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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Aug. 28, 2013



From the Sept. 2013 issue.

From social media to value pricing, these women (Michelle Golden, President, Golden Practices, Inc.; Kim Hogan, Director, West Coast Operations, XCM Solutions, LLC; and Shayna Chapman, CPA CITP CGMA, Managing Member, Shaynaco, LLC)

have each made a name for themselves by leveraging new avenues of

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better.

Collaboration, Community, Camaraderie

In an ever-changing industry filled with new faces and emerging technology, professionals find that breaking down barriers between practitioners, vendors, and consultants is proving to be a win-win-win.

Kim: in recent years there's been a paradigm shift between an industry divided and what we have today. There's a growing collaborative presence where technology vendors realize that peer-to-peer interaction is infinitely more valuable than advertising and self-promotion. Most of all, the emergence of social media has provided platforms for interaction across miles and organizations. The reality that people want to do business with people that they like is more evident now than ever. Today's technology helps build trust, foster relationships, and form lasting bonds with fellow accounting colleagues in ways that just weren't possible five or ten years ago.

Shayna: In the past, we've each worked in our own little box and expected our counterparts to fit inside that box with us. This often led to frustration. The software wasn't exactly how we wanted it. The consultant is hard to communicate with. The CPA refuses to be open to change. The dynamics have certainly evolved. Vendors aren't just people trying to sell you software anymore. They really are listening to your ideas. To make this noticeable, their sales people are becoming the face of their software and are forging real relationships. This certainly has a positive effect on software. They're listening to the CPA and consultant and constantly asking, "What do we need to improve upon?" Likewise the CPA and consultants are stepping outside of their boxes and saying "Hey, what great ideas have the vendors put in place that we haven't thought of and how can we use that to our advantage?"

Michelle: We're seeing the trend of blurred lines between practitioners, vendors, and

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and their own client technology, certainly contributes to the need for this acceptance of more transparent, authentic relationships. This makes business better for everyone.

Facing Down Challenges

We're all in a quest to move the profession forward and experience speed-of-adoption obstacles with clients, partners, and a slow-moving industry as a whole...but we don't let that stop us.

Michelle: It has to be about working with the right people. Everett Rodgers introduced the Diffusion of Innovations (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diffusion_of_innovations) that illustrates how new ideas (and technologies) are adopted: 2.5% are innovators and 13.5% are early adopters followed by early majority, late majority, and laggards. To be effective, enjoy the process, and stay personally inspired to innovate, I work with the 16% at the front of the curve. When there's opportunity to grow or improve, an attitude of "maybe someday" isn't found in firms who are serious about staying competitive, serving customers exceptionally, and being around for generations to come. It's exciting to see the number of firms with emerging leaders who see a need to embrace new ideas.

Kim: With so many moving parts in today's business world, roadblocks can often appear out of nowhere. Just when you think you've convinced the last person to stop being afraid of the Cloud, something happens that forces all of us to face reality: not even the Cloud is perfect. Finding the right balance between the ability to have anytime/anywhere access and ensuring data is always safe and secure can be a difficult feat. In the end, firms that find ways to creatively overcome obstacles for themselves and their clients are the ones who will thrive.

Shayna: As we all know, tax laws only keep growing and the accounting rules keep

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Change is a word that evokes anxiety among even the best and the brightest. There's a constant tug-of-war between the old-school mentality that says, "but we've always done it that way" and a new régime that insists that there's a better way. The key is finding that middle ground where change can be embraced rather than feared.

Shayna: The accounting profession has historically not been seen as agents for change. With acronyms like SALY (same as last year), we appear as if we're taking two giant steps back instead of looking forward.

The difficulty lies within the size of the firm and the age of the staff and partners. While college graduates come out of school ready to use technology to trade in their pens and paper, older partners who have been doing things the same way for years do not want to change the way they conduct business. While "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" may *seem* like a viable solution, history has proven there are always ways to improve to be faster and better.

Michelle: While a lot of firms talk about making change, it's often that only one or two partners are willing to stomach it and, without the support of their remaining colleagues, they simply can't succeed. Change is hard enough without active resisters. Unfortunately, democratically led firms (most firms) end up stuck in status quo. To be able to affect change in our profession, I work with firms who insist on looking ahead—who are philosophically opposed to adhering to old ideals. Characteristics of these firms are more corporate (less committee) leadership models, a culture of innovation with viewing change as healthy and constant, and higher-than-average trust and autonomy versus command-and-control environments. Talk about change! You didn't see many firms like this even ten years ago. The profession is shaking up and it's wonderful to see practitioners, vendors, consultants, and the industry's membership organizations all encouraging and supporting the behaviors that change requires: collaboration, learning, and strong leadership.

Kim: We're seeing this determination to change first hand in industry groups such as

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talent, that organization will ultimately usher in a new wave of leadership.

When we fast forward 10 or 20 years from now, it's tough to say exactly who or what will be the breaking news in the accounting profession. Yet, history has taught us that the industry will always need a healthy mix of stability and change. Surely there will be new communication platforms, more advanced technology solutions, and influencers we haven't yet heard of – that's human nature. Perhaps more than anything, our profession will experience the continued evolution of the community – and the heightened collaboration that comes with it – that will ultimately drive the success of tomorrow's accounting world.

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