

2013 Membership Survey



Hong Kong Institute of
Certified Public Accountants
香港會計師公會



Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants Results of the 2013 Membership Survey

During 2013, the Council of the Institute met and agreed upon the substance of the 6th Long Range Plan as strategic guidance in serving members' long term needs. A potential tactical action step to help address Pillar Four "Membership support and development" of the plan included the use of a survey tool. A working group of directors was tasked with the survey development, implementation and evaluation, targeting a response rate of 10% as successful.

The following pages contain the framework and results of the initial survey which offer insight into members' perceptions of the market and highlight the Institute's effectiveness as a resource to the community.

Membership Survey Working Group¹
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I. Research Objectives

As Pillar Four of the 6th Long Range Plan (Appendix 1) was primary guidance for the survey, the relevant sections have been highlighted below.

- (1) Conduct an initial comprehensive survey to assist the Institute in understanding membership demographics and geographical locations, with a series of subsequent surveys to different sectors of members to find out their needs, expectations and what would make them proud to be a member of the Institute.
- (2) Gather data and conduct surveys on the supply and demand for CPAs in practice and in business, in order to better understand the dynamics of the profession and the market.
- (3) Provide relevant training and networking opportunities to enable members to have a smooth transition from public practice to professional accountants in business.
- (4) Determine the Institute's effectiveness with regard to:
 - a. Supporting industry-specific opportunities to network and demonstrate expertise.
 - b. Supporting practice development activities deemed relevant by members.
 - c. Packaging and marketing products and services to targeted membership groups according to their demographics, industry sectors and occupational needs.

II. Data Collection Process

The development of the survey has been approached in a systematic manner with consideration given to the quality of questions. Working group members met periodically to determine the types of information that would best meet the objectives outlined in the relevant portions of the 6th Long Range Plan. Afterwards, questions were developed and evaluated to eliminate consequences related to improperly collected data such as a survey participant's inability to answer questions accurately or failure to provide survey participants with appropriate answers.

The working group adopted the **ABC** approach as part of the question development phase. This approach highlights tips for designing questions that preserve data integrity.

1. Questions should not be **Ambiguous** and should isolate one issue within a question. Wording should be clear and concise, minimizing any room for interpretation.

2. Questions should not be **Biased**. Neutral words should be used and communication of pre-conceived ideas should be avoided.
3. Questions should not be **Complex** and should be developed based on the "typical" member's knowledge base. Consideration should be given on whether the member has the proper perspective to answer.

