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Partner

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In what ways have you contributed to your firm / company to make it better?

Since becoming a partner two-and-a-half years ago at Bennett Thrasher LLP, Atlanta's eighth largest accounting firm, I have taken certain leadership responsibilities in the firm's Financial Reporting and Assurance Department, as well as the Restaurant / Franchise practice.

During my 10 years at Bennett Thrasher, I have helped management at more than 40 private middle market clients from the Southeast with their annual financial reporting and compliance needs, with client revenues up to \$1 billion.

I am also involved with Bennett Thrasher's mergers and acquisitions practice, performing financial due diligence on a number of transactions annually valued at more than \$50 million. My financial reporting responsibilities include employee benefit plan audits that assist in safeguarding retirement funds for more than 5,000 metro Atlanta employees.

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

I am actively involved in various professional organizations, including the Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA), where I frequently contribute accounting articles and serve as an accounting resource for the organization's more than 500 members representing 4,000 Georgia restaurants.

In addition, I work with the accounting education programs at Kennesaw State University (KSU) and the University of Georgia (UGA). At KSU, I serve on the Accounting Advisory Committee, where I work with faculty and business leaders to explore the current issues facing accounting schools and graduates. KSU's Master of

Accounting Program is one of the largest programs in the state with around 100

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As a participant in the Bennett Thrasher Foundation, I work on projects with other firm employees to make Atlanta an even better place. The BT Foundation has enabled me to serve several community organizations annually, including Habitat for Humanity, Junior Achievement and Park Pride, among others.

What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession in the near future (three to five years)?

I see many technological advances ahead. Data mining and technology will have a major impact, and we will see a lot of that incorporated in our audit process. Vendors are already marketing toward that goal, and we are trying to stay ahead of the curve.

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

I've led Bennett Thrasher's recruiting efforts at Kennesaw State University, as well as at my alma mater, the University of Georgia. Through my involvement at both universities, I have played a role in helping dozens of students secure jobs, as well as continued to guide them in their career questions and goals once hired.

It's important to understand what academia is saying about our profession and what millennials are seeking. My aim by becoming involved in accounting education programs is to bridge the gap between the leadership of the firm and its future.

What is your career philosophy?

I believe first and foremost in taking care of your people and your clients. This helps define the culture of our firm.

Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped change your life.

Rick Bennett. The values he portrays and the culture he has established at the firm

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