

NOVA CPA

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LOOKING INWARD

CPA Angie Herman is changing corporate culture at Casino Taxi and giving back to the community



A Message from CPA Nova Scotia's President & CEO

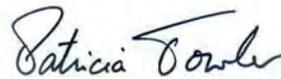
Dear Members,

In NOVA CPA, we strive to profile CPAs who have interesting jobs, and rich lives in their communities. Because of this, we've been able to highlight some really interesting people in past editions. This edition is no different, as we profile Greg Wieczorek, CPA, CA and Angie Herman, CPA, CMA—but with an added twist. Not only do both of their stories reflect smart and interesting individuals, but they also show an element of real resilience. In different ways, both have overcome obstacles to become who they are, and their stories are inspiring.

We didn't plan on having a unifying theme when laying out this issue, but in reading Maureen Gillis's article about ethics, I can't help but think that ethics and resilience are linked, and that asking the question, "what's the right thing to do in this situation?" rather than, "what can I get away with in this situation?" will lead to a character that is both ethical and resilient. These are traits CPAs are justifiably known for.

My thanks to Coralee Lewis for this, her first edition of NOVA CPA. Coralee is with us for a mat leave as our Director of Communications, Jessica Gillis, has welcomed a new baby into her family, and we are delighted to have Coralee on board with us.

Sincerely,



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President & CEO, Chief Legal Officer

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LOOKING INWARD

ANGIE HERMAN:

“

I've always been told that I'm not a traditional accountant, but I would say that I'm exactly today's accountant; I'm not the stereotypical accountant that everyone used to picture years ago.

”



Angie Herman was only thirty-four years old when she became the co-owner and Chief Financial Officer of Casino Taxi in Halifax. Her previous work gave her plenty of experience in the accounting world. However, it was her passion for people that would change the culture at Casino Taxi for the better. How does a company that is over ninety years old continue to see growth? Angie explains how focusing on the wellness of your employees can lead to an increase in your bottom line.

Humble beginnings

Originally from Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Angie grew up knowing what it was like to have very little. Though money was tight, her parents made sure to pass on to Angie and her two sisters what was truly valuable. Her parents demonstrated how to prioritize generosity, kindness, and hard work over the things that would bring temporary happiness. These humble beginnings shaped Angie into a person who chose to rise above her obstacles and strove to be a positive influence in the lives of those around her.

Straight after high school, Angie enrolled in the biochemistry program at Memorial University. "I was good at science," she remarks, "and when you're from a small town, there are only so many jobs that you know exist. I didn't know anything

about business." After taking electives in subjects like economics, however, Angie was shocked at how much of it applied to everyday life. As her interest grew, Angie made the last-minute decision to apply to Dalhousie University for its Bachelor of Commerce program. "At Christmas dinner," laughs Angie, "I announced that I was transferring to Dalhousie at the end of the month. Within a week, I moved to Halifax, found a place to live, and enrolled at the university."

From there, Angie went on to get her Certified Management Accountant designation, as well as her Master of Business Administration. She did this while working for ExxonMobil, supporting its Sable Island Offshore account. She also worked for Bell Aliant, overseeing the company's residential, business, and Fibre Op revenues in Atlantic Canada. In 2013, Angie made the switch to Casino Taxi, taking on the role of co-owner.

Seeing the need for change

At Casino Taxi, Angie noticed that everyone in the company was working independently. There weren't any leaders who were aware of each job in a way that they could support, monitor, and reward employees for the great work they were doing. So Angie made it her goal to get to know her employees. She spoke with each person, finding out what mattered to them, and what motivated them.

Creating your own Sesame Street

Working in the taxi industry can be stressful. Running 425 of the 600 taxis allowed in the Halifax Regional Municipality, Casino Taxi deals with a high volume of business daily. Like many business owners, Angie feels that when everything is going right, no one notices, but when something goes wrong, everyone does. Dealing regularly with sensitive subjects like stereotyping and stigmas that exist in the industry can become very discouraging.

Rising above all the stress to be a productive leader, wife, and mother involves some coping mechanisms that Angie has honed over her years in business: "you have to rely on others and realize you're not alone. I take my walking shoes to work and I go for walks around the neighbourhood. I have gotten to know the vendors and shop owners in the Hydrostone near my office and when I walk down the street, I have people call out to me. It's a bit like Sesame Street."

