

# WOMEN BUSINESS

*Woman to Watch*

## Sally Mainquist

**S**ally Mainquist, CPA, has been president and CEO of Certes Financial Pros since May 2007. The St. Louis Park-based company places senior-level finance and accounting professionals. More than half of the Fortune 500 companies in the Twin Cities and many small businesses use Certes for interim, project and permanent placement support. Mainquist has held progressive roles with Certes for the past nine years. She began her career with KPMG and went on to hold various leadership roles in finance and operations, including vice president of manufacturing at Recovery Engineering Inc. and manager of financial reporting and focus factory manager at Graco Inc. Mainquist is a member of Financial Executives International, Financial Executive Women Network, the Minnesota Society of CPAs, the American Institute of CPAs and the CEO Roundtable.



### President and CEO Certes Financial Pros

[www.certespros.com](http://www.certespros.com)

*What professional accomplishment makes you most proud?*

I have experienced (and enjoyed!) several career changes throughout my professional life from accounting, to operations, to sales. I pride myself on being open to change and my ability to thrive on change. Capitalizing on opportunities to change careers has allowed me to experience new challenges and accomplishments.

*What do you see as the biggest issue in your industry right now?*

The shortage of qualified finance and accounting professionals now and in the years ahead will be a challenge. With the baby boomer generation approaching retirement age, the demand for experienced finance and accounting professionals is surpassing the supply. While the number of finance and accounting graduates is increasing each year, it will not compensate for the number of retirees in the industry.

*What are your goals for this year?*

- Seamless integration with our new parent company, Staffing Now Inc.
- Expand our two professional networking groups (FEWnet – Financial Executive Women Network; and Nextworking – a group for young

finance and accounting professionals)

- Leverage best practices — be open to change and implement ideas to keep us cutting-edge in the market.

- Continue to build a sense of community with our contractor base. Since most of our employees conduct their work at client locations, it's important that they feel a sense of connection and belonging to Certes.

- Share the Certes spirit — continue to promote the ways in which Certes serves as a bridge to a better life for the financial community, clients and employees alike! *What are your long-term goals?*

A long-term goal is to expand Certes nationally. To introduce the Certes culture, our beliefs and our practices to other markets would be incredibly fulfilling.

*What was the single most defining moment in your career?*

I began my professional life as a secretary at a public accounting firm. I watched the kind of work I saw my colleagues performing and I thought, "I can do that!" I also recognized the opportunities that would result from obtaining an education in

accounting. I attended night school while working during the day for two years to help fund my education, and eventually I finished up with an accounting degree from the University of Northern Iowa.

*Who has been your greatest mentor?*

George Aristides, retired CEO of Graco Inc. I worked under George during my 13 years at Graco, and he had an incredible way of involving and empowering employees at all levels. George encouraged me to explore cross-functional opportunities, and as a result I applied for and was promoted to a plant manager position. Transitioning from public accounting at KPMG to manufacturing at Graco was a big challenge for me. I was not only learning the business but I was also the only female plant manager at the time. Another plant manager gave me six months to make an impact, and I knew the first thing I had to do was build trust at all levels of the organization, as I had seen George do. I walked the factory floor, met with each person, asked for suggestions, and implemented many of their ideas — not to make friends but because they were smart decisions. George taught me to listen to the individual and take care of the individual, and then take care of business.

*What advice would you give to women professionals?*

Support one another. It's important for women to encourage and promote other women, especially in the business world. I also encourage female professionals to live their most authentic life. Leverage your strengths and find work that involves your passions.

*Family:* Husband Kent; children Susan, 23, and Reed, 20

*Hobbies:* I enjoy weekends at our lake home, biking, skiing, exercising, volunteering, entertaining and decorating.

*If you were to write a book about yourself, what would the title be?*

"It's Never Too Late to Change Careers"