

THE SUCCESSORS

As baby boomers prepare to retire, CPAs from generations X and Y are making their mark on the accounting profession. Meet five young practitioners among them.

If anyone contradicts the stuffy, outdated CPA stereotype, it is Shea Smith.

By day, the 32-year-old is a supervisor in the audit department of Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant CPAs and Consultants, LLP in Fort Lauderdale. But away from the office, he is an accomplished disc jockey and budding music producer who has spun tunes at venues throughout South Florida and the United States. Currently, he is recording under the name Nutron, and he'll be releasing his music on an independent label this year.

"I have a fully functioning recording studio in my home, and I have put out recordings under various names in different genres of music," said Smith, a native of Fort Lauderdale. "My co-workers encourage me with my efforts, and I share my music with friends at work."

After graduating from the University of Florida with a bachelor's and master's degree in accounting, Smith worked at a small firm before joining Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant in 2003. The firm's faster pace and overall ethos appealed to Smith, who said the firm has been particularly progressive in its efforts to attract and retain qualified young CPAs. He cited BDPB's commitment to career development as an example.

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"It's important that training be provided within the firm, as well as outside the firm," said Smith, whose specialization is real estate. "For example, I recently attended the AICPA National Real Estate Conference in Phoenix. I expect a culture that encourages such activity, as opposed to viewing it as a scheduling conflict or loss of billable hours."

Smith said CPA firms competing for young talent should focus on office culture, technology and knowledge-sharing. First and foremost, young professionals are attracted to collaborative environments where they can form relationships with co-workers. Providing up-to-date technology is important, because it helps promote inno-

vation, efficiency and creativity in the workplace. Smith also noted CPAs should get the training they need to solve complex problems, and their firms should encourage them to share knowledge with co-workers.

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When he isn't working, recording or adding to his immense music collection (7,000 vinyl records and 10,000 iTunes songs), Smith makes time for community service and professional outreach efforts. He is on the forming Executive Committee of the United Way Young Leaders Society of Broward County, which provides community outreach and helps raise funds for the United Way. He is also doing his part to recruit the next generation of CPAs as a member of the FICPA High School Outreach Committee. He speaks to teenagers and encourages them to consider a career in accounting.

"Accounting is the language of business," Smith said. "It allows you to help people with their business in a very tangible and direct way." ■



Shea Smith is supervisor in the audit department of Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant CPAs and Consultants, LLP in Fort Lauderdale.