

Spotlight on Emerging Professionals

RISING

stars



Natalie Quan



Nikolya Serdyuk



Parisa Nesva Derani



Eric Vander Veen

Young and emerging professionals are making a name for themselves in CalCPA. Recently, Nikolya Serdyuk, CPA/ABV was awarded the first Fresno Chapter YEP of the Year Award for Excellence; the annual statewide YEP Conference presented in conjunction with the Education Foundation grows in popularity every year; and our YEP professional networking website, <http://calcpayeps.ning.com>, continues to attract members. Spotlighted here are a few standouts.

Nikolya Serdyuk

Firm: Baker, Peterson & Franklin, CPA, LLP

Position: Senior Accountant

Are you a CPA: Yes. Since childhood, but California recognized that only April 14, 2007.

What's the most important thing you've learned so far in your career?

When I meet a person for the first time and they ask me what I do, my response is simple: "I am a CPA." Instantly the person grants me a high level of trust, free of charge. However, I learned that to maintain and solidify that trust is hard work. The CPA community talks a lot about "quality work." It's hard to learn about this term from books, so you have to see it to understand. Through my walk and work with my peer accountants I learned the meaning of "quality work." I am blessed to have people who set the level high and lead by example.

What surprises have you encountered on your career path?

Through school, I heard that accounting is a profession that sits inside of a box and looks at the world through thick glasses. From the start of my career, every engagement has shattered this stereotype. I was fortunate to become a member of a great team at Baker, Peterson & Franklin and have turned work into a fun process and an interesting quest. Together we have to innovate, think through and create to get the

work done. So I am surprised every time someone shares about their experience about accounting and calls it boring.

How has CalCPA helped you along your career path?

Some fish need a pond to learn how to swim and grow up in before launching into deep waters. CalCPA is that pond for me. I enjoy participating in the CalCPA networking events, which provide access to other professionals with many years of valuable experience.

What do you bring that is unique to your job?

Ukrainian sense of humor.

What is essential to you in a job and employer? What do you think other emerging professionals look for in jobs?

I have desires, dreams and goals like all those who were impacted by youth. If you want to hire me, I want to make sure you take all those into account and the job description spells out every one of them. Employers want to have a great employee, so why use me for something I was not made for? It's great to work for people who understand that. My employer ingrained this into a mission statement: "As a team, we seek to always bring out the best in our colleagues."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I enjoy the fact that CPAs serve other people in various ways. I hope after walking 10 years on my career path I will find myself serving others.

What's your favorite quote?

"Thinking is hard work. Maybe that's why so few people do it." CPAs are constantly engaging in a mental activity. Occasionally, I find myself slipping into a dull data processing routine and not engaging my mind to analyze the client and data I work on. So this quote reminds me that the client is paying me for my human mind, not another computer.

Who inspires you?

Jesus is my model. In my work I meet and interact with a lot of people: co-workers, clients and other professionals. Some people I will see only once. Each of those individuals is something more than just a controller, attorney, accounts receivable clerk, farmer or a CPA. However, the fast pace we are all in so often stops us from learning about the person. Thus, relationships become formal, rather than personal. Jesus was always surrounded by a crowd, but he always saw individuals in the crowd. He looked at the individual and cared about what was in one's heart and mind. This inspires me because it is hard to do.

If you were CEO/partner of your own business, what would be your top priority?

People. After a few years of audits, I am confident that when you have a happy employee, you have a successful business. An old saying goes, "No cattle, no crops; a good harvest requires a strong ox for the plow." I have seen CPA firms that reached the stars through their employees, and CPA firm partners that still plow themselves because the ox refused to plow and decided to become a cosmonaut.

What career advice would you give other young CPAs?

Young professionals start our careers with passion to "achieve" and "become," but the thorns and dusty roads we encounter tear apart our enthusiasm. We see people settle for less, give up the dream and go to work for a dollar. *Do not settle!* When you encounter thorns and dust,

relax and realize it is a part of the process—we are "achieving," we are "becoming."

Parisa Nesva Derani, CPA

Firm Name: Nesva Derani & Co.

Position: Owner

Are you a CPA: Yes, since 2001.

What surprises have you encountered on your career path?

Partners are not ready to promote based on knowledge and capability—you've got to put in your dues first to gain right of passage with them. In addition, I've come to realize a CPA career is far more interesting than ever taught in college, with so many paths available leading to professional, as well as personal development.

How has CalCPA helped you along your career path?

CalCPA has helped me to connect with other like-minded CPAs through various interest groups, committees and functions. The organization also has provided opportunities, leadership, networking and peer-to-peer discussions.

