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Sponsorship: Stepping Up Success

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Executive Sponsorship: The Definitive Edge

If ever a topic needed defining, it's 'executive sponsorship.'

As the Accounting MOVE Project team interviewed firm leaders, consultants, academics, and women at all stages of their careers, nearly every discussion opened with this plea: "Exactly how do you define sponsorship? We think we do it. But what is it, exactly?"

CPA firms have intuitively adopted many of the best aspects of executive sponsorship. And therein lies the problem: an organic practice easily becomes fuzzy and indistinct. It's difficult to measure the results of an aspect of culture that doesn't have a name, much less a budget. It's impossible to replicate success when you are not fully aware of what you are already doing well, and how you can do it even better.

Sponsorship is the key to successful succession planning. Succession planning counts on the pipeline. Executive sponsors are the vital link, opening up new opportunities and helping all candidates – but especially women – stretch to master key experiences that qualify them for their next career steps.

Mentorship is widely known and widely believed to be a key factor in women's success. Mentors serve as sounding boards and provide guidance and context. Coaches, too, can be vital, delivering pointed feedback and helping women develop essential skills so that women can achieve at the next level. But sponsors make the final, high-level connections that translate potential to possibilities to full participation.

Sponsorship will come into greater focus in the coming years as firms drill down to the underlying dynamics that build viability. That can't happen soon enough for women who must overcome subtle cultural and workplace barriers to assemble the qualifications for senior leadership.

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Wilson-Taylor Associates

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

Sponsorship: Stepping Up Success

Sponsorship is one of the most powerful and overlooked, dynamics for propelling women through the talent pipeline. Here's how firms and women can amplify the effect of sponsorship.

When we asked any one of the MOVE firms if they had a sponsorship program, the answer was almost always the same: "What exactly do you mean by sponsorship?" Or, "Well, we have a mentor program. Is that what you mean?"

One thing became clear about executive sponsorship at CPA firms: it's confusing. Partners aren't sure what it is. Candidates hear about it, but aren't sure what to do with what they learn. While sponsorship can be a rifle shot that lands the right candidate in the right position at the right point in her career, its power is too often holstered.

The business case for sponsorship is synonymous with the business case for succession. Partners must replace themselves in order to expand their practices, to launch new lines of business and to retire. Cultivating the next generation has traditionally been a collegial practice at CPA firms, with recommendations and advocacy occurring in the natural course of relationships and collaboration. But as clients increasingly demand diverse client service teams, and as the profession faces a costly and painful talent drain when mid-level women defect, the old model of "I know it when I see it" sponsorship is being replaced by purposeful strategies. (See the infographic on page 13 to learn how to convert the deadly "You remind me of me" dynamic to a mode of identifying sponsorship candidates.)

Mentoring and coaching benefits the candidate

- A *mentor* is a sounding board, guide and advisor.
- A *coach* helps the candidate get better at specific skills, including leadership, presence, and business development.

Executive sponsorship benefits both the candidate and the sponsor

- An *executive sponsor* puts his or her influence on the line to help the candidate gain a target position or assignment – and that success builds the sponsor's reputation, authority, and influence.

Successful sponsorship occurs organically at some firms, and when those firms have strong cultures of diversity and inclusion, organic sponsorship draws in equitable proportions of women. Meanwhile, firms with ambitious growth plans, purposeful intentions to advance women, or both, are adopting deliberate sponsorship models.

Firms do agree on one key aspect of sponsorship: By definition, sponsorship involves a narrowing funnel of candidates. Unlike firm-wide programs for millennials and women, there are few enough candidates in the sponsorship pipeline that firms can track their progress easily. The strategic importance quickly hits home, says Jen Wyne, director of human resources at Moss Adams, based in Seattle. "You're developing your own successor," she says. "You have to replace yourself…and sponsorship brings someone forward for the greater good."

After all, that's the whole point: senior leaders and senior talent managers need to know – really know – who's closing in on promotion to the partner or principal level. Sponsorship pulls the most promising, qualified candidates from the general talent pool and puts them on a first-name basis with the firm's top decision makers.

Sponsorship: The Critical Edge

Jennifer McNeal, a newly minted partner at Lurie (Minneapolis, formerly known as Lurie Besikof Lapidus), credits the sponsorship of the firm's managing partner and another partner as a critical factor in achieving partnership while she started a family.

She'd signaled her interest in partnership during her involvement in Lurie's Emerging Leaders program, which was formed to infuse millennials with the knowledge about firm operations and vision. "My timeline changed when I had a baby," says McNeal. With guidance from two sponsors, she organized her plan into incremental milestones – director, then partner in training, then partnership.

The three-year plan worked. McNeal believes that sponsorship synchronized with business development was the winning formula. She expects to extend a hand to the next generation, who are already involved in the Emerging Leaders program.

"We already have our leaders for the next ten years, and most importantly, we've told them that," says McNeal. "They know they're the future leaders of our firm, and they're already participating in the decisions they'll inherit."

For the past eight years, Denise Gueli, a partner with The Bonadio Group (Amherst, New York) has sponsored Nancy Cox as she has moved from a full-time employee staff accountant to part-time senior when her son was born, and then back to full-time as she continued on a partner track. Because sponsors are accountable for their candidates meeting their goals, Gueli's compensation is directly tied to Cox's performance as well as her own.

"It's essential for women to understand how sponsorship works, especially at mid-career, when they are sorting through so many options." – Jen Wyne, director, human resources, Seattle-based Moss Adams

"Nancy is going to make an amazing partner, and we have been able to keep her by helping her navigate the career stage where many accounting firms lose talented women," says Gueli. "While sponsorship is good for men, women and the firm, I think that it's especially beneficial as a formal program since many women view asking for help as a sign of weakness. By having a sponsor that you can talk to, it's a safe zone and you know that someone has your back."

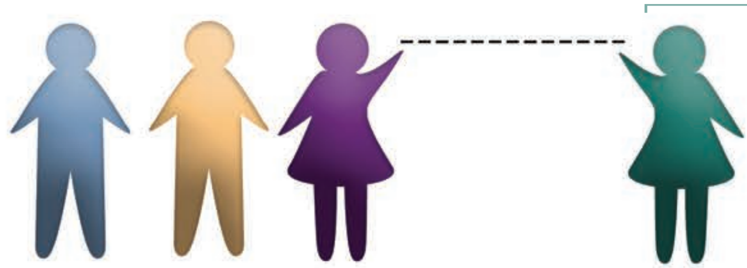
Cox says that Gueli has been instrumental in navigating her career as well as her voice at the partner table. "When I first went part-time, I was having a very hard time figuring out when it was OK to say 'no' and Denise spent so much time helping me establish boundaries with clients and other employees," says Cox. "I am positive that I would not be moving toward partner without her sponsorship and guidance, both with me directly and as my voice to others in the firm."

