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the 2012 “Most Powerful Women in Accounting” awards.

Q&A

Studies show that more women than ever are graduating with accounting degrees, but few are pursuing, or staying in, public practice careers. What do you think may be causing them to think public accounting careers are not as attractive as other careers?

The public practice arena has its own set of challenges due to work load issues. The time constraints of an ever shortening busy season, make it very hard for some firms to retain women. I think many women just find it less demanding personally to work a set schedule year around without the peaks and valleys of work load time constraints.

What advice would you give to these college students about the opportunities for women in the accounting profession?

The accounting profession has so many opportunities that are yours for the taking. Set your sights, make a plan, go forth and conquer. There are truly no limitations. If public accounting is your calling, the firms in this country are all so different—not just by size, locale or specialty—culture, gender makeup, flexible scheduling, paperless—whatever you find to be appealing. Just do yourself one favor—be happy and content wherever you are. You are the only who can make a choice to make your personal situation better.

If you were asked as a consultant to give advice to firms, would you have any recommendations on things they could do to better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

In my opinion, 2 things are so important. Firm culture—-a balanced culture that has

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staff regarding personal pathways. It helps to manage expectations on both sides.

Do you think that there is still a glass ceiling in accounting firm senior management and partner levels, or that the profession has moved to a mostly gender neutral state?

The barriers have definitely been altered, but not completely shattered. I believe at this point, we are truly on a firm by firm basis. Some firms truly do not want to change the gender balance while others have went to being more out of balance with the male gender being more in the minority. It is truly firm choice at this point in the game.

Do you think being a woman in the accounting profession has made career advancement more challenging than it might have been for a male in the same situation?

My personal situation is a little different than most. I started my own CPA firm in 1985 at 25 years old. I truly did not realize there was an issue. The phrase "glass ceiling" has not been discussed much. I thought being young and female was something new for the profession and would be welcomed.

Since I was a sole practitioner, my potential clients new up front who I was and what I brought to the table. Personally, I can say I have not had the challenges I know many have had to endure.

What solutions have you found successful in managing work-life integration. the balancing of your career with your personal, family and social life?

One of the biggest keys in my practice, is a piece of my client selection process. I find it best when I work with client/family groups that have similar personal/family/social values as I do. Their expectations of me do not compromise my personal expectations.

For example, if I had a sick child, they would never think less of me, nor expect me to put my

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I can work from anywhere. Seriously. I love it. It seems I am always somewhere. It is so nice when you do get back to the office—the desk, inbox, messages are not stacked so high. Mobility has allowed me to make my time so much more productive thereby increasing my down time. My work/life has always been more a dual approach... minimize time spent on work to maximize life time. It ebbs and flows with the busy season each year, but mobility has made it so much easier to flatten out those peaks and valleys.

What single piece of technology could you absolutely not live without, and why?

My smart phone. It keeps me connected to my world, whether it be my family, friends, clients, weather, news; whatever is impacting my world at any given time. Most clients do not go through the office phone system anymore. It is either a text message, email or call direct to my cell.

I text myself messages often, especially when out of the office. This then serves as my to do list, reminders of important things people share with me, or just trivia that I want to remember. It could be my need for a GPS, to get the latest airline change information, Pandora for a rental car that the radio doesn't work....the uses go on and on !!!

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

Mypc.com It allows me to be anywhere I need to be anytime I am needed or I have the need.

What do you like to do when you actually have free time without any obligations to work or family?

Anything outdoors in the summer time—running, our backyard, beach/lake; cooking in the winter months; good wine/ travel year around.

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