or 30s, the odds are high that you’ll be calling at least a handful of companies home throughout your career. Your baby boomer parents may have spent their working years at just one or two employers, but these days, most young professionals expect to do at least some job-hopping: In a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) survey of 4,364 grads—aged 31 or under, from 75 countries—54 percent said they expected to have between two and five employers in their lifetime; more than a quarter expected to have six or more.

If they do swap jobs, according to a 2014 report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it’ll be to the tune of every three years—that’s about how long the bureau found that workers aged 25 to 34 stick with an employer—though turnover is expected to increase, now that the economy has improved.

To be frank, many hiring managers would prefer to roll with a job candidate whose resume suggests that she’s willing to tough it out with an employer, according to Rosemary Haefner, vice president of Human Resources at the jobs site CareerBuilder.com. But having several notches on your work belt doesn’t carry the stigma it used to—in fact, most companies have come to expect it. Nearly a third of 2,138 employers and HR reps surveyed by CareerBuilder.com last year said they assumed workers would job hop, while 55 percent said they’d hired a frequent job-hopper. More than half of employers polled had even come to see it as a positive, saying that job-hoppers tend to have a wide range of expertise and can adapt quickly. “Viewing job-hopping as bad is outdated logic,” said Eileen Sharaga, a career counselor and coach based in New York City. “The whole work environment has changed—you can get a health plan on your own, you can take your 401(k) with you, so the things that used to tie people to jobs just aren’t there anymore.” However, there’s a catch. While it’s one thing to move on, when you leave a job still matters. In a 2014 survey conducted by PayScale, Inc., and Millennial Branding, 26 percent of Millennials said that workers should only be expected to stay in a job a year or less before looking for a new position, but experts almost universally pan exits of under 12 months. Why? For one thing, replacing an employee can be an expensive proposition—the think tank Center for American Progress estimates that it costs businesses about one-fifth of a worker’s salary to replace him or her.

If you get in the habit of leaving before the ink on your business cards has dried, hiring managers might conclude that you’re not worth the time, money and effort it takes to train you. Repeatedly leaving under a year at a job doesn’t do you any favors either, since it takes more than a minute to learn the nuances of an organization. When you’re new, explained Daniel Y. Mizrachi, CPA, a 29-year-old manager at PwC, “no one has a rapport with you, which means you’ll have to build up your political capital all over again.” Moreover, some hiring managers would rather see you bounce around earlier in your career, rather than later. “Employers are less forgiving of those who are older, have more experience, and continue to job hop,” says Joel A. Cooperman, CPA, the founder and CEO of the northeastern accounting firm Citrin Cooperman. Indeed, in the CareerBuilder.com survey, 41 percent of hiring managers said frequent job-hopping becomes less acceptable in your 30s, while 28 percent considered it a no-no after age 40.

There’s also one more factor aspiring CPAs have to keep in mind: the CPA exam. “I would recommend that a CPA candidate stay put while studying for it,” said Amanda L. Sexton, CPA, a business valuation and litigation support services specialist. If you haven’t passed the exam yet, you’ll want to get it out of the way before your job duties grow. In the end, too, “How long should I stay” is trumped by an even more important question: “Why am I leaving?”

“Moving around isn’t a bad thing, if it allows you to develop an insight or understanding of who you want to be,” says Roy L. Cohen, a career coach and author of The Wall Street Professional’s Survival Guide. Any employee who leaves a job, he adds, should be able to make a case for how doing so helped him to be a better-rounded professional. “If you can tell the story about how the moves you made helped you to achieve greater insight, people are going to be impressed by your decision,” he said. For more on whether and how to start timing your exit, read on.
Deuces

We asked CPAs and career experts what they think is a reasonable amount of time for young professionals to spend at a company.

By Anya Khalamayzer and Chris Gaetano

TWO YEARS

“I don’t think there’s any one answer, but, at the very least, try to stay for two years. Switching after just one year, or less, is a red flag that will draw a lot of questions, even if you had a really good reason for why you left.” —Allan Tepper, CPA, Cofounder and Senior Managing Director, CFO Consulting Partners LLC, Princeton, N.J.

“Two years is a healthy amount of time to stay at a company, unless the company is dysfunctional, you can’t do the job or your self-esteem is being eroded.” —Lynn Berger, Career Counselor and Coach, N.Y., N.Y.

