How to Have a Successful Tax Practice
(or how to work as a team!)

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For those of you that don’t know me…..

- Kristine (Tina) Caratan, MNA, CPA, CGMA
- 37+ years in public practice - 41+ years total experience. Currently consulting to the NFP industry
  - Previously – Partner Moss Adams LLP - PIC Northern CA NFP Practice
- Nationally recognized speaker on NFP accounting, audit, management, women’s initiative topics
- Licensed in CA (active), CO, NY (inactive)
- Bachelors (Accounting) – Santa Clara University
- Masters (Nonprofit Administration) – USF
- Teach NFP/Gov and Accounting Ethics and Fraud
Agenda

- Role of Site Coordinator
  - i.e., “managing partner”
- Role of Site Managers
  - i.e., “partners”
- Role of Site Supervisors
  - i.e., “managers/seniors”
- Role of Site Volunteers
  - i.e., “Staff”

Similarities to a CPA Firm

- Notice anything about the Agenda?
- If you think that working for VITA is any different than working for a CPA firm – think again!
- VITA has
  - Clients
  - Deadlines
  - Structure
Similarities to a CPA Firm

- Team work essential
- Clients expect professionalism
- It is your duty to provide professionalism, no matter your position in the “firm”

**THIS IS NO DIFFERENT THAN A CPA FIRM**
- Think of this 12 weeks as a precursor to your future!

Role of the Site Coordinator

- Like an office managing partner, Gabriel is responsible for the overall site effectiveness
- He is responsible to:
  - IRS
  - United Way of the Bay Area
  - Professor Hetherington
  - And to a lesser extent – ME!
- He has attended various site coordinator training sessions
7 Role of the Site Coordinator
- Responsible to:
  - Schedule the volunteers
  - Counsel/mentor the volunteers
- He is NOT responsible:
  - To be the only one doing all the work
  - The site is a village and cannot or should be dependent on one person
  - An office managing partner is only as good as the people in the office – likewise for Gabriel

8 Role of the Site Managers
- Opening and closing the site each day we are open
- Fill in for site coordinator in his absence
- Manage the supervisors
- Are not preparers – but rather reviewers
- Will prepare international returns
- Complete back up and transmit returns
Hours involved for the Site Coordinator and Site Managers

- They are all responsible to put in 180 to 200 hours during the 14 to 15 week period (~January 17 through ~April 22)
- This equates to about 14 hours/week
- In return, they are enrolled in ACCT 699 and will receive 3 units
- Professor Hetherington is the faculty assigned to the course

Role of the Site Supervisors

- Supervise the volunteers during shift
- Monitor intake
- Address client and volunteer questions/concerns
- Perform a detail check of the returns
- Contact clients if error found in return and personally meet with client upon re-visit to site
Role of the Volunteers

- Interview clients while preparing returns – this is NOT a copy job
- Complete first level review of other volunteers’ returns
- Volunteers only prepare and check
- No other duties assigned

But why is the VITA site similar to a CPA firm or any professional job you will have?

- Would you not show up to work at any professional job?
- If not, why not?
- Why would not getting a paycheck make a difference to your responsibility to show up to work when scheduled?
Why is all of this important?

- Team work is an essential element to success
- There are over 100 in attendance, with ~180 signed up to be volunteers
  - How can you be a team with people you do not know?
  - We are asking you to be a team with strangers!

How to create a team?

- Team creation cannot be the sole responsibility of the site coordinator and site managers, but........it is their responsibility to -
  - Open the lines of communication
  - Create proper dialogue with the team
  - Engage them by understanding their issues
  - Develop trust and cooperation
How to create a team?

- Supervisors and volunteers are responsible to-
  - Understanding their role is critical to the success of the VITA site
- Just like in a CPA firm, the staff/seniors/managers work is significant to the operations - the leverage factor applies
- You are the client facing members of the VITA team

But why does it really matter?

- Research proves team work has the following effect
  - Increased productivity
  - Improved job satisfaction
  - “Employee” buy-in
  - Reduction in misunderstandings
Increased Productivity (your 10 year stats)

- Increased time by Volunteer over 10 years
- Increased number of returns per volunteer over 10 years
- Increased hours spent on each return over 10 years

What do the stats say?
- Our training is getting better
- Our teamwork is getting better
- Our intake is getting better
- Our students are getting better
Our Results

Refunds Received by Our Clients

- In Federal refund filed for taxpayers
  - 2005: 419,982
  - 2006: 602,587
  - 2007: 634,169
  - 2008: 934,345
  - 2009: 1,089,048
  - 2010: 1,115,572
  - 2011: 824,730
  - 2012: 1,137,096
  - 2013: 917,783
  - 2014: 1,175,813
  - Average over 10 years: 1,007,231.75

- In Earned Income Credit
  - 2005: 120,939
  - 2006: 221,406
  - 2007: 197,968
  - 2008: 286,208
  - 2009: 317,966
  - 2010: 280,788
  - 2011: 286,808
  - 2012: 362,340
  - 2013: 269,454
  - 2014: 301,384
  - Average over 10 years: 286,326.10

What do the refunds mean to our community?

- Our program is part of the overall EITC program
- VITA lifts millions out of poverty
- Taxpayers tend to spend their refunds quickly and locally
- Estimated that for $1 in EITC refund equals $2 in spending
- So our students contributed over $600k to the local community
Improved Job Satisfaction

- Think about the jobs you have so far in your lives
- What was most pleasing about the job?
- What was most annoying/displeasing about the job?
- What was your boss like?
- What were your co-workers like?

How to make VITA a satisfactory experience

- Adhere to your work schedule
  - Consider this a job
- Remember the impact you have on your local community
- Help out others when you can
“Employee” buy in
- You are here this week to learn to perform a valuable service
- Understand your responsibilities
- Recognize that you all have a significant role in the process
- Create the team in your own little way – who knows you might meet your new best friend through the program!

Reduce Misunderstandings
- Misunderstandings occur when you do not vocalize your concerns
- People are NOT mind readers
  - Especially your student peers
  - And trust me CPAs are not either
But be fair!

- Remember it is not easy being “in-charge”
- Your managers will make mistakes
- They might not react 100% properly
  - Guess what - they are human (and young!)
- Be mindful how you express your concerns
- All of the above applies the other way as well
  - Guess what - they are human (and young!!)

The difference between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boss</th>
<th>Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demands</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies on authority</td>
<td>Relies on goodwill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues ultimatums</td>
<td>Generates enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says “I”</td>
<td>Says “We”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses people</td>
<td>Develops people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes credit</td>
<td>Gives credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Places the blame</td>
<td>Accepts blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says “Go”</td>
<td>Says “Let’s go”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My way is the only way</td>
<td>Strength in unity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Are you a boss or a leader, potentially? The next 12 weeks will prove something about your character!

Summary
- This is a dry-run for your “real” job
- The work you are doing is VERY important
- Team work is essential
- Being a professional is critical
- And maybe you might meet your new best friend!
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Working as a team to help the local community!