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Sometimes people see one small part of a successful person's life and think, "They sure are lucky." Well, some of those same people might consider Jared Walsh "lucky." And while he thinks the word is misused, he says he doesn't mind so long as people understand that his kind of luck isn't easy. Or as he puts it, "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

The CPA and partner in the Lima, Ohio, accounting firm of Sielschott & Walsh CPAs, Inc. (www.sielschottandwalsh.com), says that the history of his town, in the heart of the Rust Belt, has resulted in a culture where people expect to work hard, are resilient and are willing to change when conditions require it.

Over its 175-year history, many economic blessings and challenges have visited the residents of this city in the northwest part of the state. At varying times, Lima has seen booms and busts in manufacturing, oil production, locomotive works and other ventures. Over the past few decades, times have improved through a successful shift to medical, retail and service-based industries, in addition to nearby Ford and Proctor & Gamble plants. This success, he says, is because of the spirit of the people.

"Ohioans are strong and are emboldened by the challenges that economic change brings. If times are bad, they won't look for a handout and they won't starve. They help each other get back up, and then find or start something new because they have faith that things will turn around."

While he doesn't speak that way about himself, Jared certainly fits that definition. At 31, he may seem young for a partner at an 18-person accounting

firm. But as natives of the town, Jared and his family have seen and experienced

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in 1982 by CPA Robert E. Sielschott. After graduation, he returned and joined the practice, which Jared says was probably a strategic move. "Bob was looking at a succession plan. We connected professionally, had the same goals for the practice, and shared a commitment to the people and businesses in the local community. So it was a natural fit."

Since Jared joined the practice in 2001, it has grown from a staff of six, partially through the acquisition of another local practice, and has expanded its client base so much that they are considering opening another office. This past year, the firm managed more than 2,700 individual returns and 500 business returns, a number that prompts "wows" from many professionals at similarly sized practices. Jared notes that the firm's adoption of technology has allowed it to develop workflows that sustain those high numbers. "You have to be efficient to manage our workload, so streamlining processes is critical." As a part of this effort, the firm mandates e-filing for all individual clients.

In addition to tax compliance, the firm also has a large base of payroll and compilation clients, while litigation support, tax planning and brokerage services are also developing into core revenue fields. In addition to his CPA credential, Jared is a Certified Financial Planner and holds Series 7 and 66 licenses. He says that he really enjoys these specialty services and that, in addition to providing clients with valuable benefits, they yield a better margin for the practice.

As evidence of its willingness to adapt technologically, Sielschott & Walsh CPAs scored a 264 on The CPA Technology Advisor's Productivity Survey (www.CPATechAdvisor.com/Productivity), a free online tool that helps professional tax and accounting practices assess their use of technology, and offers advice for enhancing their productivity.

Also of note, Jared was selected as one the magazine's "40 Under

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colleges in northwest Ohio, the firm also provides internships, which helps with production and also provides valuable experience for accounting students. As a partner now, but having been an intern himself, Jared can obviously appreciate both factors.

And while the ideas of "flex time" and remote working may have seemed foreign to the senior partner at the office, Jared says Bob's been gracious and accepting in the adoption of new technologies and workflows. "He's been great in allowing me to make changes. He sometimes chafes a little at things, but he has the right attitude and it's allowed us to succeed." The practice also provides staff with occasional morale boosters, which in the past have included an in-office visit by a massage therapist, a spa day and a family bowling night.

The heavy workload, especially during tax season, demands a considerable amount of Jared's time, but he says that's actually one of the aspects he really enjoys because of the interaction with clients. Others in this field will empathize with his schedule: In the last few weeks before April 15, the firm takes appointments from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and until noon on Saturdays, resulting in up to 90-hour workweeks.

"While a few of our clients know they could probably do their own returns online, they look to us for a larger picture, sort of an annual checkup that allows us to help them in other ways such as through planning or investment opportunities, or with general or strategic business advice." And since personal finances are often treated as a taboo subject, Jared says that the relationship with many clients is almost like that of a psychiatrist or member of the clergy. "Some of our clients have been with us for 25 years; they're local people and businesses, and we know them as our neighbors, too. But when

a client is with us, they feel they can let their hair down and ask confidential

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center of it. His wife, Shonda, is active in raising their son Jackson (4) and daughter Tatum (2). They started dating their freshman year at Lima Bath High School and attended the same college. She is also a CPA, having worked for a few years at a Big 4 firm and in-house. Shonda adds her expertise to the practice during tax season and also manages the firm's direct payroll and office management issues.

Being in a smaller city and having about a 10-minute drive to work gives Jared the ability to drop in at home as often as he needs or wants, and even to eat dinner with his family most nights during tax season. "I'm pretty good at leaving work at the office, so being able to spend time with them keeps me sane." Well, that and running. Jared will be competing in his first marathon on October 19th in Columbus, Ohio. (If you're in the area, cheer him on!) He sometimes takes daughter Tatum along while he trains, with her singing to him from her push stroller.

When the family can escape from regular life for a few days, a favorite destination is Shonda's father's house in Tennessee, where Jared looks forward to teaching his kids how to fish on the neighboring lake. The Walsh clan also recently vacationed with the families of Jared's two brothers in Nags Head, N.C. When he has only a few minutes of personal time and the kids are in bed, Jared enjoys historical family profiles such as Ron Chernow's profiles of Alexander Hamilton, J.P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller.

Jared acknowledges that he's still young and, while he may thrive on the demands of his career right now, he knows that could change in the future. "I enjoy tax season and I have a long way to go, but I can't see myself ever really retiring. Maybe I'll settle down to partial work when I get a lot older, but I love my work, my clients and my community too much to ever quit."

So can you attribute Jared's success to luck? Is he lucky to work up to

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