

Growth Strategies

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The Journal of Accounting Marketing and Sales

AAM Summit 2018 Issue

You Signed Up For The
AAM Summit. Now What?

Key Client Executives Increase
Satisfaction and Revenue

Marketer's Role in Diversity
Initiatives



brands ripe for picking



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From the Editor



The pop culture expression, "What a time to be alive!" seems to be a very suitable statement for accounting marketers in 2018. This year has already proven to be a memorable one for our profession.

Accounting marketers are asked by their firms to tackle an enormous range of business challenges: optimize search engine visibility, harness the power of social media,

recommend a CRM system, generate an unending calendar of content, support recruiting strategies, put our touch on internal retention initiatives and perhaps even become a hybrid marketer-business developer. Lines are blurring between the operational roles and responsibilities of the firm so much that we can rarely identify projects as solely Marketing, IT, HR or Client Service departmental matters. Accounting professionals also seek our help in developing client communications on difficult subjects such as tax reform, international regulations, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and other hot issues. All the while, we're being encouraged to disrupt, innovate and work as change agents who will lead our firms into the next generation.

The order is tall, but accounting marketers are somehow made to fill it. With the fresh ideas and support of our AAM connections, we can find our way through territory that is both difficult and unfamiliar. In this issue, our featured authors offer their unique approach to emerging challenges:

- Increasing client satisfaction and revenues by adding a relationship executive to the team
- Identifying tools and resources for boosting your marketing technology know-how
- Helping marketing departments contribute to their firm's diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Ensuring compliance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), even if you're not presently doing business in the EU
- Maximizing your professional development conference experience, specifically at AAM Summit 2018 in Portland, Oregon from May 14-17, 2018

The workload can become deep and demanding, but your ability to access the latest trends in educational tools and professional development is a priority to us. AAM and the voices among these pages are here to help you find the best resources, tools and connections for your continued success.

Lesley Hatfield,
Executive Editor

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You Signed Up For The AAM Summit. Now What?

Bonnie Bailey, *SVA Certified Public Accountants*



As marketers, we are a creative bunch. We plan campaigns, implement strategies, write lots of headlines, create marketing copy and post to social media. But do we put that same energy into planning our own participation in educational conferences? Maybe, or maybe we are so busy getting our work done so we can be out of the office that the conference sneaks up on

us and we just show up.

Here are some tips to help you maximize your conference experience:

1. Get Ready

Review and highlight the top sessions you want to attend. Take some time to think about your firm's objectives and how specific sessions might provide insights to help you achieve them. Review the agenda with your manager or peers, as they may have recommendations to help you decide where to focus your time.

2. Networking Power

We all know the power of networking one-on-one, but sometimes that can be intimidating in a large group. Prepare by developing a list of topics that are relevant to what you regularly work on. Then challenge yourself to sit by different people at each session, lunch or social activity. Use those topics as conversation starters. Keep in mind, your fellow attendees likely have the same goals, challenges and successes that you do and will be happy to share.

If your firm is a member of an alliance group, find out when they are meeting and join in. These more intimate groups often provide an opportunity to share frustrations and ideas. And if you're a conference newbie, the experience will offer you a few familiar faces when you get to the larger sessions.

3. Focus. Focus. Focus.

The biggest challenge is staying in the moment. Turn off your email and phone and commit to getting the most benefit from the educational sessions. Take notes, even if the suggestions seems obvious at the time, since once you get back in the office, it's often hard to remember what was said. When your mind is "in the moment," jot down an idea where you can apply it in your own firm, and if it is really good, mark it with a symbol

"Plan ahead, but be flexible as sometimes the sessions differ from what you expected. Don't feel bad about leaving to join a session that is a better fit for you."

– Kim Woirhaye-Reid, MarksNelson

"The most beneficial part of the conference for me is the relationships I've gained. I can't say enough about the ability to pick up the phone and call someone for advice and guidance from my list of AAM conference peers."

– Mac Hartman, Freed Maxick CPAs

"Pick two to three things that you learned to go back to your firm and implement. Someone gave me that same advice at my first conference, and it still rings true today. If you try and take back everything you've learned, you'll get nothing done."

–Jeshanah McLeod, Brown Schultz Sheridan & Fritz (BSSF), CPAs

(lightbulb moment!). When you get back in the office, review the notes and create a to-do list of the top ideas to guarantee you will revisit them with your team or partners. You will be amazed at the inspiration you can spark by connecting your current projects to the presentation content. Take the notes in a work journal or electronic format that you use every day. That way the inspiration is always with you so you can refer to those ideas often and reshape them to your current project focus. So many lightbulb moments, so little time!