Sponsorship isn't a one-way relationship. Gueli says that she has become a better partner and manager by being a sponsor. "Instead of just assuming that our current seniors have the same stressors that I did back then, I have learned to step back and hear what they are feeling," says Gueli. "I've also learned that everyone needs different types of support. I have to understand what motivates my specific sponsee instead of assuming that it is the same as what motivates me. You have to listen and understand each person's individual needs. I've been able to carry this lesson to all parts of being a firm leader as well."

Executive Sponsors Open Doors

With sponsors, female candidates aren't overlooked

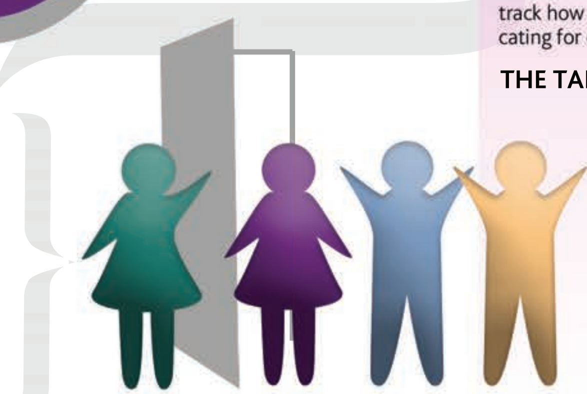
When a candidate raises her hand for a critical promotion or opportunity, the mentor can link her with a sponsor who has the right connections.



Most firms use one of four proven models for connecting candidates with sponsors.

Together, the sponsor and candidate zero in on a target.

The sponsor advocates for the candidate with other firm leaders.



The sponsor helps the candidate close the deal and reach the target.

Mentors walk alongside candidates, providing insight and guidance.

Coaches work with candidates on specific leadership and business development skills.

Sponsors are senior leaders who step in at pivotal moments to advocate for candidates to win specific opportunities or positions.

WHO ARE SPONSORS?

- Well-connected firm partners and senior leaders.
- Industry and community influencers.
- Sponsors' and managers' roles sometimes are distinct and sometimes overlap.

SPONSORS AND CANDIDATES BOTH BENEFIT

- Candidates invest in sponsors who can detect and direct critical career steps.
- Sponsors cultivate talent and open new paths to promotion, fulfilling firm succession and diversity goals.
- Sponsors invest in candidates whose success builds the sponsor's credibility and influence.

SPONSORSHIP MODELS

Organic: Candidates and sponsors find each other, often through introductions made by supervisors, and through firm events.

Introduced: Programs or staff leaders facilitate introductions.

Personal Board of Directors: Each candidate assembles a 'board' of sponsors with diverse strengths and makes requests of them accordingly.

Matched: Talent and HR staff pair sponsors and candidates based on observations, recommendations, and development goals.

All models can be measured, with talent staff tracking the mix of candidates and their subsequent career moves. Firms also track how effective sponsors are at advocating for candidates.

THE TARGET COULD BE A:

- Promotion.
- Strategically important responsibility or role.
- Lateral move that better positions the candidate.
- Focused preparation for leadership.

Accountability: The Difference Between Mentoring and Sponsoring

One of the key differences between mentoring and sponsorship is accountability, says Julie Coffman, partner at Bain & Company (Chicago) and author of its 2015 study "Everyday Moments of Truth." Mentoring is an ongoing process that's both open-ended and intended to provide context for the candidate's career decisions. But with sponsorship, she says, the sponsor is putting her own reputation on the line to specifically advocate for a particular candidate for a particular opportunity. That sharpens the stakes and also more clearly defines sponsor relationships, making them a bit more measurable.

A mentor walks beside you. An executive sponsor walks ahead of you – and opens doors for you.

Candidates with executive sponsors are:

- **More satisfied with their career progress**
- **More likely to pursue stretch assignments**

Men are 47% more likely to have executive sponsors than women.

Source: "The Sponsor Effect: Center for Work-Life Policy-http://30percentclub.org/wp-2content/uploads/2014/08/The-Sponsor-Effect.pdf

"Sponsorship takes the relationship to another level. When you sponsor someone, you truly advocate on their behalf. You are saying that we have done work together, we have accomplished great outcomes and now I want to help you grow to the next level in your career," says Coffman. "When you sponsor someone, you are committing to go out of your way to take action to help the person achieve the next career opportunity."

At Bonadio, effective sponsorship is one component of determining compensation, and raises are tied to how well an employee, who a partner or manager is sponsoring, accomplishes their goals, Gueli says.

Another approach is to have goals for candidates included in performance evaluations of the sponsor, such as at LBMC (Nashville). "The partners coach the senior managers and managers, and senior managers and managers coach seniors and staff. Partners, senior managers and managers are evaluated in their year-end evaluations based on how the person they coached met goals," says Cindy Harper, partner at LBMC.

"You must tie it to a business outcome for a sponsorship program to be successful," says Ron Ashkenas, consultant with Schaffer Consulting and author of "How to Be an Effective Executive Sponsor," which was published in the Harvard Business Review.

The rationale and mechanics of sponsorship converge in succession planning. "It's vital for firms to have a succession plan. But more than that you must have the next wave of leaders that are going to take your firm to the next level," says Doug Pallotta, partner at OUM, based in San Francisco. "I think it's really hard to get to that place without a sponsorship type program. Yes, you might get there with a little bit of luck with the right people. But our experience is that having a sponsorship program dramatically increases the odds that you will have the new leaders ready to go when the time comes."

Partners agree that the return on investment for sponsorship shows up in the firm's ability to grow; the financial wherewithal for partners to retire; and in viability and market presence. Partners also agree that these big-picture goals sometimes are at odds with short-term budget and resource priorities. Firm leaders need to realize that investing in sponsorship is investing in firm viability, and then translate that to specific programs and budget line items. The short-term payback is in retention, says Connie W. Hammell, principal with Kositzka, Wicks & Co., of Alexandria, Virginia. "So while firms don't want to have nonbillable hours, if you don't retain the talent, then you aren't going to have any top employees to actually perform the billable hours," she says.

How Sponsorship Supports Diversity Priorities

If the message of inclusion is, "everyone has a shot," a reasonable response from a woman might be, "at what?"

Sponsorship puts inclusion to work for individuals. When a firm's leaders consistently review who is sponsored and for what positions, they can see the array of talent mustering for the next round of key positions.

