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Gail Perry, CPA

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Professional Associations/Memberships: AICPA, Task Force member for AICPA Women's Initiatives Committee

Hobbies: Music (flute, fiddle), reading, writing, movies

Other Notables: Author of 30 books, including "Mint.com for Dummies," "Surviving Financial Downsizing: A Guide to Living Well on Less Income," "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Doing Your Income Taxes," "QuickBooks on Demand."

**[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?

Some women might feel they have a better chance of progressing more rapidly in their careers outside of public accounting. Public accounting is very cookie-cutter – a woman who wants to excel and stand out in her career might feel there is a better chance for doing so in a private industry setting where there is more diversity in the types of available jobs.

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

Job opportunities in accounting are good now. My advice for women would be the same as

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First, let's assume the firm has a specific desire to retain and advance more women. If the desire isn't there, if a firm feels it is required to do this rather than it wants to do this, the program will likely be unsuccessful. Likewise, women who are looking for career advancement would be wise to seek out firms that have a positive attitude about promoting women.

That said, my advice would be that the firm regard its female employees just as it would any employee – judge on merit, not gender. Don't provide preferential treatment based on gender; instead encourage women to accept the same assignments that men take and provide the same tools for success that are available to men.

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?

I think the existence or absence of a glass ceiling depends on the firm and the people who are making the decisions at the firm. If there is a bias against women because of their gender, and that bias exists at the decision-making level, that will be very difficult for women to overcome. You can't just tell someone not to feel the way he does.

Personally, I would never be comfortable working for someone who felt forced to work with me or promote me against his will. A woman who is concerned about gender issues and who is considering taking a position at a firm should meet with other women already at the firm and have a frank discussion about how women are regarded.

Do you think being a woman in the accounting profession has made career advancement more challenging than it might have been for a male in the same situation?

Absolutely not. I've never worried about being taken seriously. That said, there have been

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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?

Unfortunately, I'm a workaholic. I love my work, and so it's not something I enjoy walking away from. I'm most successful at work/life integration when I make a point to schedule personal, family, and social time just as I would work time.

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?)

My job is virtual, so I am completely mobile. I can work from anywhere and often do my job from a variety of locations. I can work outside on a nice day, at a coffee shop, in the front seat of a car on a road trip (as the passenger!), or from a hotel or beach. I rely on mobile phones (I have two), a tablet, a laptop, and a variety of add-on devices that enable me to power up and get online from any location.

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

I'd have to say my smartphone is the one thing I would most hate to lose. Email access is imperative.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

It's probably SugarSync – the app for the program that lets me access all of my files from any computer, no matter which computer they were saved on. Second would be Splashtop, which lets me access my complete desktop remotely.

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

I like to garden and grow a substantial vegetable crop each year. In connection with that, I

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