Now that you are prepared to make the most of this year's conference, remember to connect with your peers before and after the conference. Link to them on social media or send an email. Cement those relationships because we all know if you share your ideas, your peers will share back. After all, marketers are great communicators.

About the Author

Bonnie Bailey is a Business Development Project Manager with SVA Certified Public Accountants located in Madison, WI. Bonnie works with the firm's industry experts to develop strategies and marketing campaigns that drive new business to meet corporate goals.

Do You Need to Prepare for the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)?



Companies in the European Union (EU) have been preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for a couple of years. As information on GDPR is being covered more frequently by the U.S. media, many firms are beginning to take notice and ask whether they will be impacted.

The Skinny on GDPR

Generally, GDPR applies to businesses that handle personal data on individuals in the EU. A company could be required to comply with GDPR standards even if they are not physically located in the EU and they do not transact business in Europe. Basically, any business that has customers, offers goods or services and/or monitors the behavior (profiles) of people in the EU must be GDPR compliant as of May 25, 2018. Depending on the infraction, companies can be fined up to €20 million (approximately \$22.9 million) or 4% of global revenue for the previous year. This includes companies based in the U.S. that meet certain criteria.

GDPR broadens the rights individuals have under the current EU Data Protection Directive (DPD). Introduced in 1995, DPD was adapted by the EU to alleviate the need for businesses to adapt standards imposed by individual countries. American-based companies that did not have to comply with DPD may have to comply with GDPR. This includes professional service providers.

What Does GDPR Require?

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union published its final regulation April 5, 2016. The regulation can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/reform/files/regulation_oj_en.pdf.

Among other provisions, GDPR requires that individuals intentionally opt in (in writing, electronically or verbally) to receive communications from a company. If requested, businesses will have to prove that the people in their databases asked to be included. Systems and processes will have to be implemented to verify that these individuals want to receive the information from you.

Companies that are subject to GDPR are only allowed to collect the information necessary to achieve the desired result, and that result must be clearly communicated to individuals when opting in. This information can only be stored for the time needed to accomplish the task.

Firms may have to appoint a data protection officer (DPO) if they process significant amounts of data and/or certain types of data. The DPO must report directly to your managing partner, have the resources available to do the job, and maintain a level of expertise in data security.

Detailed records of personal data processing activities, privacy impact assessments, and privacy-by-design protocols are required under GDPR, as well as data on who has access to information on individuals.

Parental or guardian consent will have to be obtained for anyone 16 years old or younger. The Children's Online Privacy Protections Act (COPPA) in the U.S. requires consent for communicating with children 13 and under.

Individuals in the EU will have the "right to erasure." In other words, clients or prospects can ask you to permanently delete all of their data and, unless there is a valid reason not to, you must comply.



In the event of a data breach, GDPR requires you to notify the authorities “without undue delay,” and if possible, within 72 hours. When the personal data breach is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of the impacted individuals, you must notify those individuals “without undue delay.” The fine for not complying with the data breach notification provisions can be up to €10 million or 2% of your global revenue for the previous year.

How to Prepare for GDPR

To get started, consult with the accounting, sales, marketing, customer services, IT and other departments within your firm to identify EU-based clients, prospects, and other individuals for whom you may have data, as well as how the data is used and stored.

A lot of information on how to prepare for GDPR is available online. For example, HubSpot has a GDPR compliance section on its website (<https://www.hubspot.com/data-privacy/gdpr>). Included is a checklist (<https://www.hubspot.com/data-privacy/gdpr-checklist>) on what you need to do to become GDPR compliant. HubSpot suggests that you:

- ✓ Assess the information you have, how the information is collected and stored, as well as determine if adequate protection is in place.
- ✓ Develop a GDPR project plan and secure executive buy-in.
- ✓ Implement procedures and controls, especially for situations that may require you to notify the authorities or clients about a data breach.
- ✓ Document all sources of information on clients and prospects, how they opted in, for what purpose, and for how long you may keep and use their data.
- ✓ Ensure that all third-party vendors that process your data are GDPR compliant and have the necessary data protection protocols in place. Add clauses to your vendor contracts to protect your firm.

CommuniGator, a leading marketing automation software provider in the U.K., provides resources on how GDPR may impact your marketing initiatives. This includes a GDPR Compliance Checklist (<http://www.clearpeople.com/~media/Documents/GDPR-Compliance-Checklist.pdf?la=en>).

