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The Enlightened Accountant:

Your guide to navigating career change



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Chapter 1

July 15, 2020

It took an act of God, but for the first time in US history, the IRS extended the traditional April 15 tax deadline for the majority of US citizens.

While consumers across the country exhaled a sigh of relief, accountants began to unpack the first in what would be a long series of new rules and regulations for how we manage finances in a pandemic. Whether it's navigating the Employee Retention Credit or Paycheck Protection Program loan qualifications, we've had to get up to speed in a hurry.

To put it mildly, this year has been one of change. From social unrest to economic uncertainty, 2020 presented individuals and organizations with a decade's worth of challenges. Chief among them: relearning how to perform everyday responsibilities in a remote environment. At home, we've navigated weak WiFi signals, tight quarters, and disruptive family members. As an industry, we've redefined how we collaborate and relearned a wave of new rules and regulations.

Now, as social distance continues to become more and more familiar and that July 15 deadline has come and gone, these new circumstances have left professionals at every level with more room to assess their previous status quos. Organizations around the world are permanently transitioning to fully dispersed working models. As a result, entire business models have been upended to account for changes in customer and employee expectations.



For better or worse, this period of space has given us the mental room to assess our professional standing and set new goals for the future. For some, that professional growth means learning new skills, adopting new capabilities, or even exploring new ventures. For many of us, though, this has been more than a season of evolution; it's been a season of enlightenment.

We've been granted a moment to decide what's important, challenge our assumptions, and ascend to a new level of ambition. An Enlightened Accountant is one who looks beyond the numbers to assess, anticipate, and analyze what comes next.

The ability to assess and apply data analytics separates modern accountants from their predecessors. The constant pursuit of Continued Professional Education (CPE), leveraging economic trends, and maximizing the use of industry resources empowers the Enlightend Accountant to proactively pursue their professional goals.

While this era of enlightenment promises to radically change the way we work, it's up to each of us to decide how we will engage with the tools and opportunities in front of us.

What obstacles await you on your journey?
How will you adapt your skills to a digital market?
Where will your search lead you?

Each of these decisions will shape your journey to becoming an Enlightened Accountant.

Enlightened Accountants:



Understand the power of data as a tool to shape business decisions and strategies



Take proactive measures to engage with and influence their own professional development



Are relevant and aware of the latest trends and changes in the industry



Chapter 2

Ascending the data experience

The necessary distance required to confidently work in 2020 has brought its share of challenges.

While we've generally adapted to obstacles like remote work environments, digital security, and virtual conferencing, these solutions have demonstrated what work can look like beyond the walls of an office building. In the weeks since our nationwide reclusion, firms of all sizes have been forced by circumstance to adopt workflows and technologies that would otherwise be years into the future.

In general, these shifts have enabled remote work environments and have been a significant boon to both businesses and employees as a result. These changes also serve as a clear opportunity for historically reticent organizations to increase their comfort with technologies like the cloud, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, and begin to automate more and more of their capabilities.

This change is a huge opportunity for today's accounting professionals. Automation and similar next-generation technologies promise to redefine how we operate by performing basic tasks faster and more efficiently than any human ever could. It's only a matter of time before low-level calculations will be owned entirely by machines, while the people who were once responsible for those duties are free to assess other options.

Our job security hinges on our ability to speak and understand the language of business. As accountants, we thrive in problem-solving scenarios. The Enlightened Accountant welcomes automation as a tool that will assist them in their journey. Removing tedious tasks frees time for these professionals to focus on more pressing challenges and opportunities.

