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Edi Osborne, CSPM, CPBA, CPVA

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[Click here to see the other honorees of the 2012 “Most Powerful Women in Accounting” awards.](#)

Q&A

Studies show that more women than ever are graduating with accounting degrees, but few are pursuing, or staying in, public practice careers. What do you think may be causing them to think public accounting careers are not as attractive as other careers?

Although most firms have become more “family friendly” – encouraging a healthy home/work life balance, it is still very difficult for women to advance as quickly as their male counterparts because of a perceived “lack of commitment” to the profession when they put their careers on hold to pursue motherhood.

I believe a woman’s definition of success may differ from her male peers. A woman’s path for advancement in the profession is not as much about advancing in the hierarchy of a firm as it is about advancing her personal and professional skills, her leadership abilities, and her passion for helping clients enjoy greater success.

It’s exciting to see some of the most progressive firms in the profession are started, and being run, by women who seek to create a more collaborative, relationship focused culture.

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

There has never been a better time to be entering the profession. There are a wide range of

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If you were asked as a consultant to give advice to firms, would you have any recommendations on things they could do to better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

Whether it is about attracting and retaining male or female talent to the firm my advice would be the same. Focus on outcomes not activities. Establish clear expectations with associated performance metrics and then get out of their way. Also, firms must engage the next gen of talent as architects of their own careers. Give them room to explore options that play to their strengths rather than trying to force everyone down the same career path.

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?

The glass ceiling has never been more fragile. Women are breaking through in greater numbers. I believe this is a function of the higher levels of “emotional intelligence” that women have. One’s ability to coach/mentor and lead others has become as important as one’s technical abilities.

Edi shared a passage on this subject from a [Huffington Post article](#).

Are women more emotionally intelligent than men? And will women naturally emerge as the organizational leaders of the future?

These days many voices answer “Yes” to these questions. For example, by the year 2018, according to the Chartered Management Institute in the UK, the workplace will be one where the demand for “female” management skills will be far stronger than today. The world of work will be more fluid and virtual, and women will move up the chain of command because, as Claire

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What solutions have you found successful in managing work-life integration. The balancing of your career with your personal, family and social life?

Surrender. Surrender to the idea that you can't have it all, but you can design an integrated work/life style that works for you and still be successful.

In other words, we used to think in terms of sacrifice, today we think in terms of choices. Those who are making choices congruent with their values are far more fulfilled and happy than those that made “sacrifices” to play by someone else's rules.

How mobile are you regarding your work? How have mobile devices and apps impacted your productivity and work-life balance? (Spending less time in the office?)

I am 80% mobile. There are still some activities that are better served in the quiet space of my office, but most of what I do is greatly enabled by mobile technology.

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

I love my iPad; it is a perfect bridge between my laptop and smart phone. I used it for e-mail, research, digital photo gallery, reader, etc.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

Mobile banking apps make it easier for me to manage my company from anywhere in the world.

What do you like to do when you actually have free time without any obligations to work or family?

I am a mixed media artist with a heavy emphasis in textiles, acrylic painting, and glass

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