

Employers as enablers:

Creating the conditions for better storytelling.



About ACCA.

We are ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), the only truly global professional accountancy body.

Since we were founded in 1904, we've been breaking down barriers to the accountancy profession. Today we proudly support a diverse community of over **257,900** members and **530,100** future members in **180** countries.

We're redefining accountancy. Our cutting-edge qualifications, continuous learning and insights are respected and valued by employers in every sector. They equip individuals with the business and finance expertise and ethical judgement to lead and drive sustainable value in organisations and economies worldwide.

Guided by our purpose and values, we're leading the accountancy profession for a changed world. Partnering with policymakers, standard setters, the donor community, educators and other accountancy bodies, we're strengthening and building a profession that focuses on people, planet and prosperity to create value for all.

Find out more at accaglobal.com

Who is this guide for?

Insights for employers to help build storytelling capability in early-career professionals



Managers of early-career talent

To help you coach stronger communicators, create practice opportunities and support audience-specific storytelling.



Senior leaders and employers

To help you build storytelling capability in teams.



From number crunchers to storytellers:
Why early career finance professionals must master storytelling skills



Across the interviews and discussions, one message comes through clearly: the communication environment itself has changed and employers need to respond to that shift.

A common thread across the discussion was the change in communication norms and the need for all stakeholders, including employers, to adapt rather than assume shared reference points. As Prof. Srinivasan of IIM B notes, *‘The way people communicate has changed. Given the penetration of social media, the internet, how often people interact, the use of images, emojis, all of this has changed and requires all parties to adapt and change’*. The implication for employers is to **adapt how they coach, engage, and develop younger professionals.**

Work with the strengths

Every generation brings its own strengths. Younger professionals may have shorter attention spans, but they have extraordinary processing speed, digital fluency and an energy that, when channelled well, can be transformative. Think of it as an exchange – experience and institutional knowledge on one side: speed, technique and fresh perspective on the other. Together, they’re formidable. Anahita explains, *‘For every negative that we put down for the younger generation, there will be a parallel positive – and we must work with the positive and draw that out of them’*.



Use formats that get attention, but train through practice

While working on storytelling with the younger generation, adapt to their digital habits. Use the formats they already consume – shorter, clearer, more visual communication – rather than relying only on traditional instruction-heavy methods. Storytelling improves when digital formats are paired with active practice: speaking opportunities, rehearsals, recording and feedback.

‘Employers can help by coaching younger staff on preparation for meetings, presentations and client conversations.’



Box 3.1: The Gen Z voice

We conducted focus group discussions with Gen Z to hear and give a platform to their voice. They gave their views on how employers can help them.



Active guidance from managers and seniors, especially because younger professionals are entering workplaces where they are expected to communicate well from the start. Participants linked this to automation and changing entry-level work: tasks that once allowed gradual learning are disappearing, so younger professionals need support earlier in their careers.



Confidence-building support, especially in high-status or global settings. The discussion explicitly raises cultural and workplace barriers tied to global business environments. Young professionals having prepared data but lacking the courage to speak in rooms shaped by hierarchy and international exposure. Employers can help by coaching younger staff on preparation for meetings, presentations and client conversations, while also creating environments where they are comfortable contributing early.



Structured opportunities to practise and tailor audience-specific storytelling, with dry runs, presentation practice and feedback built in. They also need support in tailoring stories to different audiences – clients, managers, peers and interviewers – so they can decide what to emphasise, how much detail to give and how to make the message land.





‘...you have to see what makes that individual tick and figure out bespoke strategies for that individual.’

Provide stories that resonate with the younger professionals

Use purposeful stories and examples that are respectful and use relatable examples. Younger professionals need to be drawn into the stories. Nadir puts it well: *‘If you’re a good director, you get them to do what you want them to do, but make them think it’s their idea – you have to see what makes that individual tick and figure out bespoke strategies for that individual’*. Personalised engagement helps: *‘Rather than making them treat it like work or giving them instructions, try to bring them on’*, adds an interviewed employer.

This extends beyond communication style to how you manage day to day. People work at different paces and in different ways and working with that rather than against it pays off. As Ananhita found: *‘If I, as a leader, know and understand why things are being held back instead of just blowing a fuse, I will keep a calmer environment – and by the time I reach my deadline, everything will be lined up’*.

