



CPA Standout Lisa Kianoff Watching the Past Become the Future

Lisa Kianoff of Birmingham firm L. Kianoff & Associates knows that her past played a huge role in getting her to where she is. It's just that, at the time, it didn't look like such a direct route. Kianoff was studying to be a speech therapist at Hofstra University, Long Island. While living in Las Vegas, she took a job as an office manager for a food distributing company and that experience sparked her to take an accounting class at UNLV. She enjoyed it - a lot.

"So when my husband Alan and I moved to Birmingham in early 1980, I wanted to be sure that there was a school that offered a good accounting program. I found just that at UAB. Once I got into the program I became interested in public accounting and achieving my CPA. [My experience at UAB] gave me a diversity of exposure. I developed an interest in tax, audit and small business," she shared.

And here's where the past started to reappear.

She reflects, "My dad owned a jewelry manufacturing business for years. Through him I was exposed to business from an entrepreneurial perspective and was able to see the impact accounting had on the success of a business. I also have a memory as a small child of going to his office and loving [the chance] to 'play' with a very old-fashioned adding machine. Little did I know this was a glimpse into my future."

Although both she and husband Alan have family members who own their own businesses, Kianoff was the first in her immediate family to graduate from college. After graduating, she went to work with Big 8 firm Touche Ross & Company.

"It was a great experience. I had the opportunity to get involved in tax, audit, and small business work. I was also given the freedom to pursue the accounting software and technology end of the business. The PC market was in its infancy and I was part of the first group who trained in microcomputers consulting with Touche. Years later, I was able to add the CITP (Certified Information Technology Professional) designation. I strongly recommend it for accountants involved in technology," she emphasized.

Alan Kianoff works full-time at L. Kianoff & Associates and Lisa is enthusiastic about their collaboration.

"It is terrific having my husband as part of the business. He has strengths in many of the areas I do not. Since he is not an accountant, he also has a very balanced perspective. That helps in making business decisions in an office where accountants outnumber the rest of the team," she stated.

When asked about the challenge of work/life balance Kianoff answers ruefully, "I would not say that I have always been successful [in balancing]. I know that Alan and I want the balance to swing more to the family as the girls (Natalie, 17 and Hayley, 13) get older and our time with them gets shorter. I do think the juggling that every mom must do has served me well with my business life. And it has made me understand that our team members have the same need to be





with their families. Even though it is sometimes a strain on the business, the family always has a high priority.”

Kianoff has an appreciation for where her accounting degree led her, acknowledging the opportunity it has given her to combine her love of people, teaching, technology and accounting.

She goes on to explain, “In looking back, I realize that unless you are open to new ideas and new perspectives, you cannot grow. In today’s world, and especially in the field of technology, the one constant is that ‘things will change’. The more flexible we can be as people the better our lives and businesses will function. Since our readers are accountants and this is about business I’ll quote my dad. He always said ‘You just have to make enough money to do what you want for the business and for the people’ – this is always a good reality check for the decisions we make everyday.”

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