

CUSTOM CONTENT  
OCTOBER 18, 2021

# LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: Women in Accounting





# Leaders of Influence: Women in Accounting 2021

Last year, the Accounting Move project took a look at the inroads women accountants have made towards equality in the accounting profession.

Among the statistics in the report:

- 48% of firms conduct internal pay equity surveys that include base pay and bonuses
- 90% of firms (up from 71% in 2014), have partners and principals review the results of internal pay equity surveys
- 59% of firms (up from 48% in 2019), prepare managers for pay equity discussions
- 52% of firms rotate emerging women leaders into client-facing roles (an all-time high)
- 38% of firms offer rotations onto executive task forces (an all-time high)
- 34% of firms offer rotations into operating positions (an all-time high)

While there is still room for improvement, it is clear that much progress has been made. As noted in the report, “Accounting firms nationwide are growing in multiple directions. Women lead much of that growth with unexpected combinations of experience, skills and aptitude.” Nowhere is that more true than here in the Los Angeles region.

Los Angeles is truly a national leader when it comes to influential women in business – and the field of accounting is no exception. There are some particularly stellar CPAs in LA who happen to be women and we’ve alphabetically listed some of the very best of them here, along with information about their careers, practice and some relevant recent accomplishments they’ve achieved.

Congratulations to the accountants who made this list and thank you for working to keep the people and businesses of Los Angeles on the right fiscal track.

*Methodology: The professionals featured in these pages did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted to the Los Angeles Business Journal. Those selected for inclusion were reviewed by the editorial department and chosen based on a demonstration of impact made on the profession and on the Los Angeles community.*

RSM celebrates the power of great people.  
Congratulations Michelle Huang, Karen Reffner,  
and Stacie Droege.

It gives us tremendous pleasure to recognize the achievements of **Michelle Huang, Karen Reffner, and Stacie Droege**. Congratulations for being named to the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2021 Most Influential Women in Accounting list.

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## CONGRATULATIONS

**DENISE BALCAZAR, CFE & ALEXANDRA CHERNYAK, CPA**



*on being recognized amongst LABJ's Women of Influence in Accounting.  
Your expertise and commitment to your clients are unmatched!*

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LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING



**ARLENE AMBOY**  
Audit Partner  
Weinberg & Company, P.A.

**A**rlene Amboy, CPA, started her professional accounting career at a Big 4 in her native Philippines, but immigrated to the U.S. in search of greater professional opportunities that are available to women in the United States. Today she is audit partner at Weinberg & Company's Assurance and Audit Practice in Los Angeles, and has 21 years of public accounting experience, 16 of which are in the U.S. working primarily with emerging growth, micro and small cap public companies. Arlene is recognized for her technical excellence by colleagues, clients, and the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board.

Amboy's accounting technical skills help public companies prepare for significant capital raising events, including initial public offerings, direct offerings, follow-on and secondary offerings, and private investment in public companies (PIPEs). She has significant experience with business combinations, purchase price accounting, and is an expert in the analysis of complex debt and equity transactions.



**BELVA ANAKWENZE**  
Virtual CFO and Business Manager  
Abacus Financial Business Management

**A**s the principal of Abacus Financial Management Group, Belva Anakwenze serves as a virtual CFO for several creatives in Los Angeles. Her clients range from entertainers and their closely held companies to large entertainment tech companies. She also has several music live events and musicians. She's made sharp pivots in the past, such as like when Anakwenze changed her client base from professional athletes, who weren't good at following advice, to entertainment industry talent, including actors, directors, producers, and writers. For them and their closely held companies, Abacus handles the day-to-day financial affairs as well as helps them plan and invest.

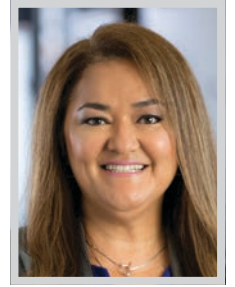
Anakwenze's business continues to grow in client base and employees. In the male-dominated financial world, she is able to reach her goals as a CFO by facing challenges and tough conversations head-on and speaking in everyday vernacular to ensure complete transparency and financial climate understanding.



**CHRISTY ASHENFELTER**  
Senior Financial Consultant, CPA  
Goetzman Group

**C**hristy Ashenfelter has over 20 years of proven performance for a diverse and demanding client base including Fortune 500 and middle market clients within entertainment, consumer products, high tech, and financial services throughout Los Angeles and surrounding areas. Her high visibility engagements have elevated her reputation for timely deliverables requiring critical thinking and engaging insights of best practices learned from her myriad of clients.

