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of the 2013 “Most Powerful Women
in Accounting” awards.

Q&A:

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

It is estimated that nearly 100,000 CPAs will retire in the next 12 years and any women who are willing to step up and lead can easily distinguish themselves in this profession. Firms will have to change to support the drive by younger professionals for anytime, anywhere work support and to define pathways for women to progress and raise their families, too. But to drive this change, women have to communicate their needs to their firms' leaders. They also have to communicate their needs to their partners at home in order to get the support they need to balance both the demands of work and family.

What advice would you give accounting firms on things they could do to better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

- Develop and then maintain open lines of communication with your female (and male) team members and make sure that your people feel they can be honest about their challenges in balancing work with their personal lives.
- Move away from the “old school” time and place paradigm – where work had to be done at a certain time (8 to 5 p.m. and Saturdays) and at the office (with the notion that if I can't see you, you must not be working).
- Instead, move to an anytime, anywhere work environment and allow your people to fit work into their lives – you'll find they are able to give more time when it fits

with their schedules and can occur in places other than the office.

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I think there is still a glass ceiling, fears of women not being able to put in the effort, decisions made based on assumptions about young women who “might” have children and not be as committed after they have a family and more. This exists in some firms, but there are also an ever-increasing number of gender neutral firms that do not support this type of “old school” thinking and are working hard to innovate ways of operating to support both men and women with young families.

There is also a phenomenon where some men (and sometimes women) are threatened by powerful or outspoken women leaders. This can create an automatic glass ceiling in a firm where those adverse to strong women leaders are in a position to block their progress. Unfortunately, I still see encounter this but certainly not as frequently as a decade ago.

How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life obligations, whether that includes family, etc? I don't think I've achieved “perfect balance” and I don't think it can be achieved.

There are times when my work overshadows my personal life (especially during our compressed busy seasons twice per year) and times when my personal life activities take top priority and require me to say no or scale back at work. So, my first piece of advice on balance is to realize that it doesn't mean everything is perfect at home and at work at the same time, all of the time, because I don't know anyone who has accomplished this. Accept some imperfection from time to time.

I have had the great fortune to have engaged exceptional child care providers who act as co-parents and take ownership of important areas of our family life when I cannot. My husband is super supportive and shoulders his share of responsibility. He also has to juggle his big job with our family's demands, too.

I often work at night (it's 11 p.m. as I write these answers) after my kids' activities are

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driving), my back porch and more. I love my “tiny” Ultrabook laptop, my EvDo wireless stick, my Kindle Fire, and my Droid smart phone and our many cloud-based applications for billing, document storage, CRM and more – all of which enable me to be very productive while on the move. I also LOVE wireless on airplanes and it is almost a deal-breaker for me to fly an airline that doesn't offer it (spoiled!). On the positive side, these things make my mobile work life possible and I feel truly blessed to live and work in this age where all of this is possible. On the negative side, it is VERY hard for me to truly disconnect and focus on my personal life. For instance, when we travel as a family, my children say that we are on a “trip” if my laptop comes with us and that we are really only on a “vacation” if I leave it behind.

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

It is a hard choice between my Dell Ultrabook XPS where I produce a ton of deliverables each year, conduct many webinars and hold Skype coaching sessions and my smart phone, which allows me to stay very connected to family and friends via text and voice.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

Facebook – I wouldn't have answered this a year ago, but so many of my professional connections have moved to this platform and I appreciate keeping up with colleagues, friends and family members on their many musings, life events and other accomplishments. I am more of a responder than a poster on the personal side – I definitely post professional content – but I really enjoy the opportunity that Facebook offers of knowing people on a different level.

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

I love to garden – both flowers and vegetables – and to use my produce in recipes all

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