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Gail Perry, CPA

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advanced positions in the profession, so if you're looking for a long-term position with a company, I recommend you make sure the decision makers are open to having women leaders in their midst. Every firm is different, and at the end of the day, they are all filled with people, so just make sure you respect the people you work with and that they respect you and are willing to let you shine.

What would you suggest to accounting firms that are interested in retaining and advancing more qualified female staff? I would say that they need to make their intentions known. There is a stigma in the profession about women who want to work and have families at the same time. Determine your firm's stance on work/life issues before you make promises to women on your staff, and then keep your promises. If you are uncomfortable with women in leadership roles, make that known. The #MeToo movement is having a ripple effect among some firms who are considering backing off from hiring women in order to avoid gender controversy. If this concerns you, don't be afraid to have the difficult conversations about gender issues, and make sure you have clear rules and consequences in place to cover as many situations as you can foresee.

Why did you choose to work in – and stay in – the accounting field? I worked my way through college as a bookkeeper while pursuing a degree in journalism. And then when I got my bachelor's degree, I found I could make more money as a bookkeeper because I had several years of experience, so I turned in that direction. A couple of years later, I returned to school to formalize my accounting education so I could sit for the CPA exam, because I determined that I really liked working with numbers. Ultimately everything came together as I became a journalist/accountant.

What are you currently reading? *Delicious* by Ruth Reichl, *Getting Things Done* by David Allen, *Invested* by Danielle Town.

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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. Ron Eagle – formerly president of the Information Technology Alliance and accounting technology leader at George Olive & Co. (now BKD): He taught me I could step over the edge without worrying about falling off the cliff.

Please share a personal rule or principle that you follow. Focus on goals. You can deal with day-to-day changes or setbacks or even leaps forward as long as you know where you're going.

[See the full list: 2018 AICPA / CPA Practice Advisor Most Powerful Women in Accounting.](#)

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