CommuniGator recommends that you:

- ✓ Determine if and how your firm will be affected by GDPR.
- ✓ Understand the penalties.
- ✓ Plan to meet the GDPR adoption timeline.
- ✓ Establish which controls you will need in place for your opt-in process.
- ✓ Write and make available your opt-in statement.

GDPR: By the Numbers

According to a 2017 PWC survey of 200 executives from U.S. companies with more than 500 employees:

1. 54 percent of survey respondents said GDPR is their top data-protection priority.
2. 77 percent of respondents plan to spend \$1 million or more on GDPR.
3. 64 percent of the executives surveyed reported that their top strategy for reducing GDPR exposure is the centralization of data centers in Europe.
4. 54 percent plan to de-identify European personal data to reduce exposure.
5. 32 percent plan to reduce their presence in Europe and 26 percent plan to exit the EU market altogether.

Source: PWC, “Pulse Survey: U.S. Companies Ramping Up General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Budgets”

- ✓ Get explicit consent from implied-consent subscribers (customers and prospects).
- ✓ Get as many individuals as possible on purchased email lists to opt in.
- ✓ Obtain explicit consent from as many non-engaged individuals as you can.
- ✓ Identify who you do not have explicit consent from before May 25th and stop marketing to these EU individuals until they consent to receive your communications.
- ✓ Check that your privacy and cookie policies are GDPR compliant.
- ✓ Put controls in place to track and secure personal data you have on individuals in the EU.
- ✓ Implement data transparency measures to comply with GDPR’s right to be forgotten, subject access right and right to data portability requirements.

GDPR is coming. The time is now to figure out if you need to comply. Our global marketplace opens many grand possibilities – including what can happen if you do not take measures to meet the requirements of GDPR.

About the Author

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Key Client Executives Increase Satisfaction and Revenue

Allan Tetley, *Grant Thornton LLP*



Psst... Don't tell anyone, but there is a beauty of a role that exists in some firms today. It's hidden under the mask of confusion that generally describes sales and marketing in most accounting firms. Uncertainty. Speculation. Variable at-risk compensation. An undefined career path. Unknown measurable metrics. These are a few phrases that describe this role. But

without it, firms struggle to compete in their largest client accounts.

Have you heard of a director of key accounts, key account manager, key account director, client relationship executive, key account executive or a key relationship director? Whatever the nom du jour is, it is the best role at the firm. To all but the largest professional service firms, the idea of having a full-time business development professional who spends all their time working on a select few accounts instead of hustling around finding new clients can seem counterproductive. At the very least, it seems duplicative to what the key relationship partner or partner-in-charge of the account is supposedly doing.

But, here is where most firms get it wrong.

They put all the pressure and responsibility of managing the account, building the relationships, maintaining the relationships, dealing with procurement and getting the client to marketing events on that lead partner. And the firm still expects the partner to deliver on all the chargeable hours to complete the engagements, manage the engagement teams, monitor client satisfaction and respond to the next RFP from another division within the client account.

You end up using the minds of your presumed best and brightest subject matter experts (which is what got them to be partners in the first place) to take on a significant number of non-chargeable hours in order to maintain a key strategic account of the firm.

There is a better way.

As an accounting firm, you sell and manage time, and it is an ever-evaporating product. What separates you from having a terrific growth account or a bear of a one-off engagement? It's being able to efficiently use your time, as well the time of your best people, on your best accounts.

Why do most firms take their highest performers—the best revenue-producing partners who are known in the community or industry as thought leaders—and move them into an administrative role of account management? Just because they performed so well in the delivery role? This is where science needs to meet reality.

To keep your high-performing partners, they need to keep doing what they do so well and have more time to do it. The highest and best use of evaporating time is to have the right people doing the right things, at the right times. This is where a key account executive comes into play.

It's how you generate growth and revenue.

When a business development executive is assigned to a key or strategic account, there are growth benefits to the firm. Here are a few examples:

- ✓ Generally, business developers meet people and ask a lot of questions. It's not likely that relationship partners have the same amount of time to invest, let alone the same level of interest, desire and competence. A business developer gets to know the "buying culture" of the clients far more intuitively than partners often do. They are also able to build relationships across the organization, both broadly and deeply. Partners are a mile deep in their area of technical expertise and an inch deep generally; sales is the opposite, which positions them to carry the relationship-development dialog across all the functions of business.
- ✓ Most large companies utilize a sourcing or procurement group to handle vendor selection and the RFP process. Procurement is responsible for narrowing down vendors for services like tax, statutory audits, internal audit, compliance and system implementation. This requires that a firm meet with procurement staff and possibly even submit firm qualifications. With partners' limited time, they want to focus on the finance or tax executives, not procurement. However, without a dedicated focus on the procurement team, the company won't even know your capabilities, and you may miss opportunities to bid on projects. Business developers don't often make this mistake.
- ✓ When your engagement team is onsite at a client, they are often provided with a room to work, including any security card needed for access. This is a golden ticket for a business developer. Continuous access to the client can result in numerous hallway or break room conversations with client

