

## **Alumni Spotlight:**

**Shannon Brouillette,**

BSBA Accounting, 1994

**&**

**Leigh Ann Horton, CPA**

BSBA Accounting, 1993; MA Tax, 1994



### **Developing a Niche.**

BY Jessi Hill, Consensus Communications

Fisher School of Accounting Alumnae Shannon Bishop Brouillette had a vision to change the realm of the financial business world, and in 1999 she did just that.

CFO Strategic Partners (CFOSP) was founded based on the principle that companies deserve an effective avenue to benefit from experienced CFO services without the high cost of overhead. Later joined by lifelong friend and Fisher School of Accounting Alumni Leigh Ann Cash Horton, the two set out to fill a void that many companies in Central Florida needed and wanted.

Today, companies of all sizes can take a pro-active approach to business utilizing CFOSP. By offering specifically tailored services to meet the needs of each client, the company provides a high-level, strategic financial vision and knowledge needed to run a successful business.

In less than six years, the company has averaged 90% annual growth. With offices in Orlando and Tampa, the entrepreneurial company has effectively served more than 200 small to mid-size companies.

Although Shannon credits her family for instilling her with an unmistakable entrepreneurial spirit, she also credits UF with allowing her to hone her financial and business skills.

"Starting a company from the ground up is never an easy task," said Shannon. "I know that the skills I developed while at UF, skills that were taught outside the traditional realm of accounting and "outside of the box," helped me achieve the level of success we have today."

Following graduation, Shannon began her career with KPMG Peat Marwick as a member of their audit team. Several years later, she left the firm to pursue an opportunity with United American Bank, which was subsequently acquired by Colonial Bank. Serving as a commercial lending officer, Shannon dealt with CEO's on a regular basis and discovered there was a lack of financial services that catered to small and medium size companies.

In response to her findings, Shannon founded CFOSP in August of 1999. Leigh Ann joined CFOSP as a partner in 2000. As a team, Shannon and Leigh Ann currently manage 21 CFO's, who serve more than 90 clients in 25 industry segments. They also oversee both Florida offices, including the headquarter office in Orlando and the satellite office in Tampa.

"We are constantly reminded of how a great foundation in business and finance can produce long-term results and outstanding success," said Leigh Ann. "UF provided us with that groundwork."

Prior to her tenure with CFOSP, Leigh Ann served as the International Tax Manager for Hard Rock Café International. She began her career with IBM as an accounting intern in Somers, NY. Later, Leigh Ann joined KPMG Peat Marwick in the Mutual Fund Tax Practice in New York City. In 1996, she transferred to the Orlando KPMG office, where she gained a diverse tax background. And it is with that strength of diversity that makes CFOSP truly unique.

CFOSP clients not only receive the expertise of their team member, but the collective experience of the entire company. Because CFO has been intricately involved with more than 200 companies of all sizes and throughout a wide range of industries, the knowledge brought to new clients is tremendous. The result is successful strategic planning, cash-flow management, budgeting, and tax planning. The services provided by CFOSP can take a business owner to a higher level of understanding to make better decisions for their future.

"From the time I started working with the team at CFOSP, I haven't looked back," said John Elsea, President of Peninsula Engineering, Inc. "The services they have provided have tripled my bottom line, giving us serious profit levels that have helped fund company growth. Plus, I get a Fortune 500 CFO for a part-time cost. CFOSP has not only enhanced the financial well-being of my company, but also of my life, allowing me to focus on my other businesses."

Both Shannon and Leigh Ann have been repeatedly recognized by the *Orlando Business Journal* as successful female entrepreneurs, and have been given awards as "Up & Comers," in the business world. Shannon was also one of this year's finalists for the *Orlando Business Journal's* "Women of the Year Award," as well as the Magic 107.7 and Orlando Sentinel's "Women of Magic" Awards.

"Even in business, I find myself relating to clients and business associates through our UF heritage," said Shannon. "Once a gator, always a gator!"

# CFO

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