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Sandi Smith Leyva, CPA, CMA

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of the 2014 “Most Powerful Women
in Accounting” awards.

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

The accounting profession is made up of dozens of different professions – controller, CFO, auditor, tax preparer, sole proprietor, partner, advisor, planner, educator, and more – so there is a path for everyone. You can't beat accounting when it comes to gaining business savvy if you want to run your own business – it's the best.

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

Give women motivators and rewards that are aligned with their values and not with men's. This means lots of time for family and a larger degree of independence. Allow them to compete against themselves and not others, and provide a sharing, collaborative environment that supports women's strengths and not men's.

3. 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?

Yes, there is still a glass ceiling. No, the profession has not moved to a gender neutral state, and science shows we never will – we can't change the subconscious biases we're wired with. Brain science has a lot of answers that firm partners “don't know they don't know” when it comes to gender differences. Of course, I'm partial about that, but the answers are clearly there.

4. How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life

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states and 7 countries, and 100% of our services are delivered via cloud apps. I am extremely reliant on cloud apps for training delivery, client orders, payment, project management, CRM, customer communication, and more. I can't say I use mobile technologies as much as others but we are moving in that direction.

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

I can't imagine living without the Internet, even though I spent 40 years without it. In addition to all the cloud apps I use, I love the ability to ask a question and get an instant answer on any and every subject. I write a lot, and it makes the research go fast.

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

CalenMob allows me to see my Google calendar on my phone. A close second is the group of social media apps I use: Twitter, Facebook, Hootsuite, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, and many more. I have them on both my iPhone and my iPad. We have clients in a Facebook group and a LinkedIn group and I like to keep up with what they post. When I am at conferences, I like to rev up my tweets.

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