INSIGHT PAPER

Building the capabilities that create value

Preparing accounting and finance professionals for the next era of trusted advisory

Executive insight

Client Advisory Services (CAS) has long delivered value through financial insight, trust, and operational guidance. Rise2040 gives that progression a sharper meaning. Across a global dialogue involving 6,263 participants in 25 countries, a consistent emerging role came into focus: the trusted, anticipatory adviser.[1]

This shift raises a real question for many CAS teams: how do you keep pace with changing expectations when recurring deadlines, staffing constraints, expanding client demands, and an ever-growing set of technology solutions are already competing for attention? Yet what clients value most is not the technology itself, but help anticipating what's next, making sense of change, and moving forward with clarity.

The central insight

CAS will create its greatest value when technology-enabled capacity is deliberately converted into foresight, judgment, and trusted guidance.

Rise2040 describes this “Human in the Lead”: intelligent systems expand what is possible, while professionals remain accountable for direction, meaning, ethics, and action.[2]

Automation can help reduce the effort required for month-end reporting, but the value lies in how we can use that recovered time: identifying margin pressure, testing cash flow scenarios, preparing better questions, and helping the client decide what actions to take next.

Technology Creates Capacity.
Capability Creates Advisory Value.

Why CAS is becoming more anticipatory

Rise2040 distinguishes between *Hard Trends*, which are future facts that will occur, and *Soft Trends*, which can be influenced through strategic choice. Advancing AI capability, expanding data volumes, demographic change, and regulatory evolution are identified as forces with sufficient certainty to support action now.[3]

For CAS, those forces converge around a practical shift. Automation reduces the time required for structured and repeatable work. Data becomes more immediate and abundant. Client expectations move toward greater insight. This gives us the capacity to identify patterns earlier, test scenarios, surface emerging risks, and help clients make stronger decisions.

THE SHIFT	**CAS moves from explaining what happened to helping clients anticipate what may happen next and decide what to do.**

This is why the role shifts outlined in Rise2040, from historian to strategist, compliance enforcer to anticipatory adviser, and information reporter to insight and trust leader, are especially relevant to CAS.[4] The future uses that foundation to create a more forward-looking advisory relationship. Technology opens the door, but it is the professional's judgment that walks the client through it.

Trust is the value model for CAS

Rise2040 found that trust was the common thread running through technology, value creation, talent, governance, and changing market expectations. It describes trust as an appreciating asset in an environment shaped by AI, automation, expanding data, and disinformation.[5]

This is particularly relevant for CAS because advice only creates value when a client is willing to act on it. A technically accurate report earns credibility, but trusted advisory goes further: explaining what the numbers mean, being honest about what's uncertain, questioning assumptions, and pointing to a responsible way forward.

Technology can produce an answer in seconds, but a fast answer isn't always a clear one. A model can generate a forecast without knowing which assumptions hold up or flag an anomaly without grasping what it means for the business. Closing that gap is the professional's work, and it is where trust is earned. Clients rarely remember how fast the analysis arrived. They remember who helped them make the right call.

Technology may enable the work, but professional judgment and trusted guidance are what create value for clients.

RISE2040 LENS	**Trust differentiates CAS when answers are abundant, but confidence is scarce.**

The capabilities behind trusted advisory

Rise2040 identifies four connected capability domains: relational capabilities, insight and judgment, transformation leadership, and technical and AI fluency.[6] A CAS professional must develop these capabilities simultaneously for client conversations, as a gap in one capability weakens the others.

These capabilities need to develop across the CAS team, not only at the most senior levels. Staff, managers, and leaders may apply them differently, but each role contributes to whether insight becomes trusted guidance.

TECHNICAL FOUNDATION	Accounting and finance knowledge supports accuracy, validation, standards application, and accountability.
DIGITAL FLUENCY	AI, data, analytics, and platform fluency allow teams to work with intelligent systems and evaluate outputs.
JUDGMENT + FORESIGHT	Critical thinking, ethical reasoning, scenario planning, and systems thinking turn information into perspective.
ADVISORY IMPACT	Strategic listening, communication, collaboration, and trust-building move clients from insight to action.