By definition, firms with well-developed sponsorship cultures have a streamlined pipeline of sponsors and candidates to track and measure. Talent development staff who measure sponsorship say that it's relatively easy to keep track of who is being sponsored and by whom, the candidate's next career step and the sponsor's effect on that step. Most talent development staff track results on a spreadsheet, as human resources information systems rarely include tools for measuring relationships (including mentoring).

Tying sponsor relationships to succession planning and to inclusion programs is a powerful way to extract immediate value from these efforts. The positions that candidates aspire to win are important to the firm; otherwise, they would not be worthy of the sponsor's time and effort.

Sponsorship offsets many dynamics that subtly discourage women from asserting their ambitions to rise in the profession:

- Women's contributions to team success are often obscured, according to a Harvard study of how women are cited as authors of academic studies. Female academic researchers only gain recognition when they are the sole authors of their work. The implication: the success of a mixed-gender team is not likely to build a woman's reputation as much as it is a man's. Sponsors can ensure that women's work is not overlooked.

- Women gain more from high-status workplace relationships than do men, according to a UC-Berkeley study. Purposeful sponsorship ensures that women benefit equitably from relationships with powerful and well-positioned senior leaders

- Sponsorship offers a channel for applying the firm's work-life and career track offerings to specific situations to craft custom solutions. This fuels the firm's flexibility in using existing programs to forge new paths to partnership.

Sponsorship Models that Work

As firms sort out what models of sponsorship (and mentoring, and coaching) best help them achieve their staff and growth goals, a spectrum of models is coming into focus. Practitioners and experts agree that sponsorship works both ways: it builds sponsors' networks while drawing up individuals. "Sponsorship pairs well-connected senior leaders who are willing to invest in candidates, with motivated candidates whose wins will bring success to themselves, the sponsor and the whole firm, for years to come," says Risa Lavine, chief of staff at New York-based CohnReznick. "Leaders need to challenge themselves to find candidates whom they like and believe in, whom they can learn from," says Denise Daniels, associate dean, School of Business, Government & Economics, Seattle Pacific University. "What works for you won't be the model for the future. It has to be done differently for firms to thrive."

Models range from organic models, which create opportunities for candidates and sponsors to connect, to highly engineered matching programs. Success depends on how well the model meshes with firm culture and the culture that leaders want the firm to have. The process of sponsorship can perpetuate firm culture or change it.

Organic

Firms provide information about sponsorship, context that explains how sponsorship drives career success, and provide settings for candidates and sponsors to meet. But, firms do not match candidates and sponsors.

Advantages

- Fosters strong interpersonal connections
- Can set up lifelong relationships
- Self-selects strong candidates: the networking and relationship skills required to win a sponsor are fundamental to the skills required to succeed to partner
- Requires clearly outlined career paths and qualifications for each position so that candidates have the information they need to seek out strong sponsors

Disadvantages

- Perpetuates same types of leaders if everyone is replicating themselves
- Events and communication must stay on point or candidates and sponsors will be less likely to act
- Must somehow weed out ineffective but eager sponsors
- Information gaps can leave some candidates at a disadvantage
- Requires strong mentor and talent tracking to ensure that candidates are not overlooked
- Osmosis is not a communication strategy; communication must be specific, consistent, and constant

Freed Maxick identifies employees for the firm's Rising Stars program, who are then 'adopted' by partners and directors, says Janice Moceri, professional development officer at the Buffalo-based firm. But, the firm does not subsequently keep records of the relationships, ask the sponsor pairs to larger meetings, or formally match pairs. The candidates are not even told who their sponsor is or even that they are in the Rising Stars program, but it works. "At Freed Maxick, we allow for a more organic evolution with our mentoring process. The matches that are made between directors (or senior staff) and employees is something that happens naturally. You just feel it, it evolves and you can see it happen," says Moceri.

Personal "Board of Directors"

Professionals are expected to assemble, nurture, and manage a panel of advisors who can provide direction, recommendations, and input for career growth. Panels should be comprised of people with a range of complementary strengths. At least a couple should be sponsors, both within the firm and external.

Advantages

- Exposes candidates to several models of career success
- Candidates must still request sponsorship role from at least one advisor, as needed
- "Each one be one" model expects candidates to also serve as others' advisors, maximizing peer relationships and perpetuating a 'pay it forward' culture
- Often includes external advisors who can sponsor candidates for community, nonprofit, and professional association leadership

Disadvantages

- High maintenance, as candidates must switch out new advisors as their career progresses and goals change
- Everyone is expected to have a personal board of directors, so sponsors must advocate intensely to raise the profile of outstanding candidates
- Demanding and time-intensive, as many professionals will be on multiple candidates' boards

"You need to have an engineered approach to make sure it happens. The personal board of directors is built into the program to give the protégé a broader base of support and larger variety of expertise in which to glean appropriate coaching. We don't assume the sponsor will be the one person that they go to for everything they need," explains Stacie Kwaiser, chief operating officer at Rehmann, based in Troy, Michigan.

Rehmann structures its personal 'board of directors' program in sync with its leadership development program, including these key elements:

- An individual development plan that outlines areas of growth for the candidate
- The sponsor and candidate collaborate to identify firm leaders who can provide guidance to the candidate in the targeted growth areas
- Together, the sponsor and candidate reach out to the leaders to garner their support.

Though it has long taken a 'personal board of directors' approach, Plante Moran, based in Southfield, Michigan, built a sponsorship component into its new women's mentoring program. A partner is assigned to spend time with the candidate over 18 months reviewing professional development. (The partner is not the candidate's team partner.) The assignment culminates in a meeting with the management committee to discuss the candidate's interest in and readiness for entering the partnership pipeline. Meanwhile, the management committee reviews the pipeline of women quarterly, and scours evaluations to make sure no woman is overlooked.

Introduced

Candidates and sponsors are introduced by talent development staffers, with each candidate offered several potential sponsors and asked to indicate preferences, and vice versa.

Advantages

- Option to quickly make course corrections and reassign, if the match is not compatible
- Helps ensure diverse matches – across gender, race, personality, practice area, technical expertise, business development skills, and other talent development priorities and goals
- Helps ensure that potential candidates are not overlooked
- Structured approach supports tracking of results
- Provides an 'on-ramp' for sponsor-candidate pairs that start organically

Disadvantages

- Must be tracked and nurtured
- Some trial and error while potential sponsors are tried out
- Candidates need to be schooled in how to navigate the system

At Burr Pilger Mayer, based in San Francisco, every candidate who is being considered for partner has an internal coach who facilitates introductions to two sponsors: one within the candidate's practice area, and another elsewhere within the firm. "You have to be well known throughout the firm," says Beth Baldwin, BPM's head of human resources.

