

A Capstone Conversation With Michelle Golden



Michelle Golden
Growth Leader/Principal
K·Coe Isom



CAPSTONE MARKETING

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Hello, this is [Jean Caragher](#), President of [Capstone Marketing](#). I am delighted to be talking today with [Michelle Golden](#), the newest inductee into the [Association for Accounting Marketing](#) Hall of Fame. Many of you probably know Michelle from her days at Golden Practices. After 14 years of consulting, she made a bold move and joined [K-Coe Isom](#), formerly Kennedy and Coe, as an owner and growth leader. There, Michelle works on aligning sales, marketing, and value creation with operations and strategic objectives. She guides and works closely with the firm's pricers, industry strategists, and the marketing communications and sales teams, and participates on the firm's five person leadership team. I could go on and on. Michelle is a published author, a [TEDx](#) presenter, and accounting industry influencer. Check out her profile on [LinkedIn](#) for more. Congratulations, Michelle, and welcome to the Capstone Conversation.

Michelle: Thank you, Jean. It's a pleasure to join you today.

Jean: We've known each other a long time, Michelle, and this award was so well-deserved, perhaps a bit late in coming. How did that feel that night?

Michelle: Oh my gosh, I was very surprised. I was actually out of the room at the moment, at a different dinner, and I was receiving some odd texts from people demanding my presence urgently. So, I ran downstairs and was really touched and honored with the recognition in AAM's Hall of Fame. It was pretty cool. I was surprised because I had not been as involved in AAM over the last five to 10 years as I had been very, very, very heavily involved in the '90s and early 2000s. Life took me in some different directions that made it a little bit hard. I had to make some choices about where to spend my energy, and I wasn't as involved with AAM. So, I was really surprised, but I don't know that it was late. For something like that I don't know that there's a time schedule for it, but thank you so much.

Jean: You're welcome. Michelle, let's start off. We both understand that accounting marketing can be challenging. What do you think is the greatest challenge in marketing CPA firms?

Michelle: It is finding the true, actual, distinctive thing about the firm, the firm's service to a particular niche, or the firm's practice areas. If you go from one website to another to another, or talk to one CPA versus another, you're hearing ultimately the same stories over and over. If you ask somebody, "Well, what makes this firm different?,"



whether it's my firm or any of the firms that I've consulted with over the years, the list of things that people are going to tell you are identical. They're all table stakes, "We're experts in our field." Well, so is your neighbor firm on either side of you. Everybody's an expert in that niche, which is why everybody has gone to niches. That's been a big thing over the last 20 years and it's been very fruitful. But, some firms are deeper in niches than others, and I think it's our job, and the biggest challenge is to really hold someone out. There are some key factors that if they're not met the firm really isn't in a niche, and I would categorize it as dabbling. My opinion is, you can't really differentiate or hold yourself out if you're a dabbler. You have to be deep. It's hard to get CPAs sometimes to really go deep enough to make a difference.

Jean: Because they feel if they start focusing in specific areas they're missing opportunities out of those areas of focus?

Michelle: Yes, absolutely. There's a saying (I don't even know whose saying it is, but I want say Steve Jobs and that's probably not right, so I'd hate to go down that road too deeply), you are who you don't serve. We don't want to exclude anyone so we're really afraid to say, 'Hey, we're in banking,' because we don't want to exclude contractors, or vice versa. You can't be compelling and convincing that you're a hundred miles deep in 50 areas if you have seven people in your firm. It's just not going to work.

Jean: We've also seen websites where they list their industry expertise and there are 14 industries there.

Michelle: Yes, that's a lot. I'm in a firm now, we have over 300 people and a firm my size can't really be in more than four or five truly deep areas.

I love the firm I grew up in, but I grew up in a firm that at the time had seven partners and about 80 people, and we had probably 14 practice areas listed. We were probably truly rich in maybe three of those. I don't know if that's how that ratio works out, Jean, with what you've seen.

Jean: Right.

Michelle: Yes, I'd say a firm under 150 people, you probably have really two mega strong areas, and the rest are probably a good list of representative clients.

Jean: What is the pitch, if you will, to partners, to help sell the idea or convince a partner group about the value of really focusing and being true specialists in the niche?

Michelle: I tell them that there are three things that are absolutely requisite if they're serious about wanting to differentiate themselves in a niche. One is that you have to read. You have to, whether it's reading online or reading magazines, or trade publications, or what have you. You have to read, I want to say daily, but that might be a



lot. How about weekly? You have to stay in touch. You have to be reading blogs, or reading articles, or reading print materials, whatever it is, you have to constantly be reading and learning about your niche. If you're not, then you're not truly a specialist in it. I would cut that. I would say that's predominate. What do they say? "Readers are leaders"?

Jean: I believe that. . .

Michelle: And, how can you be influential if you're not in touch? How can you be out there really growing and having an impact on an industry? That would be my second one. I'd say reading is number one, number two is actually impacting. Having an impact, whether it's bringing people together, focus groups and peer groups to help influence or change what's happening. Maybe it's just locally in your area, and maybe it's through a construction-related organization where you gather people together and help them create a better environment for their industry. I'm not talking about financial tax stuff, I'm talking about actual business growth and creating opportunities, or getting involved with community development and whatever it is, the regional chamber, something like that to create more credits for people to move into your area so there's more construction opportunity.