THREE TO FOUR YEARS

“The first year, you’re really just settling in, getting a feel for the office and how things work, and seeing where your job fits in. The second year, you should be improving in your technical skills and getting more comfortable with the assignments you work on. The third year, it’s up to you to apply what you’ve learned and make yourself shine. And by the fourth year, well, if you’re not moving up and advancing, either your skill set needs some work, or it’s time to move on.” —Tera A. Stanton, CPA, Partner, Davidson Fox & Company, Binghamton, N.Y.

IT DEPENDS

“If the work environment is positive, you should stay at a job as long as you feel challenged and you’re learning. If that’s 3 years, fine. If that’s 5 years, fine. And if it’s 10 years, that’s OK too. How long you stay should depend, not on some arbitrary number of years, but on whether you feel you’re growing as a professional.” —Charles Weinstein, CPA, CEO, EisnerAmper LLP, N.Y., N.Y.

“There’s no set number of years. For some people, it could be as early as a year, but for others, it could be closer to two or three years. If you’re not advancing, it’s time to go. If the job is starting to affect your health, then it’s definitely time to go. Don’t be afraid to keep your options open.” —Mark Ulrich, CPA, Director, Center for Accounting Research and Technology, St. John’s University, Queens, N.Y.

QUICK TIP

When it’s so not worth it

While leaving a job without a backup plan is ill advised—you never know how long it will take you to find your next gig—staying in a truly toxic environment isn’t any good for you either. If your workplace includes emotional abuse or mistreatment, and the company doesn’t take it seriously, consider it a deal breaker and make plans to move on—fast.
THE ISSUE: YOU'RE AMBITIOUS
Should you stay or should you go?

DEPENDS

According to a Deloitte survey of 7,800 Millennials in 29 countries, only 28 percent thought their current organizations were making full use of their skills. But if your goal is to advance, you don’t necessarily have to leave your current job to do that. Indeed, said career services specialist Lynn Berger, too many people leave their organizations before they’ve explored every opportunity within it. “There may be a way to accomplish what you want within your environment, before you jump ship,” he said. If you’re feeling stalled at your current job, can you take a class or work with another department on a project or task force? Have you talked to your manager about your desire to get promoted and what steps you might need to take to make it happen? If not, your decision to leave may be premature.

THE ISSUE: YOUR ORGANIZATION STILL USES FLOPPY DISCS
Should you stay or should you go? GO

Young professionals have a hard enough time living, much less working, without technology. So it’s no surprise that a majority—some 59 percent—of Millennials who responded to PwC’s survey said that the state of an employer’s technology is key when they’re considering a job. While it could be worth your while to work for a firm that, if not cutting edge, at least has a desire to stay current—there may even be an opportunity for you to help it step up its tech game—experts say it’s wise to break up with an employer that’s stubbornly clinging to fax machines and Windows 95, or any other Stone Age technology. “Organizations that aren’t keeping up with technology are falling behind, which is a liability, not an asset,” career services specialist and author Roy L. Cohen said. “If your boss likes the status quo, and is not supporting your growth and development in the technological sphere, you have no choice but to look outside the organization.” After all, adds James R. D’Arcangelo, CPA, of the firm D’Arcangelo & Co., LLP, we’ve already seen how swiftly technology has shifted the profession so far. The firms that will continue to thrive, he said, keep an eye on where technology might lead the profession tomorrow.

THE ISSUE: YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF GRUNT WORK
Should you stay or should you go? STAY

Here’s the reality of starting out at the bottom of the totem pole: It may take a sec for your career to become all that you’d dreamed of, with more top-of-the-pick, superengaging projects and fewer of the tedious tasks you’d rather not do. And that will likely be true no matter where your cubicile is. Consequently, if you make a lateral switch from one lower-level job to another, just to get away from grunt work, you’ll likely find that the grass on the other side is actually the same shade as the grass you just left behind. In this profession, “there is no instant gratification,” said Yigal M. Rechtman, CPA, principal of litigation and forensics at Grassi & Co. The good news, adds career coach Eileen Sharaga, is that patience does get rewarded, so be open to what you can learn—whatever the task, wherever you are.

QUICK TIP
Leave on a good note

It pays to leave an employer on the best possible terms. One way to do that? Never give less than two weeks’ notice. Rebecca L. Nash, a 24-year-old CPA candidate, recalls that when she left her position at a small firm in Sullivan County for the midized firm EisnerAmper LLP in New York City, she was so intent on not burning bridges that she put in more than a month’s notice. “I gave them plenty of time to plan and adjust to the change,” she said. “It was important to me to have a healthy relationship with superiors before I left.” If nothing else, remember this: A proper closure is just as important as a proper introduction.

