**ACCA ADVOCATE’S SPEECH: Q2 Brand Theme – Connections**

**Topic:** The Power of Connections

**Length:** 15 mins

**Audience:** General audience

**NOTES:** This is a general script to accompany the PPT.

As an ACCA advocate, if you want to amend the speech to highlight your own connections then please do – from learning providers to businesses, from new connections to old – please use this as a framework on which to build.

**Slide 1: Amend the introduction as appropriate - introduce yourself and your role/ title.**

Hello / good morning / good evening (delete as appropriate).

It’s great to see so many members / friends/ colleagues here from XXX’s accountancy world here today.

I qualified as a professional accountant with ACCA in [year] and since then I have acted as a passionate advocate for the accountancy profession, for my professional body ACCA, and for the opportunities it has given me.

ACCA has enabled me to have a great career and it’s really important for me to do what I can to give back.

One of the ways I can do this is by talking about the big issues that are changing our world, and how we work and live; and one of these subjects is about the role of the accountant as a connector.

Ours is a global and local profession – it is one that spans boundaries, and perhaps this is because accountancy is the international language of business.

So how we build our connections, and help them grow and thrive and build more connections is something very appealing to me.

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**SLIDE 2**

So I’m here today to share some of my own thoughts about the power of connections, and also to highlight a new report from ACCA and CPA Canada that is all about connections; I’ll move onto that in a moment.

ACCA’s strategic priority for 2019-20 is to maximise the global impact of the ACCA Qualification – working with partners, members like me, and future members to deliver its brand promise.

ACCA’s strategy and vision revolves around developing the agility and adaptability to cope with change and seize new opportunities.

This is essential for companies to transform and grow internationally and not stand still.

Navigating this changing course globally is important now more than ever, and to be successful, businesses and the public sector must be flexible, resilient and adaptable.

And to do this, we all have to plug into the power of connections.

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**Slide 3**

During 2019 / 2020 ACCA is helping us all concentrate on the big themes influencing the accountancy profession around the world now and in the future.

Quarter 1 was all about the power of digital; Q2 is about the power of connections; Q3 will be about the power of ethics and Q4 the power of future-ready talent.

These four themes help to form ACCA’s thought leadership and professional insights, continuing its commitment to publishing insightful and innovative reports, in collaboration with employers and other strategic partners.

So over the next three months, ACCA will be getting us all to ‘think ahead’ and to focus on connections and partnerships – and that’s what I want to share with you today.

The power of connections is a bond, a link, a tie that enables finance professionals - the clients we work with and the organisations we work for - to thrive and move up to the next level. Without connections, it’s worth thinking about where you would be?

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**Slide 4**

ACCA is a super-connector and this brings benefits for members like me, students and affiliates; organisations and business, and government and society.

ACCA’s global reach and connections makes its research unique and the skills secured through the ACCA Qualification help students and members get connected.

ACCA’s connections with learning providers and employers offer the best learning experience and also offer the best career and job opportunities.

Through this theme, the aim is to highlight the power of the ACCA Qualification in developing professional accountants with the right common knowledge and skills, providing employers across the world with access to our network and the best global talent.

Through the power of our connections, we can all learn and grow through access to an international network of support and resources.

Through this theme, we can all be encouraged to be more active in using our connections, and to realise the power inherent in doing so.

For ACCA, the reach and diversity of its connections means it is able to think ahead, innovate and progress the accountancy profession, through its professional insights work, qualification and learning opportunities. This makes me proud to be a member of such an innovative – and yes – connected professional body.

And these connections ACCA forges as a professional body help to form the common approaches and standards needed for successful international trade, including involvement in expert bodies. ACCA lobbies on behalf of the profession on a number of issues, from audit to tax. ACCA’s connections also help to inform policy making.

Connections help to build capacity, and drive economic growth, which in return offers great benefits to societies.

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**Slide 5**

ACCA uses its unrivalled network and connections across the world to create opportunities for individuals, organisations and economies – from accessing the best job opportunities worldwide on the ACCA careers job board to supporting developing economies improve their finance structure.

So building partnerships is very much fundamental to its strategy. It is, and will be central to the way it needs to work in the future. By developing mutually beneficial partnerships, ACCA can build a network that provides much more value for us all.

It is important to underline the value of ACCA’s strategic partnerships and highlight joint activities with all partners.

