



Enhancing CPA Firm Success Through Gender Diversity

| Action | Description | Resources | Owner | Timeline | Result |
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| Step 1: Understand the business case and why it is so critical for firms. | Recognize that a women’s or diversity initiative is not only a human resources concern, but one that has significant benefits and consequences for the entire firm. The resources here can help inform firms about what is at stake. | The Attraction, Retention and Advancement of Women Leaders: Strategies for Organizational Sustainability Women’s Initiatives Executive Committee: Educating, Advocating Advancing Organizational Strategies: Retaining and Developing Women Leaders | | | |
| Step 2: Build the business case by analyzing firm demographics and pipeline. Compare them with those of the profession. | Use data to clarify some of the urgency involved because it can demonstrate, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How women’s advancement compares with men’s. • How much time it takes each gender to advance. • When women are likely to leave the firm. • Whether the firm is losing talented people before they can | Women’s Initiatives Executive Committee CPA Firm Gender Survey AICPA Supply and Demand Survey PCPS National Management of an Accounting Practice Survey | | | |

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| | <p>step into leadership roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills, contacts or talents the firm has lost when women have left. • Comparing the firm’s situation against the profession can provide prospective, as well. | | | | |
| Step 3: Get leadership buy-in to work on addressing areas of improvement specific to the firm. | Use the business case, firm demographics and promotion trends and profession-wide data to make a compelling case for change. Reach out to other business leaders for perspective on the business case for leadership buy-in. | AICPA Women’s Global Leadership Summit | | | |
| Step 4: Create an effective governance structure to spearhead the initiative. | Develop a team to champion the women’s initiative. It must include members of management and have management’s complete and visible support. Men—and the concerns of men in the firm—should be included in the discussion. The team might be called a women’s initiative, women’s advancement or diversity and inclusion team. | Organizational Strategies: Retaining and Developing Women Leaders Steering Committee Charter Template | | | |

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| <p>Step 5: Link this initiative with the firm’s mission, vision and strategic plan.</p> | <p>Linking the program’s goals to mission, vision and strategic planning goals—such as recruitment, retention, succession, new client development and overall long-term sustainability—demonstrates the program’s value and improves management and staff buy-in.</p> | <p>Organizational Strategies: Retaining and Developing Women Leaders</p> | | | |
| <p>Step 6: Introduce the program and its goals to the firm.</p> | <p>A communication plan should explain the program’s purpose, describe how it will benefit all firm members and demonstrate management support. Failure to achieve any of these goals could hinder the program’s success.</p> <p>Customize the Sample Business Case Communication Document Template to make a compelling case for change in your firm.</p> | <p>Sample Business Case Communication Document Template</p> | | | |
| <p>Step 7: Conduct a baseline survey.</p> | <p>Customize the sample questions to your firm’s unique needs. Let firm members know the survey demonstrates your interest in their opinions and ideas and will help leaders create a more inclusive workplace for all. Share survey results with firm</p> | <p>Sample Baseline Survey Questions</p> | | | |

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| | members and explain how they will be used. | | | | |
| Step 8: Using your survey results and other relevant information, conduct a firm self-assessment. Develop a definition of what success will look like. Share survey results with the firm and use results, including opportunities for improvement, to adjust the program as needed. | <p>Use the “Diagnostics” section of the “Organizational Strategies” paper (along with other sources cited here) to develop useful data and insights.</p> <p>Every firm’s definition of success will vary, but one question for the team to consider might be: How many women do we want to have at which levels in what timeframe?</p> | <p>Organizational Strategies: Retaining and Developing Women Leaders</p> <p>PCPS Firm inMotion e-Toolkit</p> <p>Accounting Inclusion Maturity Model</p> | | | |
| Step 9: Finalize goals and define and implement strategies using the Action Plan Template. | <p>Prioritize the diagnostics from the firm’s self-assessment and review the links between the program’s goals and firm’s strategies. Identify potential barriers to success. Create strategies and a final action plan. New goals or strategies might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of defined career paths and expectations at | <p>Action Plan Template</p> <p>Organizational Strategies: Retaining and Developing Women Leaders</p> | | | |

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| | <p>various competency levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of alternative career paths. • Guidelines for promotion to partner or other levels. • Introduction of leadership training. • Flexible work arrangement or remote work programs. • Sponsorship and mentoring programs. • Efforts to raise awareness about unconscious bias. • Including men in the conversation. | | | | |
| <p>Step 10: Revisit progress at least quarterly.</p> | <p>Create action items that support achievement of quarterly goals. Assign champions for each goal and hold them accountable for progress. Remember to align any goals with the strategic plan to underscore their importance to firm success. Use AICPA resources to support</p> | <p>AICPA Online Mentoring Program</p> <p>Recruitment and Retention Toolkit</p> <p>Employee Retention Guide: How to Keep Your Top Talent on Board</p> | | | |

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| | your recruitment and retention of women. | | | | |
| Step 11: Promote your firm's diversity. | Position your firm as a diverse and inclusive workplace in your local market. Highlight your firm's successes in client meetings and recruiting and retention efforts. Raise the visibility of your female role models within and outside the firm. | AICPA Women's Global Leadership Summit | | | |