

# IPA Profile

Tom Barry  
Managing Partner  
GHJ



GHJ

71 YEARS  
IN BUSINESS

LOS ANGELES  
HEADQUARTERS

250

STAFF SIZE

## What is the single biggest challenge facing your firm now?

Employee engagement is a major challenge across the board. With the evolving nature of work, driven by technological advancements, remote and hybrid work models, and shifting employee expectations, maintaining high levels of engagement has become increasingly complex. Employees now seek more than just a paycheck – they desire a sense of purpose, connection and opportunities for growth within their roles. Disengaged employees can impact productivity, morale and overall company culture, which makes it essential for organizations to prioritize engagement strategies. This includes fostering open communication, recognizing achievements, providing professional development opportunities and creating an inclusive environment where employees feel valued and heard.

## Where do you expect to be focusing most of your attention in the next two to three years?

Technology will continue to transform the industry, and we are already looking at how to enhance the client experience. Advanced data analytics, AI-driven insights and automation could provide clients with deeper, more actionable intelligence.

We are also prioritizing talent development and retention by creating a work environment that supports flexibility, continuous learning and professional growth. My goal is to ensure that we are not just keeping up with industry trends but setting them – leading with a blend of innovative technology and a human touch.

## What is the biggest and sometimes often missed opportunity for the profession?

While firms talk about being data-driven, many are still not fully capitalizing on the insights hidden in their clients' financial data. By investing in predictive analytics and developing capabilities to turn data into strategic advice, we can move from being compliance partners to becoming true business advisors who help shape our clients' future decisions. This shift requires not just technology but also upskilling our people to interpret and communicate data-driven insights effectively.

## What was the best advice you received as a young up-and-comer in the profession?

"If you don't make mistakes, you haven't tried." We work in a field that often demands perfection, and that can cause some to err on the side of inaction. But embracing appropriate risk has allowed me to grow faster, innovate and develop resilience. It is a reminder that progress often comes from stepping out of your comfort zone, and it is something I continue to apply in my leadership

today – encouraging my team to take calculated risks and learn from every experience.

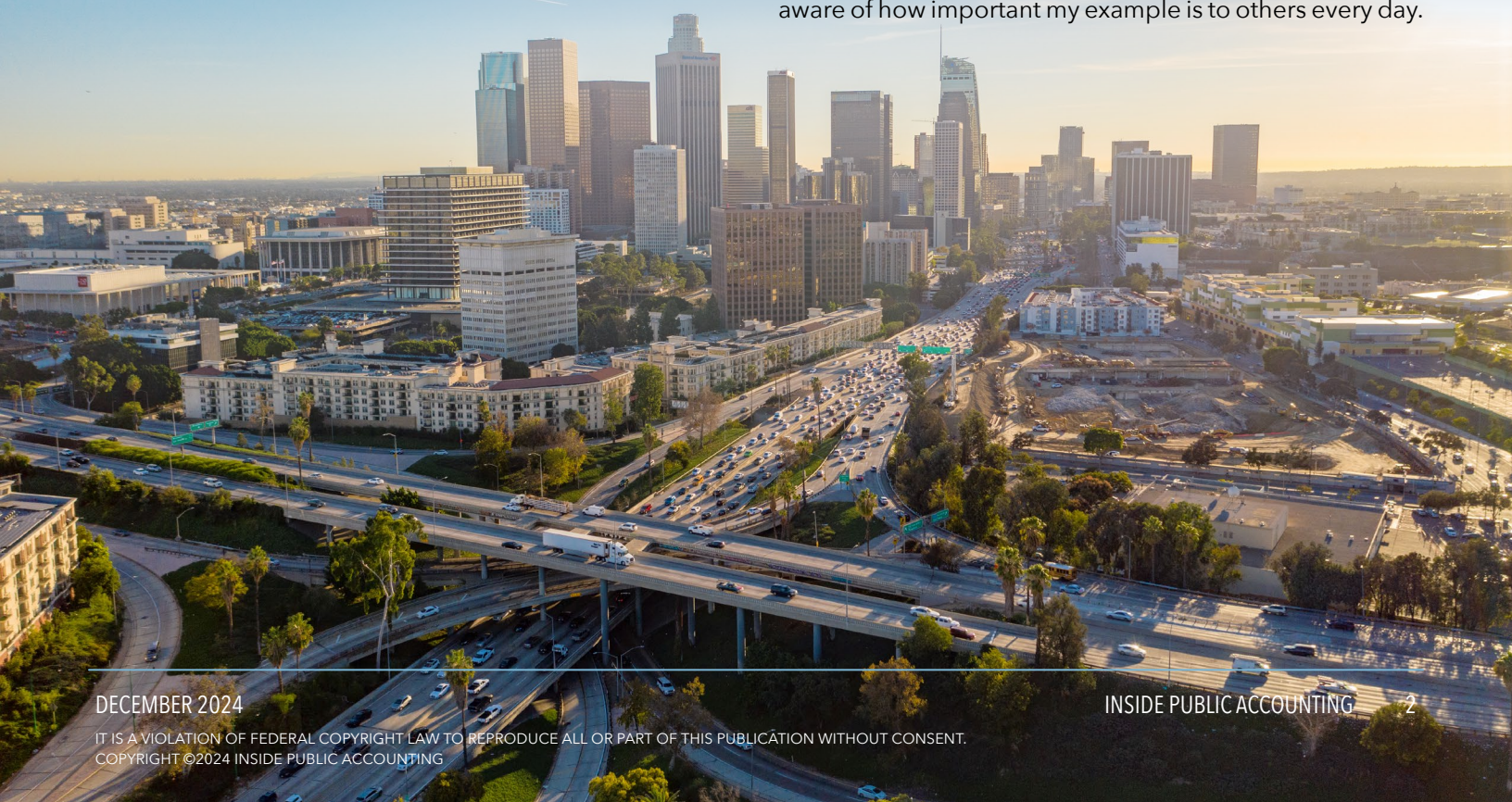
## What advice would you offer to someone entering the accounting profession today?