What's your favorite quote?

"Never, never, never give up." —Winston Churchill.

What career advice would you give other young CPAs?

Never give up. Don't sweat the small stuff and stay focused on the big picture.

Natalie Quan

Firm Name: Berger/Lewis Accountancy Corporation

Position: Audit Manager

Are you a CPA: Yes, since Jan. 1, 2008

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How has CalCPA helped you along your career path?

CalCPA has assisted me to become a leader. I've met a number of professionals who I look up to and aspire to be, and it has taught me that there is more to being a CPA than just numbers. It's taught me pride in my profession and inspired me to try to instill that pride in the new generation.

What is essential to you in a job and employer? What do you think other emerging professionals look for in jobs?

I want a firm that is loyal to their employees: they appreciate them and have integrity and, as an employer, I'd want the same from my staff. I think more emerging professionals are looking to do something they like to do, not just because it's just a good career or steady field—they want to enjoy what they do while doing it. They also want to be appreciated and acknowledged for their work—and they should be!

Who inspires you?

Any woman in leadership. It's hard to juggle family and work and break past the glass ceiling, and any woman who does it—from a CFO or partner in a public accounting firm—I aspire to emulate.

If you were CEO/partner of your own business, what would be your top priority?

Doing what's right for my clients would be high up there. But to serve my clients the best way possible, my staff needs to be happy and want to be part of my team and vision. So I think my staff would be top priority. Without a happy, motivated staff, you cannot run your business successfully.

What career advice would you give other young CPAs?

Love what you do or find something else to do.

Eric Vander Veen

Firm Name: Croce & Company Accountancy Corporation

Position: Staff Accountant

What's the most important thing you've learned so far in your career?

Not knowing the answer is not a bad thing; however, not being able to find the answer is a whole different story.

What do you bring that is unique to your job?

I have a unique background as its roots are in agriculture. I grew up working on the farm and graduated from Cal Poly with a degree in agribusiness, with concentration in accounting.


What is essential to you in a job and employer? What do you think other emerging professionals look for in jobs?

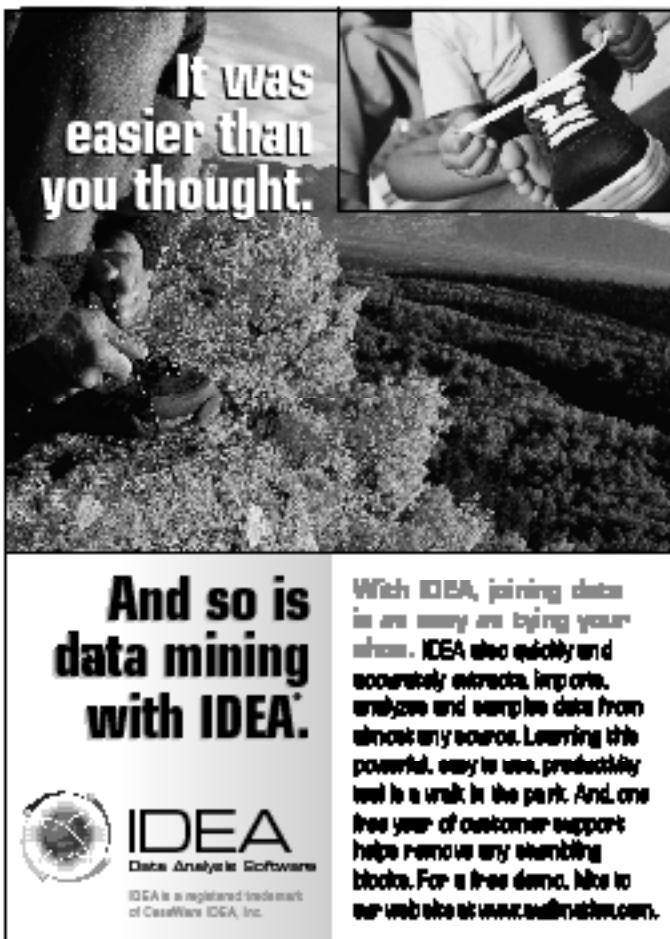
A job and employer must offer the ability for continued growth and promotion, along with the usual items (good pay and benefits, vacation time and the ability to use it). I think that emerging professionals are willing to work hard, but we want to be rewarded for our hard work and effort. Emerging professionals are looking for current rewards, rather than a promise of a reward in the future.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I hope to have continued my progression up the corporate ladder—and hopefully my wife will have agreed to let me get a new boat.

What career advice would you give other young CPAs?

Take advantage of the all educational opportunities available to you, because there will come a day when someone is looking to you for an answer. 



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