Rising women evaporate from accounting firms' partnership pipeline. Women comprise 51% of managers but only 19% of partners. Here are solutions.

2013 Accounting MOVE Project Report

Context

Career Paths

ENGAGE OR EXIT?

Conversations

Connections

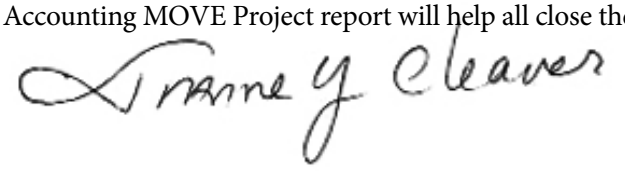
This year, the Accounting MOVE Project's annual theme, "Engage or Exit?" delved into one of the most vexing dynamics for both women and firms: That many women at public accounting firms disengage at the senior-staff and new-manager level and leave for careers in industry or entrepreneurship.

This report bridges the small but fatal gaps in communication and expectation that have derailed many women's progress to partner, and that have dashed many firms' returns on their investments in rising women.

This report has two sections:
"Engage or Exit?" is based on original research conducted by the MOVE team – a survey of more than 440 women in accounting about their career expectations and realities, enhanced by dozens of in-depth interviews with women at all points in their careers.

The MOVE Report updates the key demographic benchmarks established in 2010 and shows how best practices result in the retention and advancement of women in public accounting. The MOVE section continues ongoing narratives about innovations in firm programs and culture.

We thank the hundreds of women who shared their hopes, disappointments and career strategies, and the dozens of firm leaders who shared their own aspirations and frustrations. The proven and promising practices outlined in the 2013 Accounting MOVE Project report will help all close the gap that prevents firms and women from achieving their ambitions.



Joanne Y Cleaver
President, Wilson-Taylor Associates, Inc.

Wilson-Taylor Associates

MOVE Forward Faster!

These additional MOVE tools can help your firm recoup its investment in women and rising leaders.

MOVE Scorecard

• In-depth recommendations and comprehensive benchmarks on all MOVE factors enable your firm to invest in programs, practices and culture that actually work. Insight scales with your firm's size and growth objectives.

MOVE workshops

• Communication workshops for partners and rising managers equip them with insight and tactics to convey firm goals with compelling messages and persuasive leadership.

• Messaging and media readiness workshops build firm authority and reputation by equipping leaders, staff and subject matters experts with powerful techniques.

• Career pathing workshops help rising leaders and staffers apply the strategies in *The Career Lattice* (Joanne Cleaver, McGraw Professional, 2012)

• All workshops available on-site and online.

Context. Career paths. Conversations. Connections.

Context

Women develop different expectations as their careers unfold. Fine-tune culture and programs accordingly or they become irrelevant.

Career paths

Women need to see how their career goals break down into incremental, achievable steps, and how they will gain the skills to win at each level.

Conversations

What is unsaid is just as – perhaps more – important as what is said. One key conversation is chronically miscommunicated by partners and misunderstood by midcareer women.

Connections

Peer relationships are the most important and underrated dynamic in retaining women. Managing over complements managing up and its twin stalwarts, mentoring and sponsorship.

Context

As women advance through senior staff to manager, they reassess their priorities. To retain women through this transition, firms must adapt culture, programs, and communication accordingly.

By the end of 2012, the Accounting MOVE Project surveyed 440 women in accounting. While they represented all levels, from new grad to partner, over a third of the respondents were at the senior staff to manager level.

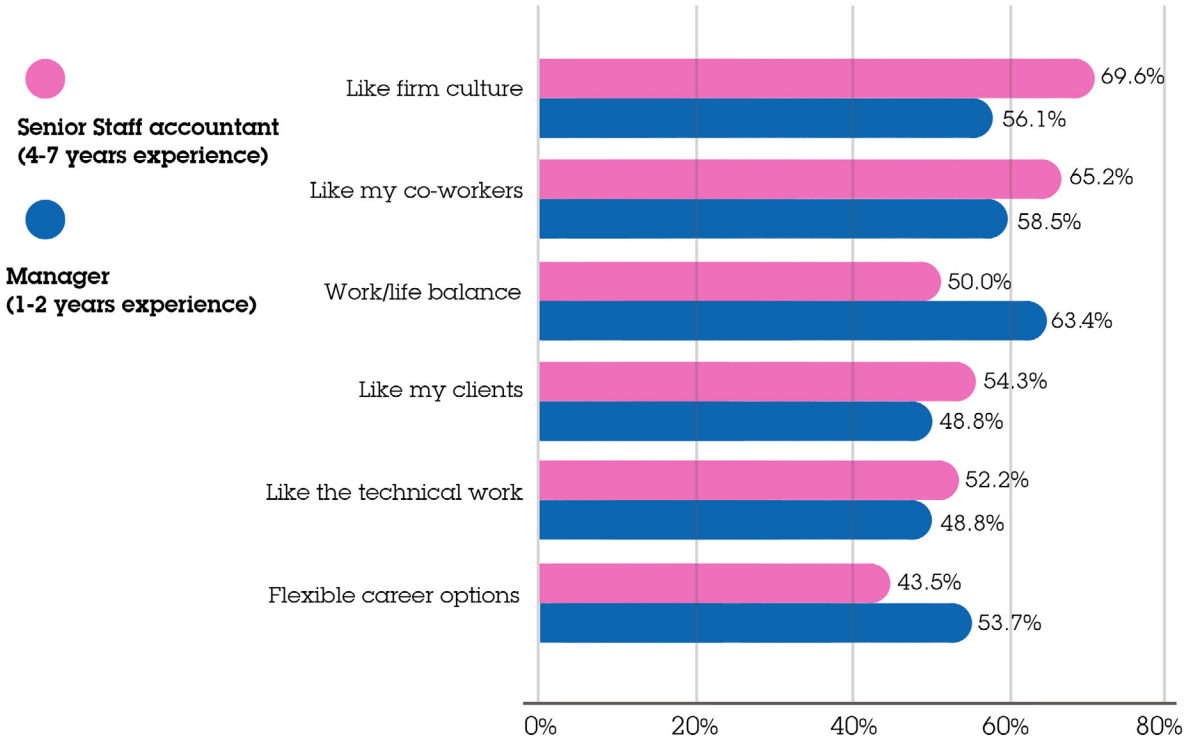
According to the MOVE individual survey, the top four priorities that retain women senior staff are:

- Firm culture
- Relationships with co-workers
- Relationships with clients
- Technical challenge

The top four retention factors for women managers are:

- Work-life balance
- Relationships with co-workers
- Firm culture
- Variety of career options

Which of the following factors encourage you to stay at the CPA firm where you currently work? (Please check all that apply)



Source: Wilson-Taylor Associates, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com

Culture trumps programs, which explains why so many employers repeatedly relaunch women's initiatives. Programs and 'commitment from the top' are announced with the best of intentions. They fizzle out because efforts to advance women are rarely translated to an everyday business advantage for specific client engagements, teams, and growth goals.

When women leave, teams are drained of the talent required to win and keep clients. Firm leaders must 'connect the dots' to show managers how to use work-life programs, career path options, equitable pay, and career coaching to keep the talent they need to achieve immediate business goals. Practice and team leaders who absorb the tactical importance of retaining women make decisions that achieve their firms' strategic goals for advancing women to leadership.

MOVE Founding Sponsor Moss Adams outlines this dynamic in "The Diversity-Engagement Equation," a presentation it makes to business and women's groups, building its reputation and influence in the process. Sharing the story of its culture change through Forum_W wins credibility with the business community and shows the values of Moss Adams.