Do not make short-term decisions that will negatively impact your long-term health – stay the course and play the long game. Economic cycles come and go, but in the long run, maintaining and investing in these foundational elements of your business will always yield a strong return.

## What motivates you most as a leader?

My children are my greatest motivation and the most important part of my life. Being a good father is paramount to everything I do, and embracing flexibility in my schedule and leveraging technology allows me to be a present father and husband while still fully dedicating myself to the firm, and I aim to model that balance for my colleagues. At GHJ, we call this #BeMore, and it is the philosophy behind our firm's culture. We believe that people do their best work when they are empowered to #BeMore and pursue their professional and personal goals. By prioritizing this balance, I hope to inspire our team to be more engaged, fulfilled and, ultimately, more impactful in their work and beyond.

The responsibility I feel as a dad and a leader makes me aware of how important my example is to others every day.





## Where do you see the accounting profession in five years? How do you see it changing/developing and/or how would you like it to change?

The profession will continue to be challenged with the talent shortage. The competition for top talent is not going anywhere. To stay ahead, we need to embrace technology not just to automate routine tasks but to enhance the way we work, allowing our people to focus on strategic, value-driven activities. This will include greater use of AI, data analytics and machine learning to replace less value-add tasks, drive insights and provide more proactive advisory services to clients.

Location and time will become more irrelevant. We are already operating in a more flexible and hybrid work model – this evolution has enabled firms to tap into a broader talent pool, unrestricted by geography, and provide clients with seamless service regardless of time

zones. As leaders, it is our responsibility and challenge to champion this evolution and ensure that we build and maintain a culture that supports the ever-evolving needs of our people and clients without compromising on collaboration or client service.

Moreover, I would like to see the profession place a stronger emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability. The pace of change demands that we constantly evolve our skills and stay ahead of emerging trends. I envision firms becoming learning organizations that invest heavily in training and development, not just for technical skills but also for leadership, innovation and emotional intelligence. This is how we can turn the talent challenge into an opportunity – by creating environments where people can thrive professionally and personally.

We aim to serve as true partners to our clients by helping them navigate complexities with agility and insight. By embracing technology, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and redefining the boundaries of our work, we can transform our profession into one that is dynamic, resilient and deeply impactful.

## What is a business book you'd recommend to other leaders?

*The Advantage* by Patrick Lencioni resonated with me because it emphasizes the importance of building a cohesive team and a healthy organization. At GHJ, we strongly believe in investing in our people and setting them up to succeed, and this book focuses on how leaders build culture.

## What is your proudest professional achievement?

My proudest achievement is not tied to a specific moment but rather to the pride I have instilled in my parents throughout my professional journey. They made tremendous sacrifices to give my sister and me opportunities they never had, and I hope that any success we have achieved is a reflection of their dedication. 📌

The IPA community wants to get to know you better! If you'd like to share your thoughts and insights in an IPA Profile, let us know at [ccamara@ipainsider.com](mailto:ccamara@ipainsider.com).

**INSIDE**  
public accounting