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FIRM MANAGEMENT

Powerful Women

With well over 200 nominations this year, our judges were faced with the enormous task of sorting through the candidates who brought forward a level of dedication and exemplary job performance that has surpassed all previous years.

Gail Perry, CPA • Nov. 23, 2020

Since 2012, *CPA Practice Advisor* magazine has awarded the annual Most Powerful Women in Accounting awards. This is the third year we have partnered with the AICPA on these awards, and that partnership has expanded the visibility and reach of the awards to truly represent the entire U.S. accounting profession.

See the 2020 Most Powerful Women in Accounting at
www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/21162105.

With well over 200 nominations this year, our judges were faced with the enormous task of sorting through the candidates who brought forward a level of dedication and exemplary job performance that has surpassed all previous years. I would like to commend the panel of 13 independent judges who had the difficult decision of choosing this year's winners. But more than that, I would like to congratulate this year's winners.

You will see if you read the biographies of the women who won the award this year that these women weren't selected because they happened to be in the right place at the right time. Not only are they skilled and brilliant – they take chances, they make sacrifices, they step into the center ring.

And more than that, the women who win this award take the time to bring others with them. I like to conjure an image of a typical Powerful Women in Accounting winner as someone who is climbing a ladder to success, who has one hand reaching up to the next rung on the ladder, and the other hand reaching down to bring the next person along.

Imagine, for a moment, the accounting profession without women. Actually, I'll do that imagining for you because I entered the profession when women in the roles of accountants were kind of a novelty. In fact, in those early days, when I was introduced to clients, there was frequently an actual moment of explanation to assure the client that I was an accountant and not a secretary or office administrator, as those were roles typically filled by women. We all worked in the office, not at home. We all worked the same hours – 8 a.m. until 5-7 p.m. unless it was busy season, then the nights were longer and we worked Saturdays and Sundays as well. There was no paid leave if you took time off to have a child; you scheduled sick or vacation leave to take care of family matters. If you didn't know how to do something, you figured it out on your own – there was no mentoring.

There are those who will say that bringing women into accounting firms resulted in changes that took away from the focus of the job. The stereotype is that women *were allowed* to join the workforce, and then they started imposing unreasonable requests like flex schedules, work from home options, paid family leave, casual attire, and more. I'm happy to be on the side of taking credit for those types of concepts. And I don't think it's a stretch to say that, without the changes that women brought to the accounting firms, we would not be able to continue doing our jobs through the current pandemic. Women, who brought not just their education and skill sets to the office, also brought their sense of responsibility and their priorities for life outside the doors of the office. That outlook planted the seeds for the 21st century workforce and the ability to consider atypical work styles and embrace them when appropriate.

But that's just food for thought. The main thing I want to say here is – CONGRATULATIONS! to all of this year's winners, and actually to all of the more than 200 nominees who make up the pool of outstanding and formidable women who are leading our profession in directions we have yet to experience.

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