Moss Adams outlines these success dynamics for retaining women:

- Build acceptance for different leadership styles
- Clarify what it takes to succeed

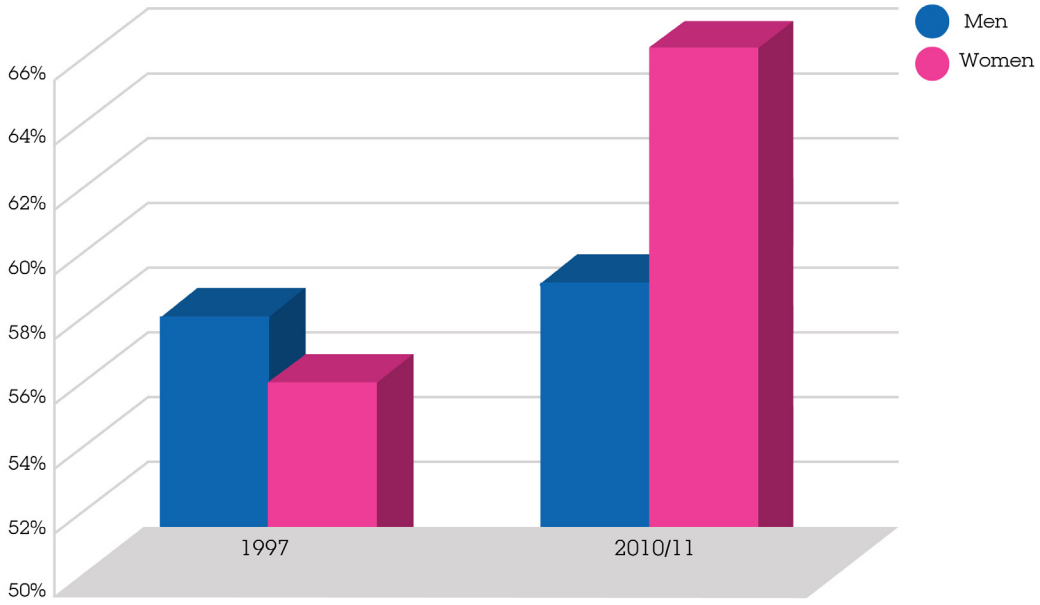
- Fuel ambition through recognition and feedback
- Assist in building networks/social capital
- Provide access to mentors and role models
- Harness altruistic energy
- Offer family-friendly benefits
- Embed flexibility as a business goal

Young women enter the workforce wondering if they will truly have a fair shot at a top spot. Firms must be explicit and consistent in outlining opportunities and reporting results so that women have critical context for making career decisions beyond what they personally observe and experience.

Young women and men share nearly identical priorities for both career and life expectations. A 2012 Pew Research Center survey found that having a high-paying career is a top life priority for women – exceeding the ambitions of men of the same age. These same women also expect to have families and solid marriages. Firms will retain women when they matrix work, life and economic independence goals. For example, conversations about career advancement also need to set expectations for increasing compensation and scenarios for work-life management.

Many women report they were surprised to find, upon becoming a partner, that they had newfound freedom to realign business, personal and family responsibilities. In fact, new findings from researchers at Tel Aviv University validate that powerful people in the workplace are 26% more satisfied with their lives, overall, than colleagues much further down the totem

Gen Y: Who values a high-paying job?



SOURCE: Pew Research Center, 2012. (Percentage of 18-34 year old who say high paying work is one of the most important things
Wilson-Taylor Associates, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com

pole. When women have a full understanding of how achieving partner can help them accomplish many of their life goals, they are more motivated to stay the course.

Each key dynamic must be developed, discussed and supported in sync. When they are not, women will forge their own solutions, even if that means leaving the firm.

Expectation management makes all the difference, says Tricia Bencich, human resources manager with Moss Adams and program manager for Forum_W. As the firm continues to evolve Forum_W, it is launching a workshop that targets women who are three to six years into their career to give insight into advancementat each level. It's an open and honest forum for discussing career expectations.

To retain the firm's pipeline of women, the key piece of the workshop is tackling "future tripping," says Bencich. During this time in a woman's career, it's common to make premature career decisions based on what may unfold both personally and professionally. There's an open discussion on the most common "future trips:"managing work/life balance, developing sales skills and creating their own path to success.

"We want to keep our best people; they are a significant part of our growth strategy."

- Kristen Clark, partner, The Bonadio Group

Lightbulb Moments

Osmosis isn't training. Just ask Jodi Dobson, senior manager with Baker Tilly.

Business conditions have changed dramatically since she joined the firm 15 years ago. Work doesn't roll in like it did a decade ago. And though Dobson watched the partners in her practice area to glean what she could about how they won new clients, the process seemed mysterious -- until she achieved senior manager and began attending higher-level meetings.

"I started to see the plan, where the business came from and where we're going to grow. Suddenly, it's clear: if you're going to be part of that, you have to be a part of bringing in business," she says of her light bulb moment.

But how, exactly? A different economy demanded different tactics. "If I just tried to do what the current partners do, I couldn't do it," she says. Firm-provided sales training helped, but Dobson's real breakthrough came when she figured out that she had an innate 'consultative' style that helped clients deduce why they needed Baker Tilly services, instead of being told what they needed.

Dobson made the most of the long sales cycle for winning new audit clients, letting relationships build organically. She has also worked with partners to gradually take the reins for several longstanding clients, giving those partners peace of mind to retire.

Pacing her development to sync with the evolution of her practice area – energy and utilities – has made all the difference. Dobson now coaches rising women to claim a slice of leadership at their current levels so "they realize that they are not only valued, but invaluable. That experience makes it real, and what it would be like to be a partner. They realize, 'I am a key individual

on that team.' And when you have relationships on top of that, you don't want to let them down."

"They didn't try to keep me until they heard I was leaving," says Angela Ty of the international firm where she toiled for the first several years of her career. Even while she kept her head down in technical work, she kept her hand up, signaling her interest in advancing.

The problem was, nobody read her signals. She doubted that she would ever be seen as anything more than "a producer. All my life I felt that I had a lot of skill sets - leading, connecting with people, and I felt that the people above me didn't want to utilize those skills," she says. As well, she observed a profound disconnect between the firm's official work-life programs and the way managers negated those programs through daily decisions. She assumed she'd migrate to industry.

Then she reconnected with a former colleague who told her that the culture at Rothstein Kass was different. At her prior firm, "They expected you to leave. But at Rothstein Kass, we talked not just about my next step, but several steps ahead."

Now a senior manager in the San Francisco outpost of New Jersey-based Rothstein Kass, Ty progressed even while she was on a part-time track after the birth of her daughter. Mentored long-distance, she heeded the advice of several women partners in the firm and throttled back of the course of one year. She was promoted to senior manager while working four days a week, "and as soon as I was ready in my life, I decided to come back full time," she says.

Now, she is taking full advantage of the advancement promises made when she joined the firm. "The partner for the office told me, 'This is the world you get to manage and that you are responsible for. My goal is for you to expand that world and take on more and more.'"

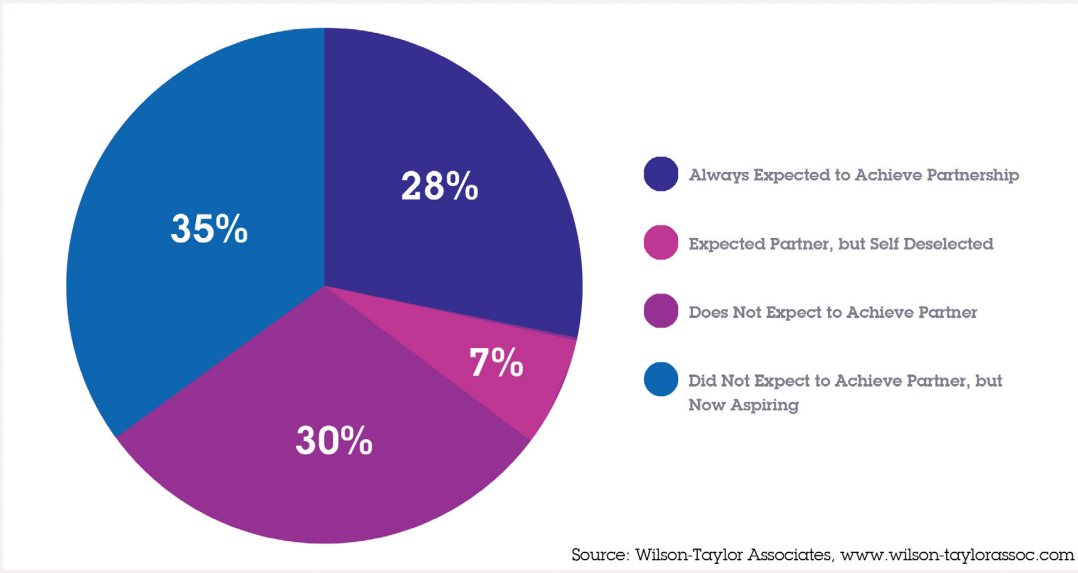
As a senior associate, Ty contributed to proposals and worked on the firm budget. Now, she is accelerating that operations experience. "I'm going to lunch with partners and our service providers so I can see how we manage those relationships, and to networking events to see how we bring in business," she says. "I'm seeing that there's a lot of opportunity to grow beyond engagements."

