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## Way Up:

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**Amy Vetter** • Sep. 20, 2016

In a recent column, I talked about how we can [encourage more diversity in accounting firm leadership positions](#). But how do women know that this is the right way to progress their career?

When women graduate from college and start their careers, they generally have a lot of time to pursue career progression. But then our personal lives tend to become more demanding, whether that be starting a family or otherwise. How do women ensure that their career will continue to progress if they have to take a step back?

There are generally two options: start working your way up your current firm or go it alone. From my experience doing both, I have developed a set of questions that can help you make this important decision.

Starting your own firm is undoubtedly a huge undertaking and requires a significant investment in more ways than one. If you answer yes to the following three questions, you're ready to go it alone.

### Going it alone

#### 1. *Are you looking for more flexibility?*

One of the benefits of being your own boss is the ability to set your own hours. Being your own boss doesn't necessarily mean you will be logging fewer hours. Working on

a flexible schedule may work for those starting a family as there is the potential to be

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need to bring on a partner or a staff member who has these qualities. I always say you should hire your opposite. As an example, if your talent lies with business development hire someone who can work on the day-to-day tasks for clients. Hiring someone exactly like you won't help, you need talent that balances out your personality.

### *3. Do you know your purpose?*

Understanding your purpose for starting a firm will not only help you make your decision but it will set you up for success should you decide to do so. Author and speaker Simon Sinek developed an idea called “[Start With Why](#)” that suggests businesses are successful when they define their core beliefs and ‘why’ they exist, rather than ‘what’ they do. To develop this, think about the strongly-held beliefs you would communicate to a customer or an employee.

After considering these questions you may realize that you are not ready to start your own firm. Here is how you know you're ready to work your way up.

## **Working your way up**

### *1. Do your firm's values match your own?*

If you're going to make a long-term investment in your current firm, think about whether its values align with your own. Progressing within a firm where there is a disconnect between your value system and theirs will only cause problems later down the road. Are you passionate about serving the community in which you work? Ensure your firm makes valuable contributions in this area. Make sure these values are clear and communicable.

### *2. Will your firm be able to offer the flexibility you need?*

Flexibility is a huge factor in deciding what career path to embark upon, especially

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eventually like to take up a technology advisory position, make sure those learning opportunities will be on offer to you. If you want to specialize in a particular area, make that known and ensure you will be given enough rope to learn these skills. Will you be offered business development training? These are all questions to ask.

If you're able to answer these questions affirmatively, then you're on the right track to working your way up the ladder.

Taking into account all of these considerations will ensure you continue your uphill momentum, no matter where that might be.

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