



International Women’s Day is an opportunity for businesses to better support women in the workplace

Companies of all sizes can take five actionable steps to foster greater gender parity

4 March 2021, Hong Kong – In advance of International Women’s Day on 8 March, the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (AICPA & CIMA) shares tips for businesses to better support and empower their female employees.

“The global pandemic has highlighted the balancing act that women have performed for years managing their work and family lives,” said Crystal Cooke, Director of diversity and inclusion for the Association, the global organisation for the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) and The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). “It’s incumbent that organisations recognise the challenges women face in their career progression and put practices into place to support their success.”

Here are five things businesses can do to build a culture that provides greater gender equity in the workplace:

- **Be flexible:** The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to change the way we work and manage our lives. According to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#), working mothers are spending significantly more time on childcare and housework than men during lockdown. Employers should understand the added stress that comes from managing household responsibilities with the demands of work. This will likely require thinking outside the box for equitable and realistic solutions, such as flexible workhours or split days.
- **Make it OK to say “no”:** Create an environment where those who are overwhelmed feel safe, and will not feel penalised or judged, for saying “no” to additional projects or responsibilities. Encourage women to ask for help when they need it and the option of taking wellness breaks to move, meditate, practice gratitude, and embrace this time with their families.
- **Offer support:** Show concern for your employees and offer them the support they need. Ask the important questions and really listen to responses: How are you doing? and What can we do to assist you? Then find a way to provide the support needed, which again could be unconventional.
- **Emphasise well-being and self-care:** For nearly a year, your employees have largely lived the same day over and over. Many are juggling all their responsibilities, which have now seeped into their workday and therefore resulted in no boundaries. It’s important that you help the women in your organisation find ways to successfully



manage their mental health, stress and energy levels and to take some joy out of each day.

- **Be more inclusive:** Look around you in important leadership meetings – online or in person. Are women and people of colour (POC) well represented? If not, reshape your invitation lists and include women and POC in meetings where strategy, vision, and business critical decisions are being made, even if they aren't partner yet.

The Association (AICPA & CIMA) is committed to supporting women in the profession and to achieving gender equity for women in the finance and accounting profession. The Financial Reporting Council's [2020 Key Facts and Trends in the Accountancy Profession](#) found that women currently make up 50% of all accounting students at the UK professional bodies and 37% of members. Yet, they remain largely underrepresented among management and partner positions, with less than a fifth of all partners being women at the largest firms. 'Being well, look after your wellbeing. I think we have to be more engaged in technology and rise up to the challenge in the post-pandemic world.' said Dr Irelan Tam, Chairlady of CIMA Hong Kong.

The Association has several initiatives to empower women in accounting and finance and support allyship in the workplace, including:

- The [AICPA & CIMA Women's Global Leadership Summit](#), an annual conference which gives women in the profession the opportunity to develop their skills and connect with like-minded professionals. This year, the Association will host a series of regional Summits in Africa, Europe, North America, and Asia-Pacific.
- The AICPA [Women's Initiatives Executive Committee](#), a dedicated group of volunteers whose mission is to promote and support the success of women to advance the profession together.
- The [Women in Leadership Forum](#), a network of CIMA members dedicated to supporting women in finance and accounting and helping them build their dream career.
- Providing Continuing Professional Development resources and webcasts to help accounting and finance professionals close the gender gap within their organisation. This includes practical toolkits such as the [SheQ - Using the Power of Emotional Intelligence for Success, which has an accompanying archived webcast](#), videos such as [Advancing Gender Equality in the Workplace: What Works](#) and podcasts such as [Diversity and inclusion: closing the gap](#).

– ENDS –



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Notes to editor

These tips are based on responses from recipients of the AICPA's and CPA Practice Advisor's 2020 Most Power Women in Accounting Awards.

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About the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants

The [Association of International Certified Professional Accountants](#) (the Association) is the most influential body of professional accountants, combining the strengths of the American Institute of CPAs ([AICPA](#)) and The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants ([CIMA](#)) to power opportunity, trust and prosperity for people, businesses and economies worldwide. It represents 650,000 members and students across 179 countries and territories in public and management accounting, and advocates for the public interest and business sustainability on current and emerging issues. With broad reach, rigor and resources, the Association advances the reputation, employability and quality of CPAs, CGMAs and accounting and finance professionals globally.

About The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), founded in 1919, is the world's leading and largest professional body of management accountants. As part of the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (the Association) its members and students operate in 179 countries, working at the heart of business. CIMA members and students work in industry, commerce, the public sector and not-for-profit organizations. CIMA works closely with employers and sponsors leading-edge research, constantly updating its qualification, professional experience requirements and continuing professional development to ensure it remains the employers' choice when recruiting financially-trained business leaders.

About the American Institute of CPAs

The American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) is the world's largest member association representing the CPA profession, with more than 429,000 members in the United States and worldwide, and a history of serving the public interest since 1887. AICPA members represent many areas of practice, including business and industry, public practice, government, education and consulting. The AICPA sets ethical standards for its members and U.S. auditing standards for private companies, nonprofit organizations, and federal, state and local governments. It develops and grades the Uniform CPA Examination, offers specialized credentials, builds the pipeline of future talent and drives professional competency development to advance the vitality, relevance and quality of the profession.