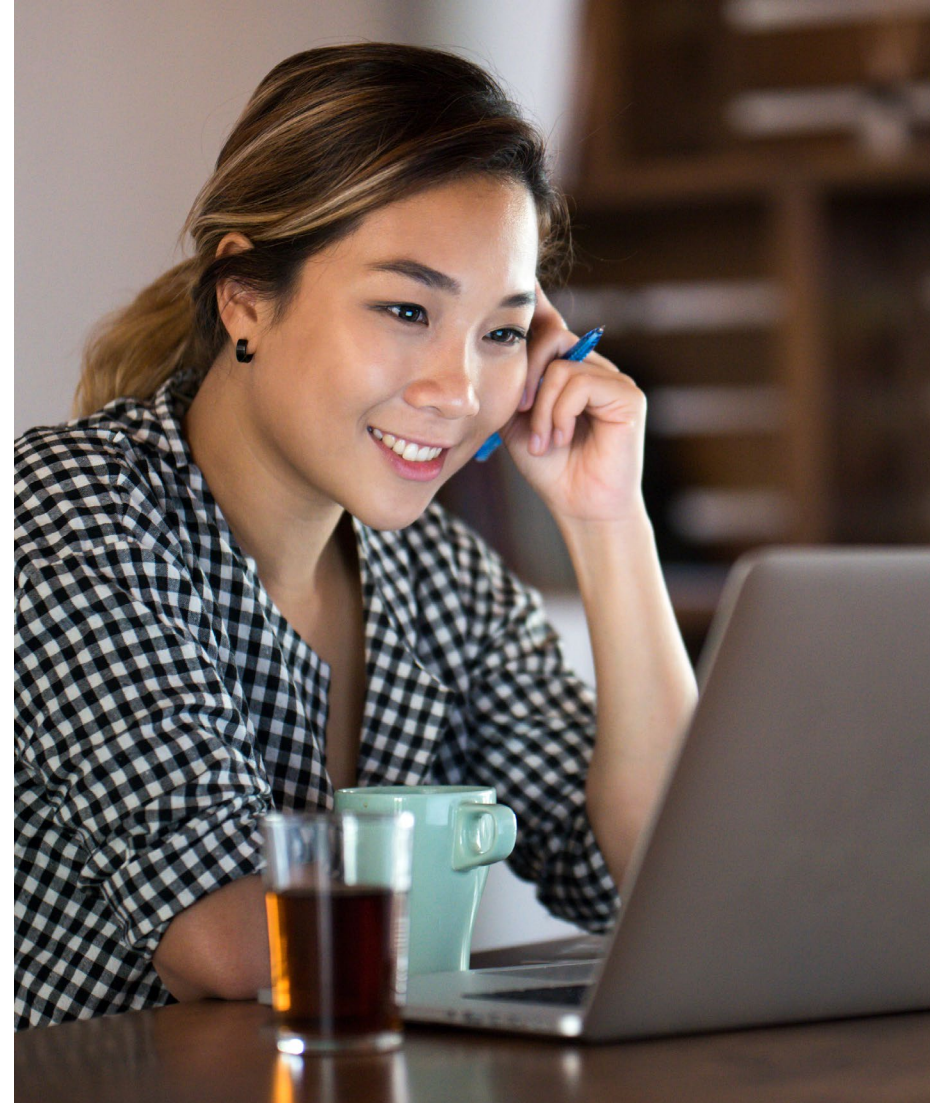
In fact, with automation tools in place, the Enlightened Accountant can dedicate more time to identifying critical business insights that:

- 1 Empower key decision makers.
- 2 Define the strategic futures of our organizations.
- 3 Shape our future capabilities.
- 4 Impact the financial and federal standing of our clients.

The Enlightened Accountant recognizes that these resources can deepen the pools of data that they use to manage, analyze, and make recommendations based on the broader implications of those numbers and the data paired with them. Of course, new technologies can calculate and execute in the blink of an eye, but they cannot replace the experience and interpretive capabilities of an accounting professional.

Automation not only opens new opportunities for the Enlightened Accountant to pursue value for their organizations but presents a resounding opportunity to adopt new skills and capabilities to expand their individual impact.

New skills like intelligent data management practices can help transform your offerings and shape your ability to create more proactive business recommendations. But these talents aren't necessarily taught in traditional accounting courses. The skills at the foundation of today's Enlightened Accountant—data management and analysis, automation—are learned through either personal experience or CPE. Accounting professionals on the path to Enlightenment must take their education into their own hands should they wish to continue to keep pace with the world around them.



Not sure where to start?

Our [Foundations in data and analytics course](#) is a great introduction to how to apply your data and start driving change.