Be curious and listen to build trust

Gen Zs develop better as storytellers when leaders create trust, invite contribution and treat listening as part of leadership rather

than a soft extra. Creative professionals highlight the power of developing curiosity to help Gen Zs learn. As Yuki Elias notes: *‘That interest in ourselves and in other people is going to be an important skill so that we lead better and manage human beings better’*. Curiosity in the younger generation will encourage them to be authentic. Listening is the practical expression of that curiosity. Tushar makes the point simply: *‘The more trust you show in responding and listening to them, the more you’ll get from them. Once you start listening to them, they’ll start listening to you’*.

Give real opportunities to practise

Give them real exposure – critical tasks, opportunities to present to internal audiences, and the space to fail and recover. A Big Four leader described this: *‘We involve our younger members in client presentations. To prepare them, we do a dry run, where we plan on content delivery and articulation so that in, say, 50 words, they’re able to put across their point’*.

Engagement matters as much as exposure

Tushar, who works with CEOs on team building, notes that Gen Zs need to be constantly engaged rather than slotted into rigid structures – the goal is to make work interesting and impactful.

Tips for storytelling with the younger generation

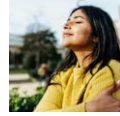
Workshop storytelling through exposure, rehearsal and low-risk practice



Create safe zones for practice and failure – workshop-style settings where people make presentations and prepare deliberately. ***‘Put them into a workshop where they are presenting in front of others... and give them the exercise for even one week and tell them this is the way you have to prepare for yourself now’***, suggests an interviewed employer.



Use rehearsal, structure and mentorship. Create mentorship programmes for Gen Z to help them understand the big picture. While written communication has evolved, Gen Zs should get an opportunity to practise their verbal communication. Do guided rehearsal for client presentations. Brief them, rehearse with them and help them refine how they land a message.



Build confidence by reducing anxiety. Help them practise clarity, in ways that build trust in their own voice. The point is not to make younger professionals sound polished, but to help them trust their own thinking and voice. Help them find their presence and voice.



Keep workshops active and engaging. Use active formats rather than static instruction. ***‘You have to put them into a situation, make them present, make them record what they learn’***, explains an employer.



Use role plays to reverse perspectives. Creative professionals recommend role plays as a hands-on rehearsal tool that builds confidence, empathy, listening and adaptability. Ask managers to play employees and younger professionals to play managers in common workplace scenarios – briefings, feedback conversations, internal presentations, or client updates.



ACCA's global policy priorities.

Providing the accountants that society needs and enables sustainable business is core to ACCA's DNA:

We at ACCA believe that the accountancy profession has a vital role to serve the public interest and enable sustainable organisations. Fulfilling this role requires educated and appropriately skilled, ethically sound and highly motivated professionals with robust career prospects. [ACCA's global policy priorities](#) and activities to achieve them is equipped through skills, relevant policies, regulation and standards, and the profession's role is well leveraged to drive sustainable business.

BRIDGE THE ACCOUNTANCY SKILLS GAP
Build accountancy capacity so that businesses, the public sector and economies have access to skills and expertise to thrive.

Call to action for policymakers:

- Widen access to the accountancy profession through inclusive educational, vocational and workplace policies that allow anyone to develop the accountancy skills needed.
- Develop and grow the accountancy profession across all sectors, championing sustainability and technology skills to ensure the profession meets market needs.

DRIVE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS
Drive policies, regulations and standards that deliver prosperous, ethical, sustainable organisations and economies.

Call to action to policymakers:

- Drive the adoption of policies and regulations related to sustainable practices and ethical decision-making which reinforce corporate responsibility and enable the transition to net zero while fostering diverse and inclusive workforces.
- Drive the adoption of international standards which draw on global best practice, enable harmonisation across jurisdictions, facilitate international trade and maintain accountability and trust.

CHAMPION THE PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT
Champion a refreshed understanding of the vital contribution of professional accountants in a changed world.

Call to action to policymakers:

- Champion and draw on the insights of professional accountants to influence policy linked to audit, tax, public sector reform and easing the SME regulatory burden, as well as sustainability and technology risks and opportunities.
- Champion the role of professional accountants in creating and delivering value in the public interest – from entrepreneurship to organisations of all sizes and sectors – through their ethical, sustainable and innovative contribution to business and society.





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THINK AHEAD