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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

Melissa K. Hooley, CPA, CGMA – 2015 Most Powerful Women in Accounting

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Melissa K. Hooley, CPA, CGMA

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“Most Powerful Women in Accounting” awards.**

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

Accounting is a sustainable profession that will offer you unprecedented opportunities to learn and grow both technically and personally. It offers more flexibility than people realize. Don't rule it out because of the things you hear about the long hours. If you work with the right firm that values your contributions – they will work with you through various transitions in your life to make it work. I have worked at large firms and small firms and they have always worked with me to make the balance work. It is also a time in our profession where the demand is great- therefore the opportunities for advancement of women are great.

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

Mentor and develop your female staff early on in soft skills such as networking and business development. Men naturally do this better in a business environment and women tend to have the attitude that letting their work speak for itself will be enough. Help them become well rounded professionals from day one and your firm will benefit greatly.

And quite simply – provide workplace flexibility and a path to reach professional goals. Accounting firms will retain the best talent (both male and female) if they realize that the priorities of our up- and-coming leaders have changed. Quality of life and family life is a larger priority for the generations that will rise to lead our firms. We cannot allow the desire to have and raise children to be prohibitive to career advancement.

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

There have been so many, however most recently “The Heart Led Leader” by Tommy Spaulding.

In what ways do you participate in the professional community to change/improve the accounting profession?

I am the current Chair of the AICPA Women's Initiatives Executive Committee. Our mission is to promote and support the success of women for the broader purpose of sustaining the profession by creating an inclusive environment, increasing talent engagement and leadership opportunities for women.

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

I am involved with a number of philanthropic endeavors. My participation centers around organizations that I am personally invested in and ranges from fundraising to general volunteering to serving on committees/boards. I have had a long-term involvement with the MS Society and I serve on a committee at the American Transplant Foundation. I believe that what we give we receive back many fold. It is so important for members of our profession to provide assistance to such organizations because we can bring a different value to those organizations.

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

Right now there are more successful women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders than there ever have been. I believe that the importance of recognizing their viewpoint, communication style and needs and wants cannot be underestimated. I believe there are three qualities of a new type of leadership in the profession: Innovation, Mindfulness, and Mentoring. Technology will also play a big role in the future of our profession which ties in to innovation. How do we become more relevant as a profession?

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

I hope that what people see when they look at me and my career is someone that leads by example. I'm a partner at a successful firm, have raised a beautiful daughter, been an active participant in leadership and speaking at all levels of the accounting profession and take an active role in mentoring the up-and-coming leaders in our firm.

Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped shape the direction or focus of your professional life.

My father and mother. My father encouraged us to go for our dreams. There were no real barriers other than those we created ourselves. My mother taught us how to effectively and compassionately communicate with others. They both helped us to keep life and job in perspective. Taking care of the family took priority: that had many different meanings and they helped us navigate through what should take priority at various points in our careers. All three of my sisters are business owners as I am.

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