executives. This is key to building long-term relationships and goodwill with clients. A good business developer will talk with the client about other challenges they are facing. This isn't done in an obtrusive way but, rather, as a cordial "good morning" to break the ice. Hopefully, this one minute conversation leads to another encounter. However, all too often partners will walk past an open door and not make any effort to simply introduce themselves. Clients buy from those they trust and like. Business developers have more time to invest in building trust with the clients.

A key account executive is a buffer between the engagement team and the client. For instance, when you have a large engagement that goes on many months and involves a lot of people on both sides, there are bound to be some personality or work-related conflicts. The key account executive can play the role of arbitrator. Since they are not part of the delivery team, don't charge time and often have an independent perspective that differs from the engagement partner, the client feels more comfortable sharing with them. Issues discussed can include personality conflicts or perceived team members weakness that the client would not share with the partner. These confidential discussions can help the firm perform better and that goes a long way to getting the next engagement.

It's an instrumental and rewarding role.

As a key account executive, or as a business developer with key account responsibilities, you will meet and work with very bright people, both within your firm and the client's team. You

will be seen as a problem solver by both sides. Knowledge of the client's culture, procedures, business units and leaders will increase the client's confidence in the solutions you suggest. Your firm will also bid on less work that is not a good fit for you or the client.

You will need to build relationships and entertain the clients, making you popular with client executives. Your partners will appreciate it when you are able to bring clients to your events. And best of all, you do all this without the chargeable hours responsibilities that cause angst among the lead partners. When it comes to the client, you will be involved in all the meetings leading up to your being awarded the work. The client will know you and understand your role—a key member of the core team.

Leading key accounts is really the best job in the firm.

About the Author

Allan Tetley is a key account executive with Grant Thornton; an inaugural role in the Atlanta office five years ago when he joined the firm. He has more than 25 years of professional service experience having served in client service roles at PWC and as a partner in Accenture Learning. He can be reached at Allan.Tetley@us.gt.com. Views expressed are his own.

2018 AAM SUMMIT THINK **FRESH!**



REGISTRATION IS NOW **OPEN!**

GET READY FOR
SOMETHING
COMPLETELY

DIFFERENT

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5 Tools for Influencing Digital Engagement



There's something exciting about adopting new technology, especially if you can influence your team to help drive change. We've all looked at our email list and thought, "This list is getting stale and it's shrinking." No matter how beautiful your email templates are, people are going to unsubscribe. But the question is, how do you capture new leads so that your email list stays on point?

This is the precise reason why I love visual engagement and technology, they somehow manage to go hand-in-hand in the digital world which makes our jobs all the more fun and allows us to wear our strategic hats. To capture new leads, you could implement landing pages. Perhaps you have a tax planning guide that your audience could download, but before they gain access to that PDF they must give you their email address. Ta-da! Trust me, it's a champagne moment when you start to see the increased subscribers and engagement numbers. Your results will also help with the leadership buy-in, as SAAS subscription fees can add up to a sizeable investment.

This brings us to tracking and measuring your ROI on a larger scale. All of these tools can speak to each other in a beautifully synchronized way. Say that you've designed your social media campaign, linked it to a landing page and captured new emails (which then triggers a personalized drip-campaign, launching a new can of initiatives we can discuss another time) but now what, what comes next? These leads should then flow into your CRM and their lead source would be tagged, for example, as "Landing Page." As you begin to win opportunities from these leads, you can begin to drill down and represent these lead sources within your CRM's dashboard. This will be a great win at your next Partner meeting!

The resources are endless, but following are my top 5 tools and blogs to help you and your team drive new digital engagement initiatives:



1. CRM

CRM (my platform is Salesforce) has an endless source of tools to help support business development and marketing initiatives. It's a great way to track prospects by keeping tabs of which events they attend, what email campaigns they receive and the resources you've dedicated to cultivating the relationship. Marketing is often an art and not always a science, but harnessing big-picture data is a superpower. Once you begin to compile prospect and client data, tracking and measuring results as they flow through your sales pipeline, you'll be able to utilize dashboards to your advantage and these metrics won't let you down in your next ROI conversation with leadership. This is easily my #1 tool, it is that critical.