6 NEXTGEN
THE ISSUE: YOU WANT A PERK/TYPING CLIENT/SKILL SET THAT YOUR CURRENT FIRM DOESN’T OFFER
Should you stay or should you go? DEPENDS

Some 72 percent of young professionals that PwC surveyed said they made concessions while job hunting during the recession in order to land a position. That includes 32 percent who said they agreed to a lower salary than expected and 17 percent who took a job outside their ideal location. As the economy improves, however, some of those Millennials may begin to look elsewhere. On the one hand, if your job doesn’t offer something you want, there may be room to negotiate. An example: exploring new specialties or learning a new skill set. According to D’Arcangelo, since firms know they need to help their employees grow in order to retain loyal, talented CPAs, they may help to open up a path for you that didn’t previously exist. “Have the courage to say to them, “I want to work here, but I need certain skills in order to be relevant tomorrow in my career,” D’Arcangelo advised.

Still, sometimes an employer simply can’t accommodate you, and you’re better off finding one who can. For instance, since Daniel Y. Mizrachi, CPA, wanted opportunities to work with larger clients and do more global work, he knew he’d have to leave the midsized regional firm where he’d spent five years. He pursued a position at PwC by connecting with recruiters on social media, and recently became a manager there. “Before you think of changing employers, identify your short-term goals, long-term goals and midterm goals, and make sure whatever role you take will fit within your plan,” Mizrachi suggested.
The CPA exam is one step closer to getting a full-on makeover. The American Institute of CPAs (AICPA)—which works with the testing company Prometric and the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) to give the exam—spent much of the past two years asking practitioners how the test could be updated to better reflect modern-day demands on the profession. (The exam was last tweaked in 2011, which, just to show you how much can change in four years, was the end of President Obama’s first term, when tech watchers officially declared BlackBerry dead, and the last time a Harry Potter movie was in theaters.) Now, the AICPA has a fleshed-out plan for revising the test, which it released for public comment in September. The institute will regroup when the comment period closes in November, announce the finalized updates at some point in 2016 and begin offering the revamped test in 2017. You can view the entire proposal for yourself at aicpa.org, but, in a nutshell, here’s what’s on the table:

**MORE QUESTIONS AIMED AT CRITICAL THINKING**

Though CPAs are expected to have fundamental accounting and auditing skills, there’s greater pressure for them to also demonstrate that they’re critical thinkers with plenty of business savvy—or, as A. Rief Kanan, CPA, an accounting professor at SUNY New Paltz, puts it, CPAs are “people who can discern what’s relevant from what’s irrelevant.” Consequently, the next version of the CPA exam will be geared toward testing what the AICPA calls “higher-order cognitive skills,” such as problem solving, analytical ability and professional skepticism.

Though the test will retain the existing four-section structure—Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR) and Regulation (REG)—there will be greater emphasis on task-based simulations, even in the BEC section, which previously hadn’t had any.

**YOU’LL GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE TEST MEASURES UP TO REAL LIFE**

In the past, some CPA candidates had wondered whether the questions they encountered on the exam reflected actual scenarios that accountants face. In fact, when the AICPA announced that it was looking to revise the test, Riddhi N. Desai, a young CPA from Potsdam, N.Y., told us that it was one of her main complaints. “Some of the simulation questions are esoteric to the point of having little relevance to actual practice,” she said. “There should be more questions that speak to situations you’re actually going to encounter in the working world.” The AICPA says it’s trying to do just that. According to the proposal, the exam’s current Content Specification Outline and Skill Specification Outline will...
be replaced with a blueprint attached to each section that will spell out how the skills and knowledge tested are relevant to the tasks that a newly licensed CPA might encounter.

YOU’LL GET MORE TIME TO TAKE THE TEST
Under the AICPA’s proposal, the new exam is expected to be longer than the current test, jumping from 14 to 16 hours. The extra time will be devoted to BEC and REG, so that each section will be 4 hours long. The exam will also include a 10- to 15-minute break for each section that does not count against testing time.

THE TEST WILL COST MORE
According to the AICPA, the cost of taking the exam will increase, with the BEC and REG sections running applicants an additional $20.

