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ACCOUNTING PROFESSION HAS OFTEN BEEN CALLED "RECESSION-PROOF." IN SOME WAYS, THAT'S TRUE. HOWEVER, WITH COMPANIES LAYING OFF WORKERS AND CLOSING DOWN LOCATIONS ON A GLOBAL SCALE, THE CLIENT LISTS OF U.S. ACCOUNTING FIRMS WILL CERTAINLY BE AFFECTED. IF YOU'RE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BUT HAVE FIVE OR FEWER YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, YOU COULD BE IN DANGER OF LOSING YOUR JOB. AND IF YOU'RE SOON TO GRADUATE, YOU'RE ABOUT TO FACE THE DIFFICULT PROPOSITION OF SETTING YOURSELF APART AMONG AN ENORMOUS CROP OF NEW ACCOUNTANTS, AS WELL AS A GROWING GROUP OF JOB-SEEKING INDUSTRY VETERANS.

But the struggling economy does not spell certain doom for young accountants. While employment opportunities may be on a slight decline, accounting is still one of the strongest global industries. However, it is becoming increasingly important that you build your professional skills, knowledge base and rapport with others in your industry in order to thrive.

This article will highlight three tips for positioning yourself to successfully find and keep employment in the current tumultuous job market.

Earn Your CPA

In a volatile market, the most recent people hired are typically the first to be let go if there's nothing that sets them apart from their colleagues. The CPA license is a sign to employers of your commitment to your career. It's also an indication of your work ethic and a demonstration of your ability to set goals and take the steps necessary to achieve them.

Becoming a CPA is also your first step toward career advancement. Accountants are considered leaders and trusted experts in accounting and in business. Studies have shown that companies are increasingly looking to veteran CPAs to fill CEO and CFO roles in their organizations. Of course, it all starts with earning your CPA as early in your career as possible.

The benefits of earning your CPA are clearly evident in the long run, but you can also reap some pretty remarkable rewards immediately after passing the exam and gaining licensure. According to recent salary surveys, Certified Public Accountants of all experience levels typically earn roughly 10–15 percent more than their non-licensed counterparts in comparable positions. The sooner you take the CPA Exam after graduation, the easier it will be to tap into your existing knowledge. There is no time like the present to begin working on the most important step you can take toward job security, upward mobility and increased compensation for the rest of your career.

Kaplan Schweser is the featured CPA Review course provider of the WICPA. Learn more about preparing for the CPA Exam at www.wicpa.org/Kaplan.htm.

Become indispensable

Expertise is a characteristic of indispensable employees. An extremely significant step you can take to boost your value to the organization is to become an expert in an important and unique business niche. The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) is a great example of one such niche. IFRS is a reality that accounting firms will be dealing with sooner or later in the United States. There is currently a shortage of IFRS-educated CPAs nationwide. There are a handful of opportunities available for this type of training.

An equally important tip for becoming indispensable is to remember that no job is "somebody else's job." Be the type of person who constantly seeks out the next challenge and the next opportunity. Don't wait for it to come to you. If you identify a job that needs to be done, do it. Employees who are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty are especially valuable to employers who are operating understaffed due to economic turmoil.