Chapter 3

Aspiring to greater heights

In 2020, CPE regulations in many states shifted to accommodate distance-learning necessities.

This move from traditional on-site and employer-provided CPE to more adaptable digital sessions have introduced a new level of convenience for accountants in need of their annual hours. This opportunity to learn at their leisure helps accounting professionals cater their studies to their preferences and interests.

By transitioning from an in-person model to a digital webcast solution, CPE providers can offer their students a range of flexible options that adapt to their circumstances. Suddenly, the course options have expanded well beyond those listed at a conference. We can dive into key topics in our downtime, from whatever device we want, and improve retention by breaking those lessons into more manageable courses.

This flexibility gives accounting professionals new control over continued education. In the same way the Enlightened Accountant analyzes data to shape the future of their organizations, they use CPE to shape their destiny. Rather than taking courses at random, they build a strategic course load that feeds their interests and aspirations.



For years, CPE has served as a professional obligation—a three-day conference we have to sit through to tick a box. What many fail to realize is CPE provides accounting professionals with a platform to confidently explore new industries, capabilities, and skill sets in a controlled environment. CPE shouldn't be a grab bag of policy updates and vague interests, but rather a strategic collection of courses working towards a greater ambition.

With CPE, the Enlightened Accountant can:



Get expert insight into new business avenues.

