

# Another go-around around-OB

**I**t's not entirely clear whether Carmen Jeschke, CPA, chose accounting or accounting chose her. Either way, Jeschke successfully scaled a couple of career "mountains" before aspiring to be a CPA.

Her journey into the profession may well have begun in high school when a teacher pointed out that Jeschke had a knack for accounting. Jeschke decided to pursue a journalism degree at San Diego State University, however, and also ignored her father's advice to minor in business. With degree in hand, Jeschke launched a 10-year career as a television reporter, a demanding field that requires frequent moves.

Six of those broadcasting years were spent in Portland, Ore. When her husband, Greg, who also works in journalism, took a job in Reno, Nev., Jeschke took a job in media relations for the University of Nevada. Later, she worked in marketing for Reno's Girl Scout Council.

"It was good work, but I wasn't in love with it," Jeschke said.

A move to the San Francisco Bay area brought the family near Tracy, Calif., where her father owned a small business.

"I found I liked helping him with bookkeeping," Jeschke said. "With a young son to care for, I knew that journalism wasn't for me anymore. I started thinking about doing something a little more challenging than bookkeeping, something that would allow me to do interesting work but still be there for my son."



Former journalist  
Carmen Jeschke  
lands second  
career as a CPA

By Donna Pinsoneault



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## Embracing change and uncertainty

Another move took the family to Wisconsin where Jeschke enrolled in accounting classes at Madison Area Technical College. She found school so interesting, she wasn't yet focused on going back to work. So she hesitated when professors encouraged her to pursue an internship.

An offer from Porter & Sack, CPAs, S.C., in Madison forced Jeschke to decide if demands of the profession would allow room for family life.

"I didn't know how to communicate that I needed to leave every day at 3 p.m. so I could pick up my son," she said of her 11-year-old son, Sam. "I came from an industry where your personal needs were the last things on the radar, so I was surprised when my future employers said they were completely able to work around that."

Jeschke realizes that not every public accounting firm is able to be as flexible. She appreciates the unexpected opportunity to do her job well while keeping her commitment to her family, a commitment that was tested while studying for the CPA Exam.

"You clearly have to make sacrifices and I missed a lot of family events," she said. "But once a week, even when everything else went by the wayside, I still made it to Sam's school to volunteer."

### Opportunity knocks

A key benefit is that her son learned what it takes to build a second career, something Jeschke also witnessed while growing up.

"My parents went back to school when I was in high school," she said. "I would see them studying and it didn't really register as being odd or different. It didn't dawn on me then that they were giving me the message to keep learning and growing. I hope that I've set that example for my son, that no matter what your age, what you are doing or want to do, you can make that opportunity happen for yourself."

Jeschke shares that message whenever she talks with students.

"I encourage them not to lock themselves into anything," she said. "Right out of college, you think you know what you want to do, then life changes. Some things start to matter more than others. You also have to allow for a learning curve, get a sense of self and a sense of the job."

That's where Jeschke finds herself today. "I'm back at the bottom of the mountain," she said. "I realize that despite my age, life and work experience, I'm starting over. It's tough for me to not always figure out the right solution right away."

Many of Jeschke's colleagues offer encouragement as she continues to transition into accounting.

"Because Carmen carries herself with composure and maturity, we would sometimes forget that she was new to all of this," said Janet Hartung Renfert, CPA, a partner at Porter & Sack, CPAs. "She was hard on herself and we had to remind her that she was still learning technical aspects of her new profession."

Jeschke said she feels blessed to have had so much support.

"I had a great team helping me succeed," she said. "I had help from family and friends, a great husband who went above and beyond, and a professional environ-

ment where colleagues were willing to serve as resources when there was something I didn't understand."

### Life's an adventure

Making career changes confirmed Jeschke's belief that life is an adventure.

"Early on, I decided to be open to opportunity," she said. "I wanted a life path that was a journey of surprises. For example, for years I said I would never go back to school, but guess what happened? I went back to school and now I'm on a completely different path."

Jeschke thinks the accounting profession makes it possible for those working in other fields to transition to accounting.

"Many people are choosing accounting as a second or third career," Jeschke said. "I think the variety of backgrounds and life experience second-career professionals bring to the table is exciting to see."

### What's next for Carmen Jeschke?

"I want to keep learning more as a professional, and I'm excited to imagine what I might be doing after 20 years."



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