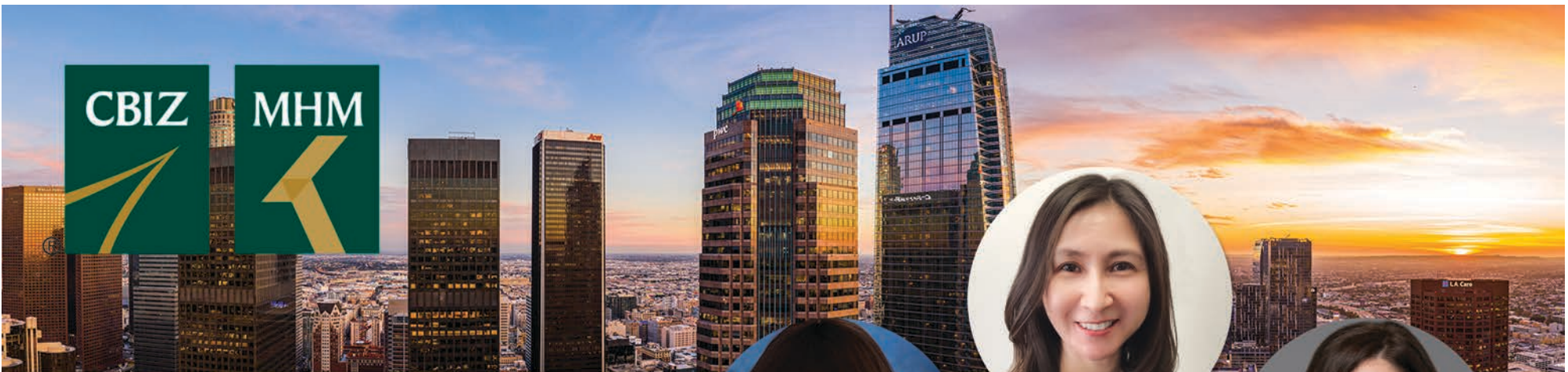
Ashenfelter is a top performer that is incredibly hard working, reliable, dependable and trustworthy. She has become senior management's "go-to" person always exceeding, not just meeting, expectations. Ashenfelter consistently leaves each and every client engagement infinitely better equipped for future success thanks to her thorough documentation and implementation skills. In addition, she provides on-going support to her many client companies as required. Ashenfelter's exceptional work ethic, and client-facing focus has earned her the accolades of all client companies she has served.



**DENISE BALCAZAR**  
Senior Manager  
Miller Kaplan

**D**enise Balcazar, a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), has worked in public accounting for 26 years. With a focus on licensing, royalty compliance, and production cost inspections, she provides expert data analytics to film and television content financiers, entertainment labor unions, and copyright owners in recorded music, music publishing, and sports. A member of Women in Toys, a global licensing and entertainment community dedicated to the advancement of women through leadership, networking, and educational opportunities, Balcazar offers consulting and career advice to its members.

Balcazar is also an active member of Miller Kaplan's Training Committee which works to provide staff with technical training materials for career development. She earned her degree in Accounting and Business Administration from California State University, Northridge, where she was involved in various associations such as the University's Accounting Association, Minority Business Program, and the Latino Business Association.



We are honored and proud to congratulate our colleagues Cheryl A. Calhoun, Betty Liu and Kelly O'Neil on being named among the *Los Angeles Business Journal's* Leaders of Influence: Women in Accounting!



Cheryl A. Calhoun  
Tax & Business Management  
Managing Director



Betty Liu  
Senior Manager



Kelly O'Neil  
Managing Director &  
Attest Practice Leader

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MHM (Mayer Hoffman McCann P.C.) is an independent CPA firm that provides audit, review and attest services, and works closely with CBIZ, a business consulting, tax and financial services provider. CBIZ and MHM are members of Kreston International Limited, a global network of independent accounting firms.





**CHERYL CALHOUN**  
*Managing Director*  
 CBIZ & MHM

**A**s managing director at CBIZ MHM Los Angeles, Cheryl Calhoun brings more than 30 years of experience and expertise to all facets of the entertainment industry. She represents talent, production companies, entertainment service companies, media service companies, publishing companies and executives in varied tax and business matters. Calhoun is also a co-leader of CBIZ's Multi-Family Office and Virtual Family Office Practices. In addition, she specializes in assisting not-for-profit organizations – combining her talent for business and tax issues with her desire to contribute and support impactful causes.

Calhoun champions the mission of organizations she supports by building strategic relationships and ensuring that the partnerships are in the best interest of each organization. She was recently named chair elect of the board of the American Lung Association (ALA). Cheryl has worked with the ALA for more than 10 years, where she helped build the inaugural Local Leadership Board in Los Angeles.



**CATHERINE CATHERINE**  
*Director, Business Management*  
 Armanino LLP

**A**s a business manager/CPA, Catherine Catherine serves as her clients' personal CFO, helping manage their day-to-day financial operations and providing an oversight function for their financial universe. Catherine provides family office and business management services to high net worth individuals and families as well as entertainment professionals.

Catherine's specialties include business management, entertainment accounting, family office services, cash management and financial planning, tax planning, bookkeeping/check writing, payroll, budgeting, business entity formation, estate planning and general ledger software consulting. Catherine previously spent 11 years at RBZ, LLP, which merged with Armanino. Now a leader within Armanino, Catherine joined the firm as the second employee working in the Business Management practice after it was founded and remains a critical team member. She has specifically taken on a leadership role to drive digital transformation of the Business Management practice and Family Office group.



**ALEXANDRA CHERNYAK**  
*Partner*  
 Miller Kaplan

**A**lexandra Chernyak has spent her 21 years with Miller Kaplan focused primarily on labor organizations and employee benefit plans – providing expert audit and accounting services, including managing complex reports such as Federal and State Informational Returns, Department of Labor Reports, Agency Fee and Hudson Reports, and Financial Core Payer and Beck Reports for many large organizations.

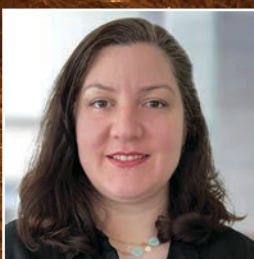
Chernyak currently serves on the board of Valley Community Healthcare, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization – promoting best practices in maintaining the well-being of low-income, medically underserved residents in North Hollywood, North Hills, and the surrounding communities. Internally at Miller Kaplan, she is co-chair of the firm's HR committee and a key stakeholder in the firm's Quality Control Committee. Additionally, she mentors staff to help them achieve work-life balance and successfully manage their responsibilities to their clients, the firm, and themselves.