Career Paths

Women start their accounting careers brimming with ambition, according to the Accounting MOVE Project individual survey. Two-thirds of women choose a career in accounting because of the potential for advancement, and 56% are intrigued by the income potential. And, of course, the AICPA reports that women are half of accounting graduates.

Yet, the path to partnership is opaque. Changing business conditions have made it impossible to simply follow in the footsteps of today's partners. Meanwhile, many women must integrate significant family responsibilities.

Partnership Expectations of Women



Source: Wilson-Taylor Associates, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com

Few observe a clearly mapped way forward. The good news is that personal experience and firm culture can be deciding factors—almost half of the women who did not expect to achieve partner at the beginning of their careers had decided it was possible after a few years in the workforce.

Alternative career paths are a promising mode of retaining and advancing women through the perilous mid-career stage. The strongest career pathing programs provide career coaches and leadership training so that women are always on track, even if that track is slower or more circuitous than the standard.

But the challenges appear most daunting at the senior staff level. The MOVE Project found that 44% of women have been strongly tempted to leave at least once, and more than half of them are still considering defecting. Most of those quietly contemplating leaving are senior staff.

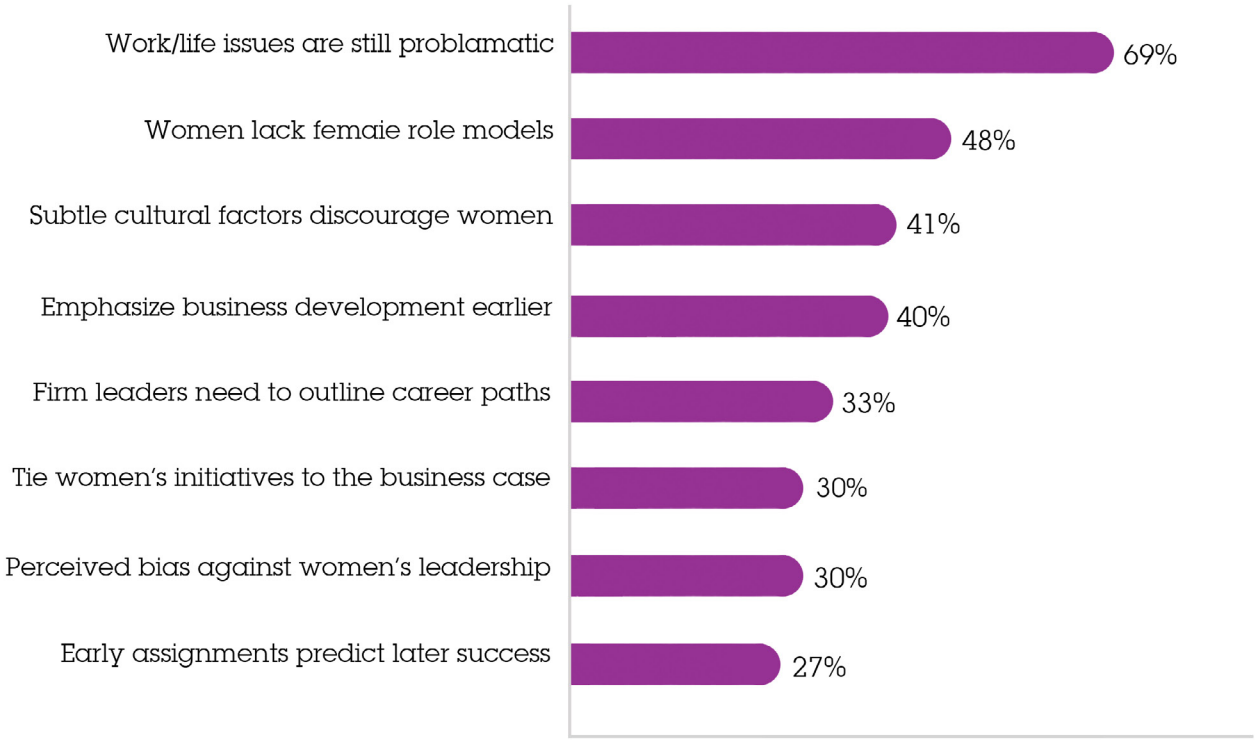
Another Seat at the Rainmakers Roundtable

Prior Accounting MOVE Project reports (available at www.wilson-taylorassoc.com) have profiled the innovative Rainmakers Roundtable program developed by Rothstein Kass. Through highly structured training-and-networking sessions, the program equips mid to high-level women with the skills and confidence to pursue new clients.

The roundtable has added a leaf with a series of four three-hour trainings culminating in an external networking event organized and run by the group. The goal, says senior manager Melissa Randall, who manages the firm's work-life and women's advancement programs, is to ensure that women chosen for the Rainmakers Roundtable program have an operational understanding of networking basics.

Another enhancement of the Rainmakers Roundtable has resulted in an

Top Barriers to Women's Advancement



Source: Wilson-Taylor Associates, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com

event for industry-leading hedge fund clients and prospective clients. "Capital Conversations," run by recent Roundtable participants and a firm female principal, is a thought-leadership discussion where industry trends, the current business climate and resources are discussed, reports Randall. "As word about the event travels, other female clients are already asking to be invited to the next one."

Because rising women organize and present the event, they are showcased to guests. And, by working closely with the principal, the midlevel women gain insight into business-development dynamics. "It makes business development transparent," says Randall. "It highlights the success of our female principals in their mentoring and skills, too. We are creating sustainable growth for years."

Conversations

It's what you say, and how you say it.

It's also what you don't say, and how that goes unsaid.

No wonder conversations sometimes feel like a minefield, for both midcareer women and for partners.

Open, honest, frequent conversation about next career steps are the 'silver bullet' that disarms the silent debate that a woman is likely having with herself about her prospects at a firm. Yet, the MOVE Project researchers repeatedly heard a single misfired conversation related, word-for-word, by rising women and by partners of both genders. "What does it take for me to make partner?" a woman manager will inquire of the partner in charge of the practice area in which she works. The universal response: "Just keep doing what you're doing."

That exchange is a universal fail. Partners intend to say, "You are on track." But women interpret this as unhelpful. They are not sure they will 'read between the lines' to detect the intangible qualifications for partner and build skills and experience accordingly. Many are also concerned about sending the right signals as they pursue partnership: Not too pushy, not too modest.

Three factors redirect this miscommunication:

- Coaches, mentors and career advisors can provide critical context by explaining the underlying assumptions of both women and firm leaders.
- Women can ask about specific next steps in the context of the firm's growth and foreseeable need for new leaders.
- Partners can outline specific next steps tied to immediate opportunities that explicitly address gaps in women's qualifications for firm leadership.

See the script diagram on page 12 for a model for recasting this crucial conversation; visit www.wilson-taylorassoc.com for information on leadership, communication and career pathing workshops.

Before that doomed conversation even starts, many women are starting to talk themselves off the partner track. Women and talent-development staff report this self-derailment usually starts at the senior staff level. By the time a woman becomes a manager, she is well on her way to deciding if she will forge ahead on the partner track, or if she will jump at an opportunity to leave.

According to the MOVE individual survey, the four top reasons why women abandon their ambitions for partnership revolve around doubt that they can manage the perceived workload while maintaining the level of technical excellence that had supported their success to that point.

- 57% - I could not reconcile ambitions for personal/family life with what it takes to achieve partner.
- 22% - The established path to partner in that firm was not a path I would or could follow.
- 19% - There is a lack of female role models at my firm.
- 17% - I lacked business-development skills.

Marc Rosenberg, a consultant who advises firms in management and partner issues, frequently hears the repercussions of misfired attempts to communicate about the potential for advancement. Many among the current generation of partners simply aren't comfortable having a transparent conversation with a high-potential young woman literally young enough to be their

"I get a lot of 'just keep doing what you're doing,' but I don't know what that means. I don't know what 'continue doing' means. I get that over and over and I go to evaluations and I don't leave with anything tangible."

