

Executive Profile



ROBERT RAFFO

MANAGING PARTNER, HOOD & STRONG LLP

Background: Born and raised in San Mateo and began career at the San Francisco accounting firm Hood & Strong in 1977 upon college graduation. He became a partner in 1989 and managing partner in October 2008. He debuted the firm's formal nonprofit-service niche in 1995.

First job: Painter for my cousin's apartment complex in San Mateo and a pet sitter.

Education: Bachelor's of science in commerce from Santa Clara University.

Residence: Los Altos.

Business philosophy

Best way to keep competitive edge: It's important to realize the talent in all your personnel; to be open to new, unusual ideas; to take risks; and to plan for three years out or more, not just the next year or two.

Guiding principle: Be kind, genuine and respectful. It's simple, yet so important.

Yardstick of success: A workplace of smiles, laughter and respect. Clients smile when they see you. Another measure of our success is that half of our 16 partners are women. I'm extremely proud of that unusual statistic. The first women achieved partnership at our firm in 1981.

Goal yet to be achieved: Positioning Hood & Strong for its entrance into its second century in 2017.

Judgment calls

Best business decision: Lobbying for the establishment of a formal niche within the firm to focus on the accounting needs of our nonprofit community.

Worst business decision: Not confronting issues head on. That doesn't happen any more.

Toughest business decision: Not being able to give our personnel larger raises this past year due to economic restraints.

Biggest missed opportunity: I really have no regrets. I guess not capitalizing on the relationships that my family had as native San Franciscans.

Mentors: Professionally, the senior partners at our firm. From both a business and personal perspective, my late mother-in-law, who was fabulously and awesomely pragmatic and caring.

True confessions

Like best about job: The ability to influence the growth and future of our firm, our clients and our personnel.

Like least about job: Hearing that one of our personnel or clients will be leaving us.

Pet peeve: Impatience, arrogance and lack of respect.

Most important lesson learned: Always treat everyone with respect and kindness.

Most respected competitor: I respect all of our competitors. They keep the excitement growing each day.

Three greatest passions: Family, piano, faith.

First choice for a new career: Orchestra conductor.

Predilections

Favorite quote: "I do", Susan Raffo, Nov. 12, 1983.

Most influential book: "The Shack" by William Young.

Favorite cause: Education of girls for careers in math, science and business.

Favorite status symbol: Loving family and good friends.

Favorite movie: "The Godfather, Part 1."

Favorite restaurant: Le Papillon in San Jose.

Favorite vacation spot: The Hawaiian Island of Lanai.

Favorite way to spend free time: Anything with my wife, family, friends, my dog and cats; reading; or traveling.

What's on your iPod: Lawakua and their rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World" transcends the others.

What do you drive: Honda Accord, grey, 2005. I love my Honda, and it makes quite an impression on the garage attendants. (Big grin.)

— Mark Calvey ■