Potential sponsors are identified through BPM's annual partner evaluations, and every partner is expected to be available, and make some outreach, to candidates in other practice areas. But it's the coach system that ensures that BPM candidates are introduced to the right sponsors at the right time. Coaches circulate their need for a sponsor among the partners, and "somebody steps up and says, 'I'll sponsor that person,'" explains Baldwin. "It's an expectation among the partners that they'll step up."

Matched

Candidates and sponsors are matched based on assessment tests, career trajectory, firm goals, individual needs, and other talent priorities.

Advantages

- Careful matching by talent development staff, engineered to address multiple points of commonality
- Clearly identified benefits for both candidate and sponsor
- Talent development staff must check in often to ensure compatibility
- Option to quickly make course corrections and reassign, if the match is not compatible
- Helps ensure diverse matches, across gender, race, personality, practice area, technical expertise, business development skills, and other characteristics
- Helps ensure that potential candidates are not overlooked
- Structured approach supports tracking of results

Disadvantages

- High maintenance
- High risk for talent development staff
- Lack of autonomy might be off-putting to some
- Firm must have tolerance for trial and error

Kositzka, Wicks and Co. in Alexandria, Virginia, formalized its sponsorship program last year using the matched model. Craig Browning, director of marketing, says that the firm's goal is to help employees achieve their career goals and to create accountability among partners for growing the next generation of leaders.

Firm leaders need to realize that investing in sponsorship is investing in firm viability, and then translate that to specific programs and budget line items. The short-term payback is in retention, says Connie W. Hammell, principal with Kositzka. "So while firms don't want to have nonbillable hours, if you don't retain the talent, then you aren't going to have any top employees to actually perform the billable hours," she says.

Because each service group (four in the firm of 70 people) had three partners, each employee was assigned one of the partners as a sponsor. Matching was done first based on type of work, and then personality and strengths were taken into consideration, says Browning. Staff members meet with their sponsors monthly while managers sit down quarterly. The process is formal with goals and time frames documented after each meeting.

"We found in our survey that our employees are looking for career guidance and assistance that goes beyond the annual evaluation. They want a way to be proactive in their career," says Browning. "Our feedback so far from employees about sponsorship is that the program is helping meet their goals."

Why Sponsorship Sometimes Falls Short

If it's such a silver bullet, why does sponsorship sometimes misfire?

The commonly-held fuzzy definitions inject confusion into sponsorship discussions, triggering misunderstandings that ripple through execution. It's hard to design programs and measure results when people aren't sure what sponsorship actually means.

Other factors that confound sponsorship success include:

- **Point of entry:** women aren't sure how to access the system. "The Sponsor Effect" found that women are more likely than men to expect that their work will speak for itself, while men are more likely to count on personal connections to deliver promotions. Firms gaining momentum with sponsorship clearly outline what it is and how young staff can earn sponsor relationships.

- **The "See it to Be It" dynamic:** many firms have one-dimensional models of success and are dismissive of how this discourages women and undermines retention. When success only looks like one type of person, and there's only one way to achieve that success, women who don't fit that cookie-cutter silhouette will rationally conclude that they won't be identified as having leadership potential, says Julie Coffman, the Bain author of its "Everyday Moments of Truth" study. "Most organizations have a poster child of who's successful here, and it's a pretty narrowly defined poster child," says Coffman. Sponsorship, she says, can be the force that breaks the poster child syndrome. When firms openly discuss sponsorship – what it is, how it works and how rising staff can earn sponsors – they bring the process of identifying and defining future leaders out into the open. When that is in the context of outlining new paths to top positions, and when senior leaders share aspects of their stories that are unexpected, and relatable, the firm can quickly change the discussion and context of discovering, nurturing and sponsoring more diverse leaders. Coffman also says, "If you don't break it down for people, they don't know how it works."

"Success will be when we no longer have to remind leaders to double-check that women are presenters at an all-firm event – when including women is second nature." – *Rhonda Sparlin, partner, RubinBrown, St. Louis*

- **Hesitations about sponsoring those of different genders and generations.** Adelle Erdman, director of marketing at Frazier & Deeter (Atlanta) says that while she has seen many times that men are very effective sponsors to women, there are other times where she has felt that a sponsor wasn't doing a good job because he didn't understand her point of view. "If the sponsor is a 45-year-old male equity partner and the sponsee is a 23-year-old woman, then he may not see some areas of needed advice that a female would understand," says Erdman. "Someone who is your own gender and has been in your phase of life may add more value."
  "A good sponsor is a good sponsor, regardless of their gender and the gender of the employee," says Ron Ashkenas, a consultant at Schaffer Consulting (Stamford). However, if there are relatively few women at the firm or few women at the higher levels, then it may make sense to have a woman sponsor a woman since she understands what it takes to be successful.

- **Unclear payoffs for sponsors, for their performance reviews and their own career advancement.** When Frazier & Deeter moved from an informal to formal sponsor program last year, part of the process was training new sponsors. "In addition to group training, we did a lot of one-on-one coaching and follow-up to help them understand their role and what they should be doing," says Neeley Bain, manager of People & Culture at Frazier & Deeter. The firm provides each sponsor with a guide that includes a checklist to ensure the sponsor knows the expectations of their role.

"You have to understand your organization's landscape and you have to have someone who has taken risk and failed, because everybody taking the safe way doesn't make for great talent," says Risa Lavine, chief of staff for CohnReznick. "To be a sponsor, you have to have courage."

Sponsorship Fuels Confidence

Sponsorship is a 'secret ingredient' that builds confidence in going for stretch roles just when women's confidence tends to fall off: midcareer.

This addresses the now well-known dynamic that men believe they are qualified when they meet 60% of the criteria for a position, while women believe they are qualified only when they meet 100% of the criteria. Women self-select out of leadership channels and opportunities. Sponsorship breaks that cycle.

"As a sponsor you have to ask the question, 'What are your goals?" That's an ongoing conversation. It changes." – *Stacie Kwaiser, Rehmann*

"We need our up-and-coming women to be personally sponsored by someone who believes in them. It has to be genuine and based on preexisting experience with that person. You want someone who will take to their next level of experience as advocates…remind them of how great they are," says Coffman.

Sponsorship helps candidates put their ambition in gear two ways, says Catherine Tinsley, executive director of the Georgetown University Women's Leadership Institute. First, it hitches ambition to a specific target. Second, the trust and belief that the sponsor expresses in the candidate can propel women candidates to overcome doubts and lack of confidence. "Confidence is your belief in your ability to do something. It's not motivation and it's not having goals," says Tinsley. "You have to believe in organizational goals and see that your effort and ability will be recognized." Working with an influential sponsor reinforces the confidence women already have and spurs many to reach beyond their comfort levels, she says. "The sponsor isn't necessarily someone you interface with very often, but it's someone who says, 'Let's give her a chance.'"

