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Anne-Lise Vivier, CPA

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

Opportunities in the accounting profession are numerous, so don't be afraid to go after them. And speak up! If you are in a meeting, don't be shy. If you have something to say, just say it.

What would you suggest to accounting firms that are interested in retaining and advancing more qualified female staff?

I think there are a few things that could be done. The first one is to look at their culture to assess whether it is *truly* supportive of women. Then, I would take a look at the training program in place and how it can help women develop the qualities they need to become leaders. Confidence is something that can be learned and practiced, for instance. Another question I would ask is whether the firm has a good formal or informal mentoring program. Finally, I would suggest they offer more flexible ways to work (flexible hours, remote work, etc.) and look into childcare options.

Why did you choose to work in – and stay in – the accounting field?

I used to think I went into the accounting field by default, but it is just not true. I think it fits my personality really well. I stayed because I really love it!

What are you currently reading?

Born to Run, by Christopher McDougall. I am training for a marathon and thought an inspirational read could not hurt.

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

I hope that the accounting profession will evolve as fast as our customers.

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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.

Can I describe more than one? There are a lot of people I highly respected and listened to along the way.

The first mentors I can think of that really shaped who I am are my parents. They were, and still are, unbelievably supportive. My mother was a working mother and showed me that women can do it. My father introduced me to the business world. They both also pushed me to be my best and to grab opportunities when they presented themselves.

There is also one partner at the Big Four where I started my career that I think helped shape the direction of my professional life. I don't know anybody who is more respected than him when it comes to giving a technical answer to a client. He has taught me that keeping it simple, even when dealing with the most complex of transactions, is usually the way to go. I left many years ago, but we still get together regularly.

Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow.

Always do the right thing, no matter what.

[See the other recipients of the 2016 Most Powerful Women in Accounting award.](#)

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