No single capability creates advisory value on its own. Technical knowledge supports accuracy and trust, digital fluency extends the team's reach, judgment gives information meaning, and advisory skill helps clients weigh options and act. Their combined effect turns technology-created capacity into advisory value.

Capacity must be designed into value

A common transformation assumption is that automating routine work will naturally create more advisory activity. Rise2040 suggests a more deliberate path. Future relevance will depend on intentional choices about skills, roles, client conversations, pricing, coaching, and how success is measured, not on technology adoption alone.[7]

In practice, capacity can be absorbed by additional volume, fragmented work, or the next deadline. It becomes advisory value only when firms redesign expectations around how time is used and what outcomes matter. That may mean creating space for preparation before client conversations, making scenario analysis part of recurring service, coaching teams to ask stronger questions, and recognizing proactive guidance as a core deliverable.

A practical CAS value chain

1	2	3	4	5
CAPACITY	**CONTEXT**	**FORESIGHT**	**JUDGMENT**	**ACTION**
Technology reduces effort and increases access to information.	Professionals connect data to the client's operating reality.	Trends, scenarios, and risks are considered before decisions are fixed.	Options are evaluated with technical rigor, ethics, and accountability.	Guidance helps the client move forward with confidence.

The chain clarifies where value can be lost. Capacity without context produces faster output. Context without foresight keeps the conversation anchored in the present. Foresight without judgment creates possibilities without responsible direction. Judgment without action leaves insight unused.

Development must mirror the work

If CAS is evolving toward trusted, anticipatory advisory, development cannot focus only on content knowledge, tool proficiency, or routine updates. Professionals need practice with the moments where advisory value is created: validating AI-supported analysis, interpreting incomplete information, framing issues, weighing uncertainty, explaining trade-offs, and guiding clients toward action.

Rise2040 calls for rethinking talent and capability around technical rigor, technological fluency, and discernment. It also warns that traditional experiential learning may weaken as routine work is automated.[8] For CAS, the implication is clear: learning must intentionally recreate the judgment-building moments that may no longer come through repeated entry-level tasks.

Development should therefore include realistic client situations, branching decisions, feedback on reasoning, coached conversations, and reflection on outcomes. The goal is not only knowledge acquisition, but readiness to act when the answer is not obvious.

Questions for CAS leaders

- Where is technology creating capacity, and how is that capacity being redirected toward higher-value advisory work?
- How are advisory capabilities developed progressively across roles, from early-career professionals to client relationship leaders?
- Do role expectations, measures, pricing, learning, and coaching reinforce the advisory value the firm wants to create?

The insight

Rise2040 presents an optimistic and actionable vision of the future, where technology serves as a force multiplier, trust becomes an increasingly valuable asset, and the anticipatory adviser emerges as a defining professional identity. CAS is one of the clearest places to put that vision into practice. CAS firms can put that vision into practice by deliberately building the capabilities that help clients anticipate change earlier, make better-informed decisions, and move forward with confidence.

CAS creates value by transforming technology-enabled capacity into foresight, judgment, and trusted guidance.

Sources

1. Rise2040: Shaping the Future of Finance and Accounting, Executive Summary and Methodology Overview: 6,263 participants, 95 Future Forums, and 25 countries.

2. Rise2040, Executive Summary and "Building the capabilities for 2040": Human in the Lead and the role of judgment, communication, ethics, and trust.

3. Rise2040, "A Framework for Certainty": Hard Trends, Soft Trends, and anticipatory leadership.

4. Rise2040, "The identity shift: From… to…": historian to strategist, compliance enforcer to anticipatory adviser, and information reporter to insight and trust leader.

5. Rise2040, "Built on trust" and "Trust as an appreciating asset."

6. Rise2040, "The critical capabilities for 2040."

7. Rise2040, "The road to 2040: From vision to action."

8. Rise2040, "Talent and workforce dynamics" and "Use it to rethink talent and capability."