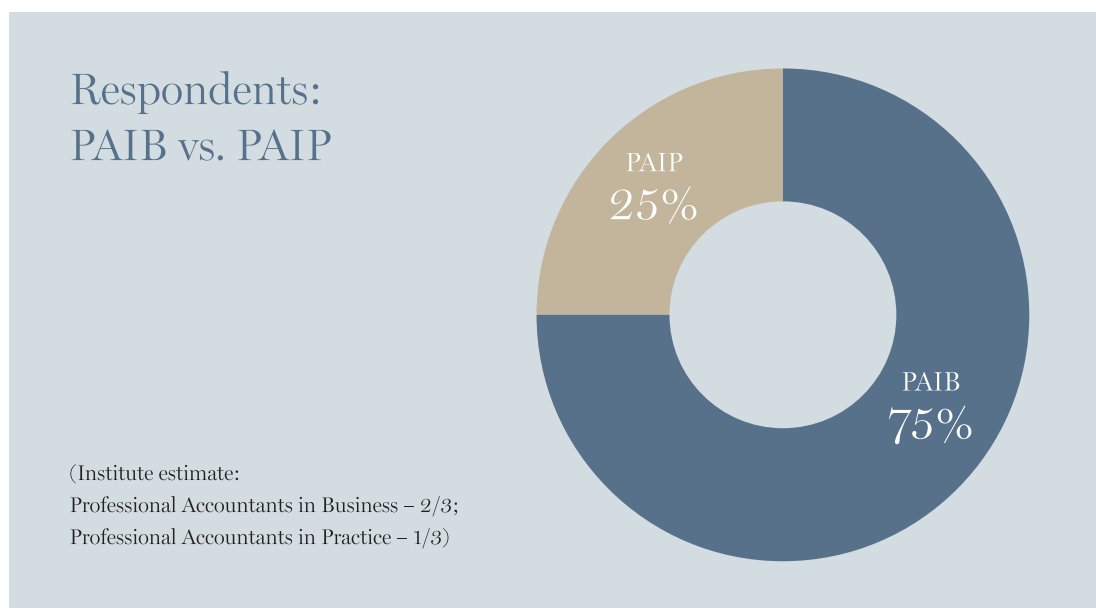
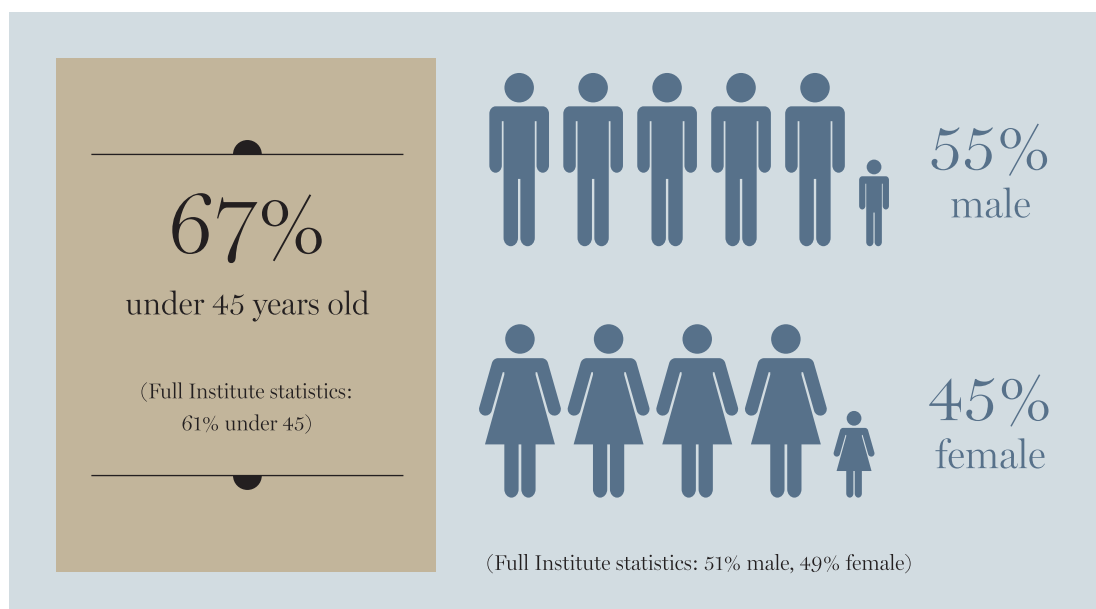
The main objective of the project was to develop a survey tool that generates usable and actionable data. The Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) served as guidance for the project.

Pretesting by directors served to identify any fatal flaws in questioning and promote question integrity. Reminder emails communicating the survey benefits, specified due dates and incentives helped maximize response rates.

III. Highlights of Survey Results

1. Demographics

The survey was conducted during 8-29 November 2013. A total of 3,748 completed responses were received. The demographic make-up of survey respondents is statistically representative of the Institute's membership of approximately 37,000. It shows the notion that the accounting profession is popular for career development of women as almost 50-50 split between male and female.



