

The top people in public accounting — 2019

Each year as part of the Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting list, *Accounting Today* asks candidates for the list to name who they think are the most influential people in the field, and here they are, ranked by the number of votes they received from the 152 candidates. The top 15 are listed below:

No. 15: Jim Bourke



Bourke has "consistently served as an example of where our profession is going," said one member of the T100, and in both his internal role at Top 100 Firm Withum and his external one as a global evangelist, there are few greater proponents of accounting's technology-enabled, advisory-focused future.

No. 11: Bill Reeb (tie)



One member of the T100 described Reeb as "the right person at the right time to chair the AICPA," due to his many years of working with firms and his long-time focus on consulting and the accountant's role as advisor.

No. 11: Russell Golden (tie)



As the leading figure in U.S. standard-setting, Golden was a natural pick for many T100 candidates.

No. 11: William Duhnke (tie)



After 18 months of "reorganizing and rebuilding" the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, Duhnke is "poised to move forward on important new auditing standards," wrote one T100 candidate.

No. 11: Gary Boomer (tie)



Boomer has been pushing accountants to embrace technology for longer than just about anyone else, and his models (and the consulting firm he founded) continue to guide them to do just that.

No. 8: Jennifer Wilson (tie)



Wilson "challenges people to think differently, with no apologies," according to a fellow member of the Top 100. Whether it's her clients, other thought leaders or the profession at large, she constantly pushes accountants to be better.

No. 8: Charles Rettig (tie)



"Rettig's plans for the IRS will have a major influence on all of us," wrote one T100 candidate of the relatively new commissioner, while another noted that he "has an opportunity to reinvent the Internal Revenue Service as we know it."

No. 8: Erik Asgeirsson (tie)



With CPA.com's role in promoting technologies like the cloud and technology-enabled services like CAS, Asgeirsson and his team "have done an exceptional job 'pulling' traditionally conservative and risk averse accountants into the modern age," as one T100 candidate put it.

No. 4: President Donald Trump (tie)



Some who named the president as one of their most influential were quick to say they didn't support him -- but everyone agreed on his significant impact on tax laws, the regulatory environment and the economy as a whole.

No. 4: Kimberly Ellison-Taylor (tie)



"A tireless advocate for the profession," the Oracle exec has remained a major voice long after her term as AICPA chair, influencing the influential through her passion for accounting and her ability to communicate that passion.

No. 4: Jay Clayton (tie)



Many candidates for the Top 100 cited the SEC chair simply because of the commission's role in the markets, but others zeroed in on specific issues, like the second look it's giving Regulation S-K, and his focus on transparency and effective disclosure.

No. 4: Ron Baker (tie)



Many noted Baker's long-time championing of the value pricing, but the idea is only part of the source of his influence; the other part was identified by another member of the Top 100: "He knows how to ask the right questions to get people to think and challenge their own beliefs."

No. 3: Allan Koltin



"It's unreal to think about the number of people he influences, the transition he is facilitating and the counsel he provides firms," one member of the T100 wrote, neatly summing up Koltin's outsized impact.

No. 2: Tom Hood



"Not sure Tom even needs a 'why,'" one T100 candidate wrote, but just in case, the Maryland Association of CPAs' chief was voted the second-most influential person in accounting for his vision, his skill at communicating that vision, and his ever-innovative efforts to move accountants into the future.

No. 1: Barry Melancon



As he has for several years, the AICPA chief dominated the polling, with more votes than the previous four people combined. In particular, T100 candidates credited his enormous influence to his ability and willingness to lead change, his vision for the profession, and the work he is spearheading on taking the audit into the future.