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Kathy Watts, CPA, CHC

2018 Most Powerful Women in Accounting

Partner – [Horne, LLP](#)

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far as you choose to go.

What would you suggest to accounting firms that are interested in retaining and advancing more qualified female staff?

Be intentional in identifying and growing female talent. Don't make assumptions that a female may not want an opportunity due to personal responsibilities. Offer opportunities based on skills and experience and allow females to choose their own path. Consider a sponsorship and advocacy program to elevate up-and-coming individuals. Sponsorship is the single largest difference in experience between those in the majority populations of leadership and those who are not. Sponsorship happens less often with diverse populations and women in public accounting due to the complexities of affinity bias and often unconscious tendencies of human beings to sponsor those that remind us of ourselves.

Why did you choose to work in – and stay in – the accounting field?

I chose accounting because my father is a CPA and former CFO. I found public accounting to be invigorating. It is a challenging career – never dull. It isn't about the numbers; it is about helping clients achieve their dreams and reach success.

What are you currently reading?

The Anticipatory Organization by Daniel Burrus

Thank You for Being Late by Thomas Freidman

Same Kind of Different as Me by Denver Moore, Lynn Vincent, and Ron Hall

What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession in the near future (3-5

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How do you see yourself participating in shaping the future of the accounting profession?

I see myself developing creative ways to help clients succeed in this period of disruption. Helping clients find their way in the “new normal” will allow me to define new services and new ways of serving within the accounting profession. I also am passionate about helping more women reach their full potential and achieve their definition of success within the profession. True change happens one person at a time. I want to touch as many people as possible to impact the tidal wave of change.

Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped shape the direction or focus of your professional life.

An executive partner, friend and mentor made a huge impact on my career. First and foremost, he acted as a sponsor to me ensuring I was given exposure to leadership opportunities. He helped me advance by stretching me to always reach beyond my comfort zone. He didn't assume I wouldn't want to accept a challenge or that I lacked the ability. His assumptions were that I could do anything I chose to do and he made sure those opportunities were available for me.

Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow.

I have always felt it was important to be transparent and truthful. You build credibility with clients, team members, family and friends if you are open and honest – don't shy away from the truth. I do the right thing for the right reason and give others the benefit of good intentions that they are doing the same.

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