That's how sponsorship is evolving at CliftonLarsonAllen, based in Minneapolis. Jennifer M. Leary, managing partner for the Carolinas and Georgia, says that early in her career at an international CPA firm, she neither heard about sponsorship nor saw it in action. Shortly before she was asked to head the Carolinas office, CliftonLarsonAllen conducted an employee engagement survey and confirmed what leaders had suspected: career paths needed to be more defined.

"We can't make it happen overnight. But we need to make it happen every day." – *LaChel Hird, chief career officer, Minneapolis-based CliftonLarsonAllen, on drawing more women into the firm's partnership pipeline*

"It's amazing what you unleash when you focus on career building," says Leary. CLA professionals coach rising talent. The coaches meet twice annually as a group and advocate for those they coach. Coaches must be specific about what team members have done and can do. "It's more than just saying, 'Sally's great.' It's saying, 'Sally did a great job on two merger and acquisition engagements and wants to take a lead role on M&A,'" explains Leary. Blending resources and accountability works with all rising talent, and providing structure for feedback that millennials crave, and that women want for synchronizing career and personal plans.

Beyond "You Remind Me of Me"

Look beyond the obvious to make successful matches between sponsors, mentors and candidates

It sounds like a natural fit when a senior leader gravitates to rising talent because the senior person sees herself in the younger person. But cultivating fresh talent is more than cloning — in fact, cloning current leaders can result in one-dimensional models of success and doesn't achieve diversity priorities.

Young staff also need to be cognizant of the "you remind me of me" dynamic. Researchers at Georgetown University have found that young women often seek mentors and sponsors who appear to represent an idealized version of their future selves, from professional accomplishments to family status to personality.

It's up to leaders to choose not only people who remind them of themselves, but also to detect potential in a spectrum of promising staff. That builds a pipeline of talent that is diverse in terms of gender, race, LGBTQ, economic background and family heritage.

One way to retire "you remind me of me" is to shift the focus to the organization's culture and needs by adopting this perspective: "You have several qualities that we're looking for in tomorrow's leaders."

Sponsorship: Like Oxygen, Essential for Life, but Often Invisible

In the last quarter of 2015, the Accounting MOVE Project team asked individual women about their experiences with executive sponsorship. An online survey was circulated to members of MOVE Project partners, the Accounting and Financial Women's Alliance, and the American Society of Women CPAs, yielding 89 usable responses. The MOVE individual survey results align with the findings of a study conducted by the Global Accounting Alliance. It found that 54% of all firm staff would stay if they thought they were headed for leadership – but only 30% of the staff reported that their own firms' leaders had discussed leadership opportunities with them. Here are the highlights.

Demographics shape sponsorship opportunities

- Men are three times more likely to be sponsors for women associates/senior associates, but men are only 25% more likely to be a mentor for woman associates/senior associates
- This mismatch aligns with the higher proportion of male partners at nearly all firms: men comprise 77% of partners in the 2016 Accounting MOVE Project aggregate results

Communication about sponsorship is unclear and lacks a call to action with specific next steps

- 50% of women first become aware of the concept of executive sponsorship as associates/senior associates

Women's initiatives and women-focused communications are key to informing women about sponsorship

Women first heard about sponsorship from:

- 23%: their firm's women's initiative
- 20%: several sources, including external sources
- 16%: their mentors
- 12%: firm-wide communications
- 9%: firm leadership, in a firm-wide meeting

How do women find out how sponsorship works at their firms?

- 41%: ask peers
- 32%: do nothing, because they don't know where to find out more information
- 32%: gather information from external sources, such as local business groups

What action do women take when they first learn of executive sponsorship?

- They don't: the number one response was "I deduced I had to wait to be 'tapped on the shoulder.'"

Mutual accountability has had the unexpected benefit of greater transparency among senior leaders. "When people come in the room, they're not just telling the story about that person, but they're actively involved in helping that team member build their market value and, in turn, the career that they will find the most fulfilling," says Leary. "A sponsor is committing part of themselves when they're advocating for you."

MOVE 2016 Results

The Pipeline of Women—2016 MOVE Project Metrics					
All MOVE Accounting Firms					
Women Employees and Managers as a Proportion of ALL Employees & Managers (%)	**2016**	**2015**	**2014**	**2013**	**2012**
Women Full-Time U.S. Employees	51%	51%	51 %	51%	51%
Women New Hires	50%	51%	48%	50%	51%
Women Professionals	47%	47%	45%	45%	44%
Women on Management Committee	21%	23%	19%	20%	24%
Women Partners & Principals	23%	22%	19%	19%	17%
Women Directors	46%	30%	41%	43%	27 %
Women Senior Managers	47%	47%	44%	44%	40%
Women Managers	49%	50%	51%	51%	52%
Women Career Professionals (*MOVE uses the AICPA definition: a professional at the senior or manager level who will work in the current role for the indefinite future.*)	52%	57%	54%	48%	62%
Women Supervisors/Senior Staff	49%	52%	48%	48%	49%
Women Associates	52%	52%	48%	53%	52%

Source: 2016 Accounting MOVE Project/Wilson-Taylor Associates, Inc.

Based on surveys and interviews completed by 49 CPA firms in the last quarter of 2015 and first quarter of 2016.

Participating firms are making steady progress in advancing women. The proportion of women partners and principals is now 23%, a substantial rise in five years. Firms are holding steady with retaining women senior managers who typically are on the brink of partnership.

Regular review of firm metrics yields insights in time to take action. Jen Wyne, head of human resources for Moss Adams/Seattle, says that when she analyzes the firm's demographics, she recognizes success but also asks herself, 'where can we do better?' Moss Adams has expanded its reputation nationally by publishing a Forum W annual report since 2009. The firm's transparency is now being emulated by other Seattle employers. The annual report continues to demonstrate Moss Adams' commitment as an advocate for women by sharing details of its journey with clients, the business community, and recruits. "We're currently at 27% women partners," says Wyne. "We're proud of that, and we do a good job of retaining women through senior manager. Our goal is 30% women partners by 2022. We'll reach that goal – and push beyond it."

M oney: Pay equity policies and practices

Pay equity continues to dominate popular and business headlines. Suddenly, employers are realizing that a transparent pay equity culture and open accountability builds trust and reputation. Pay equity is an opportunity for CPA firms to showcase how they apply their own expertise to a topic of vital interest to the public, women, clients and policymakers.

