

STAR ACCOUNTANTS

As a tax partner, Elaina Kogan, 42, specializes in helping high net-worth clients manage and reduce their tax liability. She also works in the areas of tax compliance and planning. At Singer Burke, Kogan leads the tax team and likes to work closely with clients to solve taxation issues.

ELAINA KOGAN

TITLE: Tax Partner

FIRM: Singer Burke Zimmer & Butler, Encino

SPECIALTY: Helping high net-worth individuals with tax issues

HOBBIES: Travel, theater, dining

Question: Why accounting?

Answer: From a young age, I knew three things about myself: I excelled in math, I was going to work in an area where I could problem-solve, and I had a passion for business and entrepreneurship. As I advanced in my career, I concluded that my commitment to resolving problems using practical means and applications were going to be my strongest assets in any working environment. Accounting proved to be a natural fit.

Your role in the firm?

I am a tax partner. My servant-leader approach affords me the ability to work with creative and productive colleagues in a collegial environment. As a partner, I lead managers and staff to collectively plan, execute, direct and complete tax engagements for our clients utilizing a team approach.

What defines “star accountants”?

The term “star accountant” is associated with

a person capable of multitasking, effectively communicating with a variety of constituencies, is adaptable to emerging technology, and maintains a desire to learn. My biggest “star skill” is measured by the success of my leadership within the firm and the trust established with our clients.

Time management:

Each day is aimed to provide a high standard of service to our clients and staff. As a result of this goal, the time spent at work varies greatly depending on the need. Of course, there are established tasks like reviewing tax returns and tax planning that each of us engages in daily. However, today’s accountant is much more interpersonal and engaged in multiple aspects of the company.

Best part of your job?

Every day I get to work on a question or a situation that’s unique and different. My job provides the opportunity to learn new skills and expand my expertise. I also enjoy utilizing my role in leadership to develop our newer staff who are just beginning in the profession through guidance, support and training.

Biggest misconception about accounting?

Many have a perception accountants are nerdy and boring. Nothing could be further from the truth. Singer Burke is a diverse firm with people of many backgrounds who produce plays, build sandcastles and play softball. We are fun, athletic, creative and knowledgeable.

Your personality at work:

I am very organized, congenial and always set new goals. My personal characteristics translate well into my work environment, effectively meeting deadlines and addressing urgent client needs. I enjoy getting to know our clients in a



Kogan: Utilizes team approach to taxes.

way that works for us both so that my firm can customize a plan right for them.

New generation of accountants:

Technology and the internet allowed my generation of accountants to receive information from clients in minutes, streamline processes and increase efficiency. Our research and tax preparation software give us invaluable tools that allow us to analyze data and take advantage of tax planning opportunities rapidly. The result is a more accurate and efficient tax solution for our clients.

Memorable experience?

During a company’s “all hands meeting,” our managing partner told a story about a stonemason while drumming on an African drum. It was remarkable because it was untraditional; however it was funny, memorable, reinforced our core values and defined the tone of our company culture – to provide a holistic view of the services

we provide.

How should the profession change?

I would like to see the role of technology continue to expand in the accounting profession. At Singer Burke, we do our best to utilize modern systems and software to bolster our ability to take on workflow and provide comprehensive analysis to clients.

Favorite out-of-the-office activities?

I travel, attend the theater and enjoy experiencing new ethnically authentic cuisines and restaurants.

Career advice:

A career in accounting is challenging, rewarding and engaging. I would encourage those considering a career in accounting to take any opportunity to learn and speak with those in the field, seek out internships or start taking classes to see if this is an industry that speaks to their natural skill set.

Biggest mistake by clients?

Some clients delay or refrain from making difficult decisions about taxes and finances. I would advise such clients to bring the matter to our firm’s attention as soon as possible so we may provide timely advice on important matters.

Life during tax season:

Hectic, but collaborative! Everyone is working long hours so there is a great sense of camaraderie. I make sure to take additional time to support my staff and ensure we provide accurate and timely solutions to clients.

Accounting mentor?

I credit my introduction to the tax profession to USC Professor Shiing-Wu Wang.

– Stephanie Henkel