

Chapter Presidents Discuss Business, Industry and Education Careers

By Rhonda Ledbetter | TSCPA Chapter Relations Representative

In this issue, we spotlight the current chapter presidents who work in areas other than public practice. They are in widely varied fields: one is in the finance department of a privately held company providing industrial construction services, one owns an accountant recruiting firm and one is a faculty member in the school of business at a large public university.

Those participating are, in alphabetical order by last name:

Art Agulnek, CPA-Dallas;

Mark Goldman, CPA-San Antonio; and

Jeff Smith, CPA-Corpus Christi.



Art Agulnek
CPA-Dallas



Mark Goldman
CPA-San Antonio



Jeff Smith
CPA-Corpus Christi

CPA Career, Job Responsibilities

Along the way, they have gathered a wealth of knowledge through:

- public accounting at a very small firm;
- contract work for the Resolution Trust Corporation after the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s;
- the accounting department at a company that operates convenience stores; and
- a Big Four firm, with extensive international travel.

In addition to developing their work skills, they had other experiences that shaped their careers. One person stated that his first accounting job was working for his father's CPA firm, starting in high school. By the time he was in college, he was working directly with clients. He left his principles of accounting II class early one day to accompany one to the bank and help complete an application for a line of credit. He felt odd being 20 years old, working with the banker as an equal professional. But the visit was a success.

There was also the shirt-and-tie lesson. Early in his career, one of our story participants had to personally deliver some financial

information back to a client's office. Because it was a quick trip, the CPA hadn't dressed for the occasion and was still wearing a t-shirt and jeans. The client didn't say a word, but the young accountant could feel the awkwardness of the moment. He resolved that would be the last time he wouldn't dress professionally for work, no matter how short the day was going to be for him.

One adventure involved a staff member's trip to an African nation that started smoothly enough. However, while he was there, a revolution erupted and the airport was closed, leaving him stuck for a week. Another adventure, in a developing nation, resulted from taking a cab (despite repeated warnings not to do so) when the prearranged driver didn't show up to go to the airport. They careened down dark, narrow streets, with the CPA terrified it was his last ride on this Earth. He was so happy to get to the airport that he gave the driver an extra \$50 ... not knowing that giving the U.S. money violated the country's currency exchange rules and could have subjected him to spending time in jail.

Discussion included variations upon a busy season. At the company in industry, it's the beginning of January for calendar year-end processing. The end of the fiscal year brings a crunch for the financial reporting. For accounting recruiting, the busiest seasons are January-April for hiring in industry and October-December for public accounting. Work compression comes during December and May at universities. Final papers are due, and exams must be prepared and graded.

Work/Volunteer Skills and Chapter Involvement

The conversation turned to the skills that have helped in the volunteer arena. Learning to think like a leader rather than simply a member was cited. Another explained that being involved in a small company provides an opportunity to be involved in all aspects of corporate accounting. Having those different perspectives enables leaders to look at issues from several angles rather than having only one perspective.

Chapter involvement came in a variety of ways. One person started by volunteering for the committee promoting involvement in education. That led to chairing the committee, then service on the chapter board, then positions at the state level of TSCPA before being tapped as president. Another began by attending member involvement committee meetings, a springboard for participation in the chapter. He took on additional responsibility in holiday season toy collection efforts and moved up to co-chairing the committee. That led to the chairmanship of another committee and then election to the chapter board.

Career Rewards and Challenges

Participants talked about the most rewarding part of their career. Smith enjoys being able to work with both entry- and upper-level