She also looked at employee compensation. "In today's environment," observes Angie, "a lot of companies have stopped giving raises, and with inflation, that means people are earning less today than they were yesterday. I made it clear that this would not be happening here. By doing that, people do better for you." Casino Taxi now has a compensation system in place that ensures that everyone gets annual raises.

Call centre complications

Casino Taxi Dispatch is a call centre environment, which typically has a lot of turnover and absenteeism. Upon arrival, Angie noticed a staggering amount of people showing up late for shifts, or more often, not showing up at all. Angie decided that instead of focusing on the negative behaviours, she would reward those who were showing up every day and supporting the company.

"We do a monthly draw for everyone with perfect attendance," explains Angie. "If you have perfect attendance in the quarter, you are guaranteed a gift certificate, and there are also prizes and an annual celebration." Casino Taxi saw a significant change in its absenteeism, and now boasts 98.5% perfect attendance over the past four years. "Our focus was on rewarding those who were here. People appreciate acknowledgement for the things that they do every day."

To further inspire employees, Angie created the new role of Senior Call Taker to allow people to progress within the company. These are employees who can handle more difficult calls or assist dispatch when there are challenges. There is one on every shift now, and it has allowed people to move up in the organization and receive higher pay.

Finally, Casino Taxi redesigned every workspace with sit/stand desks and ergonomically correct chairs and lights. The company redid its kitchen and gave everyone personal space to store their belongings. Angie is confident that these efforts make a difference in office morale: "it is common to celebrate workplace milestones at Casino Taxi because hard work deserves to be celebrated."





**PROUDLY SERVING HALIFAX FOR
OVER 90 YEARS.**

She also makes a consistent effort to celebrate the positive. "I always focus on what is going well and then I share it," she says. "When I share good news on social media (sharing something nice that the drivers are doing, or something nice that a customer did for someone on our team), it inspires someone else to reach out with their good news story. It creates a cycle of positivity."

Giving back to the community

Deciding where Casino Taxi's charitable donations will go each year is a responsibility that weighs heavily on Angie's heart. "My family and my husband's family have always believed that of those to whom much is given, much is required," remembers Angie. "It's an emotional thing for me because when I was growing up, I had very little, but even with that very little, my parents always made sure that they took care of others. They invited people to dinner; they volunteered; and they gave a percentage of what they had. It's not difficult for us to give; it's an honour and privilege."

While giving back is very important to Casino Taxi, there are limitless causes to give to, and the difficulty is in narrowing down the recipients. When Angie arrived, she set guidelines for the company's charitable donations. Casino Taxi focuses first and foremost on who's in its neighbourhood. The company has chosen to forgo donating to national charities in favour of strengthening the communities in which its customers and drivers work and live. Angie insists that Casino Taxi is "a local family business and we support charities that support local families."

A couple of years ago, Casino Taxi reached its two-millionth customer in a single year, and last year, it ended at 2.2 million. We can't say exactly what factors lead to such phenomenal growth, but we're certain that Angie is an important part of it.



EYES WIDE OPEN

THE VALUE OF ETHICS TRAINING

Article contributed by Maureen Gillis, CPA, CA

Standing at the front of accounting class, I watch as students hand in their assignments and initial the attendance sheet. There are no points for attendance. In this regard, you might say that initialing the attendance sheet does not matter, per se. It is just one, simple, small thing.

One student approaches the table, runs an index finger down the sheet, initials once, then twice. She glances at a group of friends before initialing a third time, when I say, "you should only initial beside your own name. Do not sign for others. To do so might be considered a form of academic dishonesty." The student turns to me, clearly surprised (shocked may be a better descriptor). Eyes go wide open.

It was this seemingly small incident that began my reflection. When does the teaching of ethics begin for students who aspire to be CPAs? How do we teach them right from wrong, or how to determine the best of two choices that may both feel right, or may both seem wrong?

We create trust. These three words begin our CPA Values statement and are followed by Act with integrity. How do we teach that to have integrity as a profession, we must first have unquestionable integrity as individuals? To tell the truth always, in big things and in small things; for it is often the small things that sit at the top of that slippery slope.

"If you are dishonest, I do not work with you," a guest speaker and fellow CPA tells the accounting class. Again, eyes go wide open.

