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women in the accounting profession?

There has never been a better time to enter the Accounting profession for college students, regardless of gender. The profession is undergoing a massive transformation enabled by technology, and the next generation is best poised to embrace and lead this shift. Practices are shifting into the cloud, business models are transforming, and Accountants are increasingly becoming more visible, valued strategic advisors to their clients. For those with an entrepreneurial spirit, the possibilities are really endless in terms of the potential impact. Many Accounting professional thought leaders in the US are women, so the profession clearly embraces the female point of view. Attend any Accounting conference and you'll find women leading sessions, running panels and presenting keynote addresses.

2. What advice would you give accounting firms on things they could do to better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

The latest research will tell you that to retain and advance more qualified women in accounting firms, it starts with C-level commitment and sponsorship. To learn and understand the situation in your firm, talk to the women in groups and in one-on-one discussions to better understand their needs and challenges. Talk to the best wheel makers outside your firm that have clearly been successful on this dimension. Make it a priority and have a clear action plan with clear targets that define what you want to achieve. I highly recommend the book "[How Remarkable Women Lead](#)", written by two McKinsey partners. They describe a model called "Centered Leadership" which outlines what it takes for companies to create environments in which women will thrive. My thinking has definitely been influenced from this research and model.

3. 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?

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4. How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life obligations, whether that includes family, etc?

Over time I have come to deeply appreciate the secret sauces that create balance for me. It starts with my amazing husband who is incredibly involved in supporting my professional success, on many dimensions. From there, we fearlessly ask (and pay) for help to buy back precious time. This was the primary piece of sage advice I received from working executive Moms during my first pregnancy when I actively asked them how they made it work. Technology is also a great help – who needs to run errands when everything can be delivered to your front door? Lastly, I am incredibly selective about how I spend my time. Beyond prioritization, I have learned the importance of deciding what gets my A-quality focus (versus B or C). Some things just need to get done. Long ago I abandoned being a perfectionist. Lastly, I try to make time to take care of myself. Whether it's exercise, time with girlfriends or volunteering, I believe it's important to keep doing the things that feed your soul and bring you happiness and meaning above and beyond work and family.

5. How mobile are you regarding your work? How have mobile devices and apps impacted your productivity and work-life balance?

Like everyone, mobile allows me to be constantly connected. Professionally I use it to scan and respond to urgent issues and attend meetings on the go. Recently it's been fun engaging in the twittersphere at accountant conferences (@heatherkirkby) which I primarily do on my mobile device. Overall, it's another tool in the toolkit of buying back time so it's definitely a boost to productivity. And from a work-life balance perspective, it certainly provides much-needed flexibility in our attempts to have it all.

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

The cloud. Having grown up in a world of telephone books, shopping in stores,

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