- 39% of MOVE firms conduct pay equity surveys
- 39% of MOVE firms conduct pay equity surveys by department and by region

In 2015, employer transparency about pay equity emerged as a powerful driver of employer brand. Salesforce, Intel and a few other large employers won headlines and positive media coverage for 'coming clean' about the need to conduct pay equity audits and correct any pay gaps they consequently discovered. Salesforce spent $3 million to correct the inexplicable pay gaps revealed by a thorough analysis that stripped away factors such as longevity, education, and performance that could justify a differential.

CPA firms with strong pay equity stories still have a chance to use pay as a market differentiator by openly discussing how they review pay patterns and how they address pay discrepancies they discover.

Baker Tilly continues to excel at pay equity, synchronizing market pay with part-time work schedules and alternative career tracks. That ensures that staff are not penalized for making the most of the firm's career options, and also means that when part-timers increase their hours to full-time, their compensation automatically scales to the market level accordingly. Baker Tilly also delivers quarterly compensation scorecards to market leaders so they are continually updated on pay trends relevant to the staff they need to retain and develop.

Firms also realize that they must be prepared to handle employee inquiries about how and when pay audits are conducted and what the firm does with the results of those audits. CohnReznick is rapidly adopting a 'due diligence' philosophy to pay equity, explains WomenCAN senior manager Michelle Lifschitz. That philosophy consists of ongoing comparisons, audits, and analysis that weave compensation into the ongoing conversation about career paths, retention and genuine reward for performance.

Meanwhile, federal and state regulations are tightening. In December 2015, a new fair-pay law went into effect in California, requiring employers to produce data about pay rates for 'equivalent' jobs, not just jobs with identical titles. About half of all states have their own pay-equity legislation or regulations underway or passed. American employers are paying closer attention to pay equity as a risk and as an opportunity. They are realizing that one way to close the aggregate gap is to clear the way for more women to occupy higher-paying, higher-level jobs.

O pportunities for advancement

Succession planning is now a daily management task. The accelerating exodus of baby boomer partners is forcing firms to concentrate on retaining women one to three years from partnership. That's the 'danger zone' where the proportion of women drops by half at nearly every firm. Retention and succession planning are two sides of the same coin: as firms realize that everyday culture can be a tip factor for keeping women needed to complete current projects and to support growth.

- 35% of MOVE firms rotate mid-level women into client-facing roles
- 26% of MOVE firms train managers to identify high-potential associates

When women win, the whole firm wins. The most successful women's initiatives translate the business case for advancing women as a market strategy for regions and practice areas.

Sponsorship is one of the cornerstones of BKD's newly launched women's initiative, dubbed SKY. Candidates and experienced partners were chosen for a deliberate stretch for both, explains Wendy Henry, managing partner of the St. Louis office. "The leaders needed to have the experience of being a sponsor for an up-and-coming woman," says Henry. "Most of these women are currently directors, and our focus is on keeping them in the pipeline and helping them achieve their next steps."

One candidate, for instance, was known by her immediate peers for her technical mastery, but was not well known to firm leadership and in her industry. Her sponsor literally helped her get on the stage at industry events as an expert, propelling her reputation with key decision makers.

At Burr Pilger Mayer, every candidate who is being considered for partner has an internal coach who facilitates introductions to two sponsors: one within the candidate's practice area and another elsewhere within the firm.

And Rehmann has tracked the results of its sponsorship program since 2007. It has retained 79.1% of the 72 women assigned sponsors to help them navigate the firm and their personal career paths.

Although her official title is professional development officer, Janice Moceri at Freed Maxick tells her colleagues that her role is to be their "career GPS." In the newly created position Moceri helps create programs to develop and retain employees and also works with each employee individually. While she works with all employees, she says that she has seen how her role especially benefits women as they forge a career that meets their professional needs as well as their families'. "I tell people that there are 50 ways to get to the same career place and that I really help people hone in on their strengths to get there," says Moceri. "We needed someone who was a thought leader to create programs to both develop and retain people. It was very important to have the right person that knew our culture, so we promoted someone within."

"Career advocacy strategic planning has re-energized our senior partners. They're coming up with new ideas. It has brought down silos, and connected generations all across the firm." – *John W. Haag, Sr., principal and leader of the firm's Career Advocacy Team, Yeo & Yeo/Saginaw, Michigan*

More Responsibility, Earlier = Increased Staff Engagement

Recruiting experienced accounting hires is one of the biggest challenges in public accounting today. The best solution has nothing to do with recruiting, but rather focusing on retaining current experienced staff at the crucial manager and senior manager level when many employees, especially women, exit accounting. To help increase engagement and retention, firms are starting to give more responsibility and exposure at earlier career levels than before.

Best practices at MOVE firms include:

- At The Bonadio Group, strategic planning sessions now include principals and managers instead of only partners. Partners actively solicit rising leaders' input for the direction of the firm in the meetings. "The current principals and managers are actually going to be the ones that end up executing and living today's strategic plan because they will be the leaders of the firm. They need to agree and believe in the plan," says Nancy Cox, principal at Bonadio.

- HBE Becker Myer Love LLP/Lincoln, Nebraska, includes all levels of employees from staff to partners on its newly formed Business Development committee. The group of 11 employees meets every other week to discuss new business development topics, train on business development skills and work to refer new clients. "Everyone, at all levels, is learning new business development skills," says Allisa Lovitt, marketing and communications manager.

- Every six weeks, a group of senior managers who are identified as potential partners at LBMC meet with the firm's managing partner and members of the board of directors to talk about becoming a partner. "He talks with them about the financials of the company, the earning potential of partners, the process of becoming a partner and what the day-to-day reality is when you are a partner," says Cindy Harper, partner at LBMC. "Before, there was a mystery behind the curtain, but now we are seeing this group of senior managers much more willing than in the past to ask questions and have conversations that they previously would not have felt comfortable doing."

- Lurie/Minneapolis has a similar strategy. The Emerging Leaders Group meets once a month and invites partners on a rotating basis to discuss important subjects such as strategy, leadership/coaching, and business development.

- Last year, Kositzka, Wicks and Co. created focus groups for all areas of firm development and growth, including workplace flexibility, business development, and women's initiative and marketing. Craig Browning, director of marketing, met with every employee to determine their interest and strength before assigning them to a focus group. Focus group projects that have already made a significant impact on the firm, range from redoing the proposal template to trying new social media strategies. "A staff member on our social media focus group came up with an idea that resulted in significantly more client referrals from our web traffic," says Browning. "For people to feel loyalty to the firm, which will increase retention, they need to feel involved. We want everyone from staff to partner to have a say in the direction and actually get a chance to take ownership."

Inclusion: Beyond Invitations

Opportunities are only valuable to employees if they take advantage of them. Women often hesitate, and the moment is seized by more assertive colleagues – very often, men.