**NICOLE D'ARCY**  
*Partner*  
 Crowe LLP

**N**icole D'Arcy has over 13 years of experience in public accounting providing audit, assurance and consulting services to clients in a variety of industries. D'Arcy specializes in public company audits while still managing a significant portfolio of private clients with an emphasis on technology and media companies ranging from start-up to mature operating companies. She is a hands-on partner who understands the need for prompt and effective resolution of issues and the importance of forthright and frequent communication with senior management and the board of directors.

D'Arcy was instrumental in the development of Crowe LLP's audit practice on the West Coast, being among the first to relocate to the market and build the practice. With her contribution to the market through thought leadership and client service, she has helped to drive consistent double-digit growth for Crowe's audit practice.

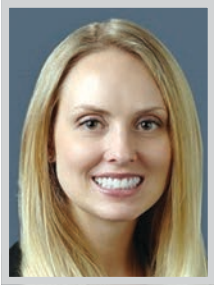


Crowe congratulates Nicole D'Arcy and Azi Ghahremani for being named to the Los Angeles Business Journal's "2021 Leaders of Influence: Women in Accounting." list.

[crowe.com](http://crowe.com)



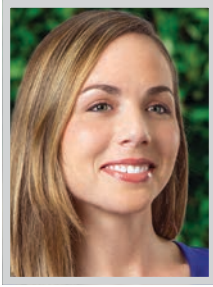
## LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING

**STACIE DROEGE**

Senior Manager, Assurance Services  
RSM US LLP

Stacie Droege has more than ten years of experience providing assurance and risk management services to both public and privately held companies. Stacie primarily focuses on audits of financial services companies, including registered investment advisors, private equity funds, hedge funds, commodity pools, fund of funds and small business investment companies. She has extensive experience with public companies and their respective SEC filings.

Droege has significant experience in supporting the not-for-profit sector focusing on organizations (such as foundations, religious organizations, cultural institutions and universities) with large alternative investment portfolios and hard to value investments. She serves as a resource for valuing and auditing alternative investments to both assurance engagement teams and executives in the not-for-profit industry. In her current role, she is responsible for managing the completion of engagements, the training and development of staff and serving as a technical resource for her clients.

**FRANCES ELLINGTON**

Tax Principal and State and Local Tax Practice Leader  
GHJ

Frances Ellington, DBA, CPA, is GHJ's State and Local Tax Practice leader as well as a leader of GHJ's Women's Empowerment Initiative, which works to motivate and inspire women at GHJ and in the community. Ellington's outside community involvement includes the "Principal for a Day" program of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and serving as a career advocate for Fulfillment Fund Destination College. She is a board member at CalCPA and volunteers with the Junior League and the City of Santa Monica. She is also currently a lecturer for the University of North Carolina's Master of Accounting program.

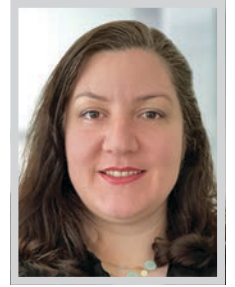
Ellington's strong industry and thought leadership, mentorship of other women and community involvement make her a shining inspiration to others. She is a strong supporter and mentor of other women both at and outside of GHJ. She also shares her time and expertise for the betterment of Los Angeles community organizations.

**LEIGH WILSON GASPAROVIC**

Audit Partner  
KPMG LLP

Leigh Wilson Gasparovic is an audit partner in KPMG's Department of Professional Practice, where she leads teams in developing tools and guidance that enhance audit quality and efficiency. She has 29 years of experience with KPMG, including 17 years as a partner and 10 years as a designated SEC reviewing partner. She primarily serves companies in the insurance industry, including life, accident and health, title, credit, and property and liability insurers.

Gasparovic is the national training partner for Insurance within KPMG, responsible for the content and execution of all insurance-specific training for all levels within the firm. She supports KPMG's Department of Professional Practice, providing advice and training to engagement teams on accounting, auditing and regulatory matters, and serving as a firm liaison with standards setters and regulators, including serving for five years as a KPMG liaison on NAIC and AICPA/NAIC Task Force matters.

**AZADEH (AZI) GHAHREMANI**

Partner  
Crowe LLP

Azadeh (Azi) Ghahremani has more than 17 years of public accounting experience. She is a trusted advisor to closely held and private-equity owned businesses, family offices, multi-generation families, entrepreneurs, executives, trusts and estates. Her experience spans a wide range of industries. Ghahremani specializes in federal taxes, flow-through entities such as LLCs, partnerships and S-corporations including their owners many of whom are high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals. Her experience also includes M&A planning in both buy and sell side transactions.

Ghahremani has been instrumental in the growth of Crowe LLP's Southern California Family Office practice and leads the pass-through practice for the Los Angeles and Orange County offices. Prior to joining Crowe, Ghahremani and her family fulfilled a two-year expat assignment in India where she and her team managed over 200 tax professionals and helped develop new protocols and processes to streamline the tax preparation process.

## Resilient. Proactive. Determined.

Congratulations Amanda Schlank for Being Named  
Leaders of Influence: Women in Accounting by the LABJ.

You Deserve the Recognition and We are Incredibly Proud  
of your Continued Contributions to Our Firm and Clients.