EYES WIDE OPEN

As CPAs, we each decide where we draw our own lines. What lines will we cross and what lines will we stand behind? Some have philosophized that our moral character is determined before we reach our professional accountancy career; we are, after all, who we are. Yet it is also thought that our moral character continues to change as we live our lives and build our careers. Wisdom, they say, comes with age. Do we become more of who we are, or do we become the average of the five people with whom we spend the most time? Influences and pressures surrounding us affect what we say and what we do, and may push up against our moral character, our integrity, and our ethical intentions.

Those of us who are CPAs in the third trimester of our careers understand that truly impactful learning does not necessarily come from reading a textbook, watching a slide deck, listening to a podcast, or even reading this article. These sources simply serve as invitations to examine a concept more deeply. Our most valuable learning often comes from exploring the questions Google cannot answer. Experience is a great teacher, including the experiences of our CPA colleagues. If you have attended in-person ethics training anywhere, you may have heard stories that surprise you; stories that hold lessons for all of us. As CPAs, we have the opportunity to learn from our collective experiences when we take the time to come together in a safe environment and share our perspectives, experiences, and knowledge. We learn from what we considered and why, what we did or did not do, what we might have done, and what we would do differently next time.

In accounting, the ethical dilemmas may be faced by new people in different offices, and yet history repeats itself. Asset vs. Expense. Personal Expense vs. Business Expense. Fiscal Management vs. Earnings Management vs. Creative Accounting vs. Financial Engineering vs Accounting Fraud—where do we draw the line? Conflict of interest or not? To disclose or not to disclose? These are the questions that often underlie issues of ethics in accounting. As we continue to open the conversation around professional accounting ethics, we recognize that our profession can face challenging issues given that ethical dilemmas, particularly in areas involving conflict of interest, often result from a failure of moral imagination; that is, our inability to recognize that the situation may have ethical dimensions. We may only recognize a conflict of interest when things do not go well, and by then it may be too late.

Perhaps the value in ethics training and opening the conversation is best captured by the quote from French author Marcel Proust: “the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” Eyes that we all keep wide open, teaching prospective CPAs to do the same, before we cross a line that, in hindsight, we should have stayed behind.





Nova Scotia CPA Greg Wieczorek

Ten years ago, Nova Scotia CPA Greg Wieczorek finished the Boston Marathon in two hours and forty-one minutes. Since then, he has completed fifteen marathons, coming first in the Blue Nose Marathon four times, and has a lifetime best of two hours and twenty-five minutes. What motivates a busy CPA and father to get out of bed at 5 am and train hard enough to break records?

At the beginning of a new running season, I ask myself: “to meet this goal, is it worth getting out of bed when it’s cold and dark?” If I can answer in the affirmative, I can be at peace with the early mornings. I know that some runners are younger and more talented than me, so the only way I can keep up is by working harder during training.

Pulling your weight

This season, I made it my goal to race in the Cabot Trail Relay, a 276-kilometre relay race around the Cabot Trail. Over 70 teams participated from all over North America. Our team goal was to win and break the course record of 16 hours and 11 minutes. Knowing that I had a team of 14 people relying on me to run my best provided ample motivation to train hard all winter. We won the race and set a record of 16 hours and 10 minutes.





Greg at the Natal Day Road Race.



Greg (left, front row) and the Nova Scotia team at the Cabot Trail Relay.

Setting goals

Each season, I figure out what will motivate me to train harder than the season before. Sometimes, it's a new event or a new record time. Other times, it's knowing that I'll be on a team or will be running in a new destination. If you're investing money into travel and accommodations, you don't want to run poorly on race day. You can always find something different to focus on to keep you motivated.

Dealing with setbacks

I try to avoid unnecessary risk during training and racing to prevent setbacks, but unfortunately, these can still happen. During times of injury, I maintain my cardiovascular fitness by training on the bike, on the elliptical, or in the pool. After training so hard, I don't want to let an injury stop me from moving forward. Luckily for me, it also helps that my wife is my physiotherapist.

Enjoying mental and emotional benefits

Running is a great form of therapy, and there have been numerous studies showing the correlation between exercise and mental and emotional well-being. Running before work allows me to be sharper and more efficient when I get to the office. It gives me uninterrupted time to think about the best way to deal with problems or challenges I'm facing.