2. MailChimp

Hands down, this is my go-to email software. Because it can integrate with multiple platforms and has a super user-friendly interface that's easy for the entire team to adopt, you'll be sure to win over your marketing team with this one. Forget HTML basics, MailChimp provides many sleek templates and drag-and-drop features that you can customize and brand. I'd also like to call attention to their mobile-friendly feature because truly no one enjoys getting emails from the 90s.



3. Instapage

Are you ready to build your email list? Well, follow me to Instapage. This service offers a way to build and customize landing pages in order to capture new leads. There are many ways to utilize landing pages, generally used for short-term campaigns not connected to your website's home page. It's a wonderful way to share downloadable content with your audience or call-out specific services and industries. This is another user-friendly tool that integrates with other platforms such as MailChimp and Salesforce, It is also simple to install via WordPress.



★ 4. reallygoodemails.com

I'm always on the lookout for new inspiration and design is ever-changing. This blog is a fun and insightful resource demonstrating today's latest and greatest email examples whether it be for events, products, drip campaigns and more!

📅 5. coschedule.com

Coschedule is a brilliant platform for building your content calendar. This tool will automatically push out social media posts, knowing the best days and times to best reach your audience as well as recycle recurring posts so that you only have to upload it once. My favorite section of Coschedule's website is their blog which contains exceptional digital marketing ideas and inspiration. They also do a great job of publishing superb landing pages.

Additionally, if you're looking to enhance your marketing technology skills check out General Assembly. They offer online and in-person daily workshops on data analytics, beginner's digital design, digital marketing certification and so much more. Ask if your firm will underwrite your educational credits for these online courses. For free online workshops, I recommend DreamForce seminars on YouTube, which offers an array

of the latest Salesforce insight as well as relevant marketing discussions.

Last, but certainly not least, make sure to keep your email, social media campaigns and landing pages cohesive with your template designs. They all speak to the same audience so it's important to keep your brand top-of-mind, no matter the channel that's driving your lead to a win. If your team doesn't have an in-house graphic designer to create and manage these templates, check out non-designer tools, such as **Canva**, to create engaging visual tools that grab your audience and enhance your brand.

About the Author

Danielle Parker is Marketing Manager for San Francisco-based Andersen Tax, where she develops high-end collateral and campaigns, and manages day-to-day marketing initiatives for the firm.

Marketing Diversity Initiatives: Transparency Rules

Joanne Clever, *Wilson-Taylor Associates*



Baker Tilly is accumulating proof that its diversity and inclusion initiatives are strengthening its culture and client service. The firm is winning regional and national 'best place to work' lists. It has persisted with national women's and diversity initiatives, and it uses data from employee surveys and national benchmark studies.

Leadership has ironed out a consistent message construct to deepen staff awareness when talking about firm culture, internally and with clients.

But, even with all these strides forward, the firm is still proceeding with extreme caution when it comes to using marketing techniques to share its accomplishments. Given the fractious and fragmented national debate about workplace behavior, culture, and accountability for how women and diverse staff are treated, is it any wonder?

The intersection of diversity and marketing would seem like a sweet spot. It can be – for firms willing to share their results and how those results came about. But for firms reluctant to share anything less than the whole truth, diversity communication can be a minefield.

Authenticity, Humility, and the Whole Truth

"When is the story ready to tell, when it is always evolving?" asks Baker Tilly chief of staff Jacqueline Wiggins. It is no longer enough to showcase logos of awards and recognitions. Potential and current employees increasingly want to know specifics of your firm's winning ways: exactly how does your firm develop diverse talent? Support work-life flexibility? Address problems such as pay inequity and sexual harassment? Hold leaders accountable?

"Firms have had initiatives for years, but usually only talk about activities, not actual results. Now is the time to be vulnerable, as a firm, and to share about progress and setbacks, what you have learned and what you want to learn, about developing diverse talent," says Jina Etienne, principal with EtiennePartners and former president and CEO of the National Association of Black Accountants. "The story is in how your commitment plays out and how your firm's culture is changing accordingly. That is the win for everyone – leadership, staff, clients and business partners."

Wiggins and other diversity and human resource leaders agree: messaging about women's and diversity initiatives must pivot on authenticity, humility, and employee and client experience.

"If you're out there with a message that you can't back up with proof points, that people can't talk about from their own experiences, you're not ready," says Wiggins. "Name a company that doesn't have a list of core values. But in this day and age of social media, those values have to be what staff can personally express through their own experience. We don't think of diversity and inclusion as a standalone program. We do think of it as a lens that makes everything better at our firm. It informs our growth strategy, our specialization strategy, and our people strategy. When we do it right, that makes it easy to talk about it internally and externally. And that is why marketing is there from the very beginning with communications and human resources – right at the intersection of brand, reputation and character."