**Amanda Schlank**

Partner, Assurance & Advisory  
ASchlank@SingerLewak.com



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### JOANNE GRATIOT

*Audit Partner*  
KPMG LLP

JoAnne Gratiot is a partner in KPMG's Asset Management practice, where she is a designated SEC reviewing partner specializing in providing audit services to asset management companies, mutual funds, broker dealers, private equity funds, hedge funds, and common and collective trust funds, as well as performance attestation engagements under the GIPS standards.

Gratiot has been with the firm for over 30 years, during which time she completed a two-month externship in which she worked directly for an international investment management company. In this position she was actively involved in the coordination of compliance, budgeting, and supervision of the asset management operations. Her audit experience includes assisting with the accounting implications of business acquisitions and SEC filings for fund offerings. She is also experienced in dealing with a number of issues related to the valuation of non-readily marketable holdings.



### MICHELLE HUANG

*Senior Manager, Assurance Services*  
RSM US LLP

Michelle Huang is an assurance services senior manager in RSM's Los Angeles office. She has over sixteen years of experience serving public and privately held companies. Her experience includes providing audit services to a variety of financial services entities, including private equity firms, broker-dealers, hedge funds, specialty finance companies and community banks. In her current role, Huang is a financial services and financial institutions specialist, with experience in complex accounting matters related to valuation of portfolio companies, financial instruments, derivatives and hedging instruments, consolidations and equity-linked instruments. She has assisted in capital and debt raising campaigns, including initial public and secondary offerings.

When asked about what keeps her engaged in public accounting, Huang remarked that every day is an adventure and that each engagement brings opportunities to solve a problem and learn something new.

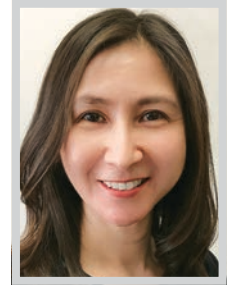


### CATHY HYODO

*Office Managing Partner and*  
*Member of Partnership Board*  
Grant Thornton LLP

A skilled accountant with over 20 years of leadership experience, Cathy Hyodo is a member of Grant Thornton's Partnership Board and the office managing partner for the firm's Los Angeles office. She has also led Grant Thornton's Los Angeles Technology Industry Practice (TIP) and served as a member of the firm's national TIP leadership team. In addition to overseeing hundreds of staff members, Hyodo supports clients in the digital media, e-commerce, telecommunications and software industries.

Hyodo is a member of several professional organizations, including the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the California Society of CPAs. Over the course of a 27-year accounting career, she has helped tech start-ups and Fortune 100 companies achieve widespread success by knowing how to navigate current and future challenges. She is also deeply invested in helping the next generation of accountants do the exact same thing.



### BETTY LIU

*Senior Manager*  
CBIZ & MHM

Betty Liu, CPA, is a senior manager at CBIZ MHM, LLC a national accounting and financial services provider, and a key member of the Los Angeles tax department. With more than 20 years of experience, Liu's expertise is providing tax and consulting services to both private and public companies. She specializes in tax minimization, planning, and compliance for companies in a variety of industries, including real estate, manufacturing, construction, retail, and professional services.

As a leader, both at work and in her local community, she focuses on the growth and development of CBIZ's Los Angeles office, by helping to train and mentor her colleagues, and using her enthusiasm and dedication to create a healthy work environment. Even during the stress surrounding tax season, her passion helps to improve office morale and the overall work environment.

## Congratulations Lori A. Roth!

We are so proud of your  
*Los Angeles Business Journal*  
2021 Leaders of Influence:  
Women in Accounting  
Spotlight!



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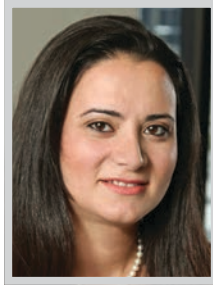
## LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING

**KARLA CHAVEZ LUNA**

Tax Partner  
BPM LLP

**B**PM's Karla Chavez Luna has been a steady riser in the tax community for the past 20 years. Working extensively with high-net-worth individuals, she guides them through the process of optimizing their income tax positions and decreasing their tax liability to help preserve their wealth. Luna's diligence in staying up to date with the most current and advantageous tax laws enables her to provide significant value. She consistently identifies tax credits and industry-specific matters that result in meaningful tax savings for her clients.

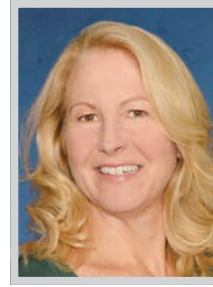
Luna works with clients in a variety of industries including manufacturing, retail, professional services and entertainment. Her specialty lies in the areas of tax planning, consulting and compliance for privately held companies (corporations, S corporations and partnerships), trusts and estates, and high-net-worth families and their entities. Through her firm's mentorship program, Luna had several mentees and advised other junior practitioners at the firm in an unofficial capacity.

**ELIZA MINASSIAN**

Partner  
CLA

**E**liza Minassian provides accounting, tax consulting, tax planning and compliance services. Types of clients include high net worth individuals, closely-held companies, multi-generational family businesses, professional services firms, real estate entities, private foundations, and nonprofit organizations. She consults with clients from the initial start-up phase, though day-to-day operations, and ultimately with potential business succession planning. Minassian is an active mentor for her millennial staff and works closely to find new ways to grow the skills of her team of associates and managers. This contributes to CLA's success as a professional service and career building firm.

