

The Promise of Technology and Human Ingenuity

An Interview with Chloe Barzey, Office Managing Director - Atlanta, Accenture

EDITORS' NOTE *Chloe Barzey has over 29 years of consulting and industry experience, including 23 years with Accenture. As the Office Managing Director, she leads Accenture's vision and operations across Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. Barzey is a transformational thought leader and has published numerous points of view on competitiveness, operational cost reduction and supply chain management. She is the executive sponsor for several women's and diversity programs within Accenture and is an active member of the Atlanta community. She served as the vice chair on the board for Hands on Atlanta and is currently a member of Leadership Atlanta, Leadership Georgia, The International Women's Foundation and on the Board of the Executive Leadership Council. Barzey has been recognized by several national organizations and publications including Diversity MBA Magazine, Diversity Inc., The Glass Hammer, and Working Mother Magazine. She has an Electrical Engineering degree from Cornell University and an MBA from Wharton.*



Chloe Barzey

COMPANY BRIEF *Accenture (accenture.com) is a global professional services company with leading capabilities in digital, cloud and security. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries, it offers Strategy and Consulting, Interactive, Technology and Operations services – all powered by the world's largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. Its more than 624,000 people deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity every day, serving clients in more than 120 countries. Accenture embraces the power of change to create value and shared success for its clients, people, shareholders, partners, and communities.*

What differentiates Accenture in the industry and how do you define the Accenture advantage?

Accenture's purpose is "to deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity." It guides our strategy, our priorities and the opportunities we create for our more than 624,000 people around the world. Every day we reflect the human ingenuity of our talented

people and use technology to deliver 360-degree value to all our stakeholders. Our purpose and our brand are grounded in our enduring formula for market leadership: embracing change, continuously transforming our business, helping other businesses create value and always striving to make things better – for our own people, our clients, our communities and the planet.

Will you provide an overview of your role and key areas of focus?

I'm the Office Managing Director responsible for our people and business across Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee. We're focused on bringing innovation to our clients and ensuring an inclusive workplace and great work experience for our more than 3,000 people across these states. Each day, I'm accountable for their engagement and well-being. In my role, I make a difference by connecting people to each other, building community and facilitating them doing well by doing good. To model this, I focus on collaborating with other leaders from a variety of backgrounds within and outside of Accenture to talk about challenges and implement solutions focused on positive change.

Especially since the start of the pandemic, people have felt so disconnected. Some have felt left out of the conversation. It takes intentionality and leadership to bring people together, to practice community and tell real stories about what failure looks like, and how to succeed.

Will you highlight Accenture's Atlanta office and the growth and strength of the office?

I'm proud to say that our Accenture Atlanta office is our most diverse location in North America, and our people here are passionate and engaged in our community. At Accenture, we are constantly making connections, working with our clients, community partners, government and academics. We are constantly looking for ways to collaborate across groups, to bring real improvements and change to our local communities.

Our Atlanta strategy is to dare to dream; to collaborate to innovate; to unite for impact. We are mobilized around this commitment and we are daring to lead the change we want to see. We're not only saying we're going to do something, but we're also doing it. Across Accenture, we're making our actions visible to the external community and we're measuring our progress and making that progress visible. It's a bold move and one of the reasons I love being at Accenture.

How did Accenture's Atlanta office adapt the way it works to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and how proud are you to see the resilience of your team during this unprecedented time?

Accenture has followed a flexible hybrid model for a long time, so that's not new. What is new are the pandemic-related concerns around our people's health, their families, their financial health, and the stress of recent

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social unrest in our country, which are added stressors for our people. Making room for additional responsibilities of parents working with school-aged children, individuals caring for aged parents and everyone dealing with additional pandemic-related stress is key. So, while our flexible approach has fundamentally been consistent, we recognize that people are juggling more now than ever before. We have also gone from OOO (Out Of Office) to OOT (Out Of Touch), encouraging employees to truly take breaks and fully unplug to rest and recharge.

All that said, I’ve been so impressed by our people’s resilience. In all the ways, they’ve stepped up and showed compassion for each other and for our community. Our people are amazing.

How important is it for there to be close coordination between Accenture’s offices in order to provide consistent and seamless service?

Very important. The most important thing is collaboration and communication. It’s always great to be together in person, but technology really helps when that is not possible. Accenture has had geographically distributed teams and worked in a hybrid model for years. We are naturally a very collaborative and cohesive organization, so this is nothing new. With technology such as Microsoft Teams, we can easily collaborate and see each other, and we are intentional about finding ways to increase engagement and a sense of community when we can’t all be together in one place.

It’s this spirit of collaboration that helps us deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity, bringing consistent and seamless service for our clients.

How critical is it for Accenture to build a diverse and inclusive workforce in order to bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table when addressing client needs?

We know from experience and from our Getting to Equal research that diversity and equality are key drivers of innovation, and inclusive cultures are six times more likely to innovate than their non-inclusive peers. Diversity is vital for innovation and essential for serving our clients. At Accenture, our first priority is our people, and to best support them, we approach inclusion and diversity with the same discipline and rigor as any other business priority.

In 2016, we published our demographics by race for the first time, along with statistics on gender, veterans and persons with disabilities. We published them because we asked our people to make changes – to make diversity and inclusion a personal priority – and it was important to be transparent about why. Transparency creates trust.

Since then, we have made progress because we had a plan and we held ourselves accountable, and we are doing more to create sustained change at Accenture and in our communities. We are committed to being part of the solution and we will continue to hold ourselves accountable.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?

I do feel that now, more than ever, there are opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry. The key is speaking up, stepping up, and stretching. Don’t wait until you have all the skills in the job description to go for the job – just go for it.

Most importantly, have mentors and sponsors. Don’t try to do it alone. Be sure you have people around you who can promote you, counsel you, champion you and team with you. Working hard is important, but so is working smart, collaborating and making sure that others are aware of your contributions.

What do you see as the keys to effective leadership and how do you describe your management style?

I stepped into my role leading our Atlanta office in February 2020 with the vision of having our office lead from the front by getting people engaged and connected to make a positive impact for our clients, our people and the community. One practical way to make this happen is to help foster meaningful connections. I have found the best way to inspire people is to take the time to listen to them, to understand their goals and dream big about what can be accomplished collectively. Once we have a shared vision, the path to get there becomes easier.

I’m always looking for ways to make connections and work together toward a common goal. To me, communication, connection, and transparency are key. Making sure you are up front about what you’re doing, letting people know why you’re doing it, and most importantly following through on your commitments.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in professional services?

The importance of not going it alone. When I wanted to be promoted to Managing Director with Accenture, I didn’t get the promotion on my first try. I realized then that I needed mentors and allies, and it made a world of difference. We are all more successful when we join forces than when we try to tackle anything on our own. That’s true in your personal and professional life, and even more true when you look at companies coming together with other companies and organizations for a common good. There’s real power in connections and collaboration. When we do that, we can do anything. ●

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