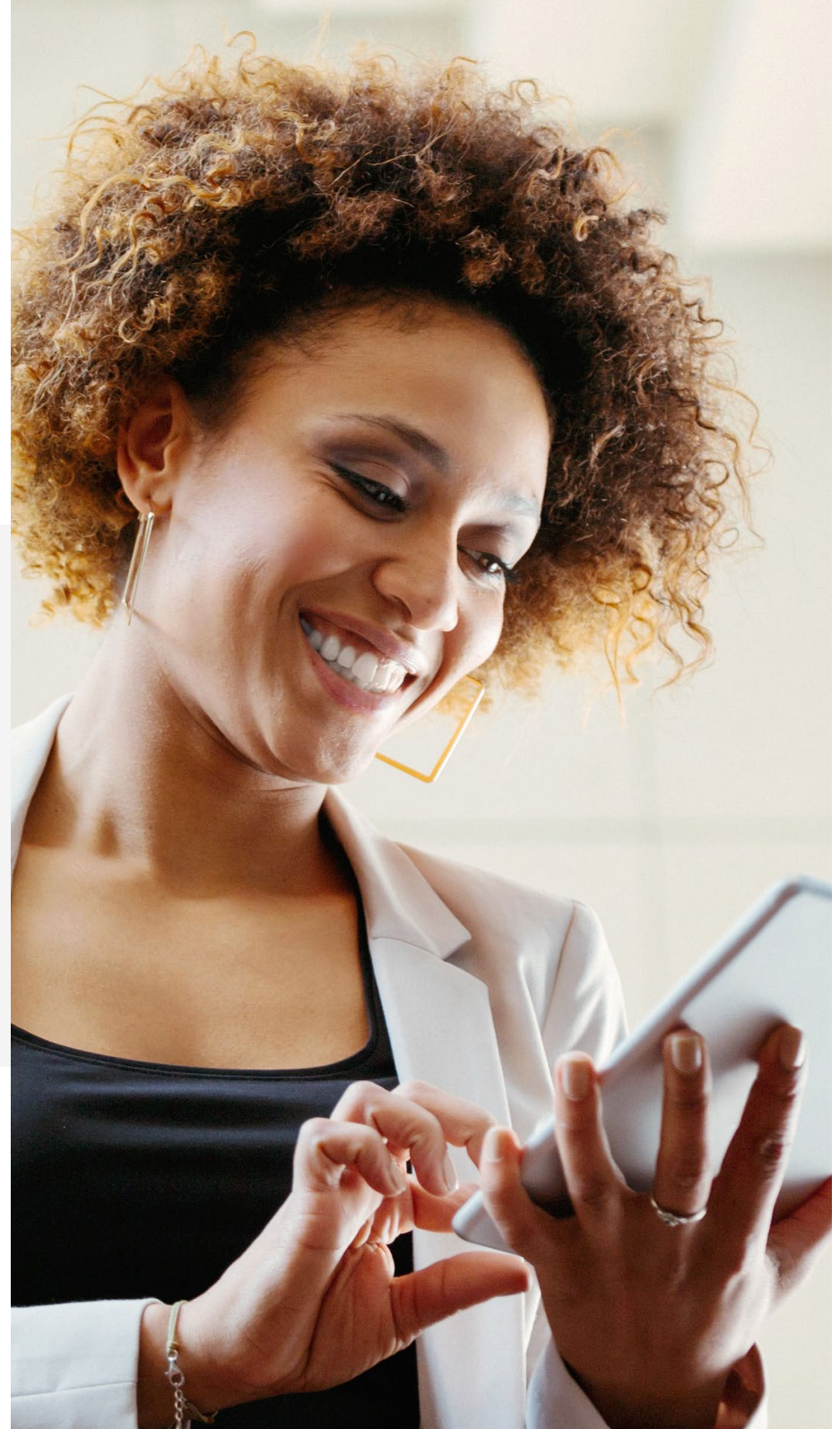


Diversify skills to improve growth opportunities.



Explore new horizons.

Specializations like forensic accounting begin with an understanding of [corruption](#) and [fraud](#)—building blocks that are available through CPE.



Want to...

Then explore...

Sharpen your Excel skills?

[Microsoft® Excel fundamentals certificate program](#)

Transition from privately held companies into the public sector?

[Risk management in the public sector](#)

Move from corporate tax services to not-for-profit?

[2020 not-for-profit accounting & auditing update](#)

Explore other markets?

[A sampling of industries and sectors, part 1](#)

Dive into a specialized industry?

[Construction industry—overall landscape](#)

[Healthcare industry—overview and update](#)

[Real estate taxation, part 1: like-kind exchanges](#)

By taking a strategic approach to their CPE, Enlightened Accountants own their professional development and transcend their station to bigger and better opportunities.

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CPE dates, requirements, and parameters differ from state to state. [Click here to learn about yours.](#)

Conclusion

Anticipating the future

While the application of data and pursuit of personal development will certainly impact how the Enlightened Accountant progresses through their professional aspirations, the final caveat on the path to enlightenment is in how these professionals engage with clients and colleagues outside of their finances.

Enlightenment doesn't go unnoticed. As you continue your journey, more and more individuals and organizations will notice your efforts and abilities. It's our responsibility to share our expertise and guide others through their own experience. The Enlightened Accountant uses this mentor mindset to provide wisdom to their aspiring colleagues while delivering ethical and insightful guidance to their clients.

This becomes more and more relevant as accounting professionals across industries and focuses continue to adapt to the ramifications of [COVID-19](#). This season has highlighted many of the new opportunities across our industry. By understanding these changing regulations and how they impact individuals and organizations, Enlightened Accountants can confidently guide their clients through tremulous times.

These transitions also present new opportunities for accounting professionals to serve our organizations with data-driven insights that provide useful information to the business.

The future of accounting will hinge on the Enlightened Accountant's ability to move beyond initial results and into its implications, and how the client can leverage or adapt to those circumstances and guide their teams into an uncertain future.



At Becker, we offer three CPE experiences:

	Prime	Select	Essentials
Subscription length	1-Year	1-Year	90-Day
Premium courses	100+	20+	
Industry-specific courses	25+	25+	
Webcasts with live Q&A*	1,000+	480+	480+
On demand courses	600+	525+	440+
Unlimited credit consumption	✓	✓	✓
Downloadable course content	✓	✓	✓
Compliance tracker by state	✓	✓	✓
Auto renew	✓	✓	

*Projected 12-month total

Each tier offers both on demand and live webcast experiences, as well as organization-exclusive partner pricing to share these opportunities across your entire organization. By creating a more flexible CPE experience, we hope to empower accountants at any stage along their path to becoming an Enlightened Accountant.

[Learn more about CPE with Becker](#)

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