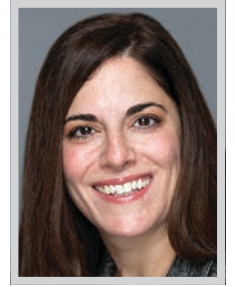
Minassian makes an effort to know and understand her clients and colleagues, and makes an effort to create opportunities for both. She is known for having a very extroverted and warm personality and a great ability to make clients feel welcome, cared for and trusted. She is also extensively involved in various philanthropic measures.

**PATRICIA J. O'CONNELL**

Partner and Chief Operations Officer  
Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt LLP

**A**s COO of Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt LLP, Patricia O'Connell leads many of the firm's strategic and operational initiatives, including those that are transformational to the organization. In leading these projects, she welcomes ideas and solutions from team members regardless of tenure. She is a collaborative, pragmatic, and approachable leader. She is employee #10, and for over 30 years, she has helped define the firm's culture, respond to the changes and challenges of public accounting, and has been a role model for the women of the firm.

As a member of the firm's executive committee, O'Connell is helping to shape the future of HCVT, addressing technology, virtual/remote work arrangements, privacy, security, attracting, developing, and retaining the right people, continuing to provide value to clients and providing a work environment where all can thrive.

**KELLY O'NEIL**

Lead Managing Director and Shareholder  
CBIZ & MHM

**K**elly O'Neil, CPA, IFRS, is a lead managing director at CBIZ MHM, LLC a national accounting and financial services provider, and a shareholder at Mayer Hoffman McCann P.C. (MHM). With more than 20 years of experience, her expertise is providing audit and consulting services to both companies in a variety of industries. She specializes in revenue recognition, purchase accounting, accounting for stock-based compensation, equity and debt instruments, and derivatives accounting.

O'Neil is an executive board member of CBIZ Women's Advantage where she directs the development of our female professionals through focused leadership, mentoring, and networking. She has worked with leadership to launch CBIZ's Flexible Work Arrangements program which successfully launched the CBIZ Parent Program. The CBIZ Parent Program provides additional support and assistance to parents as they navigate preparing for a new child as well as manage challenges that may occur while coming back to work.

# Leading and Making a Difference.

Congratulations to Patty O'Connell, HCVT's Chief Operations Officer, and to all of the women named as one of the *Los Angeles Business Journal's* 2021 Most Influential Women in Accounting. Your accomplishments are inspiring. Thank you for your leadership, dedication, and commitment to the public accounting profession.

From your colleagues at



[www.HCVT.com](http://www.HCVT.com)



**WENDY ON**

Partner  
Fineman West

**W**endy On, partner at Fineman West, has nearly two decades of experience providing business and tax planning services to clients in the consumer products, real estate, manufacturing, biotech, technology and entertainment sectors. She has deep experience advising clients on business formation and growth strategies; tax structuring and planning; business succession planning; financial planning; obtaining financing; strategic planning; and M&A structuring and due diligence. Fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese, On also leads Fineman West's Chinese practice group.

In the last year, On has done significant work to expand Fineman West's bookkeeping service. Seeing the value that this service could provide to businesses, she recruited numerous new and existing clients to trust Fineman West with their bookkeeping needs. She has helped these clients clean up their books, create better reporting systems, and save 20 to 30 percent on taxes.

**PARNIA PANDKHOU**

Director, Consulting  
Armanino LLP

**P**arnia Pandkhou is a director in Armanino LLP's Outsourcing practice. A former CFO and controller, Pandkhou has over 15 years of public and private accounting experience. She serves clients in a wide range of industries, including retail, entertainment, bioplastics, technology and real estate. Taking a comprehensive approach, inclusive of operational aspects, she provides expertise in financial planning and analysis driven by KPIs.

Pandkhou is an industry leader for Armanino in the outsourced accounting world in both the cannabis and real estate industries. She is a significant, respected leader within the firm who has made numerous contributions to the firm through hard work, taking on responsibility and leading with professionalism and unmatched positivity. Over the past year, Pandkhou has helped launch cannabis and real estate industry practices within the Consulting group. Her leadership in the real estate and cannabis industries has resulted in significant growth of those practices within Armanino.

**KAREN REFFNER**

Partner  
RSM US LLP

**K**aren Reffner is a partner who has over 25 years of public accounting experience and leads the construction real estate practice for the West Region of RSM US LLP. She works primarily with clients that are closely held, including clients owned by private equity groups. Reffner oversees one of the firm's larger real estate engagements and is responsible for all services delivered to this client. She works with real estate fund sponsors, portfolio companies, management companies and developers delivering assurance and consulting services. Her clients report on fair value basis, GAAP historical cost and the income tax basis and are involved in all sectors of real estate. Her focus is to provide value-added business advice, and quality audit, accounting and consulting services.

Reffner is deeply involved in advancing the real estate industry by serving on the accounting committee for the National Council of Real Estate and Investment Fiduciaries.

**LORI ROTH**

Co-Managing Partner  
Prager Metis

**L**ori A. Roth is the co-managing partner of Prager Metis, a member of Prager Metis International Group. Additionally, she is a partner in the Audit and Accounting, and Advisory Services departments of the firm. She has been in the accounting industry since 1984. Roth specializes in audit and assurance services, litigation support, and business valuations. She works with clients in a variety of industries including, closely-held businesses, real estate, and the U.S. subsidiaries of foreign banks and corporations.

Roth has strong international expertise that also includes working as a neutral accountant (either court-appointed or hired as a joint expert by either parties or their attorneys). She works as a business valuator and also as an impartial financial consultant when issues pertain to support and equitable distribution. She has been involved in matrimonial cases, as a certified divorce mediator, as well as shareholder disputes, corporate dissolutions, estate situations, and business acquisitions.

