



Special thanks to our photographer Jenn Ackerman, and to our host Brick x Mortar, who allowed us to shoot the cover photo at their beautiful location in Minneapolis. Inset photo: Melissa Carmichael (seated), Elaine Wyatt (left) and Lynette Stolarzyk.

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Editor



# A LEAP INTO THE UNFAMILIAR

**WHEN YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THOSE** who are most successful in the workplace, do you often wonder what was most important to their success? Was it hard work? A key mentor? Or did they take risks that led to bigger rewards? Nearly seven in 10 women are open to taking small risks to further their career, according to a KPMG survey that informs our feature story of the same name, “Risk and Reward,” which examines how women navigate in the male-dominated world of finance. The survey also found far fewer (43 percent) are open to taking the bigger risks that may be associated with career advancement.

Our cover features three professionals who have navigated their own paths to make their mark. Each is at different place on their journey—two are past winners and one is among the 36 honorees also included in this issue—but they share what the KPMG study dubs as a willingness to “leap into the unfamiliar.”

Elaine Wyatt worked as a chief financial officer and consultant after beginning her career in accounting; see “Something Ventured.” But after an executive role with the Girl Scouts of Minnesota sparked a love of working with nonprofits, her feminism and unique skillset led her to take a leap and

lead WomenVenture, an economic development agency that helps women entrepreneurs. Lynette Stolarzyk, who like Wyatt is a 2018 honoree, was recently tapped to lead Baker Tilly’s international tax function and help develop the “firm’s 2.0 strategy implementation.” For 2019 honoree Melissa Carmichael it’s all about what’s new, and how technology will shape the future of finance. Together with industry colleagues, she founded the Minnesota Fintech Collective to cultivate innovation and create an attractive environment for area startups.

So is risk at the core of success? Interestingly, just 8 percent of the women in KPMG’s study believe so. Most don’t credit being a good leader (17 percent), or even creativity (16 percent), but instead attribute advancement to good habits such as plain hard work (73 percent). Perhaps it’s a leader’s courage to make the leap, or their vision to see what others may fail to perceive, that we seek to emulate most. Maybe it’s a bit of each.

Congratulations to our Top Women in Finance 2019 honorees.