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Accounting

As new generations of accounting professionals aspire to leadership roles in the profession, it is inspiring to look to those who have attained those ranks ahead of them. The AICPA and CPA Practice Advisor partner each year to honor ...

Jun. 08, 2022

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Danielle Supkis Cheek, CPA, CFE, CVA

2022 Most Powerful Women in Accounting

VP, Strategy and Industry Relations

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TRAITS OF AWARD WINNERS

1. She has been the driving force to create a culture of excellence, innovation, and inclusion. If she is a vendor, she has helped to develop the technologies and solutions that will empower organizations to be more productive and profitable.

2. She is one of the top leaders in the accounting profession and her leadership has

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What do you feel is the most important issue facing the accounting profession today?

We are at risk of being less relevant. Our pipeline is shrinking and in the business school I teach at, we are ever concerned that undergraduate marketing starting salaries are beginning to exceed starting salaries for Master of Accountancy graduates. The business model of public accounting and the related trust created by the profession is on the precipice of collapse without a change. Most firms are doing well financially as the pandemic has shown how important the role of an accountant is. However, that current success is masking some fundamental flaws in the lack of scalability in most practices and makes the current staffing shortage even more pronounced. If we don't fix how to scale practices more efficiently through the use of technology, we will not be able to get starting salaries up and maintain our pipeline for our profession.

What one thing would you recommend accountants do to prepare for the future?

Understand data structure basics. I was fortunate to start teaching data analytics in the first cohort of the re-launched Rice Masters of Accountancy program 6 years ago. Our program was a first of its kind and we have since expanded the course to 3 courses. I also had the privilege to serve on the CPA Evolution Model Curricula Task Force, and one of the major areas that were missing from what students needed to be ready for the workforce was data analytics. So, learning some basic data structure concepts will be tremendously valuable. I do personally wish I had learned to actually code. I have met a few CPAs that are developers and CPAs and they are beyond impressive. That skill set pairing is so next level. So, if you are really wanting to get future-ready, learn some basic development skills as well.

The other ones I do tell my students in jest, but also in seriousness:

- Know how to work a copier (duplex setting, clearing paper jams, change toner

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My advice for a woman doesn't change from above. What we all know is great about the accounting profession are the path options that can lead women in the profession to government and policy, private or public business, and most of all, entrepreneurship to help foster new ideas, new growth endeavors, and new leaders. This can be even more enhanced with a solid understanding of systems, data, and technology processes. Having a background in technology can be a true catalyst for a challenging and rewarding career path with accounting at the forefront.

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Read more about the [2022 Most Powerful Women in Accounting Winners](#).

Accounting • Technology

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