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Sarah Elliott, CPA, ACC

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There will always be opportunities, and what's exciting to me is that we probably don't know what they'll look like in just a few years! The opportunities will evolve over time, as technology transforms our industry. Business is becoming more focused on experiences, relationships, purpose and social responsibility. People want to do business with people who share their values. In order to attract the opportunities that are right for you – do you know what you value...what you believe in?

Non-technical skills such as emotional intelligence, empathy, influence, listening and communication are becoming more critical than ever before. Embrace a beginner's mindset, open yourself to creativity and learning, and let go of feeling like you have to know all the answers!

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

Policies regarding equal pay, parental leave and flexible work arrangements are a basic starting point, but they are not enough. What really moves the needle is being intentional about the following:

- Clarity of and strong belief in your Why. Why do you believe advancing women is the right thing to do? Don't simply cite the business case of why it's beneficial to the firm's bottom line.
- Cultivating an inclusive environment for all.
- Investing in all of your people through meaningful leadership development, coaching and mentorship.

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

I switched my major from chemical engineering to accounting during my senior year of college. The concepts of accounting just made such logical sense to me. There is

something comforting about having everything balance and in proper order. I chose

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We see so many people in this field with big hearts – people who really want to make a difference. We also see a lot of people who lack fulfillment and question whether and how they fit into the traditional public accounting firm model. We want to help these amazing people and firms create a new Dimension of Possible.

What are you currently reading?

At any given time, I'm usually reading a few books in different formats (e.g., Kindle, Audible, and the old-fashioned paperback)! Currently, I'm reading:

- The Big Leap, by Gay Hendricks (re-read of an all-time favorite)
- Gift from the Sea, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh
- The Autobiography of a Yogi, by Paramahansa Yogananda
- The Seat of the Soul, by Gary Zukav (re-listening to another favorite)

What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession of the near future (3-5 years)?

Although I have no crystal ball, here's my best guess as to what we'll see:

- Continued shift from compliance to consulting.
- Continued shift in focus from women to a broader diversity and inclusion umbrella (with a focus on inclusion).
- More flexible business models (e.g., flexible work arrangements, remote workforce, gig economy, etc.).
- Younger professionals leading more technology initiatives at their firms or starting up their own firms.
- Firms investing more in their people's development.

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

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creates our own unique Dimension of Possible!!

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.

John Henry McDonald is a dear friend and mentor with an inspiring rags to riches story. John Henry overcame countless obstacles, including drug addiction and poverty, to build a successful, multi-million dollar business. He shared his story and annual 21-day vision quest process with me back in 2013, and it transformed my life. Thanks to this amazing man, I now appreciate the importance of dreaming boldly, creating a vision, taking risks, and believing in the power of possibility.

Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow.

Although it's tough to choose just one, I'll share the simple principle of gratitude. I started a gratitude journal in 2013. Every morning, I write down a few things I'm grateful for and reflect on why. This has transformed my attitude, relationships and level of life satisfaction. I can find something to appreciate in almost any situation. It's incredible to experience the powerful shift gratitude can make in your life.

[See the full list: 2018 AICPA / CPA Practice Advisor Most Powerful Women in Accounting.](#)

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