Here are some examples of how ACCA is the profession’s super-connector (Choose a few of the following from the list or use examples of your own):

* It is joining forces with employers in **Singapore** to create smarter finance teams.
* Among student groups there is peer to peer support through the exam journey in **China** with the China Strategic Professional Club
* ACCA’s recent global public sector conference – held in Prague - brought together 400 experts from 30 countries
* ACCA has signed MOUs with key players in the digital world such as **Xero**, **Alibaba** and **Inuit**
* It has worked with local training providers to provide access to ACCA certifications and up-skill public sector workers in countries such as **Indonesia**, **Nepal** and across the **Caribbean** and **Eastern** **Europe**
* ACCA works in partnership to strengthen the accountancy profession all over the world – and most of this work is non-funded. An extensive example of this is in Afghanistan where ACCA has worked with the Afghanistan Ministry of Finance (MoF) – and newly established professional body **CPA Afghanistan**
* ACCA works with others – such as IFAC and governments - to build the profession in many countries around the world such as **Rwanda** and **Myanmar**
* In **Pakistan,** ACCA has worked on the development of a Professional Accreditation Programme in Public Financial Management (PFM), in partnership with the World Bank and the Auditor General’s office
* In **China**, ACCA is working with the Ministry of Finance, again supported by funding from the World Bank, to provide experience for Chinese accounting firms to go global.

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**Slide 6**

ACCA is uniquely positioned with a membership of 219,000 members and 527,000 students and affiliates that span 179 countries. That puts a highly skilled network of professionals, experts who can feed into ACCA’s insights work giving it the depth and diversity that makes it relevant.

This research is shared across the world with standard setters, policy makers and regulators, influencing discussions that impact on all our futures.

And its latest reports have been delivered in partnership with numerous organsiations, and here are just a few examples:

* With Chartered Accountants ANZ and the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) ACCA has explored public attitudes to tax in G20 countries. This report has helped to inform policy making on tax equity and design.
* As part of its connectivity programme, ACCA connect experts to provide Belt and Road initiatives insights. ACCA has 23 offices along the Belt and Road route and so it is uniquely placed to help explore what it means for the profession and our members. Its expansive on-going BRI research project is being conducted with a range of partners including Deloitte China, Shanghai National Accounting Institute (SNAI) and the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) – and this is examining how BRI will affect the business infrastructure of China and key economies along the proposed trade route
* ACCA’s connections also help to demystify the economic climate. Working with the Institute of Management Accountants, together they are assessing global economic conditions, providing leading indicators on hard economic data to forecast how the global economy is changing – all from the viewpoint of members. We’re often the first to see the economic weather changing, so it is great ACCA and IMA are asking us to get involved.
* Collaboratively, ACCA is also evolving and improving corporate reporting with the IIRC (International Integrated Reporting Council) to inform global <IR> practices, while improving the quality and relevance of corporate reporting and its future shape.

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**Slide 6**

I want to move now onto a new report that has been made possible because of ACCA’s connections with CPA Canada.

Infrastructure is critical for economic and social development around the world.

Infrastructure – literally – depends on connections. From the transportation networks that enable people and goods to move around safely and effectively, to the utility systems providing power and services essential to survival.

These all rely heavily on investments and funding, as well as connections, partnerships and collaboration.

I would like to tell you about ACCA’s recent report that explores these issues and more.

ACCA partnered with Chartered Professional Accountants Canada to launch ‘*How accountants can bridge the global infrastructure gap’*. This joint survey among 3,611 respondents from 118 countries across ACCA and CPA Canada’s memberships, has produced findings and recommendations based on international good practice, to help governments close their infrastructure gap.

And importantly it asserts that accountants play a central and collaborative role in creating connections to close the infrastructure gap.

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**Slide 7**

The term ‘global infrastructure gap’ identifies the difference between infrastructure investment needed and the resources available to meet that need. In 2018 alone, the investment gap grew by over $400bn and it is set to grow to a staggering $14 trillion by 2040.

Respondents from the survey identified three major barriers to meet the infrastructure needs of their respective countries:

* 52 per cent cited a lack of political leadership;
* 49 per cent of respondents quoted a lack of finance funding;
* And 40 per cent said it was down to planning and regulatory barriers.

Solving the infrastructure puzzle is crucial to achieving a better and more sustainable future for all, as it tackles global issues such as inequality, poverty and climate change.

Infrastructure is the foundation on which our social and economic well-being is built.

All around the world – national, regional and local governments make decisions that serve the public and play a critical role in building and maintaining important infrastructure investments. Forces such as demographics, rising cyber threats, urbanisation and climate change are all increasing the global demand for quality infrastructure.

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**Slide 8**

It may sound self-serving to say this, but accountants are very well-placed to tackle many of the major challenges humanity faces in this century and beyond. Finance is so often at the centre of things, and what we measure we can manage better – from financial results to management information. That is why the profession has been so instrumental in helping to tackled climate change, through effective reporting.

