



**Rhonda Shaffer**

Deputy Chief Financial Officer &  
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### **FAVORITE QUOTE OR MANTRA THAT YOU LIVE BY?**

My favorite quote is from Mahatma Gandhi, "As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him." His words simplified, "Be the change you want to see in others."

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Executive Women in Government  
Leadership Spotlight



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### **WHAT INSPIRED ME TO WORK IN THE FIELD OF MY EXPERTISE?**

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Interestingly enough, I was a Physics major in college before changing to Accounting. I have always been drawn to the STEM fields and my initial plan was to work in manufacturing as a scientist and businesswoman. I thought I could straddle the fence and work both technical and management sides to help bring my company's innovation to market. One day, the Chair of the Business School said to me, "Rhonda, you're really an Accountant." I laughed but after taking my first course, I knew I had a knack for it and switched my major. I've never regretted the change. I've been able to build a broad portfolio of experiences across the private sector and government that I don't think I would have achieved otherwise. I later obtained a Master's of Science in Business Intelligence with an emphasis in designing decision support systems and now my chosen profession has begun to look for ways to incorporate robots and computer-aided analytics to improve the integrity of financial reporting. I'm fortunate that I could fit my love of STEM into my field of expertise, I think it makes me a better businesswoman and professional.

### **WHAT SUCCESS TIPS(S) CAN YOU SHARE FOR WOMEN WHO ASPIRE TO BE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES?**

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There's no "cookie-cutter" mold to good leadership. Begin your training now and plan on a journey of continuous learning throughout your entire career. Because there are a variety of viewpoints on leadership, make sure you have a broad-deep bench of sources that will help frame your decision-making process. Be sure to have sources like EWG where you can learn from other women leaders and pick and choose from things you might want to adopt into your leadership style. As well, don't be intimidated to let your sources know you aspire to be a future leader and then stand proudly on the shoulders of the giants you've surrounded yourself with.

### **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN HER CAREER?**

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In summary, be of high integrity, kind, and flexible. I think it goes without saying that successful people are the ones trusted by others. When we trust someone, we usually give them more responsibility. Some of the best advice I ever received was to smile at others. I didn't realize that I appeared too serious and often unapproachable. When I began to smile at others, they seemed to open up and converse more. I was also able to demonstrate kindness and empathy.

## **CONTINUED: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN HER CAREER?**

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Be flexible and plan that things around you will change. Everything has a season and rarely stays the same. Whether it's flexibility in how you manage situations or stay fresh and agile with technical concepts, embracing change will show you're able to bring new and innovative solutions to the organization you work within.

## **A LEADER THAT YOU ADMIRE AND THE TRAITS THAT YOU BELIEVE MAKE THEM A SUCCESSFUL LEADER?**

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There are so many amazing leaders that I admire. One I'm currently following is David Rubenstein, an American billionaire businessman and philanthropist. I'm drawn to his words of encouragement and really enjoy his show Peer to Peer Conversations on PBS. Some of the traits Rubenstein says make a successful leader includes being reasonably intelligent enough to work hard, nobody's perfect, overcome conventional wisdom and persist, and have good communication skills. He often talks about leaders like Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates and when everyone doubted their ideas they stayed persistent. Look at them now. In a leadership interview talking about what marks a great leader, Rubenstein said, "...if people tell you 'no' you should be more inspired to go ahead and try to do it."

## **EXECUTIVE WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT - OUR MISSION**

Prepare, promote, support and mentor women for senior leadership positions in the Federal Government. Build a powerful network to share experiences, to enhance professional relationships, and to increase understanding among women executives in the Federal Government. Motivate women leaders in the federal government to contribute to effective succession planning by creating a mentoring culture within their sphere of influence.