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Jina Etienne, CPA, CGMA

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rules of engagement – how we lead, how we manage, how we work, how much we work, where we work. Have a vision for yourself and don't be limited by the status quo.

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

Stop thinking in gender-based terms. Women don't need men to make allowances for us. We just need them to make room for us. If firms focused on the results (what they want to accomplish) rather than tasks (e.g., hours worked, face time, paper vs virtual), then measured performance on those results, it would allow women to work in whatever style and/or method that worked best for them. Of course, this assumes that firms have family friendly work policies that allow them to make whatever decision worked best for their needs, have gender neutral health plans and policies, and offer specialized leadership development programs for women leaders.

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

I always believed that accounting allowed me to have a career that would let me “flex” and adapt to meet my needs so that I could have the personal/family life that I envisioned for myself. I was able to start my own firm, serve clients in my own way and still stay at the top of my field in terms of technical acumen and exposure.

What are you currently reading?

Lean-In (by Sheryl Sandberg), The Leadership Contract (by Vince Molinaro), Team of Teams (by General Stanley McChrystal)

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

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and companies understand the imperative for change. However, I worry that most D&I policies, initiatives, strategies and program just scratch the surface. While they are a step in the right direction, I think we have to take the conversation to the next level in order to affect meaningful, long-lasting change.

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.

Jim Metzler. He saw something in me that I never saw in myself. I'm very hard on myself and struggle to see my strengths. Jim was the first person who truly challenged my self-view. As I came to trust Jim more and more, I pushed myself to strive for more. I stretched myself, came out of my comfort zone and sought increasingly challenging roles

Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow.

Our Etienne family motto: "Stop Before You Hurt Yourself" started as a joke, but it didn't take too long for it to stick. It has morphed into my rule for life. For me, it means a mix of number of things, depending on the situation:

- If things feel off or unusually difficult, stop pushing and take a break.*
- Sometimes it is better to go with the flow instead of trying to force something.*
- Don't take yourself too seriously.*
- Stay humble.*
- Things usually work themselves out if you trust the process.*

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