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Jennifer Wilson – 2017 Most Powerful Women in

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What opportunities do you feel women in accounting have in that they didn't have when you started in the profession?

In some respects, things have come a long way and yet there is still a lot of progress to be made. Women have more access to women's leadership networks, conferences, and thought leadership, providing a variety of role models, pathways and guidance that weren't really available when I started. In addition, the conversations around women in leadership are much more honest and transparent today, discussing challenges in bringing women leaders up in organizations, unconscious and conscious bias, and more. Flex programs are also light years ahead – we had almost NO flexibility when I started. Taking a personal phone call was considered an infringement on our employers back then and now, most employers embrace each of us bringing our “whole selves” to work.

How important is work/life balance and what suggestions do you have for those who are struggling to attain this?

It is crucial that each of us accomplish both our personal and professional goals. I don't believe that it is practical for us to expect those two things – personal and professional priorities — to be in “perfect harmony” or balanced all of the time. Sometimes work is our focus and priority – especially during peak work periods and sometimes our personal life needs more attention and requires us to “right size” our

professional commitments to manage at home. Most of us are committed to be a

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Having SOME “old school” male decision makers think they need a male consultant to advise them on “strategic” issues (seeking to use female facilitators for HR or marketing matters) or feeling like they should pay less for a female consultant than they do my male counterparts.

What is the best part about being a woman in the accounting profession?

Having MOST decision makers not care about my gender, but instead care about, and focus on, the value of the results we can produce.

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

We do our best to bring voice to the issues and do a lot of writing, speaking and teaching on “Next Gen” firm issues – like gender parity, empowering young leaders, creating a greater sense of purpose, belonging and empowerment within firms, preparing for transition to the Next Gen and preparing to serve the Next Gen client, too. I am personally unafraid of making people who are resisting inevitable change uncomfortable and I consider a huge piece of my role in the profession to be waking people up to the new realities of leading a firm in 2017 and beyond.

Looking back at your career, what would you do differently given the knowledge you have today and how can women who are entering the benefit from that knowledge?

I would have been less afraid to be more open with other women – and men — about the challenges I was facing. I was afraid of committing a “career limiting move.” If I had shared more, I would have found out many or most other professional leaders who were executives were facing the same challenges. If I had had this community to bounce issues off, I would not have felt as alone or like I had to put up with some of the inequity or, frankly, abuse, that I encountered. That said, my experiences shaped

me and got me to where I am today, with the perspective that I have and share with

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positive messages and push through any obstacles or roadblocks. No one can stop you from trying and trying again – except YOU. This Jim Rohn quote inspires me to continually find a way (and not listen to my own discouragement):

“If you really want to do something, you’ll find a way. If you don’t, you’ll find an excuse.”

[Learn more about the 2017 Most Powerful Women in Accounting.](#)

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