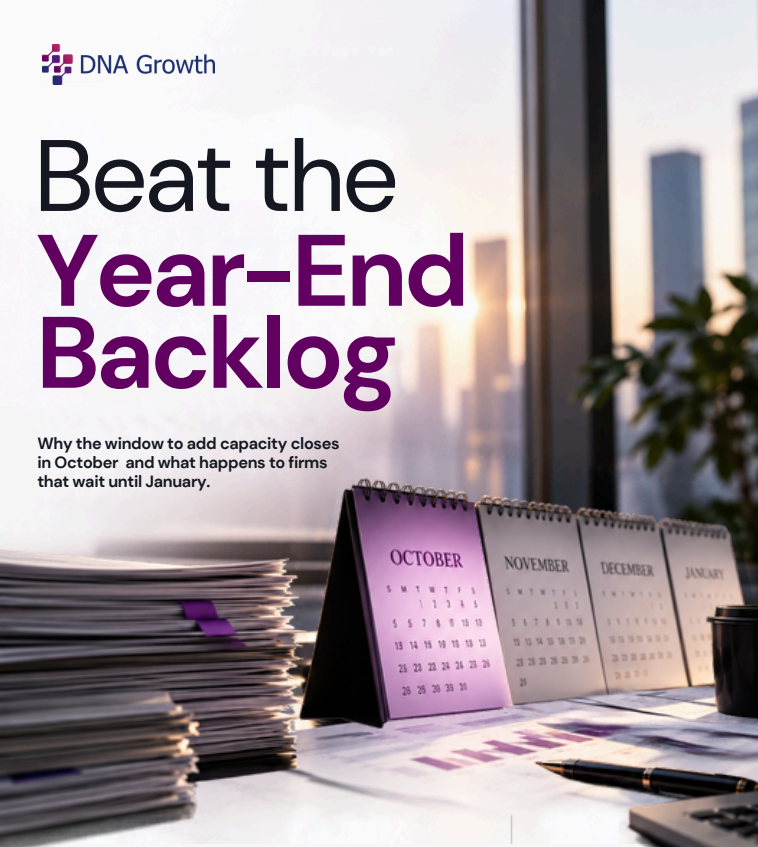
DNA Growth

Beat the Year-End Backlog

Why the window to add capacity closes in October and what happens to firms that wait until January.



78%

of accounting professionals worked 50+ hour weeks last busy season

92%

say they spend too much time on administrative work

73

days is the average time to fill a CPA-required role

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WHAT OCTOBER THROUGH JANUARY ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

Three deadlines, one skeleton crew

Year-end close prep, 1099 and W-2 groundwork, client tax planning, and audit readiness all land in the same quarter as the heaviest leave weeks of the year. The profession already records a secondary workload peak in November and December, before January's busy season begins.

Capacity does not arrive on its own.



OCT

Year-end planning begins. Client queries build. Teams still at normal capacity — the last month that is true.

NOV

Close prep, reconciliations, audit readiness. Thanks giving removes a working week from the calendar.

DEC

Year-end close, 1099 and W-2 groundwork, client tax planning. Holiday leave peaks across the firm.

JAN

Busy season starts regardless of what is still open from December. The backlog is now inherited.

Every hour not resolved in Q4 does not disappear. It arrives in January carrying interest — on top of a season that already runs at 50-plus hours a week.

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The crew isn't coming

This is a structural shortage, not a cyclical dip. The pipeline that would staff your Q4 narrowed a decade ago, and the retirement wave on the other side is already underway.



300K+
accountants and auditors left the US profession between 2020 and 2024
Adil Habib / industry data

43%
fall in CPA exam candidates from 2016 to 2024, roughly 49,600 down to 28,100
Ramp pipeline analysis

75%
of licensed CPAs are at or near retirement age
AICPA

42%
of accounting firms report turning away work for lack of staff
CPA Trendlines

Run the calendar math

A CPA-required role takes roughly 73 days to fill. A search opened the day you read this lands a start date in mid-December, onboarding through the close, productive somewhere around February. Replacing a mid-level accountant costs $30K–$50K before they bill an hour. Sixty-three percent of finance leaders are responding by increasing contract and flexible hiring rather than permanent headcount.