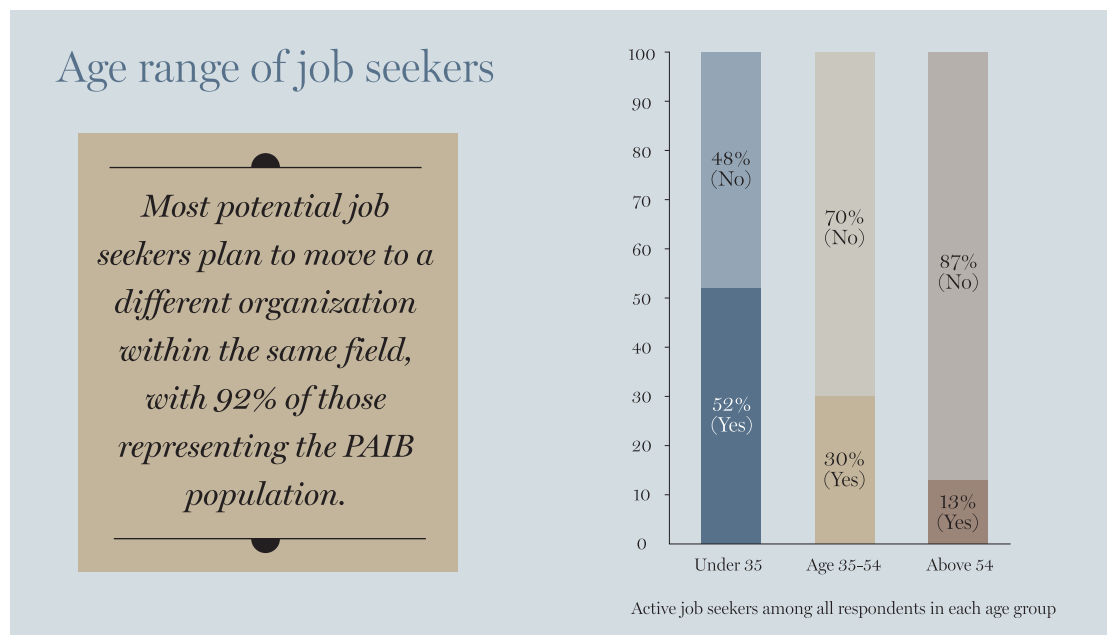
2. Employment characteristics

What did the survey reveal about employment characteristics of respondents? (See section 6 for more detailed statistics.)



*Excluding bonus, incentive scheme, overtime pay, etc. and 9% of respondents didn't respond to this question.

Comparison of hours worked per week			
Hours	PAIB	PAIP	Variance
41-55	67%	46%	21
56-70	14%	24%	(10)
Above 70	3%	10%	(7)



3. Institute's products and services

Which areas should the Institute consider further?

Members see the following as the most important products and services offered

1. Professional and Technical Trainings
2. Communications
3. Network Opportunities
4. Professional Interest Groups

Members see the following as the most common areas of interest for future products and services

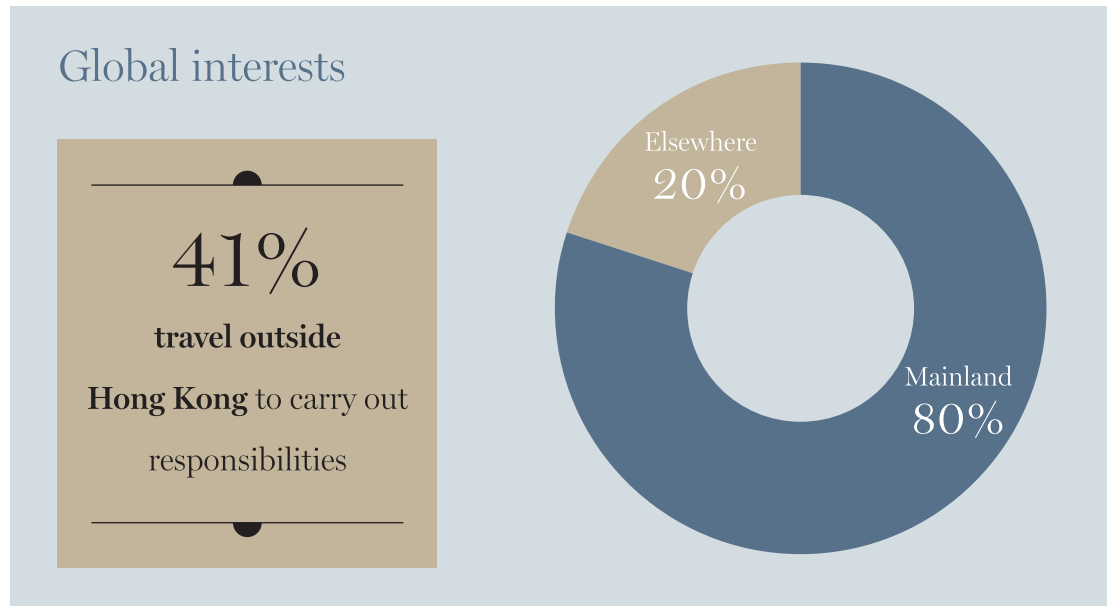
1. More CPD for skills in new and non-traditional CPA roles
2. Enhanced online resources centre for technical information
3. Increase knowledge and understanding of Mainland

Survey participants strongly supported more CPD for skills in new and non-traditional roles with 41% ranking it as number one; participants under 35 yielded 42% of the vote, 30% was from participants ranging from 35-44 and

28% of those over 44 encouraged more CPD in new areas.

