



Conversations with KPMG partners

Featuring Milford McGuirt

The KPMG Connect interview series



Milford McGuirt currently serves as Atlanta's Office Managing Partner (OMP) and has dedicated 30 years to KPMG LLP (KPMG). He is a respected presence in the boardroom, a leader in the community, and a dedicated family man.

In addition to his OMP role, he has served as the national segment leader for our Higher Education, Research & Other Not-for-Profits (HERON) practice. He recently completed his service on the board of the KPMG Foundation and has served on KPMG's Board of Directors' Nominating Committee as well as on KPMG's Diversity Advisory Board, and was cochair of the firm's African-American Network.

During a recent interview, Milford shared insight and advice that covered the value of education, his leadership perspective, advisement on achieving work/life balance, as well as the importance of giving back to the community.

Please tell us about your career path at KPMG.

I moved to Atlanta and joined KPMG as an experienced hire in January of 1986. I was promoted to senior manager on July 1 of that year and then made partner on July 1 of 1990. Prior to joining the firm, I had worked for another firm in another location. I spent roughly all of my career on the audit side of our business and working across a number of different industries—financial services, real estate, healthcare, manufacturing, and most recently, higher education, research, and other not-for-profits.

What do you find most rewarding as the leader of KPMG's HERON practice?

Early on in life, even before college, my dad strongly encouraged my brother and me to really focus on our education. If we wanted to play sports, it was contingent upon getting good grades in the classroom. I was the first member of my family to finish college, and when I started my career, this concept came back to me. It reminded me of the lessons I had learned early on about education being a tool to help people transform their socioeconomic trajectory. I think about that now when we go around campuses to recruit students and do work for these institutions. Working in this

industry ties very closely with the firm's higher purpose initiative as we help institutions transform individuals' lives.

What are you focused on as Atlanta's OMP and how would you describe your leadership style?

I have been in the OMP role since January of 2015 and I have focused heavily on transforming how our partners and professionals view the firm and the brand. I want our people to have confidence and pride in KPMG's capabilities and what we do for our clients. I believe that there is also ample opportunity to do more for our clients and I am focused on ensuring we are building strong relationships across our functions and service lines. I focus on making the firm stronger so that we can be the clear firm of choice in the marketplace.

When I think about this role in terms of leadership, there are three main pillars where I focus my efforts: (1) Growing the business for our current and future generation of professionals, (2) Developing our people because we cannot accomplish number one without having strong people, and (3) Representing the brand in the market in which we serve from community and business perspectives. I view the OMP role as an opportunity to represent

the brand and work on behalf of the partners and employees within the Atlanta office.

Please talk about your involvement in community initiatives within the Atlanta market.

I have been involved with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education for a number of years. The organization consists of business, education, community, and government leaders who share a vision of improved K-12 public education in Georgia. I serve on the executive committee of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the audit committee of Woodruff Arts Center, and I am chair of the finance committee of United Way of Metro Atlanta.

Within the firm, I recently completed my term on the board of the KPMG Foundation.

How have you seen the focus on people and culture evolve at KPMG?

We are in business because of our people, so it is critical for us to ensure that they are constantly encouraged, inspired, motivated, and really understand how they fit into the overall purpose of the firm. Today, KPMG is much more focused on empowering our professionals and exposing them to a number of different career paths within the firm, as well as mobility across functions and geographies.

As a well-respected mentor, how do you groom the leaders of tomorrow?

Mentorship has received a lot more attention in recent years. When I was a younger professional, mentoring was more informal and certainly not as structured as it is today. There has also been a shift to ensure that as a firm we have ethnic and gender diversity—and also diversity of thought.

When engaging with younger professionals, I aim to help them understand how what they do each and every day fits into the big picture. I want them to know that they have a voice and can influence their career trajectory. We need to embrace our millennial professionals as they are our future leaders.

They should feel that KPMG is a great place to work and build a career, where they can continue to grow and be challenged. They need to know that the firm is behind them and their successes.

I also like to drive home that KPMG has a family atmosphere and that you can be your true self. The firm embraces sharing who we are outside of work and I want to make sure that is clear to the folks that I lead as Atlanta's OMP.

As a partner at the firm, a family man, and an active member of the community, how have you been able to find the right balance?

The most important thing to do is integrate my family into what I do at work and what we do here as a firm. It is essential for my family to be involved and get to know other families at events like our KPMG Family Day, community service projects, and holiday celebrations. The firm has coed sports teams, which gives you an opportunity to interact with your colleagues outside of work and incorporate your family into these activities. When your family is involved in firm activities, then they do not feel like you are taking time away from them.

I hold the same beliefs on the community side—I work to incorporate my family into whatever I do there as well. Recently, Big Brothers Big Sisters had a fund raising event at a bowling alley that my wife and I attended. We had a phenomenal time and it was for a good cause. It was an opportunity to integrate work, community, and family into a day that turned out to be a lot of fun.

What message, if any, would you want to share with the alumni community?

First, I would like to say thank you for the contributions that you all have made to the firm and I would strongly encourage you to stay connected because I think of us as a family. The firm wants to make sure that we are a valuable resource for you in your career and that you are successful. It is truly a benefit to stay engaged on both sides.

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