– Woman senior manager

daughters. So, he says, partners hope that generalities will convey the sweep of opportunities they envision. Details, though, are what snap a future into focus. Left with a vague impression of a hazy career path, young women often are unsure how to respond. They quietly disengage.

"Most partners don't realize that those coming up aren't necessarily sure what is involved with being partner," says Rosenberg. "Firms assume that a young female manager doesn't want to be a partner and that explains why young women deselect -- they can't imagine exactly what it is. Most partners love their jobs, but they do a terrible job communicating that."

"I went through that – not asking the right questions, not understanding the response, not realizing I didn't ask the right question – until I found a mentor who spelled it out for me," says Dena Herbolich, a newly minted assurance partner with Moss Adams.

"As I was developing my plan to become a partner, I knew business development was a key component, but I didn't understand how we measured success. Each time I met with my boss, I learned a little bit more. I know my boss thought he was explaining everything clearly, but I still didn't understand the expectations. It took multiple conversations with multiple people for me to really feel clear about my goals."

Extended conversations like these occur every day at public accounting firms of all sizes. And lack of clarity on expectations or potential career paths is a major reason why women leave. "It was helpful to include my mentor in conversations with the leadership to translate the business language into something I could process," says Herbolich. "Now I feel like I share a common language with the leadership about mentoring women."

"If male partners are going to be sponsoring and mentoring women, they have to be trained in best practices about developing career paths, and about effective communication with both genders. Whatever their approach is, it needs to be heard and understood by both men and women. Both partners and emerging leaders need to be responsible for the outcomes of their mentoring efforts."

– Susan Miencier, Senior Manager, Plante Moran

Though Herbolich was gradually assembling the requisite qualifications for partnership, the missing piece finally arrived, courtesy of Forum_W, the Moss Adams Forum for Women. Each Moss Adams office sets priorities for its Forum_W programs; Herbolich's office brought in a sales expert who focused on women's career growth. Herbolich realized she needed a sales coach, which the firm provided.

"Business development is about building relationships and sharing the service you provide with as many companies as you can while building a successful career and stable income," she says. "Once I understood how to grow my business and help others do the same, it was a very quick path to partner."

"You can't get promoted if there's not a position," says Christie Streit, a senior manager at Clark Nuber. Understanding the firm's growth goals and how those goals translate to specific business development tactics has been essential to her preparation for partner.

Clark Nuber leaders outline those goals at all-inclusive meetings for practice areas and for the entire firm. As a new manager, Streit stepped up to gain hands-on experience with budgeting and writing proposals – operational skill development typically not available to new managers at very large firms. "As I've moved up, they want me to take ownership for bringing in the

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He Said, She Heard

Anatomy of a Critical Miscommunication – and a Model for Clear Communication

Midcareer women relate that they start to divorce their career aspirations from their firms when they felt that they had signaled their determination to become partner, but received responses that were noncommittal at best. This career-derailing conversation plays out at firms of all sizes.

Midcareer woman to partner:

"What do I need to do to become partner?'"
She means: Break down for me the specific steps I need to take.

She hears:

If I keep doing the same thing, I will stay in the same place. I need to see a few steps ahead!

She thinks:

I could use a coach or mentor to confirm that I'm taking the right steps.

She does:

She takes a job in industry and announces her resignation.

Partner says:

"Just keep doing what you're doing."
He means: You're on track, and next steps will unfold on schedule.

The partner says:

"We are sorry to see you go."
He thinks: "How did this happen? Why isn't she staying? We would have made her partner in two years."

Break the cycle of miscommunication by reframing questions and responses.

Midcareer woman to partner:

"What specific skills and experiences should I tackle next to ensure I am on track for partner?"

She hears:

I see how these next steps position me to run a practice area and win clients.

She says:

"I'm looking forward to joining that effort and accelerating my ability to bring in new business."

She thinks:

Good, I won't be overlooked. And I have a focus for discussion with my advisor.

Partner says:

"We are thinking of starting a new practice area. This is a perfect opportunity for you to gain business development skills and to gain experience with operations."

Partner says:

"I'll make sure you are included in the next brainstorming session for the launch. This will give you some focus for expanding your network."

relationship," says Streit. "It's not the partner bringing me along to a potential client meeting, but me bringing the partner along."

"Thanks for a free dinner I didn't want."

After two years with a large regional firm as a staff accountant, and being mentored by a high-profile woman manager who shared her personal values, one young woman CPA/MBA simply gave up.

Despite the self-congratulatory internal communiqués that showered down on employees during the tax season crunch, she saw managers flouting official practices and, worse, some partners granting themselves copious exceptions.

Tone-deaf upper management thought that free food would make up for required Saturday hours – even when a team had completed its work by Friday.

"I appreciated the fact that I was getting dinner, but it was a dinner that I didn't want, " she says. "The opportunities in public accounting are definitely there. But they come with a lot of sacrifices. You literally give up a fourth of your year, every single year. I didn't mind going elsewhere [in terms of work-life balance.] Everyone who worked with me felt the same." She migrated to a company in a related field. Despite frequent travel, she reports that she is satisfied with the switch.

"The younger generation is really good about expressing what they want. They're not afraid to say, 'I want work-life balance.' I appreciate their candor. It helps us manage everyone's expectations, both the firm's and the staff's."

– Lori Niederlehner, COO, BeachFleischman PC

Connections

Who's more important to employee satisfaction and loyalty: The co-worker in the next workstation or the boss down the hall?

The co-worker, according to a raft of recent studies. The 2012 SHRM Employee Engagement Spotlight, for instance, found that relationships with co-workers are the top factor for employee engagement, with 79% ranking it as a key dynamic, compared to 71% of respondents citing their relationship with the immediate supervisors. The other three factors in the top five were all variations on the satisfaction of accomplishing work (72% citing 'Work contributing to business goals:' and 'Meaningfulness of job' and 'Work itself' tying at 70% each).

- Peer relationships are the most overlooked, underestimated factor in retention and job satisfaction.
- The glass silo is shattered: Social networks and job-information sharing sites mean that workplace data and peer opinions shape employees' perceptions and knowledge about workplaces – their own and others.
- Firms can accelerate loyalty and retention by investing in peer mentoring, connections and development.

Peer mentoring, lateral networking and 'managing over' are emerging career skills that cut both ways: Thanks to incessant sharing via social networks and instant messaging, every workplace has glass walls. What happens at your workplace does not stay at your workplace, which means that ineffective programs, disconnected supervisors, and cringe-worthy communication will likely leak to the wider world of potential recruits and clients. Well-liked

colleagues have a magnetic effect. When top-producing women leave, their decision tacitly gives permission for others to follow.

That's what Krista Polansky experienced. She had always wanted to be her own boss. After graduating from college, she joined the staff of a local firm in the Midwest to gain broader experience before setting up her own shop. She loved her work, and her performance reviews were stellar. Her mentor there routinely reminded her that she was partnership material.

But she and her co-workers grumbled among themselves that maternity leave and health insurance benefits were stingy, and lag times for promotions placed their salaries below regional norms. In the first half of 2012, Polansky's mentor and several colleagues left due to a variety of medical maladies and career shifts. In July, Polansky quit to start her own practice. By year's end, two more of her fellow senior staff accountants had jumped ship, both making lateral moves to larger firms.

The tale of Polansky and her colleagues illustrates how retention crumbles when there is no longer a critical mass of co-workers and mentors.

Peer influence can be used to build a 'halo effect' around your firm, through social media communication and alumni networks. (See the sidebar on alumni networks.) Some firms are actively cultivating relationships with industry consultants and bloggers who have outsized influence with employees and clients.

Sarah Windham knows that she is gaining momentum on the partner track at Dixon Hughes Goodman. Her initial practice area – construction – was hammered during the recession. Peer and partner coaching turned her attention to an additional category. Now, as a senior tax manager, she is cultivating agribusiness clients and reaping ever-increasing results.

"We've had conversations regarding my timeline for becoming a partner. Though the timeline has moved due to the economy, I'm OK with this decision," she says. Her career progression has also been affected by her decision to take some alternative arrangements to better blend her family and professional commitments.