"When I would send out email invitations to participate in business development activities that would advance their career, men at all levels would frequently say 'me, me, me.' But for whatever reason, women rarely raised their hand," says Adelle Erdman, director of marketing at Frazier & Deeter/Atlanta. "If you personally asked a woman at a similar level then she was almost always delighted to be asked and happy to be part of it, but the women simply did not volunteer with the frequency that men did, especially at the junior level of the career."

Firms can create a culture where women are more likely to take advantage of these opportunities by:

- Having sponsors to discuss appropriate opportunities with their employees and encourage them to step up to stretch assignments.

- Encouraging past female participants in leadership programs to share their experiences with other females in the firm, both one-on-one and through networking groups.

- Having program leaders follow up with employees personally in addition to emailed communications about the programs to make all employees feel that they are invited.

Guidance from sponsors translates general career goals to specific, achievable targets that drive the results candidates need to qualify for next steps. Henrietta Fuchs, a senior manager with CohnReznick, doesn't have any time to waste on meandering business development. She's the mother of young children and a participant in the firm's partnership development program. "Early on, I just went to events and didn't concentrate on developing good meaningful relationships," she says. "Now I concentrate on about five people so I can refer business to them and get referrals from them. That has paid off." Her business development epiphany resulted partly from the pointed feedback from the sponsor she works within the leadership.

Vital supports for work-life

Work-life programs and benefits drive productivity and retain clients: that's the commonly held wisdom. Now, firms are starting to measure the return they capture from those work-life programs to both prove that assumption and to learn what benefits are worth additional investment.

- 65% of MOVE firms offer formal flex work

- 52% of MOVE firms train managers in how to use virtual technology and collaborate virtually

Return on investments in work-life programs and supports is starting to materialize. CohnReznick adopted a backup dependent program at the end of of 2015 and has subsequently saved 91 workdays when just-in-time child care providers enabled staffers to report to work.

RubinBrown strives to ensure that all benefits are equitably available to all employees across all its offices – no small feat considering the firm's rapid growth. Up to 70 contract professionals are on tap during busy season so that permanent professionals can carry on with their usual flexible work arrangements. Every year, RubinBrown assesses the productivity of staff participating in its flexible work program and then benchmarks their effectiveness against those on traditional schedules. Typically, those using flexible schedules do as well or better than those on traditional schedules.

Promising innovations at Accounting MOVE Project firms include:

- For its Dependent Care Assistance Plan, Frazier & Deeter currently reimburses 100% of daycare expenses at licensed daycare facilities for its Georgia employees (the plan has a maximum pre-tax payroll contribution of $5,000). The firm also offers the Dependent Care Flex Plan for those who have nannies or use a non-licensed facility (also subject to tax regulations).

Reduced Hours, Expanded Opportunity

Work-life concerns keep many women from wholeheartedly pursuing partnership. A solution that works at some firms is to create part-time partnership with numerous paths for accelerating to full-time partnership and also to make the most of work-life programs. "The main thing is changing the firm's perception that success equals number of hours worked. It comes down to changing your definition and acknowledging that there are very talented people who can still be a very big part of your company, but just work a lesser number of hours," says Tracy O'Neill, chief administrative officer at Kerkering, Barberio & Co./Sarasota, Florida. A woman who was working less than full-time at Kerkering recently made partner and is expected to work around 2,000 hours this year. "We would have been missing out on a great partner who adds a lot to our firm if we had not been open to seeing the different paths to partnership," says O'Neill.

Rehmann specifically tracks the career moves of people on alternative career tracks and on flexible work schedules to ensure that they are not overlooked for developmental opportunities. That's a core driver of Rehmann's better-than-average proportion of women partners and principals: 26%.

Millennials famously expect to take on significant responsibilities early and often, especially when that involves exposure to top leaders. Brown Smith Wallace designed its Wellness Committee to offer millennials entry-level leadership responsibilities with firm-wide exposure and impact. The committee researches and recommends a spectrum of emotional, social and physical wellness programs intended to support productivity and to enhance company culture.

Communication is essential for ensuring that rising women understand their options. Tricia Duncan, director of human resources at Jones & Roth in Oregon says she recently realized that many of the younger women at the firm do not know that she and another female partner worked part-time for many years. "I've had 17 years of part-time and flex-time, but am now back to full-time. The women at our firm currently trying to figure out how to manage career and family didn't see us working part-time during that period and don't realize that we got to our current high levels through that route," says Duncan. "We realized that we need to talk about our paths and be transparent so that other women know that they can reach our level through the same path if they want."

Work-Life Blend, not Blur

It's essential to draw clear, distinct differences between career development programs and work-life benefits, says Wendy Berenson, human resources director for Cherry Bekaert, LLP/Richmond, Virginia. Terms such as 'flex work' can be interpreted as an alternative career path, telecommuting, or both, muddying the distinction between new ways to advance professionally, and new ways to work any time, any place. That's why Cherry Bakaert defined its terms when it introduced MyLife, an initiative that focuses on daily personal work flow equilibrium for all employees.

Technology: The Key to Flexibility

Strategic use of the latest technology can equip employees to provide stellar client service regardless of where or when they work. Best practices in terms of technology include:

- Have a standard equipment package for all employees in terms of hardware models and software for employees to use for remote work, customized for each employee's work arrangement. "This way we can ensure that the equipment is the most efficient and reliable for remote work and decreases trouble-shooting time for IT and the employee. Otherwise you end up with different packages for different employees and everyone is always guessing what is best," says Tracy O'Neill, chief administrative officer at Kerkering, Barberio & Co.

- Set up a conference bridge for all meetings as standard practice and have the capability to record meetings. SVA, based in Madison, Wisconsin, has found greater acceptance for working remotely because employees do not have to ask for special accommodations for each meeting since flexibility in location for the call is assumed.

- Use videoconferencing equipment for meetings with remote participants. SVA recently installed three 90-inch video monitors in its largest conference room and large video monitors in three smaller conference rooms. Each staffer's laptop has the latest video conferencing access. "Due to the size of the screen and high quality of the voice and resolution, everyone really feels like they are in the same room," says Sherry Gustafson, human resources director with the Madison, Wisconsin, firm.

Differentiating women's development from work-life is especially important for communicating with millennials, says Effin Logue, chief people officer for Dixon Hughes Goodman/Charlotte, N.C. Millennials haven't yet started to worry about advancing women – they assume it will happen automatically – but they're notoriously difficult to retain – and "as a group, they're too big and important to ignore," says Logue. Tangling the terminology of women's initiatives and work-life programs would hopelessly confuse the messaging, make it impossible to track the results of each effort, and confuse millennials. That's why Women Forward, Dixon Hughes Goodman's women's initiative, is clear in its distinctive communications that work-life is not the focus of Women Forward. Women Forward emphasizes learning and leadership as evidenced on its own website and in its business development-focused curriculum created specifically for women at DHG.