The Marketplace will Speak for You

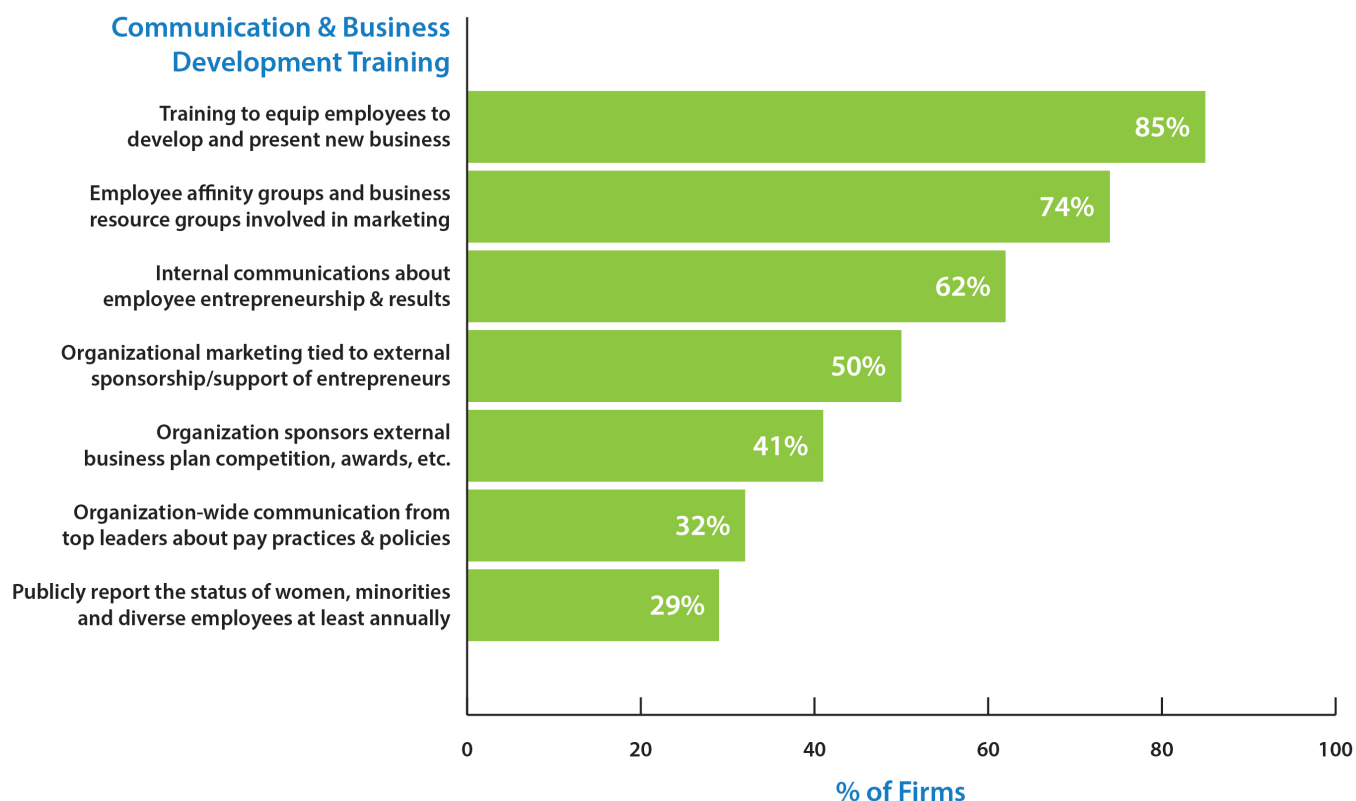
Ignoring the public discussion about inclusion is not a solution. Potential and current clients want to work with firms that share their values of advocating for all employees, regardless of gender, minority status, or identity. Firms can't simply assert that they are inclusive without accompanying action, lest they be outed on employer-ranking sites such as **Glassdoor**, **Fairy-GodBoss** and **InHerSight**. What happens in human resources most certainly does not stay in human resources. Nor should it, if what's happening validates a firm's sincere efforts to address gender, racial, and affinity identities.

Public perception of workplace diversity is closely linked to organizational reputation. The **2017 Gender Forward Pioneer Index**, compiled by public relations firm Weber Shandwick, found that companies with strong reputations have twice as many women in senior management (17%) compared to those with 'lesser-regarded reputations' (8%). Formal diversity and inclusion programs were, according to the study, "integral, along with public demonstration of executive commitment and quantitative goals and targets."