Recalling her many colleagues who have left over the years, Windham wonders if they realize what could have been… and at what point partners at firms throughout the profession will decide that enough is enough. "At some point, the best and brightest of the profession will not be partners. They'll be chief financial officers, in public or private," she says. "I'd hate to think we're losing all these great minds in public accounting because we can't make the business model work."

M
Money Pay Equity
O
Opportunities Talent Development
and the Business Case for Diversity
V
Vital Work/life Supports
Flexwork Option and Benefits
E
Entrepreneurship
Business Development and
Supplier Diversity

MOVE Statistical Summary

Women Employees & Managers

As a Proportion of ALL Employees & Managers	Year to Year Comparison			
	MOVE CPA Firms 2013	MOVE CPA Firms 2012	MOVE CPA Firms 2011	MOVE CPA Firms 2010
% Women Full-Time U.S. Employees	51%	51%	51%	51%
% Women New Hires	50%	51%	49%	49%
% Women Associates	53%	52%	51%	48%
% Women Supervisors/Senior Staff	48%	49%	48%	51%
% Women Professionals	45%	44%	46%	46%
% Women Career Professionals	48%	62%	56%	53%
% Women Managers	51%	52%	46%	49%
% Women Senior Managers	44%	40%	38%	40%
% Women Directors	43%	27%	25%	34%
% Women Partners & Principals	19%	17%	17%	16%
% Women on Management Committee	20%	23%	17%	16%
% Women Information Technology Employee	25%	24%	23%	15%
% Women Information Technology Project Managers & Team Managers	32%	29%	31%	20%
% Women Information Techhnology Principals/Partners Corp. Dept	14%	31%	7%	10%

Source: Wilson-Taylor Associates, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com

The 37 firms that participated in the 2013 Accounting MOVE Project include 10 of the Top 20 firms nationally. Participating firms are gaining traction with retention and are promoting more women to partner/principal.

At Windham Brannon, every employee has a career coach, and every coach is trained in coaching techniques. That, says Larry Sheftel, the firm's human resources director, is a main reason why women comprise 44% of the firm's principals.

Non-equity partnership: Alternative path to full partner?

Dr. Louise Single and her colleagues explored the role of non-equity shareholders in public accounting firms. They found that 50% of non-equity shareholders were women, compared with an industry rate of 20% of overall women partners. MOVE Project researchers asked firms about career paths and best practices for non-equity partners. Although commonly viewed as an alternative to equity partnership, some firms use more nuance to achieve firm strategic goals alongside successful career paths:

- For most firms, there are principals and consultants without a CPA who may serve as non-equity partners for legal reasons. People development and client-services skill sets are crucial to firm stability, so firms are looking for ways to reward their top performers in administrative roles.

Leaders at Clark Nuber don't just spell out the precise qualifications for partner: they also move rising leaders into an increasingly intense development cycle, starting with a round of nontechnical skills training and then bringing in executive coaches to help those on the partner track gain confidence in the final stretch. The firm is seeing a steady increase in the proportion of women advancing from manager to principal, says CEO Dave Katri.

Louise E. Single co-authored the first study to provide a set of comprehensive data on "director" or "non-equity partner" positions in public accounting firms. An interview with Dr. Single is included in the MOVE Equity Scorecard, available upon request.

- Equity partners who wish to take on a part-time role as they begin the process of divesting their stake in the business have transitioned to non-equity status prior to retirement. Kerkering Barberio in Sarasota, Fla., gives these pre-retirees mentoring responsibilities as well.
- Many firms reported promoting senior managers to non-equity partner roles while they are ramping up business development skills. Mentoring and leadership programs are in place to support these positions, and the goal is still equity partnership.
- At Peterson Sullivan in Seattle, newly promoted partners who are on the equity track generally spend two to three years as non-equity partners before becoming eligible to purchase ownership. This process ensures that new partners have adequate transition time as they master the skills needed to succeed at the equity partner level.
- Other firms see potential ramifications for the business model.
- When Jones & Roth CPAs and Business Advisors (based in Oregon) added a non-equity partner last year, discussions centered on how to assess both responsibility and compensation fairly, as well as how that step might affect their business model in the future.

Would a diverse hire "fit?"

A 2012 study by Dr. Lauren Rivera of Northwestern University found that over 70% of interviewers at law firms were looking for a candidate with the right "fit,' as the top criterion for hiring. Over 60% of interviewers at investment banks, and 40% of those at consulting firms also cited, "fit," above other criteria such as qualifications or relevant work experience.

The implications for diversity are striking. If hiring managers are simply looking for those who are similar to current firm employees, or who share the same interests and opinions, it could hamper the firm's ability to secure a wider range of clients in today's diverse marketplace.

M-MONEY

Key findings:

- 59% conduct internal pay equity analyses of all pay plus performance data
- 41% report organization-wide communication about pay from top leaders
- 35% conduct internal pay equity surveys across race and gender
- 18% train managers to correctly apply fair pay practices when hiring

Recommendations:

- Articulate the business case for pay equity.
- Increase communication about compensation and bonuses from managing partners and practice leaders.
- Innovate in management training to build in context around fair pay practices.
- Increase communication about the compensation costs of part-time flex-work options.

"As a firm, we're frequently seeing the business case," says Nikki Swaney, a partner with Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP. "When we talk with large companies that need a master services agreement, and they want to understand upfront about the what your diversity program that is in place. It comes up very quickly. We're meeting with more women chief financial officers who desire to work with diverse teams of professionals. The business case is very important as we transition from middle market to doing advisory work for large firms."

The Business Case for Pay Equity: Strategic Advantage for Recruiting and Reputation

- Pay transparency is ascendant. Through regulations and cultural shifts, employers increasingly are required by law to disclose more about pay disparities.
- Employers have an opportunity to gain a strategic advantage by proactively adopting progressive pay equity practices and by openly cultivating equitable compensation structures and cultures.
- By exceeding the legally required minimum, employers take the high ground, winning a competitive advantage in recruiting. Employees are increasingly savvy on issues of pay equity, and new programs are emerging to equip women with salary negotiation skills.
- Straightforward, clear and accountable pay practices build corporate reputation…and reputation increasingly translates to revenue and supports market valuations.
- Pay transparency and fairness is a key frame for equitable corporate culture, establishing a point of reference for current and potential employees, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Wilson-Taylor has found that outlining pay decision factors and equity accountability does more than neutralize employee anxiety. These practices build trust because employees understand the process, terminology, standards and measurements designed to ensure equitable pay.

Evidence for the Business Case for Pay Equity:

- The Dodd-Frank Bill requires publicly held companies to reveal key internal pay metrics. Regulations are expected to be finalized in the next 18 months, forcing transparency.
- Though the Paycheck Fairness Act did not pass in June 2012, pay equity continues to be a priority for Obama administration regulators. Both the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs just released a new set of guidelines for compensation audits that ratchets up employer accountability for equitable pay.
- National employers must face new pay equity regulations in various states. For instance, New Jersey is phasing in regulations required by its own Equal Pay Act, signed into law in September 2012.
- Pay equity and gender discrimination suits are costly and erode business reputation. Class-action suits erode reputation and put an employer on the defensive when recruiting top talent.

Women who return to the same job after taking maternity leave have smaller pay gaps than those who start a new job after taking time off. Women who took time off earned 36% less than men after 10 years in the workforce, versus a 19% wage gap for women who kept working.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

When women think it's worth it to haggle over salary

A 2012 working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that women were 9% more likely than men to try negotiating when the job advertisement explicitly said pay was negotiable. Clear instructions that salary should be negotiated also made women more likely to apply for a job in the first place, cutting the gender gap in applications by 45%.

When rules around salary demands were more ambiguous, though, men were 29% more likely to angle for a better deal.

Pay equity demands constant tending, says Mark Aulik, director of compensation for Baker Tilly. "You always have to keep it in mind, in every decision you make," he says. "You can't look at it once a year, in the annual salary planning process. You have to look at it when you make changes in team structure, organizational structure, and when you hire. Transparent pay practices build trust," he adds, "especially when employees can look through the 'glass silo' to see salary information on jobs at competing firms."

This is especially important for millennials and Gen X employees, whose formidable peer networking and online research skills yield information, but not always insight, into pay norms.

