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WOMEN UP
LOCAL WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

AAF Alexander
Aronson
Finning

CARLA MCCALL: Accounting for growth opportunities

By Keith Regan | Special to the Journal

UP CLOSE

Title: Co-President, Alexander, Aronson, Finning and Co.
Age: 45 **Residence:** Hopedale
Education: Bachelor of Science Degree, accounting, Bentley College, 1989

THE INFLUENCE FACTOR

BY YOU | How would you describe your leadership style? Confident and collaborative. I am constantly collaborating with my co-president Dave McManus. I express ideas about firm strategy and we discuss them together first before presenting them to our full partner group. This has been very successful as we bring different views to each situation which only strengthens our decision making.

FOR YOU | What are you reading? With two young children, I have limited time to read so I tend to read business books. I just finished "All In," by Adrian Gostick & Chester Elton. AAF has received "best place to work" awards for five years running and a lot has to do with our culture. This book is about managers creating a culture of belief. People in great firms believe in their leaders and in the company's vision, values, and goals. Employees need to be engaged and energized. Happy employees make happy clients.



When Carla McCall joined Alexander, Aronson, Finning and Co. in 1995, abundant opportunities for advancement were part of the appeal. McCall advanced to manager and was made partner in 2003. Late in 2010, she was named co-president of the Westborough-based accounting and audit firm, which has 44 CPAs and 16 partners.

Now, much of her focus is on creating opportunities for others.

Last year, she formed a women's opportunity network at the firm to encourage open conversations about the path to partnership. Under her shared leadership, the firm has created new growth opportunities by rounding out its service offerings, adding an estate attorney, establishing a technology advisory practice and bringing an international tax expert into the fold.

"That culture of opportunity is alive and well and even stronger, thanks to technology which allows the firm to be even more flexible in how we work with our staff," McCall said. "We're able to create even more opportunities for people now."

When and why did you first become interested in pursuing a career in accounting?

There were two early influences for me. I grew up in a family business. My family ran an insurance agency, so I knew early on the importance of accounting and taxes. The accounting class I took in high school was fun and I was good at it. So when it came time to apply to colleges, it just all seemed to make sense.

What is the most rewarding aspect of the work you do?

I enjoy building relationships. I get the most reward out of helping my clients find solutions to issues. To be a key business advisor and part of a prestigious team of advisors is truly rewarding. I tell young professionals all the time, the technical expertise is a given, but the interpersonal and communication skills needed for building relationships and trust are what makes people stand out and really excel in our business.

What is the biggest challenge facing your closely held business clients today?

Succession. As you can imagine with all of the baby boomers set to retire, succession is a major issue in closely held businesses. We can provide clients creative ways to transfer ownership to the next generation and educate them as to how a business is valued and ways to increase value.

Do you have any pet peeves?

Procrastination. We have helped many organizations execute their strategies successfully. Ideas and strategies are wonderful, but immediate execution of them is critical to success.