



Y-CPa BUZZ!



By Michelle Kaneshiro

featuring Tabitha Kam (Mitchell), Audit & Accounting Director at TRUSTA, A.A.C.

MK: How have you benefited by being a CPA?

TK: Being a CPA gives me financial freedom and numerous career opportunities. My parents guided me towards accounting instead of pursuing a "hobby" (in their opinion) in journalism. After over 11 years in accounting, I'm glad I listened to their advice because with an accounting degree, there are lifelong opportunities. The average starting salary for an accountant/CPA on Oahu is ~\$45,000 and based on performance and other factors can jump significantly over the years. During my years in public accounting, I have received requests to join privately owned companies, other accounting firms, and government agencies. Therefore, with the knowledge and experience gained in public accounting, there are many job opportunities. (Note: From a recruiting perspective, please do not switch employers every couple of years.)

MK: Why did you get involved with the YCPA?

TK: YCPA interested me as a fun networking opportunity. I think the YCPA organizes great events for pure socializing, as well as learning and community activities.

MK: What advice would you give to other young CPAs starting their career?

TK: Don't think about the fun times you may be missing while working long hours, but instead think about all of the opportunities you are gaining to learn and grow. This window of opportunity is the best time to map your career path - find the right firm, manager, and network to best suit your future goals and expect to work hard. I also advise new employees that it would be better to wait at least five years before starting a family. You'll need that time to concentrate on starting your career first, to then provide for your family later.

MK: How do you successfully get through busy season?

TK: COFFEE - At home we have a great coffee

maker that grinds fresh beans and brews our morning mug to drink on the way to work.

TRUSTA PEOPLE - We have great employees that are committed to getting their jobs completed and helping each other out.

FAMILY - My husband and stepmom take care of my children when I have to work late. Or if I have to bring them to work after hours, my parents and TRUSTA girls love to entertain them too!



MK: What does "work/life balance" mean for you and how do you achieve it?

TK: Balance is achieved through having the right expectations. As a CPA you can expect to work more than 45 hours during busy season, you can expect to be tired, you can also expect your home to have the "a bomb went off" décor when you have children. To minimize this, you need to have a good support system at home and you need an understanding work place that allows you flexibility to attend personal appointments during work hours.

In practice though, you are the only person who can say whether you've achieved an acceptable work/life balance, since it's subjective based on your individual perspective. The goal at the end of the day will always be to ask yourself "Am I on course to fulfilling my short-term and long-term goals?" If not, then what area(s) needs adjustment - spending more quality time with your family or spending more billable hours at work to make a bonus. It's a continuous

decision making process with yourself and those you impact to determine if you've successfully achieved that balance.

MK: What is the book on your nightstand?

TK: I've always loved reading! After having my family though, I could no longer find the personal time to vegetate and read. I was actually scared to start a book, because if it was good, I would read until 3am and still be forced to wake up at 6am, chug coffee, and help get the kids up and ready. But last year I found the perfect solution - AUDIBLE! Now, I don't need time to sit down and read. I can listen to audio books while I do chores, drive, and at bedtime I can lay in the dark and it lulls me to sleep. I just finished a great book called "The Lost Wife" by Alyson Richman. It's a love story during the Nazi invasion that makes you cry, laugh, and be amazed with the resilience of the Jewish people during the war. I also am listening to "Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child" for reasons defined in audio title.

MK: What is the best way to keep a competitive edge?

TK: Don't think you know it all, it's a fact that you don't. It's important to keep reading, researching, learning and refining those skills you are good at, as well as experience and grow in other areas necessary for your career. It's also important to continue building a professional network. All this impacts the work/life balance question, but again it all depends on what your (future) goals are.

MK: What is one rule you live by?

TK: Never say "Never", because you never know. I never thought I'd be working with my parents and seeing them more than I ever did growing up. I never thought I would marry a guy that's only 5'6". My exception to the "Never rule" is I'll never allow a pet slug in the house - Never Ever! No matter how much my son asks because he thinks they are interesting.