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WHERE SENIOR CAPACITY QUIETLY DISAPPEARS

The haunting is administrative

The constraint in most firms is not technical expertise. It is everything stacked on top of it. Senior people, the ones whose judgment the firm actually sells are absorbing coordination work that does not require them.



Time spent working with clients — **55%**

Median billable utilisation across firms — **59.6%**

Accountants spending over half the day on manual tasks — **39%**

Of the workweek consumed managing email — **28%**

Sources: 2023 Accounting Practice Management Survey · AICPA National MAP Survey · McKinsey

92% of accountants say they spend too much time on admin. Roughly half have done nothing structural about it, because the fix has always meant hiring, and hiring has not been available.

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WHAT THE BACKLOG CHARGES YOU FOR CARRYING IT

Letting it ride is not free



The cost of an unresolved Q4 does not appear as a line item. It surfaces as rework, declined engagements, and the people who leave in April.

What it costs	The evidence	Why it compounds
Revenue refused	42% of firms turn away work they cannot staff	Capacity decides your ceiling, not demand
Rework	85% of accountants reopened the books at least once last year; 49% did so in three or more months	Haste in Q4 is paid for in Q1
Attrition	Burnout-driven turnover in public accounting runs 15–25% a year	Replacement runs $30K–$50K per mid-level accountant
Erosion	52% rated work-life balance poor last busy season, more than double the prior year	The largest single year-on-year shift in the survey

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The window closes before the quarter does

A virtual assistant goes live in three to six weeks. That single number decides whether added capacity arrives before the close or during it.



Decide in October

Weeks 1 – 2
Scope, SOPs and role definition agreed

Weeks 2– 4
Sourcing, vetting and onboarding

Weeks 4 – 6
Live and trained on your tools

Dec – Jan
Full capacity through close and into busy season

Capacity arrives before the pressure does.

Decide in January

Weeks 1 – 2
Scoping competes with filing deadlines

Weeks 2 – 4
Onboarding runs during peak workload

Weeks 4 – 6
Training absorbs senior time you do not have

March+
Productive after the season it was meant to fix

You onboard help in the middle of the emergency.

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WHAT A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT ABSORBS

Get teats, not tricks.

A virtual assistant is not a junior accountant. It is the layer beneath one, the high-frequency coordination work that consumes senior capacity without requiring senior judgment.



Executive administration

Inbox and calendar management, meeting prep, stakeholder follow-ups, task tracking, vendor coordination

Client coordination

Document chasing, query follow-ups, onboarding packs, status updates and scheduling across time zones

Close support

Workpaper preparation, reconciliation support, data entry, schedule compilation ahead of review

Reporting & MIS

Report compilation, KPI monitoring, dashboard upkeep, recurring management reporting

Payroll & admin ops

Payroll coordination, procurement and vendor management, records upkeep, audit-ready filing

Research & data

Market and client research, data cleanup, multi-format data transformation and formatting

Your tools. Your SOPs. Your brand.

The team works inside your systems and your rhythms, clients experience your firm, not a vendor behind it.

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Capacity, measured

Four engagements delivered through DNA Growth's virtual assistance and offshore staffing model.

250 hours

freed annually

Executive assistant to a Big 4 CXO: international calendar management, confidential communications, dual time-zone scheduling, executive reporting.

$320K

saved annually

Project management for a New York nonprofit: calendar management, stakeholder coordination, volunteer communication and operational tracking.

$180K

saved annually

US digital services company: data processing and operations scaled 3x offshore, handling complex multi-format transformation.

300+

transactions a month

UK healthcare group: remote FinOps team running revenue reconciliation, financial analysis and real-time MIS across five entities.

3-6 weeks
from decision to live

200+
specialists across finance, ops and tech

24/7
coverage across all time zones

Your brand
we white-label our name by default

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Don't let the backlog haunt your busy season

DNA Growth is a global professional services firm of 200+ experts powering fractional CFOs, CPA firms, consulting firms, investors and ambitious businesses worldwide with outsourced finance, accounting, technology and virtual staffing support across 30+ countries.

CALL US	BOOK A MEETING	EMAIL US	VISIT
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US line – available 24/7	30 minutes, no obligation	We reply same business day	Virtual Assistance & Staffing

Decide this month, and you are live before the close. Decide in January and you are onboarding during it.

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