Entrepreneurship and business development

Business development is an essential career skill for partner candidates – and a requirement that often takes rising leaders by surprise. It takes both a firm culture of sponsorship and structured skill development programs to infuse candidates with the early successes that build confidence and determination to master business development.

- 71% of MOVE firms provide business development training to professional staff
- 39% of MOVE firms strategically reach out to small businesses, startups, women-owned firms and minority-owned firms, cultivating these high-growth potential markets

The 'performance manager' model at Clark Nuber/Bellevue, Washington, blends sponsorship with business development coaching by successful senior leaders. "The performance manager system has been more informal in the past and now is more formal, to help people build on their strengths," says Rob Wheeler, chief executive officer. "We don't have a cookie cutter approach to what it takes to be successful."

Focused, Fast Networking Builds Business Fast for New and Nearly Partners

The model of the short, focused, all-business networking session is gaining traction. Moss Adams was among the first to use this model, through the empoWer program, a business development partnership with like-minded law firms, banks and business insurance agencies. Women develop their books of business through by leveraging this network focused on giving and getting specific leads. Sikich LLP/Naperville, Illinois, has also found success with this model, as it cuts to the chase with trusted business associates.

The earlier, the better, when it comes to cultivating leadership and business development skills, says Cheryl Aschenbrener, a partner with Sikich. "You have to start differentiating yourself as a senior associate so people don't think that an accountant is an accountant," she says. When senior leaders model professional respect by bringing younger professionals to meetings, introducing them, and drawing them into the conversation, "you know you belong."

What's in it for me?

Business development becomes personal when firms ensure that employees receive rewards for referrals and wins. This encourages cross-selling and, at some firms, engages all employees in driving firm growth.

The Bonadio Group offers staff full credit for bringing in business, even if it's for a different practice area. This makes sure that the best accountant for the job takes on the new client. In fact, staff is actively discouraged from clinging to new clients who aren't a fit with that staffer's expertise.

"If I meet a potential new client at a networking event that needs tax help, then I will set up a meeting and bring a tax partner since that is not my area of expertise. If we bring in $50,000 worth of new business, then we both get 100 percent credit for the new client," says Nancy Cox, principal at The Bonadio Group. "It's a great structure because we are not fighting over who gets the work and instead work together to give the client the best service possible."

Women-Owned Business as a Vertical

Your firm's client relationship management system probably lists the usual verticals – healthcare, government, technology. But do you actively recruit and track women-owned businesses as a vertical?

Lurie has built a powerhouse reputation by making the most of its female leadership and advocacy for women business owners. "We are entrepreneurs and we serve entrepreneurs – we give advice that we've had to face as a firm and our clients benefit from the fact that we've walked the same path," says Kimpa Moss, chief operating officer. Five of Lurie's 17 partners are women, including managing partner Beth Kiefer Leonard.

A high profile as an advocate of women-owned businesses resonates with corporate clients who also seek strong relationships with the same group. Women business owners often are influencers in their business and professional circles.

"Our team partner system is our secret weapon," says Gordon Krater, managing partner of Plante Moran/Southfield, Michigan. "Every staff person is on a partner's team, and that helps their personal development. It's also how partners are evaluated – on how far and fast the people on their teams advance," he says. "Plante Moran also splits profits firm-wide, not by practice area, providing an incentive for team leaders to advocate for rising leaders on other teams, and to develop 'farm team' talent no matter where that talent is located."

Because different groups often work separately, it can be challenging for employees to know who handles what service area and even more so how to spot potential cross-sell opportunities. MCM CPA/Louisville, Kentucky, uses its business development program to cross-train team members on different industries and services.

Beth Geiser, director of practice growth at MCM CPA, says cross-selling previously wasn't optimized until they initiated awareness and learning across the firm. "We wanted our employees to be able to understand what to listen for when talking to a client and how to respond when they hear a specific client concern," says Geiser. "While previously they had access to this information in charts and graphs, it really makes a difference in the amount of cross-selling when you know the resident experts personally and can ask questions."

Cycle of Success

Early success fosters confidence, which releases personal risk-taking, which often results in more successes. Touching off that cycle is a key dynamic for women hesitant about business development.

"I felt like a zebra in a herd of horses," says Mary Marino, a principal with CliftonLarsonAllen/Minneapolis, of her early years in public accounting at a local firm. "When I came to work it was like walking into an episode of 'Mad Men.'" She realized, when she started her family, that the profession's culture celebrated sunny afternoons at the golf course but not sunny afternoons at a playground. It wasn't until Marino was hashing out her frustration about the culture with an informal peer group that she suddenly realized she had forged her own route to business development.

"Now, when I speak to women, I say, 'you're already doing business development and you don't know it,'" she says. "When a client tells you you're doing a great job, that's the moment to ask them if there's any-one else you can do a good job for, too." She has guided her office's focus on business develop training from what has worked in the past to what works for each potential partner now. "There's no one way that works," says Marino. "We've moved from a formula to business development based on each person's strengths."

Methodology

The Accounting MOVE Project is based on surveys and interviews completed by and with 49 CPA firms in the last quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016. Research was conducted by Wilson-Taylor Associates, Inc.

All CPA firms of all sizes are welcome to participate in the Accounting MOVE Project. Firms pay a modest administrative fee to cover the cost of the research. For that, they receive a confidential benchmarking snapshot that highlights demographic trends and comparisons, as well as that firm's strengths and weaknesses in advancing women. Firms may request an in-depth scorecard for an additional fee.

For information about scorecards and the MOVE Project, please contact project manager and firm president Joanne Cleaver, jycleaver@wilson-taylorassoc.com. To view Accounting MOVE Project archives, media coverage and other MOVE Project results, please visit www.wilson-taylorassoc.com.

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AWSCPA is a national organization founded in 1933 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. As the only resource exclusively for women CPAs and those aspiring to become certified, the Society provides information as well as scholarships to those in the profession. The Society is a leader in addressing concerns such as gender equity, the glass ceiling, and work and family issues. AWSCPA members work in all segments of the accounting and financial profession, from individual practitioners to professionals in industry, academia, and government, as well as partners in all of the largest firms. Visit the AWSCPA Web site at www.awscpa.org or call the Society's office at (800) AWSCPA1 (297-2721).

Strategic communication firm **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, the Women's Transportation Seminar, the Alliance for Workplace Excellence, SitterCity, Ebyline.com, and many others. Please see Wilson-Taylor's portfolio of work at www.wilson-taylorassoc.com.

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