An interest in the Mainland was further supported by survey results relating to global interests.

4. Members' mobility



Slightly more than 40% of respondents travel outside of Hong Kong to carry out responsibilities. Of this demographic, an overwhelming majority of 80% travel to the Mainland, with Guangdong and Shanghai identified as the top spots.

Other than those jurisdictions where the Institute already has mutual recognition agreements, respondents identified Singapore and Taiwan as two places where overseas recognition

agreements may benefit their business. Interest in overseas agreements was about the same for PAIB and PAIP respondents.

Further research is needed in the area of products and services as survey results may provide clues about other new services. Future surveys would be tailored to develop a better understanding of the best services to offer.

5. Leaders' top issues

What are the top issues on the minds of corporate and firm leaders?



In response to information gathered from corporate and accounting firm leaders regarding their greatest challenges, potential considerations may include:

- Increase in “soft-skills” training for staff;
- Continued commitment to communication related to staff development;
- Expansion of efficiency training; and
- Introduction of materials and tools to assist members in strengthening skills needed to identify and potentially create opportunities for business development.

Survey results revealed that 41% of PAIB ranked business development as the number one issue for their organization, with managing cash flow and managing staff at 16% and 14% respectively.

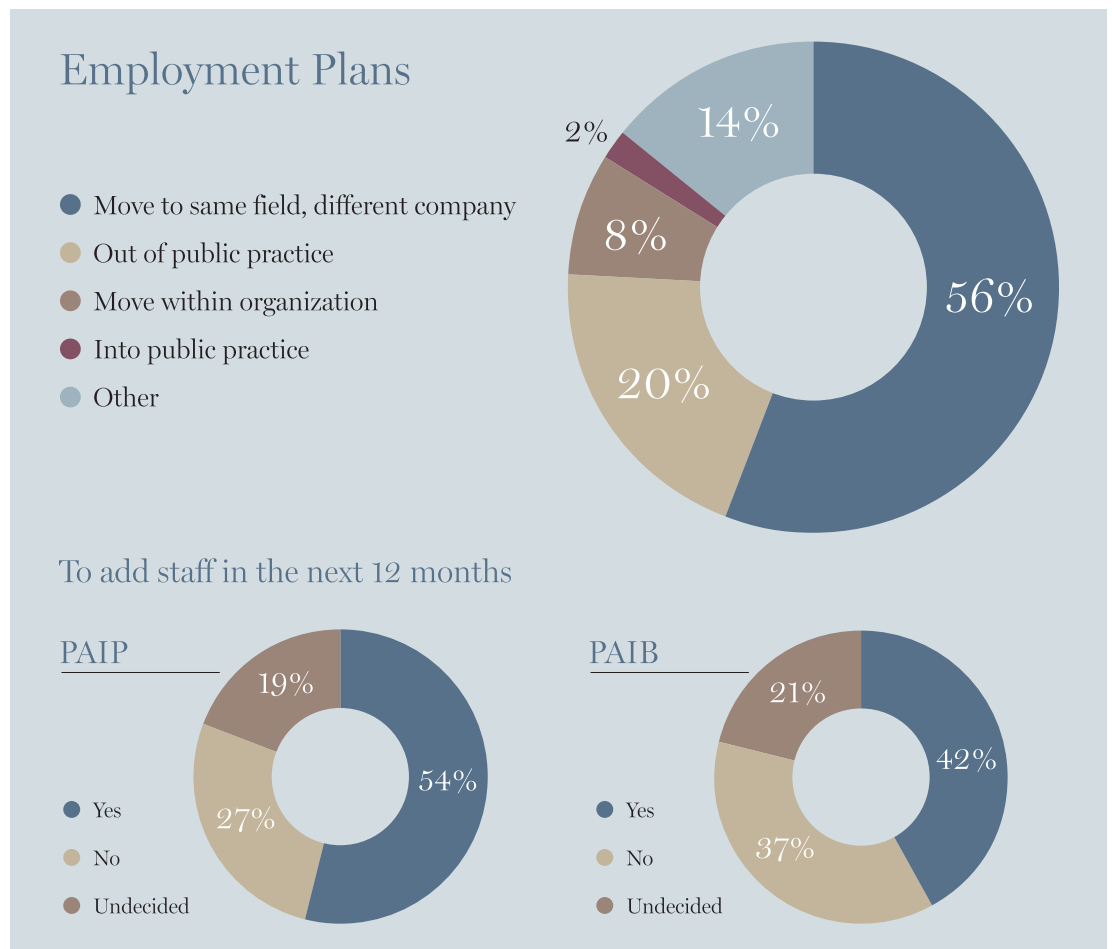
PAIP leadership indicated that hiring/retaining qualified staff was one of the top issues they faced (28%) with attracting good clients and retaining quality clients following at 17% and 16%, respectively. Both groups noted the importance of changing standards and mounting competition.

