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Jean Rakich, MBA

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

Get involved while you are still a student in networking and professional groups. Start to build your professional network early and volunteer to help at events. Be known as a good listener and be approachable. Be open minded in your career choices and never stop learning more both within and outside of the accounting industry. Develop a real thirst for learning and reading.

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

I think flexibility has become increasingly important to new people entering the accounting industry. I hire a lot of young people and they work very hard, but appreciate flexibility in their schedules. We also try to offer variety in their job roles so that they get exposed to other areas of the company and this also broadens their learning. An example of this would be to have staff that train also get involved in On-Demand content. They enjoy the change of pace and learn another skill.

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

Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard by Chip Heath, Dan Heath. This book has been an inspiration for myself and the current team that I lead. It deals with Change and the path it takes you through has made a lasting impression on me. We used this book as the focus for a week long retreat for our team a few years ago and I believe that was our best and most memorable learning experience. I refer to it often in day to day life.

In what ways do you participate in the professional community to

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partner more with their clients and be more than their accountant. It has been incredible to watch these firms embrace this approach and grow their business in ways they never thought possible.

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

I have been on the board of Bedford Best Baseball for 15 years. This is the local youth baseball organization. This is a learning league for kids from 6 years old through adulthood. Our goal is to provide a venue for anyone in the community to have an opportunity to play ball in the summer and fall. I also volunteer for functions throughout the year such as Habitat for Humanity and charitable functions at holiday times such as meal donations and clothing and food drives. I also am very active in mentoring young people in both my professional and personal life.

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

I see major changes happening in the technology and services areas of the profession. We are constantly updating our products to meet the sophisticated needs of our clients. We are also expanding our services to meet the demand of more complex problems that help our firms grow and become more successful holistically as business owners, not just as accountants. Clients want to deal with one person who can serve as their business consultant, legal consultant and their accountant. I see this as a major change of focus for our Users in the upcoming years. How do they change from being an accountant to a business partner with their clients.

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

By partnering with our clients to help make them successful. By offering products

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person helped shape the direction or focus of your professional life.

Dr. Diana Wong from Eastern Michigan University. She is a true advocate for professional women. She walks the talk and is genuine and caring. She gives tough feedback and is always only a phone call away. She has been there for me over the last 10 years as a mentor and friend. She has great vision and is a very good listener.

Every time we get together I leave our meetings feeling refreshed and challenged. She supports and respects me as a leader and is always encouraging in her feedback. She has taught me to trust my instincts and that the gut feeling we sometimes have even when it might not be logical is a signal to always listen to. When she is critical I know that it comes from a place of caring and not a place of judgment or resentment. She has a unique way of caring for those in her life that makes you feel special and empowered. She has been a huge mentor to me and a trusted advisor. I hope to be able to offer that same gift to some of those that I mentor. I have learned so much from her.

**[Click here to see the other honorees](#) of the 2015
“Most Powerful Women in Accounting” awards.**

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