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FIRM MANAGEMENT

Jennifer Warawa – 2014 Most Powerful Women in Accounting

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in Accounting” awards.**

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

Take your time and find the right firm for you. Many times young graduates are pressured to take the first job offer they receive, even if it might not be the right position or company for them. Begin your career with your end goal in mind. Then ask yourself what kind of role, responsibilities, and experiences you need to achieve your end goal. That is what you need to determine and then choose the path that’s going to help you get there. We’ve found in our Sage Vision and Strategy Workshops that it’s very common for accounting professionals to be so far down a path that doesn’t align to their end goal that they don’t know how to get out of it. Don’t settle. Go after what you want.

I would also advise graduates to consider and understand the shift the profession is undergoing. There will be firms that are more progressive, wanting to be trusted, truly valuable financial advisors to their clients, adopting new technology, and embracing change, and there will be others who don’t want to follow this path. It will be important to know what kind of firm you want to be a part of.

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

I would say in general, to attract top talent a firm needs to have a strong vision of what they want to be, a strategic plan on how they will achieve it, and a proper people and talent development plan in place. A firm that is just going through the motions will likely not be attractive to a highly qualified candidate. Top talent wants to see a firm embracing change and technology, and a firm that values their employees, offering continuous opportunities for improvement, such as a

mentoring program or development training. In addition, many females in the accounting profession feel as though they don't have the same opportunities as their male peers so making sure you share with your staff that you are an 'equal opportunity' firm can go a long way.

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?

There is still a glass ceiling in some firms (and some businesses in general – this isn't unique to the accounting profession). However, we are definitely seeing a shift in many firms as they become more supportive of female leaders.

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

This is actually a tough question for me to answer because I do work a lot, and it's not just because there is a lot of work to be done, but because I love my job and the company I work for. That can actually make things more challenging because when you love what you do, you can rationalize why lack of work/life balance is okay. That being said my husband and I are new foster parents so that is forcing me to focus on more work/life balance.

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

I am constantly traveling for work and mobility has completely changed the way I'm able to stay in touch for the better. I no longer have to be unplugged when I'm in the air, so I don't lose large windows of time while traveling by being offline. I find that using mobile devices and apps has made me more productive. If I can take short blocks of time out of my weekend to check in and take care of a few things, it's less I have to catch up on Monday morning and I appreciate that. A mobile 'device' that's now on my wish list (thanks to Greg LaFollette) is [Ringly](#). It's a ring that connects to your phone via Bluetooth and will vibrate and/or light up to alert you of incoming calls, text messages, emails or other notifications. It allows you to be out for dinner without your phone on the table but still be in touch for anything urgent that may come in. I love innovations like this that are changing the game when it comes to mobile technology.

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

It still has to be my iPhone – it’s basically a gateway in to my life and helps me stay connected to my work, my family, my extended network through social media, and current events (just to name a few things). It’s the one thing I can’t leave my house without.

7. What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

My most-used (and favorite) mobile app is probably still Twitter. I am a big Hootsuite user when I’m on my computer but when it comes to mobile, I prefer the way Twitter works.

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