I’m reminded of a comment made by peter Bakker, the President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), who in 2012 made the comment at the Rio 20 climate change summit that “Accountants will save the world”. His point was that we need to be better at accounting for externalities, how do we account for what is truly material. The work of the IIRC and the Prince of Wales’ Accounting for Sustainability projects are helping us to find a way. They are helping us to make the right connections to sustainability report.

But let me return to ACCA’s new report about the infrastructure gap. There is a point well-made in this report about the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs). Through this report, ACCA and CPA Canada highlight just how powerful and essential connections are to making these public-private partnerships work.

The relationship between the public and private sector in facilitating the delivery of infrastructure projects is vital and accountants play an important role in getting this relationship right.

This report offers 20 recommendations to close the infrastructure gap, based on observed global good practice. These recommendations include that governments should enforce effective whistle-blowing legislation and professionalise the public sector finance function to allow public servants to challenge unethical behaviour and practices that can disrupt infrastructure projects.

Governments should also direct supreme audit institutions to monitor the interaction of off balance sheet liabilities and fiscal targets in order to improve the efficient allocation.

Also they should adopt full accrual accounting and maintain a public sector balance sheet to support decision-making on infrastructure policies. It is also recommended that governments should also separate expenditure on projects to report both maintenance and new project spend.

Also governments must have the right professional team in place to harness the benefits of additional investment while mitigating the significant risks associated with these projects.

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**Slide 9**

The report concludes that accountants must work with governments to tackle the global infrastructure gap challenge.

The profession can play a critical role in closing the infrastructure gap by improving the selection, financing and delivery of infrastructure projects.

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**Slide 10**

Let me return for a moment to the point I made a moment ago about having the right teams in place, with the right skills, as this brings me neatly to the ACCA Qualification, and how it also helps build connections.

The success of the ACCA Qualification is central to its strategic vision of being #1 in developing the accountancy profession the world needs.

This vision reinforces ACCA’s leadership position in shaping the profession and delivering value to society.

So the ACCA Qualification is a powerful connector: it connects students to the professional skills and strategic thinking that employers want and need. It connects them to the world of work, and connects them to membership.

It has enabled me to make connections with new clients, new contracts, new careers, new challenges and new opportunities.

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**Slide 11**

We all know that connections are good for business and innovation.

Connections are crucial for career development and connections take us places.

Connections move the world forward and generate new discoveries.

Connections are the threads that weave in and out of our personal and professional lives. They keep us grounded while allowing opportunities to soar; they help us to advance, while forging our own history, and they help us to share our experiences as well as learn from them.

Regardless of how many connections we might have – from a tight-knit group to a vast number of links – we, and the businesses or the clients we work for, have the potential to thrive through the alliances that we make.

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**Slide 12**

**Slide 12**

So now it’s now time to harness the power of your own ACCA connections and make exciting things happen.

And to help you do just this, we’re all being invited to celebrate the power of connections on 12 September, which ACCA is calling “Connections Day”.

During the day there will be several activities where we want all ACCA stakeholders to take part. There will be a power of connections virtual conference with sessions covering topics like:

* Networking and communications skills
* The power of mentoring
* How partnerships can form a central part of your business strategy
* And many more

And to celebrate ACCA’s Connections Day we want to build the longest thread on LinkedIn by asking our members and students to tag someone. For example: ‘Tag a colleague, mentor, or boss who has made an impact in your career’, ‘Tag someone you want to reconnect with’ or ‘Tag two people you think will benefit from knowing each other professionally’. If you’re tagged please tag someone in turn to keep the connections happening. The aim is to shows the extent of ACCA connections around the world.

The second innovative thing we’ll be doing is the ACCA Connections mosaic.

Through this, you can take your place in our unique global artwork by sharing your photograph.

We want to create a piece of art which celebrates our connected global network - will you help and take part? The final piece of art will be unveiled on ACCA Connections Day. And we all hope that this will create a lasting memory that celebrates our collective global connections.

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**Slide 13**

What this theme reminds me of is a saying that an ACCA member from Africa once said to a past president at an event: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.’

As a call to action on which to end, can I leave you with a thought about your own connections: can they help you go far?

Thank you for listening.

- **ends here** - or you can show the film embedded in slide 14.

**Slide 14**

**OPTIONAL – YOU CAN ALSO SHOW THIS FILM AS PART OF YOUR EVENT: *When in slide mode – click on the image and you’ll be directed to the YouTube channel where the vide will play automatically. You’ll need internet access if presenting at an event.* NOTE:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G2nMxIUex8&feature=youtu.be>

As a call to action on which to end, can I leave you with a thought about your own connections: can they help **you** go far?

And to help you think about this question, I want to end by showing this short video about the power of connections.

**(Show film)**

Thank you for listening and watching.

**- Ends -**

**- Ends -**