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Tax Maven

The Contemporary Tax Journal's Interview with Ms. Mindy Harada Mayo

By: Enas J. Al-Mais, MST Student

For this issue of *The Contemporary Tax Journal's* – tax maven feature, I had the pleasure of interviewing Mindy Harada Mayo, CPP. Ms. Mayo is a Tax Managing Director in the San Jose office of KPMG, assisting companies of all sizes with payroll issues encountered during a company's life cycle. She is also the sole proprietor of OS Payroll, an independent consulting firm.

Ms. Mayo has over 30 years of employment tax experience advising clients through a myriad of tax issues. She specializes in independent contractor determinations as well as payroll tax audit assistance, leveraging her experience as an auditor to assist clients who are undergoing either a federal or state payroll tax review. Mindy also has expertise with the US employment tax issues encountered by inpatriate and expatriate employees.

Ms. Mayo has also assisted clients with mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, rectifying reporting issues, and penalty abatements to name a few.

Recognized nationally as an expert in the field of payroll and worker classification issues, Mindy is a frequent presenter for the American Payroll Association at both local and national events and is a member of the APA's National Speaker's Bureau. Mindy has presented to tax professionals on the topic of stock option taxation, the payment of inpatriate and expatriate employees, the issues encountered with a mobile workforce, and the due diligence process for payroll when undergoing a merger or acquisition to name a few. Following are questions I asked Ms. Mayo during our interview on November 7, 2022, in San Jose.

1. How did you get involved in the tax field? Was that your plan when you were in college?

I started out as a philosophy major at SJSU and quickly learned nobody is going to pay me for my deep thoughts. I switched to accounting and graduated, eager to jump into an accounting job. I participated in the on-campus interviews and talked with the State of CA. I tested with them and ended up ranked as eligible for a job. They contacted me from their employment tax division. I took the job, not realizing how specialized I was going to become. Definitely! It was not my plan in college, but it has served me well.

2. What stands out as one or two of your most significant accomplishments in your career?

I have managed to become a recognized expert in the field of employment tax, and I am asked frequently to be a speaker throughout the country. It is a small circle, but it is nice to be recognized for my professional accomplishments.

3. How do you keep up to date with changes in tax law and new types of business transactions and ways of working?

The joy of working in CPA firms, especially the Big 4, is being surrounded by amazingly intelligent people. This is both within the firm and the clients that we deal with as well as the state and federal agencies. We have many resources at our fingertips, but my area of tax is very specialized. I look to the American Payroll Association as well as NASPP and SHRM for updates that are payroll, stock and HR related. Staying involved at the local and national level is very important. These groups are organized and generally run by volunteers who are recognized experts in their fields. Having them available to bounce ideas off and to discuss issues as they arise is how I stay on top of changes and upcoming issues.

4. What type of business activity are you involved with today that did not exist when you graduated from school and how did you get involved in the area?

All the remote speaking opportunities and teaching to diverse audiences across all areas of tax did not exist when I graduated from school. We now have instant access to content and expect answers to be at our fingertips. The online webinars and tutorials that can be accessed instantly did not exist when I graduated. The thought leadership that is available quickly and from reliable sources is phenomenal.

5. What do you think is one key area of our federal tax system that could/should be improved and why?

The poor IRS has struggled tremendously with automation on the payroll side and the pandemic has only made it worse. Their backlog of what they would like to do is long; and by the time they have funding and the ability to work through it, technology has evolved. Technology is not waiting for the IRS to be able to move forward. There are many parts of my job that could be simplified if the federal and state agencies had the ability to automate their return acceptance and processing.

6. What advice do you have for students preparing for a career in tax?

Start broad and specialize later – after you have a core base of knowledge behind you. I became specialized right out of school, and it has worked out wonderfully. But if for

some reason I either disliked the work or the tax was eliminated, I have no skill or knowledge base to fall back on.

Fun Questions:

7. If you could have dinner with anyone (living or not), who would it be?

Mother Theresa. To find a human so completely dedicated to serving others is awe inspiring.

8. What is the most unusual item in your office or something in it that has special meaning to you?

I have a large glass bowl on my desk that contains dozens and dozens of electronic hotel keys from all my travels. I look at it often and am thrilled that, post-pandemic, we no longer must travel like we used to. Companies have realized we can work remote and can connect via a video conference versus traveling to the countryside on a regular basis.



Enas Al-Mais and Mindy Mayo, Nov. 7, 2022.