Pushing yourself

With experience, you come to know what your body can handle. I focus on small, incremental volume increases over time, and a general rule of thumb is not to increase your training load by more than 10% from one week to the next. Treating your body properly means you must be gradual with your approach.

Learning life lessons

Running is very rewarding. It teaches discipline, patience, and goal setting. I have found that these lessons apply to business, personal finances, and raising children.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



T A G G I N G
Y O U R
L E G A C Y
D E S I G N A T I O N

How do I tag my designation?

Chartered Accountants, Certified General Accountants, and Certified Management Accountants are required to call themselves a Chartered Professional Accountant and to include CPA with their legacy designation. This has been a requirement since July 1, 2015, as part of the unification.

Tagging the legacy designation is mandatory for all legacy members. Legacy members cannot use the CPA designation without the legacy designation being tagged behind it, nor can they use the legacy designation on its own.

What is a “legacy designation”?

“Legacy designation” is the term we use to refer to the designations that existed before, and that came together at unification: Certified Management Accountant (CMA), Chartered Accountant (CA), and Certified General Accountant (CGA).

What is “tagging”?

Tagging is the practice of publicly identifying yourself with both your CPA and legacy designation, as in the following examples:

Robert White, CPA, CGA
John Smith, CPA, CA
Maggie Chin, FCPA, FCMA

Am I still a Chartered Accountant (or CGA, or CMA)?

No, those professional designations ceased to exist when the laws that created them were repealed in 2016.

If I’m not a CA anymore, why do I have to put those initials after my name?

While you are no longer a chartered accountant (or CMA or CGA as the case may be), “tagging” was included in terms of the merger of the profession as a way to apprise the public of one’s background and also to assist members who were initially uncertain of the CPA designation.



Do I have to use my old designation? I would prefer to drop it.

If you earned a legacy designation, you must “tag” for now. The law says that for the first ten years after the legislation came into effect (until August 2026), CPAs who held a legacy designation must use both.

Beginning in August 2021, the Board of Directors of CPA Nova Scotia will have the option to remove the requirement to tag earlier than the ten-year mark. We will canvas members closer to that time to gauge your interest in such a move.

If you earned your designation in the last few years and therefore only have a CPA and did not earn one of the legacy designations, then tagging does not apply to you, and you will use your CPA, as in:
Jennifer Lowendowski, CPA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does tagging apply to?

Tagging applies to all public representations of your professional qualifications. Here are examples of behaviours that do not abide by the tagging rules:

- Business cards that still identify you only by your legacy designation;
- A charity website that identifies a board member with language like: “John is a chartered accountant in Halifax”;
- Signage outside a business that states the firm name, followed by “Certified General Accountants”;
- A business website that identifies an executive by “CPA” alone, even though that person held a legacy designation;
- Language suggesting that you still hold a legacy designation. For instance, a former CGA named Jean.

Jean MacDonald will tag as “Jean MacDonald, CPA, CGA,” but cannot describe herself as “a Chartered Professional Accountant and a Certified General Accountant” because no one is a Certified General Accountant any more.

There may be situations where you want to publicly identify your seniority and find that it’s awkward to have earned one designation but now hold another. For instance, your website might say: “Ling has been a CMA for over twenty years, holding increasingly senior roles.” This is

not accurate and would need to be changed, as the individual is not currently a CMA. A better description might be: “Ling is a CPA who has held increasingly senior roles, having earned her CMA designation over twenty years ago,” or “Ling is a CMA, now a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) who has held increasingly senior roles throughout the twenty years of her career.”

Do firms have to change their names too?

Yes, we have been working with firms since unification to ensure that all have changed over to CPA language from their legacy designations. If you notice that a firm is still using signage or other public indications of a legacy designation, please contact us.

What happens if I don’t follow these rules?

We hope that you will follow these guidelines because you are proud of your designation and understand the need for a consistent public presentation across the profession. But if for some reason you do not tag properly, and it comes to our attention, we will follow up with you to ensure your compliance, as these are statutory requirements.

SAVE THE DATE



CAPE BRETON PD WEEK

November 4-8, 2019
Sydney, NS



HALIFAX PD WEEK

November 18-22, 2019
Halifax, NS