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Notable Achievements: Listed on IPA Top 10 Most Recommended Consultants and

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Association for Accounting Marketing, Member Association of Accounting Administrators, SHRM, American Marketing Association, New Horizons Group and The CPA Consultants Alliance (both NHG and The CPACA are consultant to the profession associations).

Hobbies: Raising three girls, running, yoga, gardening, cooking/baking, active with youth in my church.

[Click here to see the other honorees of 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?

Women continue to be challenged to balance their roles as professionals with being a wife, mother and homemaker. Public accounting requires work compression in certain periods that challenge women – and men – to balance the needs of their firm with the needs of their families. This pressure often leads to feelings of letting everyone down that can drive some women to rethink their career choices.

Further, public accounting continues to be led and managed by men (with only 21% of partners being female). The lack of empathy that some men have for the challenges that women face their multi-faceted role can sometimes lead women to feel they lack support and

understanding from their firm's leadership. CPA firms as a whole simply have not

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

Women willing to step up and lead can easily distinguish themselves in this profession, which offers immense career opportunities for men and women alike in light of the impending succession occurring in the next 12-15 years.

Firms are ready to make the changes needed to support the drive by younger professionals for more work/life integration, better technology to allow 24×7, anywhere access and to find pathways for women to progress and raise their families, too. There are opportunities for those willing and able to give voice to their needs and innovate with their firms to meet them.

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?

I would suggest that all of these would be available to men and women:

- *Develop true flexible work arrangements*
- *Support 24×7 anywhere access and work with technology and “accountant on call” support centers to provide support to staff*
- *Abolish mandatory work periods (Saturday's during busy season for instance) and instead establish specific production goals to ensure firm, client and staff needs are met*
- *Define career “off ramp” options for women with small children to slow down and focus on raising them and then return to more demanding roles within a firm as their children start school*
- *Identify rising stars within the firm and meet with them regularly to discuss their dreams and aspirations, challenges and fears and create developmental and support programs to nurture their careers. Make it truly okay to talk about parenting as a top priority*

- *Provide support resources to help parents find the right types of child care support systems*

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community and networking activities so not developing as much business when kids are young, as an example.

Women can be less assertive than their male counterparts, too, which can lead to them being seen as less leaderly. But in the mostly male partner circles I encounter, the firm leadership is afraid of the impact a woman's family will have on her ability to contribute at the same level as her male counterpart – if she chooses to stay in the firm at all after children come.

This fear may ire women when they read or hear my answer, but if you go back to question #1 with studies showing that women are more challenged to stay in the profession, it is not unfounded.

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?

As a consultant to the profession, my career path has been different from a traditional practicing CPA. I have found being a female an advantage and a disadvantage. There are definitely some partners and partner groups who feel they will be better served by enlisting the help of my male counterparts and they may not feel they can relate to me.

Some are threatened by me. But many more either look past my gender entirely, or it appeals to them, as they feel my passion, care and concern for them and their firm and they are able to be vulnerable with me about their firm's weaknesses and their own shortcomings.

And, because I am a female in an up-to-now male-dominated profession, I would say that this has allowed me (and my fellow female teammates) to stand out and be differentiated. So, I would have to say that my gender has had a positive, or at least net-neutral effect on my career.

What solutions have you found successful in managing work-life integration. the

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of nannies and family support members who provide outstanding support when I am not home. When my babies were young, I brought them with me when I traveled for most of their first year and I still try to bring the girls with me during school breaks and summer vacation.

Technology (cloud, smart phones, Skype, webinar technologies, etc.) allows me to work from home when I am in town and to run a completely virtual business, which we have done since we were founded in 2000. This allows the other 9 women and 1 man on my team to also balance their lives, too.

I have identified my "flow period" of when I do my best concentrated work as nights, so it has been a blessing to work until 6 p.m. when I am home, then conduct the evenings activities with my family, put the girls to bed and then go back to work for several hours most nights. When I travel, I work in my hotel room or on the airplanes at night, too. This provides me the opportunity to put in the hours needed but still have time to be a room parent at school, run errands if needed during the day, etc.

I am also a master at list making, scheduling, and communicating, which is required to allow my children's lives to proceed uninterrupted when I am away. And, I am raising three female leaders – my daughters – who, at an early age, have had to show ownership for their activities, school work, clothes and other gear and to communicate their needs so that we can get them met.

Mostly it works well – but I'd be inauthentic if I said it was 100% fail proof. Sometimes, like everyone, I show up on a trip without my running shoes or missing a part of a suit, or worse, I let my family or team or clients down. And, when I do, I beat myself up, and then I acknowledge it, apologize and ask for shared solutions so it doesn't happen again.

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?)

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times together.

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

Oh brother. It would have to be my Dell Ultrabook XPS now that I can Skype from it – I am a writer, learner, curriculum developer, tool creator, teacher and uber-communicator via e-mail. I could not get any of that done without my laptop. A super close second is my Droid smart phone so I can text with my nannies and kids and talk to my husband, parents, siblings and friends.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

Outlook, I guess (it sounds so pedestrian, I realize), because it allows me to communicate with hundreds of people daily. I LOVE social media, too, and my favorite application there is probably LinkedIn, where I am able to connect with and keep up with a vast network of friends and colleagues.

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

I have to exercise 4-5 times per week to maintain my energy level and sanity. I love to run and work to get 12-15 miles a week in when I'm not training for a race. I practice Vinyasa yoga 6-8 times per month and have for 14 years. I work out with a trainer and my husband very early in the morning when I am in town to do so. I love to read and learn, but I have to admit that I reserve pleasure reading for vacations only – I simply have too much reading to do for work or with my kids.

I like to cook my family recipes and bake, too. I garden – both flowers and vegetables and spring and summer are my favorite times of the year. I love to lay by a pool or, better, the beach – and read – when I take real-life time off. I also like to watch movies or shared TV

shoes with my girls and husband – thank goodness for the DVR so we can do some of that

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