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When you live and work in a small town, it often seems like your business is everybody else's business. For accountants in such towns, this can often make for good business, especially when the professional has long-term relationships with the entrepreneurs and families that make up the community. Economic cycles and recessions may come and go, but these relationships persevere through generations.

For Shayna Chapman-Burris, the tale of the American dream started in, and eventually returned to, Gallipolis, Ohio. Tucked away in the forests and rolling foothills that lead into the West Virginia Appalachians just across the Ohio River, Gallipolis isn't a picture of suburbia. Rather, it's an historic small town with around 3,500 residents in the village (35,000 in the county) and an economy that mostly revolves around rural activities, county government, medical services, power plants and the service-based businesses that support them. It was also the hometown of Bob Evans, the founder of the restaurant chain, and whose farms have had an historic impact on the area.

Growing up in Gallipolis and being the daughter of one of the town's only CPAs, Shayna saw the ins and outs of a professional practice from an early age, and she says she didn't want anything to do with it. "I remember watching my dad and mom work these awful hours, sometimes starting around 4:00 a.m., especially during tax season. I just knew that there had to be something better."

So when she left for college at Kentucky and then Marshall University, her plan was to pursue a law degree, but then a peculiar thing happened. "I started taking a few accounting classes because it was easy for me and actually even fun," she said. "It's like a puzzle, finding the right pieces and making them fit. That's when I realized that an accounting degree made sense for me because I loved the work."

Shayna also developed an interest in international business, studying Japanese

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the respect of the community in the process. Before opening his own firm, her dad, Steve Chapman, had previously worked for Coopers and Lybrand.

Shayna is now the managing partner of the practice, Chapman & Burris CPAs, LLC ([www.ChapmanBurris.com](http://www.ChapmanBurris.com)), and has been progressively taking over the firm, although she jokingly notes that the initial three-year plan is now in its eighth year.

The firm, which has a total of eight staff including Shayna, her parents and Jon, primarily focuses on tax compliance and planning, write-up, estate and trust returns, and consulting for many of the local small businesses. With a recent emergence of Japanese-owned manufacturing companies in the area, she has also started putting her foreign language and cultural knowledge to use in building potential client contacts.

In addition to diversifying the firm's client base, Shayna has been focused on adopting technologies that can help the practice run more effectively. Since joining in 2002, Shayna says she's managed to make a lot of significant advances that have helped pull it out of "the stone age." For instance, gone is what she calls the "sneaker-net" method of file transfer, where clients would put data on a disk and walk it to the office. Another major milestone was moving her father away from "greenbar and red ropes."

One of the biggest transitions came after she attended an accounting vendor's user conference about three years ago, returning with desktop scanners and a mission to take the practice paperless, which she succeeded at in a few months. Other changes in the office have been the implementation of a server, laptops and multi-screen monitors at all desks, including a triple monitor for Shayna.

Although her dad (she calls him the "dinosaur") hasn't always been enthusiastic about some of the changes, he's been accepting of her decisions and sees the positive

changes the new processes make. And he still manages a few of the firm's older

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cable connectivity and is considering moving toward more web-based /SaaS programs, many of her clients don't have access to the same business class Internet. This limits their adoption of web-based portals, online collaboration tools and web-based programs that Shayna knows could help them and her practice be more efficient.

"I am always looking for ways to use technology more productively, and there will always be issues we have to overcome. But over the last eight years, and especially the last three, we've made the firm a lot more technologically savvy and are probably the most advanced in the area." Shayna has also been actively rebranding and marketing the firm, including use of Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites and online professional communities.

Due to Shayna's technology focus, her firm scored a 338 on *The CPA Technology Advisor's* Productivity Survey ([www.CPATechAdvisor.com/productivity](http://www.CPATechAdvisor.com/productivity)), a free online tool that helps professional practices assess their workflow practices and use of technology.

Since the firm closes at noon on Fridays (except during tax season), she and her staff have a little extra time for family and travel. So with her new iPhone 4 in her hand, technology also helps her stay connected when she escapes to enjoy quality time with her six year-old son Brayden, a budding tee-ball star who's already learned to switch hit thanks to coaching by mom, who played softball for the University of Kentucky. Brayden is also starting first grade, where he's sure to have a knack for math, considering his CPA-credentialed lineage. Shayna and her family enjoy occasional vacations in Florida as well as skiing and biking at nearby Snowshoe, West Virginia.

When not focused on her number one and two priorities in life (Brayden and the practice, in that order), Shayna also partners with her sister on their "retirement

plan,” a collection of commercial and residential real estate. She’s also active with

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woman a little differently, but that’s because the people genuinely care about each other and look out for each other. That’s what makes this home.”

## Infobox

Shayna Chapman-Burris, CPA

Managing Partner, Chapman & Burris CPAs LLC

Gallipolis, Ohio

[www.ChapmanBurris.com](http://www.ChapmanBurris.com)

Productivity Score: 338

Practice Specialties: Tax Compliance & Planning; Business Consulting; Estate/Trust Planning

College: Marshall University; Temple University Japan

Civic Involvement: Junior Womens’ Club; Gallia County Chamber of Commerce; Gallipolis Historical Preservation Board

Social Networking: Twitter — @ShaynaCPA

Technology

CPA Practice Advisor is registered with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy

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