

## Ask a Mentor

**Renisa Ribeiro (BBA, Accounting senior) asks EOC Mentor Lena Bakis about taking risks, finding motivation, secrets to success and the best piece of advice she has ever received.**

**Renisa Ribeiro (RR):** Could you give me an example of a risk you have taken in your career? Did it backfire or did it end up working in your favor?

**Lena Bakis (LB):** *Few years ago, I was offered an opportunity to make an internal transfer into a new department within the firm to work on a completely different type of work. I was not looking to transfer anywhere and this offer came in as a surprise. The colleague that I worked with before had transferred to that department a year back and was looking to expand her group. I gave it a quick thought and decided to go through interview process to understand what the position demanded. I learned that the firm was looking for people to serve its clients in that field and was aggressively looking for resources. This possible transfer was a huge risk for me as it was taking me away from most of what I have learned before and was asking me to become an expert in a brand new skill from scratch and rather quickly. After a careful consideration, I took the challenge. Transition was not very smooth, as I had to juggle my previous commitments and new responsibilities in the beginning. As the time passed and I learned the new trade, I had also met many new people and increased my internal network way beyond what it was before. The transfer has since worked in my favor, provided me with flexibility I needed to spend more time with my family and opened new horizons in my career. I am still with the new department, working on variety of interesting projects. I learned that risk could pay off.*



Lena Bakis

**RR:** What is the best piece of professional advice you have ever been given?



Renisa Ribeiro

**LB:** *I must admit that the company I work for has an incredible corporate culture with people who truly care about careers of others. If I ever doubt a certain career choice offered to me, I have numerous people that I can call on for advice. I had a particularly challenging instance. Several years ago I found myself in a situation where I felt that the system was not fair based on certain circumstances and I thought that I didn't receive the recognition I deserved. I felt puzzled and upset at the same time, but wanted to make sure I found the right solution. I had talked to several people and all of them had interesting suggestions, but one partner that I worked for at the time hit the spot. He advised me that instead of feeling sorry for myself and being angry at the system and the circumstances, I can work harder and prove the system wrong. I like to keep positive attitude in general and truly believe that the hard work will always pay off. I followed his advice, let go of my anger and started fresh. I worked harder than ever before and got rewarded for it. The action I took as a result of his advice proved to be a much better choice.*

**RR:** How do you motivate yourself to work on a project that might not seem all that exciting?

**LB:** *First of all, one should realize that not every project will be the most exciting piece of work you do. A client asked me once if I loved my job. I had answered that I love my family and really like what I do for a living, but I don't want to love my job, because I am looking to have a healthy balance between my professional and my personal life. I try to master projects that might not be most exciting and when I see results coming together, it makes me proud and I feel good about my work. I tell myself that the faster and better I do this particular work, the faster I will be done with it and then I can move on to something more exciting.*

**RR:** I'm sure you have achieved a tremendous amount of success in career, what is your secret?

**LB:** *There are many traits that one should possess in order to have a successful career: be organized, detail oriented, hard worker, fast learner, etc. All of those are equally important, but there is one quality that can distinguish you from others. You must always take pride in your work product. I cannot imagine delivering a memo or a power point to a client and/or internally if I am not proud of my work. I have to perfect everything that I do before I share results of my work with others. I take every project seriously and take great pride in results of my work. It applies to my house work and I teach my kids to be the same way. My 9 year old often asks me when I clean the house: "Are we expecting a president or something?" And my answer to her is: "I want to make sure my house is always ready to host the president" 😊*

**Lena Bakis** is a Manager within EY's Financial Accounting Advisory Services (FAAS) Group based in New York with over nine years of experience in both private and public sectors. In her current role, Lena is responsible for serving clients on technical accounting matters generally as a result of new accounting standards, primarily focused on the FASB and IASB's lease accounting convergence project. Prior to joining FAAS, Lena was part of EY's Real Estate Assurance Services Group, where she was responsible for designing and executing internal controls-based and substantive audits for variety of public and private real estate companies, both US-based and international. Lena's experience is primarily in US GAAP. Lena has been involved with several accounting advisory projects and proposals to help companies understand the proposed changes to lease accounting and assess the potential financial statement impact of the lease proposals using the EY Lease Analyzer. She delivered CPE training sessions on lease accounting convergence projects for variety of clients. Lena's most recent experience involved a major revenue recognition restatement project, and she has significant project management experience working with cross boarder and cross functional teams. The clients she has served in an audit capacity include Cedar Shopping Centers, Inc. (NYSE - CDR), Centro Properties Group, Sterling Equities, Retail Opportunity Investments Corp. (NASDAQ - ROIC), Aetos Capital, DLC Management Corp, SL Green Realty Corp. (NYSE - SLG), National Hockey League, New York Library. Lena received a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Baruch College. She is a licensed CPA in the State of New York and a member of the New York State Society of CPAs. She is proficient in Russian.

**Renisa Ribeiro (BBA Accounting, 150 Credits -2014)** is in her senior year at Baruch, majoring in Accounting and minoring in Corporate Communication Studies. She is a former Executive Board Member for the Baruch College Accounting Society. In addition to attending Baruch, Renisa is currently interning with the HESS Energy Trading Company as a Profit & Loss Intern. Prior to HESS, she has interned at the US Securities and Exchange Commission, Charity: Water, DonorsChoose.org, PENCIL and Ernst & Young LLP. While Renisa was in high school, she was part of the Virtual Enterprise International program where she served as the Vice-President of Human Resources for her firm. As an alumna, she is currently serving as a volunteer judge for the Virtual Enterprise Business Plan and Trade Fair Competitions. As for the future, Renisa would love to join the public accounting field and obtain her CPA license. <http://www.linkedin.com/in/renisaribeiro>

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If you have any questions you would like to ask an Executives on Campus (EOC) Mentor, please submit 3-5 questions to [executivesoncampus@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:executivesoncampus@baruch.cuny.edu) with the subject "Ask a Mentor".

For more information about Ask a Mentor, email Karolina Novak-Choinska at [karolina.novak-choinska@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:karolina.novak-choinska@baruch.cuny.edu)