The power of you.  
Empowered by us.

We are proud to support the powerful contributions made by Leigh Wilson Gasparovic and JoAnne Gratiot, and congratulate all the Women of Influence in Accounting.

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## LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING

**AMANDA SCHLANK**

Partner  
SingerLewak

**A**manda Schlank is a dynamic leader within SingerLewak. She has consistently delivered results to clients that are above and beyond the scope of her work. Schlank prides herself in always finding solutions and advising clients on areas of growth, technical issues and compliance. She takes a wide lens approach to her clients' business issues and pinpoints areas where efficiencies and best practices can be implemented, which translates to superior client satisfaction.

Schlank started her career at SingerLewak as a member of the staff, and in her close to 15-year career has worked her way up the ranks to partner at the firm by demonstrating sound leadership skills, technical abilities and staff development. She is heavily involved with various firm initiatives related to sales and marketing, business development and recruiting efforts.

**HELENA SONG**

Senior Manager  
BPM LLP

**W**ith more than 16 years of public accounting experience, Helena Song is a senior manager in BPM's Assurance practice. She works with both SEC-registered and privately held entities across numerous industry sectors and assists her clients with their accounting issues, valuing the relationships built and the experiences gained along the way.

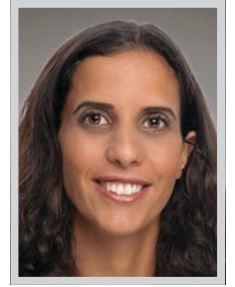
Song has extensive experience leading financial statements audits, due diligence investigations, and special reports. With a specialty in real estate accounting, she handles large audit engagements for real estate investment funds, residential and commercial real estate builders, and operators. She also serves clients in other industry sectors such as private equity, technology, manufacturing and distribution. Song is also a sought-after mentor among younger professionals who view her as a resource for honest and thoughtful career advice. Her strong communication skills benefit her colleagues just as well as her clients.

**NICOLE STAN**

Director  
CohnReznick

**N**icole Stan has become a leading voice of CohnReznick's Los Angeles office, particularly when it comes to challenges that women face in the workplace. She has taken a leadership role in various firm committees, including the Executive Women's Forum, which focuses on networking events to help uplift other women at CohnReznick.

Stan is passionate about advancing women in the accounting profession at CohnReznick and in the broader community. As a co-leader the firm's Executive Women's Forum platform in the Los Angeles metro area, she was solely responsible for the "charity spotlight" portion of the panel. Stan is also involved in the firm's Southern California WomenCAN program, a collaborative advocacy network for women, that provides mentorship, roundtable discussions, and other professional growth opportunities that empower women to achieve leadership positions in business.

**SHLOMIT TAYARI-ABITBUL**

Senior Manager  
CohnReznick

**A**fter completing her mandatory army service with the IDF in Israel, Shlomit Tayari-Abitbul moved to the US and attended CSUN as a foreign student and earned her BS degree in accounting. After graduating from CSUN, she started her career with CohnReznick. She started right before the economic downturn of the late 2000s, while also becoming a mother for the first time. Despite the economic adversity and the required time commitment of becoming a mother, she was able to complete her CPA exams.

Tayari-Abitbul has always had a passion for providing the best service to her client. She is timely in her response to questions from her clients and provides excellent guidance on complex transactions. Her passion for excellence, a key CohnReznick value, is why she has continued to further her career and become the go-to person for CohnReznick's manufacturing and distribution industries in the Los Angeles offices.

# This is your summit.

Congratulations to Cathy Hyodo on being named a 2021 Leader of Influence: Women in Accounting.



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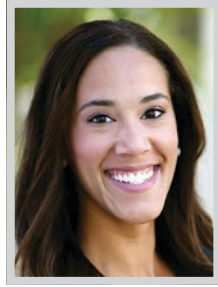
LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING



**NATALIE TRONKINA**  
Partner  
CohnReznick

Leveraging valuable wisdom and experience from her time with several firms, Natalie Tronkina has spent the last seven years working for CohnReznick and is a partner and member of the firm's Transactional Advisory Services practice, in Los Angeles. In her role, Tronkina works closely with PE firms helping them evaluate and navigate portfolio company acquisitions.

Tronkina has experience assisting client with engagements of various sizes and in multiple industries. Regardless of size or industry, she uncovers and identifies key matters for consideration and helps her clients negotiate accordingly. Tronkina has long-term relationships with private equity firms, investment bankers and business owners, who go back to her time and again with new due diligence projects. She has also been an advisor on more than 20 M&A transactions during the past year, including providing financial and accounting due diligence for Monogram Capital and its investment in Vive Organic.



**TARA WILSON**  
Tax Director  
BPM LLP

With more than 12 years of public accounting and taxation experience, BPM's Tara Wilson provides services including tax compliance, strategic tax planning, financial statement preparation and analysis, and client representation to the IRS and State departments. With expertise in partnership taxation and real estate investments, she works with clients in the non-profit, real estate, restaurant, professional services, retail, and manufacturing industries.

Wilson's hard work and dedication have fast tracked her elevation from a senior associate to tax principal in just seven short years with Gumbiner Savett Inc. A leader in the firm's Tax Department, she successfully implemented Gumbiner's new staff training program, managed departmental best practices and procedures, and served as a mentor to several staff within the tax practice. When Gumbiner joined its practice with BPM, Wilson was named a tax director, bringing along her clients and her leadership skills to her new firm.



