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Q&A:

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

A particular issue I have seen both men and women struggle with as they mature and have families is flexibility. Firms need to continue evolving work programs that let staff work anytime and anywhere. This will allow everyone to thrive and contribute.

Role models are critical and we do not have enough women role models for female staff. Cathy Engelbert of Deloitte talks not just about mentors but sponsors who helped her move up in the organization. They are different and you need to have both. A sponsor is someone in the organization who sees your potential and helps you to be "seen." A mentor is a sounding board and advisor on your career. Sponsors and mentors both educate and provide opportunities for your staff to grow.

Firms have to give women the opportunity to grow; understanding they are juggling both family and professional obligations. Create an environment that allows them to excel at work while not missing out on important family moments. There should be more than one path to success that will benefit both men and women at the firm.

Also, it's important to share their stories to help staff see a long-term future in the firm and to assist in your recruitment efforts so you hire the best talent. By valuing diversity in your firm you, can achieve great things.

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

At the time, I felt it was a good place to apply my marketing and sales skills. It gave me the opportunity to create my own role within my firm due to my unique set of skills that went beyond a traditional marketing role. It allowed me to work with management to help develop a marketing culture in the firm as well as work individually with staff to help them with career development. Looking back, it is rewarding to see the impact I was able to make.

The opportunity to lead the organization I have been involved in all these years was

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retiring and it is requiring the industry to look at new ways to do business.

Technology will continue to have an impact as not only a way of gaining efficiency but a way to gain new business. Firms will have to be nimble and adaptable. They have to listen to their client base, which is changing, as well as employees. The industry has to adapt to this changing business model; requiring a different way of doing business. Firms may no longer be able to require that all employees be in the office from 8-5. Rather, they will need to provide employee with more flexibility in how they accomplish their work. I have heard the past two years that mandatory Saturdays are less popular. Firms will have to look at ways to get the work done differently. Pricing continues to be a topic of conversation.

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

In my role as executive director of the Association for Accounting Marketing, I see myself and our association working to continue to elevate the role of marketers, business developers and growth professionals within firms. Helping firms understand the marketing resources they need and helping them to hire someone with the right skillset just as they hire an auditor when they need an auditor and not a tax professional. Including these individuals in conversations related to the future of the firm they will give them the information they need to drive those goals. Each of these professionals play an important role in helping their firms grow. This is evident in the top firms who recognize the value of the team in helping to achieve success.

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.

While I have several, the one that stands out for me as it relates to the accounting industry is Katie Tolin. She has been a mentor from the time I stepped into this industry 10 years ago. Through her recommendation, I have a deeper involvement

with AAM, and I have been able to develop a strong network of advisors that I have

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