As a profession, he says, "We need to get over our fear of sharing information." He believes that some CPA firms are moving toward pay transparency – in other words, sharing more information about market rates, who our competitors are, and how the firm benchmarks compensation. Employees need context for pay practices, he adds, because they will draw their own conclusions from online resources that claim to report current salary data, even though the data may have a shaky provenance.

Best practices Baker Tilly uses to communicate about pay policies, practices and decisions include:

- Coach and prepare line managers and direct supervisors to have productive conversations about compensation with their direct reports. The relationships that managers have with their staff provides a framework of trust that simply can't be replicated in big staff meetings or though impersonal group communications.
- Back up individual and small-group conversations with additional information online and through employee meetings. Reference materials and consistent communication will give employees an authoritative source.
- Always discuss pay in the context of professional and technical growth.
- Put context around pay, for both technical skills and growth.
- Assign human resources managers to coach line managers through compensation discussions and to pull the numbers they need.

The Bonadio Group gets right to the point in twice-yearly, firm-wide meetings. "We are unique in the amount of information we share," says Kristen Clark, principal. "We go over financial performance and growth and opportunities -- down to the numbers. We show them, 'this is what we bill,' and 'here is our cost structure'…including mergers and other growth strategies. From the beginning, that level of information is communicated to all our employees."

Like a number of MOVE firms this year, Clark reports that she and her colleagues are bluntly honest with their junior associates what their potential compensation might be as a partner. "As a part of leadership development, we don't want to focus only on what it takes to be a partner – the quantitative

criteria, etc. We also want to engage people who want to be the next generation of leaders for the firm."

Looking at the coming wave of retirements facing the accounting industry, Clark feels confident that her firm is positioned to compete for the best talent. "There's a huge opening of opportunity right now. We want to keep our best people; they are a significant part of our growth strategy."

O-OPPORTUNITY

Key findings:

- 100% offer one-on-one mentoring
- 82% offer coaching for mentors
- 71% offer a women's affinity group (employee resource group)
- 35% conduct formal succession planning
- 29% offer career coaching for alternative career paths to partnership

Recommendations

- Link programs sponsored by women's initiatives to the business case for diversity.
- Integrate directed performance review into pay for performance metrics, including bonus processes.
- Strengthen talent tracking as a first step toward succession planning.
- Build clear career pathways, including retirement transition plans, that maximize retention and talent development.

"Is a women's network necessary to advance women in the profession?"

The MOVE team is often asked this question in private discussions with firms. The short answer is, "yes," but that network can be formal or cultural. Either way, the key success factor is that the advancement of women is consistently measured and that measurement is used to evolve the culture, the programs, and the business case. Networking and business-development skills are most successful when they are deployed early and often, and are integrated with the firm's actual growth goals.

When J.H. Cohn LLP and Reznick Group, P.C. combined last year, forming CohnReznick LLP, the firm also relaunched its women's initiative. Now called WomenCAN, it evolved "from a programmatic approach to a community forum that integrates women sharing best practices with talent development and training," explains WomenCAN manager Michelle Lifschitz.

"The updated strategy has given new life and a lot more energy to the women's initiative, allowing us to give more women leadership opportunities," agrees Jennifer DeMaria, senior manager and women's initiative liaison for the Eatontown (N.J.) office.

When Lifschitz joined the firm in 2012, she immediately started working on the new strategic vision for the combined firm's women's initiative. She emphasizes the importance of strong partnerships with marketing, human

resources, IT and, especially, the firm's business leaders to help retain and advance women. She also recommends focus groups to help identify firm-wide as well as office-specific goals. "Office leaders are empowered to customize strategies that best support and address the unique challenges of women in each location," she says.

Strategic use of women's networks like Forum_W increase participation and buy-in. "Providing opportunities to build and leverage an external network is a top priority. Our offices are hosting external-facing events and developing networking partnerships that not only build our women's external networks, but also increase our visibility in the marketplace," explains Tricia Bencich, human resources manager.

Forum_W is creating a tool to help offices set up events that lead directly to networking with business development outcomes. It will combine successful practices from several offices…and close the loop between Forum_W and business development ROI. The out-ward looking focus keeps it from being stale, puts business context to internal events, and provides skill assessment for networking.

For example, the Medford, Ore. office partnered with a local university and nearby businesses to launch a Women's Leadership Forum, the area's first women's conference focused on mentoring, balancing work and life, and career advancement strategies. Planning this event created a venue that made it easy for women to expand their external network with other leaders in the community - including those with education, public safety, not-for-profit and local media backgrounds who share a common goal of developing and advancing women.

A 2012 report from Catalyst, "Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution," documents that leadership-development programs result in women getting on the radar screen for high-exposure assignments. The programs are not as much about the skills as they are about being known. Even in a smaller office, it is hard for managers to remember who has participated. Tracking with professional management software ensures that this result becomes intentional and measured.

Tracking can sometimes reveal important dynamics to address to create success. Rehmann (headquartered in Saginaw, Michigan) began an emerging leadership program for women in 2007. Participants were vetted by senior managers and principals. Yet, the firm did not retain about a third of the first class of women who attended the program. Principal Heidi Bolger recalls, "Some were put in the program to catapult leadership abilities but we found that some of them were ultimately sifted out. It clarified that our expectations and theirs weren't aligned so well."

Rehmann tweaked its criteria for admission to the program, and prepped future participants with more detailed expectations for their experience. Starting the very next year, retention of high-potential women who attend the STEP and emerging leader programs was 100%-- and has stayed there. And Rehmann can point to a host of metrics showing promotions and client-service improvements across the firm's regions.

Successful career coaching programs delineate tactical skills development from strategic career development, and ensure that rising talent receives feedback on each. Clifton Larson Allen has cross-pollinated its "HOT" program across its newly merged operation. "HOT" stands for 'Hands On Transactional." "Each staff has a HOT manager and also an advisor – HOT for the day-to-day and the advisor for overall career development," says partner Ann Joda.

Regional firms need to 'play to their strengths' to attract and retain talent, that strength being flatter organization and more staff access to partners, according to the ACRA "Talent Attraction and Retention in Larger Accounting Firms," but also need to complement that with robust skills training.
Like many firms, Plante Moran is growing rapidly through mergers. That means that its new women's initiative must combine three dynamics: the ongoing expectations of longtime Plante Moran women; the experiences and expectations of women in the merged-in firms; and the firm's overall growth goals.

Sue Perlin is the partner in charge of Plante Moran WIL (Women in Leadership), which launched in 2012. The initiative features a firmwide website that includes profiles of women leaders in the firm, articles and links to websites related to women in business and their career development, and a calendar of networking events for women at the firm.

One of the recent Plante Moran WIL programs was a set of seven panels, each comprised of two women partners and two women managers. These panels visited each of the firm's regions to discuss career strategies with the female staff. Perlin says that a centerpiece of the panel sessions was "an overview of the partner promotion process with the idea that we're trying to be more transparent about the process and share more information about it."

Plante Moran's female mentoring program supplements the firm's ongoing mentoring and career advising approach, with an emphasis on mixing in mentors outside each woman's current practice area to offer different perspectives. "One thing we're measuring is how we are growing the number of mentors and mentees we have and if and how that affects how many female staff are promoted to partner," says Perlin. Early indications, she says, are that the program is successful.

The main benefit of leadership development programs is that rising leaders become known quantities to top leaders, according to research by Catalyst, the women's business advocacy group. It found that both men and women pointed to career wins 18 months after attending leadership development programs:
• 43% were given a cross-functional assignment.
• 39% received a high-visibility assignment.
• 30% received a stretch assignment.
• 30% saw their number of direct reports increase.

SOURCE; Catalyst, "Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution," 2012

Words to Grow By: Training that Increases Retention

Chase retention for its own sake, and you might end up keeping employees who aren't the best long-term fit. Jones & Roth CPA's and Business Advisors, whose firm-wide career coaching structure has been profiled in prior MOVE Project reports, focuses instead on "how to help employees grow so they'll be a success," says Tricia Duncan, career coach. "Once people know what is expected of them and how they are performing, it helps with retention," she says. "It's about holding people accountable."

At Jones & Roth, Kolbe assessments give insight on a new employee's

65% of men felt their companies' evaluation processes treated men and women equally. Only 30% of women agreed.