**DONELLA WILSON**  
Partner and Nonprofit Practice Leader  
GHJ

Donella Wilson is a distinguished leader in her field and the Los Angeles community. Through her work, leadership at GHJ Foundation and service in the community, Wilson is on a mission to make Los Angeles a better place.

Wilson leads GHJ's Nonprofit Practice and is president and chief philanthropy officer of GHJ Foundation. She is also a leader of GHJ's Women's Empowerment Initiative. A sought-after industry leader, Wilson was also committed to ending homelessness for women. She served on the Board of Directors of the Downtown Women's Center for 13 years. She is a member of Southern California Grantmakers Audit Committee and Southern California Grantmakers Corporate Leadership Council. She was integral in the creation of GHJ Foundation, the firm's vehicle for purposeful and proactive giving to the community. In short, she is a dedicated member of the Los Angeles nonprofit community through her work, board membership and volunteerism.



**ANITA WU**  
Profit Participation Services Managing Director  
GHJ

Anita Wu is a pillar of strength and a respected leader both in and outside of GHJ. She has more than 20 years of auditing experience and is a leader in GHJ's Profit Participations Practice. An experienced accountant in the entertainment industry, Wu is a regular speaker and writer and was a co-author for GHJ's entertainment and media whitepapers. Additionally, Wu enjoys working with innovators and pioneers in the entertainment industry and collaborating with clients as a means towards getting the best results.

Wu is also a leader of GHJ's Women's Empowerment Initiative and a mentor and role model for younger members of the firm. She collaborates with other Los Angeles business women in top roles in their field to discuss the path to leadership and connects them to up-and-coming female leaders. She also routinely mentors employees to foster growth in leadership and accounting skills.

# Weinberg & Company Congratulates Arlene Amboy!



**ARLENE AMBOY**  
Audit Partner  
Weinberg & Company, P.A.

Arlene's technical excellence and professionalism is well known by her colleagues and clients. But it's a lot more than numbers, journals, and balance sheets for her.

She enjoys the challenge of working with public companies in a wide range of industries, where she can utilize her technical expertise to help solve complex accounting and SEC reporting issues for micro and small-cap clients.

**Congratulations Arlene for being recognized by the Los Angeles Business Journal as a 2021 Leader of Influence!**

**To learn more please visit [www.weinbergla.com](http://www.weinbergla.com) or call us at (310) 601-2200**



## LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING

# Work-Life Balance is Associated with High-Quality Audits

A recent study published by the American Accounting Association finds auditors don't place a premium on work-life balance, but the quality of their audits suffers if that balance is absent.

"The conventional wisdom is that job satisfaction and work-life balance are tied to the quality of our work, but nobody had actually tested this for auditors," said Jagan Krishnan, co-author of the study and a professor of accounting at Temple University.

"We wanted to answer several related questions," said Joshua Khavis, co-author of the study and an assistant professor of accounting at the University at Buffalo. "What do accounting employees think about their employers? Does job satisfaction relate to the quality of the firm's audits? What about work-life balance? The answers were surprising."

To begin addressing these questions, the researchers retrieved data from the jobs website GlassDoor.com, which features company reviews by employees. The researchers ultimately examined 19,673 employee reviews of 137 accounting firms. The reviews offered data on employee satisfaction across many different aspects of the workplace, including compensation, career opportunities, and work-life balance.

The researchers used that data to compute employee rating scores for each accounting firm for each year. They then matched each firm with its clients for the relevant year and looked



at each client's outcomes. This allowed the researchers to establish the quality of each firm's audits in the given year.

The researchers used computational models to account for extraneous variables, and ultimately found that "career opportunities," "senior management," and "culture and values" were the workplace aspects most closely associated with employee satisfaction. Surprisingly, "compensation and benefits" and "work-life balance" were least associated with satisfaction.

However, the researchers also found that job satisfaction was not associated with audit quality. "Instead, we found that work-life balance

was associated with high quality audits," Khavis said.

"Our interpretation is that many of the people reviewing employers online were young folks coming right out of college, and they attach more importance to career opportunities and so on, compared to work-life balance," Krishnan said. "But being overworked affects overall audit quality. Most people understand that when you are overworked, you are more likely to make mistakes. Job satisfaction can't make up for that.

"For accounting firms," Krishnan added, "it drives home that recruiting and retaining good personnel isn't enough. Work-life balance is

*'The conventional wisdom is that job satisfaction and work-life balance are tied to the quality of our work, but nobody had actually tested this for auditors.'*

important to ensure auditors do their jobs well, certifying the quality of financial statements people rely on."

The paper, "Employee Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance in Accounting Firms and Audit Quality," is published in *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*.

The American Accounting Association is the largest community of accountants in academia. Founded in 1916, it has a rich and reputable history built on leading-edge research and publications. The diversity of its membership creates a fertile environment for collaboration and innovation. Collectively, the American Accounting Association shapes the future of accounting through teaching, research and a powerful network, ensuring its position as thought leaders in accounting.

*Learn more at [aaahq.org](http://aaahq.org).*



**Success has a way of finding collaborators.**

**Congratulations Eliza Minassian, named among the Los Angeles Business Journal's Leaders of Influence: Women in Accounting.**

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# Mentorship Program Launches to Elevate Women in Fintech Industry

**Fi911's LIFT: Elevating Women in Fintech offers accessible, free mentoring from influential leaders in the industry**

Fi911, the sister company of Chargebacks911, has launched a new micro-mentorship program to empower female leadership across the thriving fintech and payments arena. LIFT: Elevating Women in Fintech aims to champion and enable more women to seize opportunities across the sector.

