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Elena Hesse, CPA

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for those that appreciate it, i.e. not my kids.

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of the 2013 “Most Powerful Women
in Accounting” awards.

Q&A:

What advice would you give to female college students about the opportunities for women in the accounting profession?

I still believe that if you are going to get a business degree, make it accounting. It fundamentally sets you up to be able to “talk business” and be financially aware of whatever career choices you make coming out of college. The accounting profession however can use smart people who enjoy problem solving regardless of their degree. Larger firms especially are looking outside of the traditional accounting degrees for these types of people. The accounting profession gives you a bird's eye view of how business works by exposing you to many different professions, industries and marketplaces. That is cool.

What advice would you give accounting firms on things they could do to better retain and advance more qualified female staff?

Focus on each individual's strengths and play to them in crafting the best career path for your employees. People stay with their employers when they feel they are valued and fit in with the culture of the firm. Be consistent, work/life balance will probably always be a strong motivator for all new employees regardless of gender. Don't just talk it, walk it.

Do you think that there is still a glass ceiling in accounting firm senior

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How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life obligations, whether that includes family, etc?

I consistently get asked this question and believe all of us have different ways to approach what makes sense for our lives. I am blessed with a wonderful husband and supportive family, which goes a long way. Before I had them, I believe what made me positioned to have a balanced approach was making sure I was “filling the bucket” with my relationships. It’s a concept kids learn in kindergarten and it works. Be a giver whenever you can, because one day you may need to dip into the bucket for help. You cannot maintain 100% to each all the time, it’s a pendulum and as long as it is swinging smoothly it usually works out.

How mobile are you regarding your work? How have mobile devices and apps impacted your productivity and work-life balance?

Most of my work time occurs in the office. Being a leader for a group of inside sales professionals has allowed me a modest travel schedule. When I do work at home or on the road, I rely on my iPad. I can retrieve texts, emails and remote into my desktop as needed.

What single piece of technology could you absolutely not live without, and why?

I love seeing new technologies come to market and seeing how someone has created a more efficient way to get things to happen. Having said that, I could live without just about all technology but my iPhone. I stay connected with my family when they are off in all directions, text/emails from work, lookup maps, know the weather, read my books and answer just about any question I have in a quick search. And I always have questions.

What is your favorite professional mobile app, and why?

Google, the amount of information at your fingertips is amazing.

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