Source: McKinsey, Women Matter, 2012.

inherent talents and work style. The Kolbe profile also helps identify potential career struggles, as well as team placements that will be a successful fit. Still, "the transition to management can be a big unknown," reminds Duncan. "Typically, the manager who is struggling excelled as a staff and senior, and used to fly through the work without a blip and now, as a manager, is not feeling as successful."

The learning curve may look steep, as a new manager adjusts to interaction with clients and co-workers in a more prominent role. Careful coaching reveals tweaks that will work for each personality. Duncan reports that their training efforts are paying off. "We are getting people up to speed quicker than in the past," says Duncan. "And that helps us keep the people we want."

A 2012 working paper published on the Harvard Business School website points to gender bias in promotion situations where individual candidates are considered one at a time. When reviews included batches of candidates of both genders, they were more likely to be performance-based and less subject to bias.

Career Growth by Association

"Participating in a professional association provides Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance members with opportunities to develop leadership skills and gain exposure to new viewpoints that can only happen outside of the workplace," said Lee K. Lowery, CAE, Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance executive director. "Through membership in our association, accounting and finance professionals step away from the daily office routine and develop completely different skills – to take a break from the balance sheet and plan a regional conference, for example. It is an opportunity to hone leadership skills – our members get hands on experience setting agendas and leading committee meetings. It is an opportunity to interact – in person, on the phone, online – with a group of professionals they would not otherwise know. Our members are continually learning and bringing back new skills and ideas to the office, contributing to the work the office produces and improving one's eligibility for advancement."

American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants (AWSCPA) Executive Director Kimberly Fantaci agrees. "AWSCPA strives to provide professional and leadership development opportunities to thought leaders during all points in their career. The accounting profession for years has defined certain milestones in the career path and we've noticed that professional and leadership development opportunities, while they may change, are vital to successfully navigating the career path. Whether it's educational in nature, done through outreach or networking, the opportunities are only beneficial if women take advantage of them."

"We recognize that clients are going to want to buy from people who are like them. As our firm has attracted a more diverse group of employees, we are getting a more-diverse client base."

– Mitchell Reno, chief marketing and sales officer, Rehmann

V - VITAL SUPPORTS FOR WORK-LIFE

Key findings

- 53% offer 24/7 tech support for virtual teams
- 29% offer training to managers to manage virtual teams

- 12% offer emergency/backup child care
- 6% formally measure the ROI of flexwork and telecommuting, and report it to senior management

Recommendations

- Develop training for managers to oversee virtual teams, to standardize implementation of policies.
- Outsource the conversation on work/life fit to a career coach, or a consultancy.
- Identify strategic business goals that could be enhanced by flexwork options—and track ROI.
- Offer emergency backup and sick-child care as a benefit.

What is the point of work-life programs when employees hesitate to use them for fear of sending mixed signals about their career ambitions? In interviews with women at the staff and senior-accountant levels, MOVE researchers often find that women are unclear how to access flexwork options. In fact, many are resistant to explore flex options because they believe it would be detrimental to either their compensation or their career aspirations—or both.

Open communication—and the presence of successful women partners with a flex history can mitigate the mythology surrounding flex schedules. But there is no substitute for a formal process that positions flexwork as a tool for managing workflow and for supporting growth. Best practices include coaches for employees seeking a new work/life fit and guidelines for managers who must approve the arrangement to ensure consistent application of firm policies.

Women are right to be concerned about how these decisions impact compensation and career potential. "Don't just focus on the logistics and the work hours of the arrangement," advises Kimpa Moss, COO of Lurie Besikof Lapidus & Co. "Consider how those hours should be spent. For example, the hours allocated to business development next year need to be increased, so delegate some existing hours to staff at the appropriate level who can help. Delegation will help you to be an effective mentor and increase your value to the firm. More work will be done, because you developed the people on your team and provided them with the opportunity to work on higher level tasks. At the same time, you are spending your own work hours on the types of activities that will advance your own career."

To support its flexwork strategy, Lurie Besikof Lapidus hired a benefits consulting firm to pilot a new-parent coaching service. An outside coach for work/life issues related to parenthood helps participants explore this major life transition-- and allows the participant to engage with their direct supervisor on more strategic career steps. The firm also invests in technology tools to enable virtual team collaboration and provides a resource list for all employees of vendors that can help make life and work fit together more easily.

Increasingly, the rising generation of women CPAs wants to understand the future implications of work-life programs along with the immediate benefits. Some fear that taking full advantage of programs intended to help could

Rothstein Kass was in the process of introducing emergency back-up care for dependents when superstorm Sandy hit its home state of New Jersey. The firm accelerated its communication about the new benefit, urging employees to use it. In December 2012, the emergency-care service was used 16 times.

touch off a career backlash later.

The senior manager at a large regional firm, and mother of several small children, reports that she has received invaluable mentoring and guidance from several male partners. But in the absence of a clearly mapped track to partner, she often worries about what she doesn't know, or if staying the course will be worthwhile.

"Some people at my level – men and women – are worried that as a partner, there will be a lot of pressure to bring in business and hit all these ratios. And for women – a small percentage of women – the question I have is, can I do this with a flex schedule, if I am a partner? I'm doing it now, and I'm told I'm OK, but I wonder, because there are so few women with children who have achieved partner. We only have a few, and one just left," she says.

"Just because flexwork works at a lower level doesn't mean it will work at a higher level. There are few women who can continue to make it work at the highest level. The more who do it, the more encouraged the rest of us are. Alternative career paths don't have to work for everyone, but they should work for more people."

Some firms have created multiple tracks to partnership. "We have no 'up or out' time frame," says Gloria Birnkrant, a partner with NSBN LLP, where women comprise 41% of partners. The firm's 'dual manager' track paces partnership development with a scaled-back schedule to ensure that women can progress regardless of the number of hours they are billing. Some women decide to continue as experienced professionals; some decide to pursue partner on pace with a reduced schedule; and some merge back onto the traditional, full-time partner track after a few years on an alternative schedule.

Outsource Work/Life Balance Problem-solving

Many firms are successfully integrating work/life flexibility into their strategic goals by enlisting coaches from HR or an outside service provider to help employees talk through what changes need to be made to their personal work/life fit, and how those changes might affect compensation and career advancement.

Why outsource? The danger is that conversations about flex/work arrangements have many cultural overtones, as well as legal ramifications. When a coach can help the employee outline workable options, the employee can then approach the manager with a list of possibilities that have already been vetted as workable by firm standards. Managers are then free to focus their conversations with employees on professional skills and career next steps, with personal privacy intact.

Best Practice: Successful Flexwork Tied to First Supervisor

If your first supervisor is influential, are you more likely to have access to work-life options later in your career? Researchers Forrest Briscoe and Katherine Kellogg say, "yes." Their 2011 longitudinal analysis of initial work assignments and later work-life program access at a law firm revealed that the crucial pivot was the initial manager, not the manager at the time work-life options were needed.

It's not just what you know, but who you know. Initial assignment affects career outcomes because the hard chargers get the best assignments, which builds reputation. These findings imply that the role of networking and social capital in careers should not be underestimated.

E -ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Key findings

- 88% tap networks of former employees for temp and contract work
- 82% offer training to equip employees to develop and present new business
- 47% Employee affinity groups and business resource groups involved in recruiting
- 41% collaborate with women and minority small business centers or similar programs

Recommendations

- Weave acquisition of business skills with career pathing.
- Integrate affinity group programs into both marketing and recruiting to reduce the tendency for departments to be siloed.
- Leverage existing alumni networks to support recruiting, referrals and retention.
- Use program innovation among women and minority-owned businesses to support the business case for diversity and build industry-wide support for advancing women.

Some of the strongest business development models blend immediate financial incentives with long-term career growth.

Genevra Knight, a partner with Porte Brown, gained traction with business-development when she detected the intersection of her technical expertise and industry demand. Porte Brown coaches staff early and often in the art of winning clients, starting with communication training so associates can articulate the firm's value proposition. As well, Porte Brown offers a commission for any staffer who brings in a referral. "Find a 'point of entry' with specialties," advises Knight. She specializes in tax and audit for the nonprofit and construction industries.

Hilda Polanco became a sole proprietor in 1990, specializing in nonprofit organizations. As her firm and its reputation grew, she was able to blend her priorities – family and entrepreneurship – with more authority than she had as a staffer. By 1999, Polanco's firm expanded into consultation services and training for non-profits, and teamed with an accounting practice to form Fiscal Management Associates. "We have great passion for the work we are doing. Our consulting practice allows us to put all of our priorities on the table and balance them," says Polanco. Women join, stay and are driving FMA's expansion to new markets.