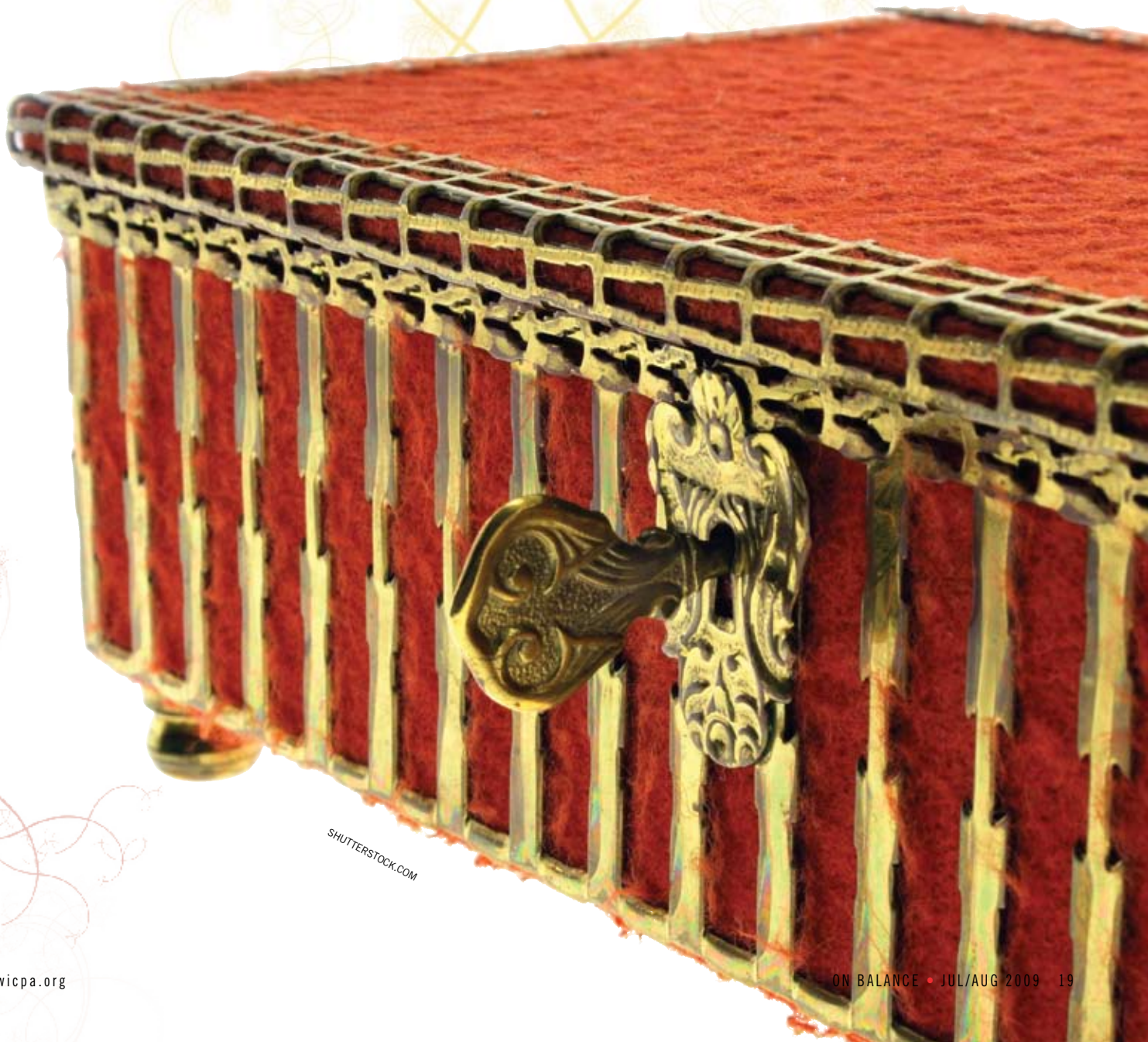
Network

Networking is an often-overlooked tool in the career of an accountant. As accountants, we've never really had the reputation for being social butterflies. But that stereotype, like any other, is made to be broken. If this is something that you've traditionally struggled with, there are strategies for improving your networking skills.

What *employers* want

IN A TOUGH JOB MARKET

By Denise C. Probert, CPA, MPA



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The first step is to go where the people are. Seems simple enough, but it's often the most difficult step to overcome. There is no substitute for expanding your comfort zone into the social sphere of your professional life. Talk to other students and colleagues to learn about accounting organizations and broader business networking groups in your area. Getting involved as a member of a smaller committee within groups is often a great way to immerse yourself in the culture of the organization.

The WICPA and Kaplan Schweser have partnered to bring members a number of great networking opportunities throughout the year, including the Young Professionals Conference, Brewers Bash, and the annual New CPA Welcome Dinner. Contact the WICPA to learn more about how to get involved and participate in these events in the future.

Now is the time to act

If you don't currently possess skills or knowledge that differentiate you from other job seekers, look into courses and additional certifications that will give you that edge. If you haven't yet begun thinking about the CPA Exam, purchase a review course and schedule your first section. If networking isn't yet a part of your professional repertoire, put yourself out there and get to know the current and future decision-makers in your local accounting and business communities. The economy will recover, and there will again be an abundance of jobs from which to choose. Until that happens, implementing the aforementioned tips will empower you to take control of your own career and destiny. ● ● ●


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