THE EXAM’S SCORING WEIGHT WILL CHANGE
Currently, multiple-choice questions count for 60 percent of the total score in AUD, FAR and REG, and 85 percent in BEC. Under the proposed changes, multiple-choice questions would count for 50 percent in AUD, FAR and REG, with the other 50 percent being made up of task-based simulations. BEC will likely have a scoring weight of 50 percent multiple choice, 15 percent written communications and 35 percent task-based simulations.

YOU’LL GET TO USE EXCEL
Since the vast majority of accounting firms use Microsoft Excel, candidates who take the new CPA exam will also be able to use the software, instead of the generic spreadsheet that’s currently offered with the test. Kanan said that this, in particular, would be helpful, since many managing partners he’s spoken to have expressed concern that students are not graduating with enough skill in using the program. Though the AICPA said it will not test proficiency in Excel itself, Kanan still believes that the change would encourage students to familiarize themselves with its functions and help prepare them for the realities of practice. “We talk about generally accepted accounting principles. This is a generally accepted accounting tool,” he reasons.

For more on preparing for the exam, go to nysscpa.org.

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MEET: Mark DiMichael, CPA, 32, a forensic accountant manager at Citrin Cooperman in New York City

The challenge:
To master public speaking. DiMichael, whose long-term goal is to make partner, is working hard to become someone who generates business for the firm. A former boss, whom he describes as “a big rainmaker,” often said that the key to winning new clients isn’t schmoozing—i.e., endlessly scheduling lunch dates—but developing a reputation as an expert, by writing accounting articles and giving presentations.

While this left DiMichael with a clear understanding of what it takes to get ahead, it also brought him face-to-face with his fears. “By nature, I’ve always been shy,” he said. “It made speaking publicly difficult.”

How he did it:
With the help of his career mentor, DiMichael identified a way to break out of his shell. Though he was new to the New York State Society of CPAs, having joined the organization two years ago, he volunteered for a leadership position in its statewide Litigation Services Committee, becoming vice chair and then chair. Both roles forced him to speak up—in a room full of much older colleagues, no less—since it was his responsibility to lead meetings. He delivered the closing remarks at the committee’s annual conference last year; this year, he ran the conference, delivered opening and closing remarks and introduced about half of the speakers. “At my first event, I was scared to death, but then I realized it wasn’t so bad,” he said. “Becoming a committee chair was probably the single most important thing I could do to become a better speaker.”

How you can follow suit:
Whether it’s taking on a leadership role at a professional or civic organization, or volunteering for project teams or committees at work, identify opportunities that force you to find your voice—and will help you to get noticed when you do. Tweet us @nysscpa.org to share your story.
HOW TO...
Not blow your interview

WE ASKED THREE HIRING MANAGERS ABOUT GAFFES JOB CANDIDATES HAVE MADE DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS. HERE’S WHAT THEY TOLD US.

LEA BENDER
Human Resources Senior Manager, NY

I typically interact with students and other candidates who are applying for entry-level positions. There have been a few instances in which a student has left his or her cell phone on and it rang during the interview. Usually, they’re apologetic and turn it off immediately, but one individual, two years ago, actually picked it up! Needless to say, he did not get the job. I’ve also interviewed candidates who are very arrogant, which I find surprising, especially for students or people who are trying to get their first professional job. I’ve had people boast about having multiple job offers. When done correctly, it’s a good point for conversation, but when the tone is boastful, it can be off-putting. Body language can also be a big indicator of professionalism—or lack thereof. Sometimes, people get too comfortable and end up slouching or spreading their legs wide, which isn’t very appropriate. Finally, candidates who don’t know very much about the firm never leave a good impression. Some people think that if they quote the website six or seven times, that’s enough. It isn’t. Candidates should research the firm past the website and talk to their contacts.

LOUIS C. GRASSI, CPA
CEO, Jericho

The worst thing is when they bash the firm they currently work for. That’s a total turnoff and has no place in the interview. Whether the candidate had a bad experience or it simply wasn’t a good fit, nothing merits that sort of behavior. Instead of focusing on the negative, you should be trying to convey who you are as a person, what you bring to the table and how you fulfill what we’re looking for as a firm. The candidates who make a great first impression are the ones who’ve done their homework, know our organization and are very professional in how they discuss their experiences. They keep their editorial comments to a minimum when asked about their soon-to-be ex-firm. At the end of the day, we really just want to hear about who they are as people, their professional experiences and what they love doing.

