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Bonnie Buol Ruszczyk

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

The opportunities for women in the profession of accounting are probably better than they ever have been, but there are still obstacles to overcome. My advice is to find a firm that not only touts their “work-life balance” but proves it by their day-to-day actions. Also find a woman mentor who has made partner level and ask her what it takes to get where you want to go. Finally, be a rainmaker. If you are bringing business into the firm, regardless of whether you are a man or woman, you will make a strong and lasting impression with the firm leadership.

What advice would you give accounting firms on ways in which they can better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

Firms are going to have to be open to the fact that success is simply not the same for everyone. Flexibility is key and creating an atmosphere where people feel like they can live their lives while they are advancing their careers is vital. I've seen many firms lose amazing people simply because they wouldn't bend a bit to their needs. Take a look at your policies and how they are implemented in real life, and create a work environment where people can thrive yet still take time off when needed and adjust their hours when necessary.

What is the name of one book that has been a great influence to you?

E-Myth Revisited was incredibly eye-opening as someone who owns a service firm. While the same systems that work for a product-based business won't work in professional services firms, it is important to implement systems that can be repeated, explained and managed by multiple people. Without that, there is simply

too much pressure on the business owner to manage everything and that load will

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as webinars throughout the year. I also recently wrote a book (published by the AICPA) on how firms can harness the power of online marketing called *Take Your Marketing Online* (www.bbrmarketing.com/tymo). On top of that our firm has two blogs that we update regularly and even started a LinkedIn group called Marketing Ideas for CPAs. All told, we do everything we can to support and educate the industry in any way we can!

In what ways do you participate in your local community to help others?

I am actively involved in our local community, particularly in helping other women business owners create companies that succeed. I am a founding member of the Atlanta Independent Women's Network and am asked to speak at a variety of events on a regular basis. On a personal level, I am a big supporter of Alpha Team Search & Rescue, where my husband is a volunteer and our dog Barney served as a cadaver dog until his recent death.

What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession of the near future (3-5 years)?

I think firms will have to create more flexible work environments to appeal to Millennials and a growing female workforce. I also expect marketing to take on a larger role in firms' strategic planning as the industry is getting more and more commoditized and differentiation is one of the best ways to overcome that fact. There will be greater use of technology and employees will be spread around the country instead of all located in one office to give firms greater access to the talent they need.

How do you see yourself participating in shaping the future of the accounting profession?

I plan to keep on doing what I've been doing for the last 10 years and support the

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advisor, and we hit it off like gangbusters during our first meeting. A few days later, I was copied on 20 different email introductions that Judi made for me, each with a personal note encouraging us to meet. That was one of the tipping points for my company. Many of those introductions turned into clients, and others introduced me to future clients. I was so grateful to this woman who didn't owe me anything but who took the time to invest in my firm. I always try to pay the favor forward and make it a goal to be a connector in all areas of my life.

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