6. Work environment

- a. What did the survey reveal regarding job-hunting plans of survey participants as well as hiring plans of employers?

CPA employees

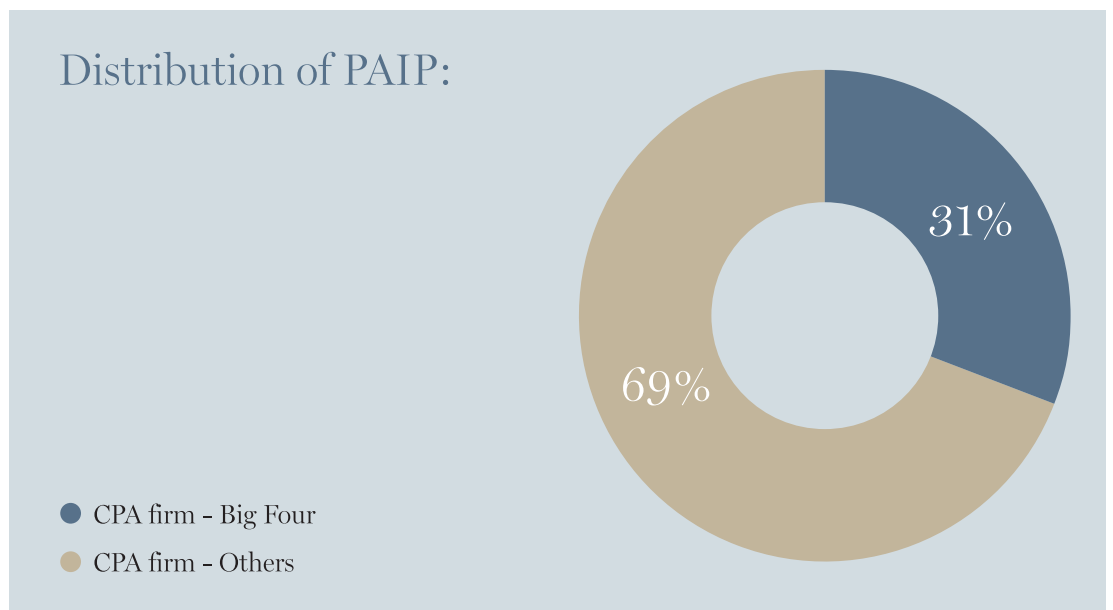
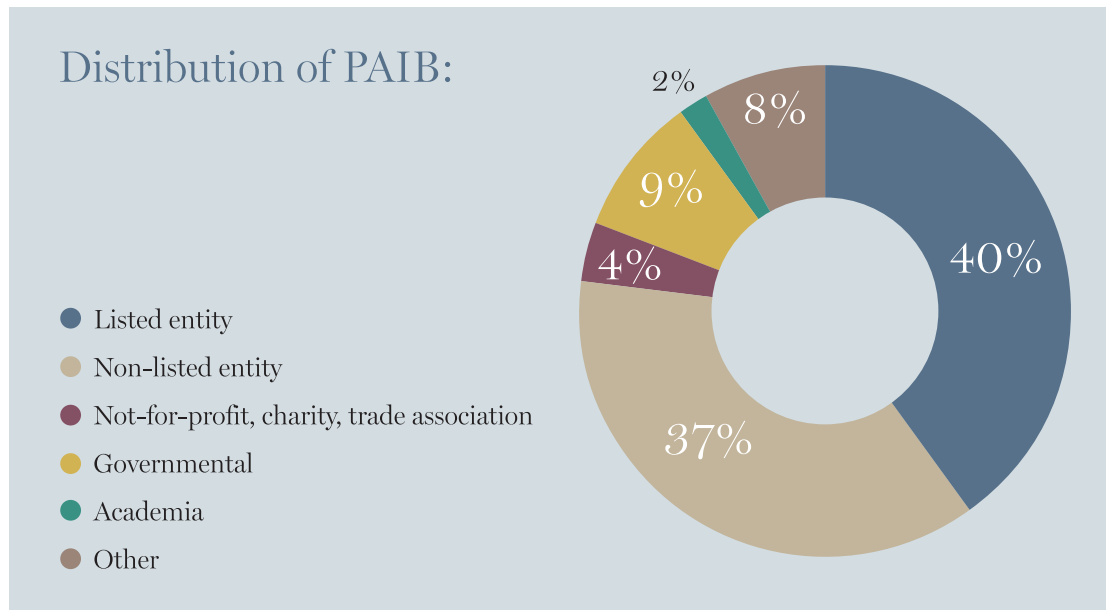
Of the 37% of survey respondents who will engage in a job search, the following best reflects their plan. Majority (56%) potential job seekers plan to move to a different organization within the same field.