MICHAEL F. ROSENBLATT, CPA
President, NY

My company specializes in executive search and business advisory services. One potential concern is when a candidate requests a delayed start date. When candidates request more than a week to make a decision on whether or not they’re accepting a position and resigning from their current job, it generally is a sign that they’re still shopping around and looking at other opportunities. Another example of a lack of professionalism is when a candidate shows up late for an interview and doesn’t apologize or explain why, or when a candidate shows up unprepared. Candidates should have read material about the company, and reviewed its website and financial information, if available. They should also be appropriately dressed and bring several copies of their resume with them.

By Jason Wong
NEWS FLASH: Accounting is a people-oriented profession, and strong communication skills are just as important as technical aptitude. In fact, said Kevin Matz, a CPA and the managing attorney of Kevin Matz & Associates PLLC, whether you want to advance, be a source of referrals or pull in business, the requirement is essentially the same: You have to learn how to interact effectively with others. That doesn’t just mean figuring out what to say and how to say it. According to Matz, good communication also means being able to hear others out. After all, he said, clients want their CPA to be responsive to their particular situation, and that’s difficult to do if you’re only catching every third or fourth word. Here are a few rules of thumb, so that you never miss a beat.

**4 EASY WAYS TO BE A BETTER LISTENER**

**Turn your body toward the speaker and try to keep your posture open and relaxed, and your facial expression neutral.**

Physically demonstrate that you are paying attention.

Nobody likes to feel as if he or she isn’t being acknowledged, so do your best to show conversation partners that you’re taking in what they say. “You’ve got to look them in the eye. If you’re looking away, it shows that you’re distracted,” Matz said.

What’s worse, according to Let’s Connect! A Practical Guide for Highly Effective Professional Networking, by Jan Vermeiren, not making eye contact could even give the impression that you lack confidence or have something to hide. Another helpful hint: Put your cell phone away or snap off any electronics in your line of sight. “Text messages, email and phone calls can remove your focus from a person and what they’re trying to say,” he added.

“You’ll only be an effective listener if you can focus.”

Stop obsessing over your lines.

Matz cautions against listening with an agenda. You might not think you have one, but if you’re focused on how you’ll respond, instead of what the other person is saying, you do—and it’s to get your own perspective across. Consider conversations as a chance to gather information and learn something about someone else’s perspective. When there is an opening for you to chime in, reiterate that you were listening by either asking the speaker to clarify a point or posing a follow-up question, suggests Kadeen Wong, an associate attorney at Matz’s firm. For example, you might start off with, “You mentioned earlier that...” or “Can you explain...” “That will help the person you’re speaking to see that you understood what was said, or give them a chance to correct you if you misunderstood,” she said.

Don’t fidget.

Not all distractions are digital. In fact, according to Let’s Connect, there’s one that screams, “I’m not really listening,” and is as old as time: playing with a pen or tapping your foot. Not sure what to do instead? Vermeiren recommends that you turn your body toward the speaker and try to keep your posture open and relaxed, and your facial expression neutral. You could also smile and nod occasionally—not to show that you agree, but that you’re processing what the other person is saying. Just don’t do it in a way that seems exaggerated and kind of crazy.

Consider conversations a chance to gather information about someone else’s perspective.
Canned, robotic responses can make it seem like you’re on autopilot and not fully engaged, even if you are, notes Ayanna N. Coleman, CPA, a senior associate at Friedman LLP. According to How to Change Minds: The Art of Influence Without Manipulation, by Rob Jolles, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was so turned off by inattentive guests who came to the White House for social functions, that he got in the habit of greeting them with the words, “I murdered my grandmother today.” The response, Jolles wrote, “was invariably one of polite approval,” until one day, a guest who actually was listening quipped, “I’m sure she had it coming to her.” Be that guest.

Avoid off-the-shelf responses.

One of the most important rules of being a good listener is pretty straightforward: Don’t interrupt. Even if you’re unclear about something or particularly excited about the topic, wait until the other person has finished speaking before you throw your two cents in. In fact, Vermeiren recommends counting to three after the other person has stopped talking before you begin talking yourself.

Wait your turn.

Keep your posture open and relaxed, and your face neutral.

