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Michelle Golden, CPF – Certified Professional Facilitator

President: Golden Practices Inc.

St Louis, MO

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Facilitators (past board of directors, past CMAA Regional Representative), Past Association for Accounting Marketing (past board of directors, past conference chair, discussion list founder)

Hobbies: Being a Gramma, genealogy, scrapbooking, reading, and being in the sunshine.

[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?

CPA firm owners are too often out of touch with the cultural and lifestyle shifts taking place over the last decade or so. A fraternal attitude of "I sacrificed [insert here: family relationships, personal time, myself, my individuality, etc] so those behind me should pay that price, too" is neither motivating or inspiring.

In addition, senior CPAs (managers and up) tend to stifle, in their young, the most creative spirits and those most likely to drive innovation and change. The squeaky wheels. The entrepreneurs.

This leads to the defection of some of those best and brightest and definitely of the least

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The opportunities are tremendous. Especially for women with leadership interests, those willing to explore (on their own time) other, non-CPA business models, and who have the guts to challenge the status quo. The future of the profession is what we, all the emerging professionals, make it to be. We aren't victims unless we accept a firm as "them." We have to be willing to step up, be change agents, and understand the firm, and the entire profession, is "us."

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?

It happens that I am a consultant who gets asked this on occasion, and for that I feel very fortunate, indeed! Again, for me, it's not about attracting and advance more "women." It's about attracting and advancing the most intelligent CPAs. Going back to my answer to the first question, for this to happen, firms have to encourage and reward innovative thinking (versus SALY thinking!) and firms have to act on some of the ideas their young professionals raise.

I strongly suggest pairing the youngest professionals with the most senior for great innovations. I tend to find that the middle level (from 5th or 6th year up through partners in their first 10 years of partnership) tend to be the least open-minded to new ideas.

The eldest are comfortable enough with their "place" and aware of implications of changes, and the youngest see things more clearly and freshly, and are willing to speak out, before they are smacked down too many times or tainted by wanting to assimilate in order to be accepted as a future partner.

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?

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by being female versus male. The problem is mostly young women (and men.) not wanting to participate in the old-style culture and rules, both spoken and unspoken.

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

Being comfortable with technology. Being accountable. And creating more awareness about the importance of defining the deliverables (what's due, when it's due, and the expected quality) in order to remove any importance from where something is done or specific butts-in-seats hours. Autonomy combined with personal responsibility make for satisfaction in balancing life and work.

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?)

Very. My MacBook Air and iPad are essential to my daily routine and heavy travel routine. In particular, tossing my iPad in my purse lets me keep up with projects and stay in touch with clients even when I'm at doctor appointments, my kids' functions, visiting out-of-town family and friends, or stuck in one of the many airports without free wifi.

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

MacBook Air or iPhone. Man, it's a toss-up. My ScanSnap, too.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

OmniFocus!! It organizes my life and keeps me on target (to the degree that I let it)

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

I wish I had more time for the things I enjoy most outside of work. I keep thinking, next

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