

# BAY AREA BUSINESS WOMAN

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## March Highlights



Strong, smart  
and bold

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## Women in accounting: A career that adds up

By Kenya McCullum

As with many professions, the face of certified public accountants has become more and more feminine over the years. Whereas at one time it was rare to find accounting firms actively recruiting women, now is an excellent time for female CPAs seeking opportunities. Financial jobs have always been and will continue to be plentiful. Women today have recognized that a good accountant is a valuable commodity, and even more so in times of economic hardship.

In fact, according to Elissa Wolf, the president of the Silicon Valley chapter of the American Society of Women Accountants (ASWA) — a national organization dedicated to providing female accountants with the networking opportunities and knowledge base they need to succeed — the current climate has opened up many new jobs that female CPAs can pursue. This influx of opportu-



Monika Miles, CPA at LabHart Miles Consulting Group in San Jose

nity is in part because of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, also known as SOX, which was passed in the wake of corporate scandals like Enron, Tyco International, Adelphia, and WorldCom. As a result, a standard of

corporate responsibility for publicly traded companies was mandated — which includes the requirements that internal control audits must be performed annually. In addition, final approval of financial statements must



Elissa Wolf, president of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the American Society of Women Accountants (ASWA)

be certified by a CPA — thus significantly decreasing a company's ability to falsify their books, while increasing the amount of jobs available in the field.

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**Women in accounting**  
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Meanwhile, accounting firms have become more receptive to giving female employees the flexibility they need to walk the delicate tightrope of a successful career and a family. Monika Miles — a board member of the ASWA's national chapter and partner of Labhart Miles Consulting Group, Inc. — says that many firms are giving their employees the option of working flexible hours, or even part time, when they are ready to have children. Miles also says that, as long as CPAs keep up with the trends of the industry and stay connected to their peers, they can easily take time off from their careers to raise a family and return to the industry to pick up where they left off.

"I think it's a great profession for women," adds Pamela S. Hedblad of Ab-

bott, Stringham & Lynch. "In fact, one of the reasons we have so many women in our firm is because we are so flexible with the whole mommy track thing. We actually have what we call a 'mommy room' here because we've had so many women have babies."

Another Bay Area firm

women.

If you think that a CPA's work is just about tax returns, think again. Women in the accounting field perform numerous duties depending on the area they specialize in and the firm they work for. Some of an accountant's responsibilities can include audit-

warding aspects of being a CPA are the relationships she builds with her clients. For example, when working with a small business, an accountant is much more than a number cruncher. She actually gets involved in the client's life and becomes a trusted confidant to the business owner — giving

in, Wolf says there will always be opportunities, as long as their skills are sharp and they are continually networking.

"I don't perceive there is an issue of gender. It's a matter of who can get the job done," she says. "I would encourage emergent female CPAs to make sure they have honed their craft technically and that they have devoted equal attention to their interpersonal skills. They should reach out and learn as best they can what it means to work in accounting environments because clearly their success is proportionate to both their ability to fulfill their role to their greatest technical excellence, but also that they have the emotional intelligence and the corporate savvy to navigate within the field."

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*"She becomes a trusted confidant to the business owner — giving advice on numerous issues like how to create a business plan."*

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that is friendly to the needs of women is Hood & Strong LLP. Not only are there several female partners in the firm, the company has adopted the philosophy that in order to retain talented employees, it needs to allow them flexibility in their schedules — which is appealing to both men and

ing financial statements for companies or individuals and writing opinions on them; court accounting that involves supplying the court with figures that will help settle a dispute; and forensic accounting designed to discover fraud.

Oftentimes, Hedblad notes, one of the most re-

advice on numerous issues like how to create a business plan, how to strategize about the future of the business, what software the business should purchase to run its operations, and where to find a qualified chief financial officer or bookkeeper.

But whichever area a female CPA chooses to work

**The new "Mommpreneur"**  
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which showed the intersection of women's lives as inventors and moms.

Cathy Bennett, founder of How Fast They Grow™ ([howfasttheygrow.com](http://howfasttheygrow.com)) and the Digi-Scrapbook™, says Monosoff's books were the most helpful Mom Inventors' tool. "They have been a wealth of information for me starting my own busi-

ness," says Bennett, whose Alamo-based company and website allows people to create scrapbook pages by uploading their photos. "It's the kind of book I pick up frequently as a reference book to answer questions."

Monosoff says there are two ways to go about inventing a product: do it yourself, or sell your idea to a manufacturer, from where you'll get royalties. "When you're inventing a product, it's not

just about the product," says Monosoff. "It's about the business mindset.

You've got to view what you're doing as a business to be successful."

For moms who have a great idea but aren't interested in starting a business, she created the Mom Invented™ brand. "They license their products to our company and we



Nadia Jamshidi, also believes that women are more willing to offer help, advice, resources and time to fellow inventors. "Mothers, I have found, also tend to care about the genuine benefit their products will bring to others," she says.

Bennett be-