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Meetings fill an increasing number of hours in the workday, but for many professionals, they aren’t necessarily worth the effort: in a recent survey of 2,066 employees conducted by Harris Interactive, respondents said they spent 4.5 hours a week in general status meetings, up from 4 hours a week when the poll was conducted four years ago. More telling, though, is that over one-third of respondents called these mandatory powwows a waste of time, with three in five staffers admitting that they tune out or do other work during meetings.

The takeaway?
If you have to call a meeting, prep work—the thinking and general plan for running it—matters. Here’s how team leaders and experts say you can conduct a productive meeting that holds everyone’s attention.

Create an agenda.
An agenda is easily one of the most important tools for guaranteeing a meeting’s success. Besides being a formal statement of what you’re hoping to accomplish, it’s also a way to ensure that attendees come prepared to participate, said Edward F. Esposito, a New York CPA who specializes in forensic accounting and business valuation. “I circulate it about a week before and use it as an opportunity to ask people for comments and ideas,” he said. A good rule of thumb is to consider the time parameters for each agenda item, which will help you to keep the meeting running on schedule, added Gail M. KinSELLA, CPA, a partner at The Bonadio Group, in Syracuse.

Follow up.
Though the content and presentation of the meeting are critical, so is what follows. According to Meeting Excellence, every powwow should have a strong closing and end on a forward-looking note. Moreover, it’s not uncommon for people to walk away from the same meeting with different interpretations of what happened. To combat this, within a day of the meeting, send out a memo that highlights action steps or the finer points of what was accomplished.

Consider if you need a meeting in the first place.
If the goal is to provide updates, you can easily accomplish that through group chat or email,” said David M. Rottkamp, CPA, the partner-in-charge at Grassi & Co., in New York City. “An effective meeting is about accomplishing something—people’s time is valuable,” he added. In their book, Meeting Excellence: 33 Tools to Lead Meetings That Get Results, Glenn M. Parker and Robert Hoffman recommend gauging whether a meeting will or won’t be useful by asking yourself this question: “What will happen if the meeting isn’t held?” If the answer is, “Nothing would be missed,” don’t book the conference room.

The takeaway? If you have to call a meeting, prep work—the thinking and general plan for running it—matters. Here’s how team leaders and experts say you can conduct a productive meeting that holds everyone’s attention.
Here’s what happened when we brought together 200 students and CPA candidates and 11 small and medium-sized accounting firms for our NextGen Career Fair at NYU in October.
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Could Shonda Rhimes’s New Show be the CPA Version of “Grey’s Anatomy”?

CPA characters don’t get a whole lot of love in Hollywood. “The Producers” famously used them as comedic foils, with Mr. Marks, a “certified public asshole,” and nervous Leo, whose boldest move is to leave the profession, trading in his visor and pencils for show biz. And though accountants occasionally pop up on TV—think Oscar from “The Office” or Skyler White on “Breaking Bad,” even if she was using her skills to launder money for a meth ring—they’re usually in the background. Doctors and their staffs, on the other hand, have been the focus of nearly 100 U.S. and Canadian shows since the 1950s, according to Wikipedia.

Another gripe, while we’re on the subject: All too often, CPA characters are just so … boring. TVTropes.com, which has them pegged as “Acceptable Professional Targets,” notes that accountants are typically depicted as “dull [and] … unable to relax or think outside the box.” But an upcoming project just might flip the script and upend some of those stereotypes: “The Catch,” a stylish new Shonda Rhimes drama that ABC has added to its 2015–2016 lineup.

Though details are scant, here’s what we know: The show stars Mireille Enos (“If I Stay,” “World War Z”) as our heroine, Alice Vaughan, a forensic accountant on the verge of being conned by her own fiancé. The trailer seems promising—and sexy—although, according to Entertainment Weekly, there’s already some behind-the-scenes drama: Jennifer Schuur, the co-showrunner of “The Catch,” left in August over “creative differences.” So, can “The Catch” do for the profession what “Grey’s Anatomy” did for surgeons or “Scandal” did for politicos? We’ll see. We’ll be blogging about the series once it starts.

Also on our radar: “The Accountant,” an action thriller starring Ben Affleck and Anna Kendrick, is set to hit theaters in October 2016. Affleck plays Chris, “a socially-weird government accountant who moonlights as a highly trained assassin,” according to the website CINEMABLEND. We’re not sure what to make of all that, but, well, Ben Affleck.

BRAIN CANDY
Tuning In

BY JASON WONG AND N. SHEREE SAUNDERS

Shonda Rhimes

EMAIL
**Future accountants**

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