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## Accounting

Oct. 24, 2016

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## **Danielle Supkis Cheek, CPA, CFE, CVA**

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Accounting is one of the most versatile professions. Even though there are still some problems with the glass ceiling in our profession, it is one of the professions that really allows you to make the career you want to have out of it. You can easily do the career lattice model or have the traditional career ladder in accounting. You can make what you want out of it, and not a lot of other professions have that capability or capacity.

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

I have seen too many times when men and women push their own ideas or ideals onto a particular woman for what she should do regarding her professional or personal life. Each woman's needs, desires, goals, etc are different from the next. There will not be a one size fits all approach to retaining and attracting women in the profession, so initiatives that support the whole woman CPA and her individual needs, goals, etc are imperative. I do believe that giving women access to networking opportunities with other women that been through a particular life or career event (and varying perspectives) is very important. That is why I am so passionate about my work with the American Woman's Society of CPAs ([www.awscpa.org](http://www.awscpa.org)). They were founded in 1933 when there were only just over 100 woman CPAs in the United States and their mission is focused on supporting the whole woman CPA through her life's transitions.

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

I fell into the accounting profession mostly by accident and even left for a very brief 9-month period. I realized that I really loved accounting and it was the right fit for me, I just hadn't found the right fit for me yet in the profession. I am now extremely fortunate to be in a position to run the firm I have always wanted to run.

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Technology is going to continue to revolutionize how we perform and deliver our forensics, attest, and accounting services to our clients. It's difficult to predict the future, but I am always on the lookout for secure emerging technology to allow me to work more efficiently and improve the quality of my service.

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

I have been teaching students for a couple of years, but this upcoming semester I get my first experience with teaching accounting masters students. I will be teaching data analytics the inaugural year as an Adjunct Professor for Rice University's relaunch of their MAcc program. The syllabus I have put together will be a lot of real-world accounting. I am hoping my students will come out with skills sets that can be used on day one and find accounting exciting and interesting.

**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.**

I know it is cliché, but my mother. One of my favorite stories to tell is that when I was a kid, I, like many kids, assigned gender roles to jobs based on the stereotypes and trends that we see around us. I hope one day there will no longer be gender associations for positions, but at the time there were. My mother was a partner at a large law firm, and one day when I was in elementary school, her associate, Pat, was coming to drop off documents. I, like always, asked what type of law does she do? Mom corrected me saying that Pat was a boy (short for Patrick not Patricia). I must have looked confused as my mother asked what was wrong, and I told her ... "but, an attorney is a WOMAN'S job". I had only ever met female attorneys through my mother's networking group. I had never seen anything different.

I have had far fewer barriers in my career than my mother, but as a kid I did not see the barriers that she had to break through to have the career that she did (I was 1

when she made partner). I thought her career path was normal. I was lucky because

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the logistics of how to keep running the day-to-day operations of my business. I am fortunate that the times (social norms and technology) are more accommodating compared to the logistical issues that my mother likely faced. It makes me even more in awe of what my mother was able to accomplish, and it helps remind me that no matter what monkey wrench life throws at me, I will be able to adjust accordingly and get what needs to be done accomplished. Thanks Mom!

**Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow.**

In the words of Tim Gunn, “make it work”. Life (personal, professional, and everything in between) is going to throw curve balls at you. It is how you respond to the challenges and how you make the best of whatever is your current situation that makes you successful. And I always personally believe that I will be successful, as there is no other option.

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