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## **Alison Ball**

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boring and routine. Those stereotypes could not be more untrue! Accounting is mostly about problem solving, creating order out of chaos and working well with people, so it's a perfect fit for many women – we do this so well naturally!

Accounting is a perfect fit for my outgoing and curious personality. Also, no day is ever the same as the one before. That said, my career in accounting happened in a very unconventional way – after getting a degree in psychology I found that I didn't like working in that field so I made a right turn and went into accounting. Initially I learned on the job, then went back to school and studied to fill any gaps in my knowledge. Over the years, my various roles gave me just the opportunity to invent, fix and create, all things that I very much enjoy. Today, I use my passion for accounting, accountants and bookkeepers to create great things at Intuit. It's been a great ride and I still love coming to work every day.

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

Retention best practices apply regardless of gender. It's all about finding what each employee needs to thrive, then creating that environment for them while helping the business grow. For some employees, that environment is created by helping them juggle work and home life – a flexible work schedule, for example, can be just the ticket. For others, it's about assigning challenging work and stretch roles – so it's important to have development plans in place for each employee. And for others, it's about the title and the pay packet. But regardless, all employees need to feel like they are a valued part of the team and that their opinions matter. Leaders should focus on being open, accessible and create an environment where even the most junior staff member can feel like they are making a difference and part of something bigger than themselves.

### 3. Do you think that there is still a glass ceiling in accounting firm senior

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### 4. How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life obligations, whether that includes family, etc?

I have been fortunate to work at forward looking companies, including Intuit, where I've been at for the past 10 years. All of my employers (with only one exception) realized that if they don't allow employees to attend their kid's key events and be there for their families when needed, retention would suffer greatly. I often take work home, but at the same time I feel "safe" asking for time off if I need it. In past roles, I used to split my day, working at the office when my son was in school, then pick it up again after he went to bed. It worked out really well.

About that "exception" employer? They expected employees to be in the office 100% during working hours with no exceptions. Even sick time was scrutinized and breaks were clocked in and clocked out. As a result, that company had a very high turnover rate because of these policies and I also did not stay long.

### 5. How mobile are you regarding your work? How have mobile devices and apps impacted your productivity and work-life balance?

I am about 75% mobile, although I do go into the office to work most days because I get a lot out of the face time. However, I have my phone connected and with me at all times to be able to quickly respond to anything needed. Additionally, I travel a lot so mobility and connectivity are essential. Overall I'm pretty happy with my productivity and work-life balance.

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

My Samsung Galaxy 4. It has "Swype," which allows me to type faster than I can on an iPhone. Also – the integration with social sites is best in class and the camera just rocks.

### 7. What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

This is a tough one. I use a lot of apps – airline apps, social apps, time zone apps,

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