

Connecting the Dots

An Interview with Pamela J. Craig, Chief Financial Officer, Accenture

EDITORS' NOTE Pamela Craig is a member of Accenture's Global Management Committee and Capital Committee. Before becoming CFO, she held several line management positions in the company's Products and Communications & High Tech operating groups and spent more than 20 years in consulting with a focus on Finance and Enterprise Performance. Craig is a recipient of the 2008 National Council for Research on Women's "Making a Difference for Women Award." In Institutional Investor's 2012 All-America Executive Team ranking, Craig was named as America's Best CFO in the Computer Services & IT Consulting category by sell-side analysts. She serves on the board of directors for Akamai Technologies. Craig is also a member of the state board of directors of Junior Achievement of New Jersey and of the board of directors for Comprehensive Development, Inc. Prior to joining Accenture in 1979, she earned a master of business administration degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree with honors in economics from Smith College.



Pamela J. Craig

COMPANY BRIEF Accenture (www.accenture.com) is a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies. With over 246,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments.

How has the CFO role changed and how do you define it today?

Over the past three years, CFOs have had to step up. Traditionally, the CFO focused on finance: reporting, compliance, and important supporting dimensions like treasury, tax, and corporate finance. What we see now is that CFOs are dramatically more involved in both strategy and operations. This is a good thing, because it connects the dots across the organization and helps to integrate the strategy and operations with the financial forecasting and results. There is less of a propensity to take risks without informed and rigorous analysis. Companies are more focused and careful

about investments, and that has been sparked by the environment that came with the most recent downturn.

How much has technology impacted the way the company operates and how do you maintain that personal touch?

We're leaders both in talent development and technology; two-thirds of what we do is oriented around helping clients implement, deploy, and leverage newer, better technology. So we're always trying to take advantage of new technologies in ways that help us run

our business better. For example, we do a lot of Web conferencing, because to run a global business, it's tough to be everywhere. But when you have really good technology – and we do now – it allows you to be closer to people than you would be if you were just e-mailing or phoning them. The key is to leverage technology and, at the same time, maintain the human touch.

For Accenture, is a lot of the growth coming from the emerging markets? What about the U.S.?

There is a strong opportunity because U.S. companies want to compete on the global stage and we have the skills and scale to help them.

That said, we have around 10 priority emerging markets that we want to grow faster than Accenture is growing, so we're focused on nurturing those as well. We are a company that is run by locals around the world. So we're trying to develop local leadership so that they can drive that higher growth into the future. But that takes time.

For example, we have been in Brazil for decades and it's now a billion-dollar business for us. Although every country is different in terms of its market and regulatory environment, Brazil is a proven model for how we are looking to grow in the priority emerging markets.

How critical has having a diverse workforce been to the culture of Accenture?

It's a key differentiator for us. I'm grateful for our culture, because we span countries, cultures, languages, generations, perspectives, backgrounds, and educational experiences via almost 250,000 people. This rich base of talent for our clients gives us enormous flexibility to encourage our people to grow and move into other roles.

At Accenture, we now have more than 80,000 women – and that's many times greater than the size of the entire workforce of the

company I joined more than 30 years ago. I feel like we're never done, but I'm very proud of that.

We always need to be creating a positive environment for women and providing support so they can continue to grow. One notable thing we do is celebrate International Women's Day in a big way, hosting more than 200 Accenture events around the world. This year's theme was "Defining Success. Your Way." The program focused on the fact that we all do things a different way and we all need to figure out our own way of performing in our lives and our work.

How has Accenture focused on social responsibility?

We're wired to serve our clients, so it's a natural fit. And I view that as a key part of our legacy in terms of the kind of culture we want to be, so it's about our clients, our people, and our communities.

We offer a wide range of local and global opportunities around the world that help people fulfill their desires to give back. These include organizations like Junior Achievement, which helps build job readiness skills for young people. It also includes Accenture Development Partnerships, through which our people go to a developing country to work on a project or provide a service that is similar to what we would do for a client, but they take a significant cut in pay to be involved in helping that country.

We thank our people who drive us to go further than we ever have before on this front, because a job lasts a long time and efforts like these are part of what we'll most remember.

What is your leadership style?

Listening is one of the most important things we have to do as leaders. One of the most surprising things about being a CFO is that it's a people-oriented function. For me to be good at what I do, I have to understand what is going on in the business as well as always try to be up to speed on anything that is going on finance wise. I have to ask good questions and then listen really well in order to synthesize, spot trends, and communicate to key constituencies like our investors and our board of directors.

Ultimately, we don't want to be a compliance function or silo, or bothering the business. I want our finance people to be there to help the business grow profitably in a compliant way.

So my style is collaborative and without a doubt, it is about the team that ultimately delivers a lot more for Accenture than any of us would individually. ●