Retaining women retains clients, says Heidi LaMarca, an audit partner with Windham Brannon. The firm flexes career paths to support several women's ongoing relationships with longstanding clients. In turn, quite a few women have merged from alternative career paths back to traditional full-time schedules and accelerated to principal and partner, building business development abilities in the process.

If client service is truly the goal, then flexwork that retains client relationships supports that goal, says LaMarca.

Alumni Networks Polish the Halo Effect

Alums, Especially Midcareer Women, Support Firm Growth

Alumni networks are a 'silver bullet' that offer both strategic opportunities to attract and win talent for immediate and long-term growth, as well as tactical modes of shaping and managing reputation in a three-dimensional networked world. Workplace reputation is hard to manage. Networks connecting past and present employees offer a powerful channel for cultivating reputation and a deep pool of talent on call that can support firm growth.

As well, research indicates that alumni networks shape current employees' perceptions of their employers. Employees believe they gain insight into true firm culture through how it treats alumni. Also, cultivating alumni relations can decrease the chances of negative feedback finding its way to online sources such as Glassdoor.com.

Like many firms, Holtz Rubenstein Reminick LLP has noticed that alums are just as eager to reconnect amongst themselves as they are to reconnect with the firm, says Janice Strain, HRR's manager of human resources. The firm holds several annual alumni receptions to include employees from various generations and acquisitions.

Referrals go both ways, says Strain. Recently, HRR lost a valued midcareer woman employee to industry. When her family obligations changed, HRR introduced her to a new opportunity, cementing loyalty in the process. Such stories are important for current employees to witness, says Strain, because they realize that being associated with HRR can return long-term benefits.

Employees and alumni are not the only ones to benefit. Client referrals from alumni and their networks show strong growth at firms who have connected the dots between alumni and their own networks. For many firms, that is the best reason to invest in the continuing success of alumni.

"We are probably more aggressive than most firms regarding our alumni network, Friends of the Firm. But it provides the whole firm with an entirely fresh way of looking at how you can help clients."

– Hayes MacArthur, principal, EisnerAmper LLC

Unexpected Dividends

As JoLynn Barone advanced at Rothstein Kass, she discovered that her experience as a working parent and her understanding of women's economic influence has yielded surprising – and business-building – insights.

Her own story resonates with many women executives and quickly builds rapport. Barone has made the most of the customized schedules offered by Rothstein Kass working full time on a flexible schedule. Her most recent promotion occurred when she was on maternity leave. And, as she weighed the implications of working an alternative schedule, Barone had heart-to-heart conversations with several mentors and sponsors to understand how her decision would be perceived and to flush out unanticipated potential reactions. "Women are very open about sharing what barriers they've faced and what they've overcome," she says. Many are eager to learn how she crafted a solution to a universal dilemma.

Part of that solution has been ensuring that her schedule is transparent to clients and making sure she's looped in about decisions made when she isn't in the office. "The partners encourage me to talk about it within the firm, because having a family has been a point of departure for some women," says Barone. "The message at Rothstein Kass is that you are in charge of your own career."

Now, Barone is accelerating her business-development skills through Rothstein Kass' "Cultivation Event Series," which introduces women portfolio managers and investors to emerging women money managers. With this series, Rothstein Kass has created common ground. "Allocators want to invest in women, and women are struggling to get money. We thought that this would be the perfect platform to start these conversations," says Barone. "This is the intersection of Rothstein Kass' goals for women in leadership with its market growth goals."

Methodology

Thirty-seven accounting firms completed an in-depth survey for research partner Wilson-Taylor Associates between December 2012 and February 2013. Of the 37 participating firms, 10 are in the Top 25 and 18 are in the Top 100 of the Inside Public Accounting Top 100 Firms List, published in August 2012 by The Platt Group.

Firms provided supplemental data and materials explaining their programs intended to advance women. Interviews were conducted with firm partners, human resources directors, and women managers, accounting academics and consultants, and with women at all stages of their careers in public accounting.

The MOVE methodology is unique in that it indexes the proportion of women in the leadership pipeline compared to the proportion of women employees. For example, if women comprised 50% of all employees, and women also comprised 50% of all managers, women would index at 1.00 for managers. But, if women comprised 40% of the senior executives at this fictitious workplace, women would index at .80-- that is, women senior executives would be under-represented by 20 points, compared to the proportion of women at this workplace overall.

The MOVE Project measures and compares percentages of women at each level of the leadership pipeline to the percentage of total women employees.

The MOVE index provides an apples-to-apples comparison of the status of women across diverse industries, employer type (public or private), employer size, and other factors that might otherwise obscure how well women actually fare across the nation.

INDIVIDUAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY

More than 440 women responded to a confidential online survey between October 1 and November 21, 2012. Ninety one percent of the respondents have worked for a CPA firm at least once, and 89% of respondents currently work for a firm. Questions focused on retention factors, expectations of making partner, and career perspectives. Individuals quoted by name in reports based on this survey gave their permission to be quoted or identified, and voluntarily provided contact information.

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Rothstein Kass is a premier professional services firm serving privately-held and publicly-traded companies, as well as high-net-worth individuals and families. Beyond core audit and tax services, the firm provides a full array of integrated advisory services, including strategic business counseling, regulatory compliance and SEC services, insurance and risk management consulting, and family office services.
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The Accounting and Financial Women's Alliance and American Women's Society of Certified Public Accountants (AWSCPA) cosponsor the Accounting MOVE Project. Their ongoing chapter program can serve as the nucleus for programs, especially if firms collaborate on enhancements, such as partner-track business development programs.

Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance
CONNECT • ADVANCE • LEAD

The Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance (formerly American Society of Women Accountants) promotes the professional growth of women in accounting and finance. Members of the association benefit from opportunities to connect with colleagues, advance their careers, and become industry leaders. For 75 years, the organization has proudly upheld its mission to enable women in all accounting and related fields to achieve their full personal, professional and economic potential and to contribute to the future development of their profession. Visit www.afwa.org for more information.

AWSCPA
American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants

The American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants (AWSCPA) is a national organization dedicated to serving all women CPAs. The AWSCPA provides a supportive environment and valuable resources for members to achieve their personal and professional goals through various opportunities including leadership, networking and education. "One of the methods of providing this type of environment to our members is through collaborative initiatives, such as The MOVE Project," according to Kim Fantaci, AWSCPA's Executive Director. "In addition, AWSCPA is committed to promoting and supporting leadership education. We understand that today's professional needs relationships and resources outside of the traditional workplace opportunities." The Society is committed to providing accounting and finance professionals with the skills needed to inspire through knowledge and vision. Firms can amplify their efforts to advance women by customizing the ongoing efforts sponsored by accounting associations.

About Wilson-Taylor Associates:

Wilson-Taylor Associates, Inc., has been designing and managing national research projects that measure the progress of women in the workplace since 1998. Its methodology pivots on factors proven to remove barriers so that women can fully participate in driving business results. Led by veteran business journalist Joanne Cleaver, its current and past clients include Women in Cable Telecommunications, Pink magazine, Women's Transportation Seminar Foundation, the Alliance for Workplace Excellence, Working Woman magazine, Tribune Co. and others. Her book, The Career Lattice, was published in 2012 by McGraw Professional. Please see Wilson-Taylor's portfolio of work at www.wilson-taylorassoc.com.

Want more information on advancing women in public accounting?

Employers may purchase a MOVE Equity Scorecard, which customizes analysis and recommendations from the 2013 Accounting MOVE Report to advise their own efforts to advance women. Contact us to discuss how we can produce a customized report that goes beyond the executive report and snapshot to diagnose and propose real world solutions for your organization. Contact us at move@wilson-taylorassoc.com, or call us at 414.395.6876.

Want more information on strategic communications services?

Reaching the right audience with the right message at the right time is part art, part craft. You only get one chance to make a good first impression.
Since 1998, Wilson-Taylor has helped companies, associations and publications connect with key audiences through:

- Content design and project management
- White papers
- Research and reports
- Blogs
- Interactive content
- Narratives and articles
- Media training and communication coaching

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