The completely free program facilitates one-on-one, on-demand meetings with industry leaders and entrepreneurs, including Andrea Dunlop, managing director of the Payment Division, The Access Group, Marion King, Director of Payments, NatWest and Sondra Fienberg, Global Workload Lead-Fraud, Microsoft, allowing mentees to discuss challenges and pressure points.

Leading the program, Fi911 co-founder and COO Monica Eaton-Cardone said, "While there are many factors in achieving greater inclusion for women in fintech, it's imperative that women at the top hold the door open for others to follow. Mentorship for aspiring leaders can improve their confidence, help them build a strong network and encourage self-advocacy, all

of which are key tools for advancement."

Eaton-Cardone continued, "We often hear about the benefits of mentorship, but many find it unattainable. Especially in an industry where there is such gender disparity – women currently only make up 7% of fintech startup founders – it can be difficult to find female mentors. On the other hand, influential women are often stretched to take on as many mentorships as they would like. That's why we chose this format for LIFT."

Women seeking mentors are asked to identify the challenge they are facing – such as navigating a difficult conversation or transitioning into a new role – and can choose a preferred mentor to speak to. After submitting a request, a virtual meeting is arranged, and mentors use the discussion to understand their unique situation and ensure they walk away with specific, actionable advice.

Applications are now open for leaders interested in joining the program as a mentor. The founding mentors represent a group of women in various positions of influence across finance and technology industries, and include:

- Andrea Dunlop, managing director of the Payment Division, The Access Group
- Angela Yore, co-founder & managing director, SkyParlour
- Becky Clements, director of payments, UK Finance
- Denise Gee, co-founder & MD, findexable

- Marion King, director of payments, NatWest

- Monica Eaton-Cardone, co-founder & COO, Chargebacks911 & Fi911

- Sondra Fienberg, global workload lead-fraud, Microsoft

- Tracy Cray, head of card scheme compliance, Chargebacks911 & Fi911

Between finding the appropriate mentor-mentee fit, to maintaining the relationship over time, traditional mentoring is a significant commitment on both sides. Micro-mentoring allows for greater flexibility and a broader reach by pairing mentees with the right professionals to coach them through specific pressure points as they arise.

In addition, Fi911 and sister company Chargebacks911 recently announced a partnership with findexable to build the Fintech Diversity Radar, the world's first global platform that measures the role women play in fintech,



creating transparency and encouraging progress within the industry. Eaton-Cardone currently serves on the initiative's advisory board alongside top fintech and diversity experts.

For more information about LIFT: Elevating Women in Fintech, visit [Fi911.com](http://Fi911.com).



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## LOI: WOMEN IN ACCOUNTING

# IMA Establishes Sustainable Business Management Global Task Force

Team will speak about sustainability for the global management accounting profession

Last month IMA (Institute of Management Accountants) announced the establishment of a Sustainable Business Management Global Task Force (IMA.SBM.GTF) to speak on behalf of the management accounting profession, accountants, and finance professionals in business.

This comes as governments, regulators, and standard-setters debate the future of accounting and a range of new corporate reporting requirements ahead of the November 2021 UN Conference of Parties 26 in Glasgow, with major announcements expected from several authoritative bodies.

“Just about all of the emphasis today with respect to sustainable business is on external ESG reporting,” said Brigitte de Graaff, CMA, CSCA, Chair of the IMA.SBM.GTF. “While this is important, it is not the whole story. We want to lead by emphasizing the role of management accounting and finance in facilitating the building of resilient, sustainable businesses. We aim to be the voice of the profession to make sure management’s perspective in these significant changes to accounting are not overlooked but prominent.”



As one of its primary objectives, the Task Force is defining a set of fundamental principles for building a successful and sustainable accounting ecosystem.

In fully supporting the formation of the task force, Jeff Thomson, IMA President and CEO, said, “As the world continues to change, so too must business change to focus more holistically on sustainable business management for long term value creation. IMA is making the case that sustainable business is good business in a complex, uncertain, and multi-stakeholder environment. We’ve shown the world accountancy

for the 21st century -- how the CMA certification is different because the body of knowledge emphasizes strategic thinking, analytics, decision making, and business leadership across an organization for both tangible and intangible value creation.”

The Task Force will look to:

- Advocate on behalf of the profession before governments, regulatory authorities, and other organizations on sustainable business management and the perspectives of accountants and financial professionals in business.
- Educate IMA members and the global

business community on the role of accounting and finance professionals with respect to sustainable business information and management.

“IMA is uniquely positioned to address the critical role of the profession in building sustainable businesses,” said Shari Littan, IMA director of corporate reporting research and policy. “As this area continues to evolve, we will develop thought leadership and education to support our professionals, who will be assuming important responsibilities for meeting these evolving demands. We aim to support this in a way that builds value for all stakeholders, promotes trust, and facilitates meaningful action.”

IMA is one of the largest and most respected associations focused exclusively on advancing the management accounting profession. Globally, IMA supports the profession through research, the CMA (Certified Management Accountant) and CSCA (Certified in Strategy and Competitive Analysis) programs, continuing education, networking, and advocacy of the highest ethical business practices.

IMA has a global network of about 140,000 members in 150 countries and 350 professional and student chapters. Headquartered in Montvale, N.J., IMA provides localized services through its four global regions: The Americas, Asia/Pacific, Europe and Middle East/India.

For more information about IMA, visit [imanet.org](http://imanet.org).

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