Evidence that talent development programs work is clear through a firm's line up of partners and principals at its website. Candidates are likely to take a skeptical view of even the most optimistic recruiting messaging when they scroll over to the leadership page and see little diversity.

Diversity Messaging and Programs

Overall, CPA firms report uneven efforts and progress with internal communication about practices and programs that address equity and advancement for women and diverse staff.



That is when transparency about the process becomes synonymous with credibility. Recruits, clients and the business community are much more likely to take your firm's efforts seriously when they see what programs and training you have underway and the difference that those programs are making already. Nobody expects precise equity – most employers struggle with the same issues. But good intentions don't go far unless a firm also shows it is taking visible, consistent, credible steps to include more women and diverse staff in leadership and key roles.

Who's Leading the Conversation?

Firms with long track records are well positioned to lead the conversation. Moss Adams launched its Forum W Women's initiative in 2008 and has been publicly releasing an annual report that highlights what it is learning, its goals, and its progress towards achieving those goals. See the latest Forum W report at <http://bit.ly/2or4IT9>.

The report and related messaging provide a sturdy scaffold for events designed to foster business-to-business networking among female executives in a given community or industry. A few years ago, when the firm hosted the showing of a documentary about how women are portrayed in the media, an encore had to be scheduled to accommodate all the Seattle-area women executives and business owners who wanted to attend.

"We're engaging in diversity efforts because we really want to make a difference within our organization, and within the public accounting industry," says Piper Turner, director of marketing. "A belief in the value of diversity is intrinsic to who we are."

Firms are reaping new clients and strengthened reputations by constantly refining a focused effort designed to build a long-term conversation with clients and business partners who share a particular identity (such as gender or race) or affinity (a life stage or experience they have in common, such as being a veteran). These firms are gaining traction.

- ✓ **Brown Smith Wallace:** The Bridge is a women's event series designed to be a vehicle for networking, professional development and fun. The events typically attract more than 300 St. Louis-area women executives and business owners. Firm associates are involved in planning and hosting the events, which gives them the opportunity to expand their networks and hone their business development skills in a comfortable, non-threatening environment. "Many of our male clients frequently send us the names of women to add to our invite list because they've heard how great the programming is from other women professionals they know," says Cheryl Foster, director of practice growth.
- ✓ **CohnReznick:** For years, CohnReznick has conducted an annual pay equity analysis by gender, and now includes analysis by minority status. In 2017, it took its approach

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Resources

Accounting MOVE Project

Annual research project supported by Founding Sponsor Moss Adams and National Sponsor CohnReznick. Results are released in the May issue of Public Accounting Report as its special section on women, and in June by the AFWA (see below) with the report and confidential scorecards for participating firms. See archives of the MOVE Project reports at <https://www.wilson-taylorassoc.com/move/accounting>

Best CPA Firms for Women and Best Firms for Leadership Equity

Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance Annual lists released every June, based on the annual Accounting MOVE Project survey and analysis. See the latest report and lists at <https://www.afwa.org/move-project/>

CPA Firm Diversity Report

Released in December by corporate sponsor Xero, based on the Accounting MOVE Project. See the latest report at <https://www.wilson-taylorassoc.com/move/accounting>

Catalyst

A longstanding research and advocacy nonprofit that compiles statistics about women in various industries, including accounting.

<http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-accounting>

CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion

A newly formed coalition of large corporations that have pledged to drive advocacy and workplace culture change.

<https://www.ceoaction.com>

to equity in compensation a step further, by proactively eliminating salary history from employment applications and background checks. The decision to adopt this as a firmwide policy, rather than a compliance exercise in the few states where it is required, is an example of the firm's commitment to pay equity in action.

✓ **Marcum LLP:** In 2012, Marcum LLP tiptoed into an LGBTQ practice at its New York office, and was subsequently astonished at the enthusiastic reception and steady stream of referrals it received – not to mention, requests for LGBTQ-related financial advisors in other markets. Now rechristened as the Modern Family practice, with specially trained advisors in most of its offices, the specialty attracts all types of nontraditional families, whose financial planning requirements are not a neat fit with current laws and regulations. “You have to believe in this stuff,” says partner Janis Cowhey, who heads the new practice. “People see through marketing ploys.”

✓ **Mountjoy Chilton Medley:** With women composing 38.3% of its partners, Mountjoy Chilton Medley is far from coasting. In fact, it has expanded its women's initiative to invite younger women and to new markets. Even as MCM hosts executive women's networking groups in each of its six markets, it is also planning its first-ever all-firm women's summit, says Kim Judy, director of human resources.