CPA employers

The profession offers solid job opportunities with more than half of the accounting firms, and more than 40% of businesses and industries, anticipating a need to add staff within the next 12 months.

b. How did employment characteristics differ between PAIB and PAIP respondents?



IV. Recommendations

1. The 2013 Membership Survey has provided a foundation from which to develop more targeted surveys in the future. Annual surveys would provide benchmarking opportunities to determine if the Institute is successfully meeting members' expectations and to identify deviations within a relatively short time frame.

Secondary surveys will allow different departments within the Institute to identify areas in which they may better serve members' needs during changing economic times. In order to effectively utilize the survey process, a production schedule should be developed to ensure surveys are produced and results are reported in an efficient manner.
2. An employment report developed from the statistics collected would provide a glimpse of the employment landscape and could include tips to employers and employees on managing a successful search.
3. Raw data from the 2013 Membership Survey should be further analysed. Additional information will assist with the development of CPD training and specialist practices.
4. Issuing of the membership survey should continue to be paired with the annual renewal with consideration being given to requesting members' cooperation in completing the survey before proceeding to the renewal phase. This approach has been successful in other jurisdictions.
5. Add automatic survey links to all emails to allow members to provide feedback to the Institute throughout the year. A general survey could be developed by the working group.
6. Expand CPD evaluation form to include more information that would guide the Institute in developing future training. Consider further development of on-the-go learning and portable resources.

V. Appendices

Appendix 1

Pillar Four of the 6th Long Range Plan

“To provide focused services to cater for the needs and challenges of all members in different sectors of the profession, geographical locations and stages of their professional careers.”

Tactical Action Plans related to survey objectives:

- Conduct a comprehensive series of survey to different sectors of members to find out their needs, expectations and what would make them proud to be a member of the Institute, and to understand membership demographics and geographical locations.
- Gather data and conduct surveys on the supply and demand for CPAs in practice and in business, in order to better understand the dynamics of the profession and the market.
- Provide relevant training and networking opportunities to enable members to have a smooth transition from PAIP to PAIB (e.g., through the proposed controllership programme).
- Package and market products and services to targeted membership groups according to their demographics, industry sectors and occupational needs.

Terms of Reference

To assist the Institute in delivering its potential tactical plans under Pillar Four, Membership Survey Working Group shall use surveys to focus on the two key areas identified below:

1. To utilize the following to understand members' needs thereby enabling the Institute to better serve them, meet their expectations and make them proud to be members of the Institute.
 - (a) Obtain membership demographics
 - (b) Learn more about their employment (i.e. PAIB and PAIP)
 - (c) Gain an understanding of members' expectations of the Institute
 - (d) Determine members' satisfaction with the services provided by the Institute
 - (e) Identify expectation gaps for actions

2. To obtain a better grasp of the employment market prospects for members, so as to enable the Institute to:
 - (a) Assist members in their career diversification and development in different sector of the profession; and
 - (b) Satisfy their needs across the different stages of their professional career.

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