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## Accounting

Oct. 23, 2012

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**Jennifer Katrulya, CPA, CITP, CGMA**

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CSwege

**Professional Associations/Memberships:** AICPA, CT Society of CPAs

**Hobbies:** Travel, snorkeling, horse shows, tennis, singing, playing piano, kayaking, skiing.

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[Click here to see the other honorees of](#)  
the 2012 “Most Powerful Women  
in Accounting” awards.

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## 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?**

*In part I think that this is the fault of the CPA firms when they do not provide young staff with a sense of potential career paths and opportunities. When the options are presented as purely and potentially forever being the “traditional” accounting service path through tax preparation, audit, etc. when firms are not offering flexible work arrangement options, and when they are not adopting technology at the pace that young staff now expect, they will seek opportunities that at least at face value seem to offer more options, more fun, and more diversity vs. going through the “hard labor” years.*

*I also think that in many firms the starting salaries have not kept pace with what staff at*

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*creative, and that are giving them leadership roles in companies every day.*

*This can be inspiring by showing them that “paying their dues” in the early years can lead them to very successful and enjoyable careers in the “traditional” accounting areas, but that they also have endless other opportunities they can explore. I cannot imagine a profession that offers a better path that provides a person with the expertise they can use to excel within this career while having so much freedom to “make it their own.”*

**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?**

- 1. Offer much more clearly defined job descriptions and sample career paths (traditional and non-traditional options)*
- 2. Invite new/young staff to participate as part of internal employee advisory boards, giving them the opportunities to be the firm “technology champion” or perhaps assist with marketing, sales, and other areas so that they are helping to inspire potential future partners and also help avoid driving staff away out of boredom and lack of opportunity*
- 3. Flexible work opportunities, including fully virtual opportunities, will continue to expand and should be something that firms are at least exploring*
- 4. While the cost of benefits has skyrocketed, this is still a critical area for many female employees, especially based on the number of single mothers, etc. This combined with flexible work opportunities still need to be key focus areas for successful retention of top staff.*

**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?**

*I am sure that this still exists in a number of firms with wide ranges in firm size. However,*

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*I actually think that in many cases it is a plus if it is accompanied by clearly defined talents and performance. For example, I do a lot of public speaking in conference and other venues largely dominated by male thought leaders. I often think that being a female in the mix has helped me establish my "brand" more easily and separate myself from the many male faces.*

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

*I am a workaholic by choice because I love what I do. Having said that, I just took a week-long vacation with my husband to the Bahamas and for the first time that I can remember I left the laptop behind, I did not take out an international calling plan, and I fully "unplugged". I think that is critical. I also work from home now rather than from an office because I am a night owl whereas my husband leaves for work by 4am. This allows me to "unplug" at least for dinner and to enjoy some time with him before I decide to continue working.*

*Previously I would be at the office late and many nights he would be sleeping when I got home. I was also travelling a lot, and realized that I hadn't seen my house in the day time for months! While I still travel quite a bit I focus on having meetings by video conference a lot as well, and again the telecommuting allows me to enjoy being home while still able to provide exceptional service to clients. For several months of the year I work 4 long days Monday-Thursdays and then also take Fridays off as "me" days, leaving Saturday and Sunday open to enjoy time with family and friends.*

**How mobile are you regarding your work? How have mobile devices and apps impacted your productivity and work-life balance? (Spending less time in the office?)**



*I am highly mobile. We closed our last “brick and mortar” office in April of this year. We*

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*With regard to Apps I rely heavily on the iPhone and/or iPad versions of Bill.com, SmartVault (through webDav), ShareFile, Smartsheet, QuickBase, Method CRM, Salesforce, Intacct, EchoSign, GoToMeeting, DocsToGo, Shoeboxed.com, eFax, Keynote, and then my online banking apps as well as Dragon Go! for dictating documents that I can easily edit and use on the go. I also keep up with my social media apps on the go! Skype is also a must-have on my iPhone and iPad.*

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

*My iPhone. If I really had to travel for a week or two and live with nothing but my iPhone I really could now run our entire firm from that one device and complete client work as well. It is true that it is not always ideal to work from that little screen, but I could do it!*

**What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?**

*I would have to say Bill.com, SmartVault or QuickBase because those three solutions really do add up to allowing me to run my firm and serve our clients from anywhere.*

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

*I love to travel (love places that are great for snorkeling or anything ocean related as well as national horse shows), I enjoy playing tennis, hosting/attending get-togethers with family and friends. I enjoy singing, playing the piano (though getting back in to it after not playing for years), and anything musical.*

*Most recently I have signed up for a new L.L. Bean Meet-Up group in my area that holds classes on the weekends for things like kayaking, cross-country skiing, and other activities, so I'm excited to try some new things! I have also signed up to be a Big Sister in my area.*

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