✓ **BeachFleischman:** BeachFleischman just signed on as launch sponsor for its home market of Tucson for **GroYourBiz**, a Canadian women's business network that is expanding into the U.S. The mission of the group aligns with the firm's mission of fostering growth through collaboration. “It fits perfectly with our brand promise,” says Eric Majchrzak, a shareholder and chief marketing officer. “We enhance your ability, we recognize that success is personal, we impact the community and we make interactions easy. It's about the experience that people have when they interact with our brand and our people.” And, he adds, joining in the early stages of the group's expansion positions BeachFleischman to help shape a potentially powerful advocate for women entrepreneurs.

“We have to be mindful of the messaging and ideas we put out there through speakers, visuals, programs, and collateral,” says LaChel Hird, who heads consulting firm Talent Dynamics LLC, and is a former chief of talent for a major firm. “Everyone will look under the hood. It has to be congruent. As a profession, I don't think we've fully figured it out yet.” But, she and other talent and marketing leaders also say that the ever-evolving conversation is a rolling invitation for others to join in, especially if they are sharing openly about what works, what doesn't, and how their firms can learn. “You can say, ‘we're figuring this out,’” says Hird. “When you are transparent that way, it's honest. And that resonates.”

About the Author

As president of content and communication firm Wilson-Taylor Associates, Joanne Cleaver designed and manages the annual Accounting MOVE Project, a comprehensive survey and analysis of women and diverse staff at 50 CPA firms. For more information about the MOVE project or diversity initiatives in public accounting, contact Joanne directly at jycleaver@wilson-taylorassoc.com.

Take 5

What one fresh marketing idea will your firm be implementing (or refreshing) in 2018 and what area of your marketing strategy plan do you expect it to impact the most?



Fina Salvo

Director of Marketing, *Boyer & Ritter LLC*

"Boyer and Ritter has undergone a major period of growth these last 12 months and is still going strong! New marketing initiatives are not on the agenda, we're focused on updating and upgrading our existing initiatives. Growth periods are a great time to reinforce the things that make our firm great, identify and capitalize on our differentiators and repeat what works within our market."



Heath Alloway

National Growth Manager
BKD

"Working with our firm's Big Data & Analytics leader, Jeremy Clopton, BKD recently embarked on a project to connect multiple data points around our firm through our client billing, CRM, email, proposal and website systems. It was clear that harnessing this data would be just as beneficial for our firm as it is for our clients. By utilizing our Analytics. BKD.com platform, Jeremy was able to create

live interactive dashboards tracking the key metrics for managing our firm performance. We are now refocusing our efforts on marketing, driving firm growth and providing a better view on campaign success with ROI. Most organizations generate impressive amounts of data every day and if handled right, your data can reveal important facts, trends and patterns that provide insights into your firm, marketing and practice management efforts."



Jennifer Hamberger

Chief Marketing Officer
FreedMaxick CPAs, PC.

"FreedMaxick is very excited about recently installing and implementing the Clearview Social automated platform at the Firm. Intuitive and simple to use, our professionals can share business content approved by the firm to LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook with just one click. It quickly gained popularity



amongst our directors/principals and the dashboard function tallies the earned media value and tracks sharing activity by participant. The two areas that we hope will be most impacted by the

use of this new platform are increased brand awareness and lead generation. By harnessing the reach of multiple social networks as well as the demonstrated potential for closed leads, we anticipate measurable results."



Heather Kunz

Manager of Marketing & Business Dev.
Williams Benator & Libby, LLP

"A key marketing initiative this year is improving the client experience. We have always been committed to great service; our client retention and testimonials confirm that it's a fundamental part of our brand. We know there's always room for improvement, though, so we spent the last months of 2017 looking at the whole arc of our interaction with clients: everything from the onboard-

ing process, capturing and maintaining client data, and client involvement in annual engagement planning, to creating thought leadership and communication with clients throughout the year. The question of how to improve the client's experience has led us beyond newsletters or appreciation events into operational processes that will potentially improve communication and efficiency throughout the firm."



Christian Moises, APR

Practice Growth Specialist, *Ericksen Krentel*

"We are in the process of creating our long-term growth strategy, which has presented the opportunity for us to conduct fresh market research to drive all decisions regarding our niches and service lines. With the advent of technologies such as data analytics, AI and blockchain already impacting how we do business, this has propelled us to research and identify how we will incorporate these new processes into our everyday approach to client service from step one, putting us ahead of the curve."



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