

## Marcum's Mission

An Interview with Saran Johnson,  
Co-Chief Human Resources Officer, Marcum LLP

**EDITORS' NOTE** Saran Johnson started her career with Marcum 19 years ago and has more than 14 years of human resource management experience. She has extensive knowledge of employee relations, organizational development and performance management. She was recently appointed as the Chair of the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee. Johnson is a graduate of Hofstra University, is professionally certified in human resource management, and regularly speaks on industry topics.



Saran Johnson

**FIRM BRIEF** Marcum LLP is one of the largest independent public accounting and advisory services firms in the nation, with offices in major business markets throughout the U.S., Grand Cayman, China, and Ireland. Headquartered in New York City, Marcum ([marcumllp.com](http://marcumllp.com)) provides a full spectrum of traditional tax, accounting, and assurance services; advisory, valuation and litigation support; managed accounting services; and an extensive range of specialty and niche industry practices. The firm serves both privately-held and publicly-traded companies, as well as nonprofit and social sector entities, high-net-worth individuals, and private equity funds and hedge funds, with a focus on middle-market companies and closely-held family businesses.

### Will you discuss Marcum's focus on diversity and inclusion?

Marcum has made diversity and inclusion a priority. There is a great benefit that comes from having people from various backgrounds because it broadens our perspective in a meaningful way and helps drive the solutions we are able to offer our clients and our associates.

Our Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Jeffrey Weiner, sits on the national Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee that I have the privilege of chairing. Jeff has personally committed to the "CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion" which is the largest CEO-driven business commitment to advance diversity and inclusion within the workplace with more than 600 CEO signatories.

**Does hiring the best talent ensure a certain level of diversity or do you need to have processes in place when hiring new**

### talent in order to build a diverse workforce?

Our philosophy has always been and always will be to attract the best people, but achieving diversity within our firm culture means that we have to open up the ways that we recruit and sometimes the events or schools where we recruit; in big cities, it's never a problem – you can always get a diverse base. In some of our suburban areas, it is a little bit more of a challenge. This means it is our job to go out and make sure that we are not

only getting the best talent, but also that we are attracting candidates from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

### How does Marcum address inclusion?

Our Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee's primary focus is programming that encourages not only a diverse culture, but also diversity of thought and inclusiveness for our 2,000 associates. The group comprises leaders across the firm from all backgrounds. That mix brings something different to the table and a totally fresh perspective.

### How is Marcum focusing on providing opportunities for women to grow and lead at the firm?

Our women's leadership initiative was established to create a more compelling work environment and enhanced career opportunities for women at the firm, through national and local programs and activities that motivate, support, advance, retain and reward women. The Women's Initiative is charged with engaging Marcum's female professionals and executing overall strategy for women's career success at the firm.

With programs such as core hours and alternative work arrangements, Marcum offers its associates more flexibility than ever before. Marcum recognizes that traditionally women still bear much of the responsibility for their families. As such, we have developed ways to retain and cultivate talented women, many of whom have spent their careers here and are now partners, national service line leaders or C-Suite executives, myself included.

### What do you tell young people about a career in the accounting profession?

I tell every young person I meet who isn't sure about what they want to do to go into accounting. I've seen the growth and success

that the profession has allowed our firm, as well as me personally, and I am grateful for that.

At Marcum, we have many rock stars here, and our people are dynamic and entrepreneurial. We have people that are out there making waves within the industry in many different areas. It is a great place to build the career you want, with the industry focus or specialized skill set that you want.

### You have been at Marcum for 19 years. What has made the experience so special for you?

I almost feel I have been born and bred at Marcum. I worked for five years before starting grad school to pursue my MBA. The flexibility, encouragement and support I received during this time allowed me to finish my program ahead of schedule.

It has really been a great place to grow my career. My role has changed over the years and, although I have always been under the HR banner, I have also become very involved in firm integration during mergers and acquisitions, which has always been interesting for me.

I truly believe in this company and in the vision of Jeff Weiner, with whom I have worked closely throughout the years.

### How critical has it been to maintain Marcum's culture with all of the growth that the firm has experienced?

I think it is really dependent on the leadership. We have now grown both organically and through mergers and acquisitions, to 2,000 people. As we've grown our ranks, it has sometimes been challenging to get and keep everyone marching to the same drummer, but as long as you have vision at the top, I think it makes for true buy-in across the firm.

We have an amazing team that does a very good job of making sure that everyone feels welcome on day one and throughout the process, which takes time. With respect to firms that have merged in, I would say many probably don't feel entirely at home and 100 percent "Marcum" until around the two-year mark. We are talking about people, not commodities, which means it can take time for new associates and partners to feel a part of the larger culture that we have here. I think that we have figured out how to do it and, for the most part, people are happy when they come under the Marcum umbrella and join the Marcum family. ●