



2021 Women in Professional Services: Wendy Valentino, Prager Metis

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Name: Wendy Valentino, CPA/CFF, CFE

Title: Partner

Company Name: Prager Metis

What steps have you taken to ensure the continued success of your firm?

My number one goal is to ensure that my team is fully trained and kept up-to-date on new pronouncements, reporting requirements, and tax planning strategies. Staff development and training is a cornerstone of our client service model; whether a client is speaking to a senior or manager of the engagement or on the phone with me, they can feel confident that everyone is deeply involved in their particular situation and can provide sound advice and guidance. This translates to success not only for our clients, but for the firm as well.

Why should women consider a career in commercial real estate and related services?

There are so many reasons women should consider real estate! It's no secret that there is a glass ceiling in this industry that's cracking but hasn't been completely shattered yet, and I think there are so many opportunities for women to get involved. I'm proud of the fact that the majority of my team here at the firm is comprised of women, and it's actually part of the reason I became a partner in the first place. I want other women in the industry to see that there is a path forward, and that's just in accounting. There are so many opportunities in property management, insurance, legal services, and other related fields.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

It's all about communication. We recently hired someone straight out of school – her first day on a very large engagement, I brought her into the full team meeting to make sure she was fully up-to-speed on the client. This level of teamwork minimizes conflicts and allows us to tackle obstacles together. Every member of the engagement team is approachable, there are no silly questions, and we brainstorm and problem solve as a group. It's been extremely motivating for the team knowing that their opinion, thoughts, and voice matter.

Women have made significant progress in the last year towards equality in the workplace. How do you advocate for your fellow women in real estate?

I've really focused on networking with intelligent, savvy, immensely talented women. I've also

committed to making meaningful introductions and forging connections between these women, creating an extremely cohesive and strong network of professionals from a number of real estate and related services. I'm working to expand this network and continue to add more and more powerhouse women to the mix.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

There have been a number of new, complicated tax issues over the last year that I have had to dive into and thoroughly understand. Many of my clients are taking new tax elections this year which means new reporting requirements and nuanced planning strategies that require a deep understanding of the tax law. I have large client with multiple owners and 1031 issues that I'm proud to have advised on, including numerous ownership changes—both individuals joining and departing—that has been really interesting to work on. So, I'm most proud of the amount of new expertise I've cultivated this year.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months?

Well I think a lot of people have the same adaption story, but I've been completely virtual for the last 12 months. Our firm flipped a switch and went totally remote in a matter of days, which is quite the feat. I've adapted how I communicate with my team and rely on Zoom and Microsoft Teams instead of phone calls and physically sitting together. I've also used these tools to continue to grow my network. In fact, I think I've been able to network with and meet a number of people that I would not have been able to meet otherwise.

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