This is probably a lagging indicator, but I would say when you are influential, and when you are a specialist, you will be sought after to both speak and write and participate in organizations related to that vertical market. If you're being asked to speak at conferences, that's a great thing, but if you're not combining that with the reading and impacting, you can do more.

Jean: That's awesome. We know people who are doing that, and we know a lot of people who are not.

Michelle: Absolutely. It doesn't mean shame on you. What it really means is to pick, we have a lot of generalists, and that's great. Generalists are awesome. You can still be a generalist, but you do need to pick one thing that you like. Picture cars on a freeway, and, maybe there are 10 cars. You can do work with all 10, but really accelerate, put the pedal to the metal on one. Which is the one thing that you want to grow? I think accountants get bored, and they don't want to be locked into banking. What I say is grow that one thing, get the momentum, and bring people under you to take that over when you get bored with it. Then, go jump over and do your construction, or do your nonprofit, or whatever. Don't feel like just because you're picking that for now that it's permanent rest of your life choice. This is not a spouse.

Jean: Interesting.

Michelle: To grow an area, you have to have enough energy. When you start dividing your energy among too many practice areas, you can't do any of them well. Pick one



thing to really throw your energy at for a few years, make sure you cultivate people underneath you to step into those relationships or join you in those relationships from the start, that's ideal. Then, you can feel comfortable handing it off as you move into the other stuff that you're excited about next.

Jean: What are the biggest changes you've noticed in accounting marketing over the past five years?

Michelle: Technology, for sure. Adapting and embracing newer media over old forms of media, the print ad, for instance, being much less useful than say, content.

I would add that more people are willing to cease being generalists and are seeking to specialize. That has been a big change. When I started in accounting marketing, like you, Jean, you were ahead of me, I started about 20 years ago, everyone wanted to be a generalist. The way we found our niches was to run a list of our clients, categorize them by, back then, SIC codes, and see where we had our bulk. Now, it's really where people have their passion, and they're naturally gravitating that way. Plus, with standards getting stricter more knowledge is needed to focus in a particular area. It is harder to dabble, and I think CPAs are embracing that. That's really good.

The other thing that has changed a lot, reflecting on 20 years, is back then, people were not available to market between January and April. Now, I think CPAs understand that they can't stop. In fact, that's the best time to be out there and actively growing their businesses.

Jean: It's interesting to hear you say that about January through April, because we both know they can't completely stop and expect on May 1, for example, to start all over again for however many months they're willing to put into it and see any results. It's probably not the same effort as it is in the balance of the year, but it's something. Is that what you're finding?

Michelle: Yes, I do. I think that is the case. I think that they're realizing it, because think about when all those opportunities arise for proposals, between December and March. There are a lot of proposals. They've always squeezed those in, but haven't really been as involved as I think folks are now.

The other really, really massive change, and I think it's a fabulous change, is getting younger folks involved in what are considered business development or growth activities much earlier in their career. It used to be that partners wouldn't even involve a staff person. Back in the '90s, even a manager-level person wasn't that involved in marketing, but then suddenly when they're getting ready to be made partner it's, "Hey, you need a book of business." Now, I think they're recognizing we start teaching our seniors and our younger associates, probably about third year. We really start getting them involved in what it takes to nurture a business relationship, starting with existing



customers, but also recognizing external opportunity. There's not an expectation of business development among their peers yet, though, because their peers aren't business decision makers, and it's not a natural fit. We don't want people bringing in 1040 work. You know, those aren't good clients. We don't want them actively bringing in clients that we don't want to keep. That would be very discouraging to them. We do want them going on sales calls so we can role model and have them emulate different types of sales behavior.

The other danger is when only one person in the firm is considered a rainmaker, and marketing looks like Bill, and if you're not like Bill, you're never going to be successful at marketing. What we want them to see is that marketing can look like Michelle, marketing can look like Jean, marketing can look like Susie, and Joe, and Bob. There's lots of different styles. If they get to rotate onto some sales opportunities with those different people, they can actually see what styles are comfortable for them.

Jean: Exactly, so they know they can have their own style, because when you've got that one person that can be so intimidating, the thought is, "I will never be like that person so I guess there's no opportunity for me," when that is not true.

Michelle: Yes, exactly.

Jean: I agree that the quicker firms can get their people involved, let them get the CPA exam out of the way, let them get certified, let them really learn how public accounting works, and then, incorporate that into marketing and business development. What's your prediction for accounting marketing for the next five years?

Michelle: That's the hardest question. My crystal ball has this big, giant crack, so it's really hard to say for sure. My personal favorite is pricing. If we all price exactly the same and we're all running into the walls of, there are only this many hours in a year, and these are our rates, and our rates times hours, we have a maximum revenue opportunity. We're starting to learn, finally, it has taken 15 years or so of constantly being beaten up by the rebels and the revolutionaries that are consulting to the CPA firms, but we're starting to realize that hours don't equate to value. We're starting to realize that sometimes if I can resolve something for you in one hour, it's far more valuable to you than if it takes me three months of eight hour days. So, we shouldn't necessarily equate our time to our price. It's a very, very hard thing, a hard habit to break, especially when all of our firms' metrics are around production hours. I see much more interest among Top 100 firms in exploring ways to price, as our people become more expensive, when it became a requisite to have a master's degree for an accounting or CPA certificate. It has made people even more expensive. Then, the talent crunch of 10 years ago made people more expensive, and now the current talent crunch is making people more expensive. When you charge about the same but your people cost more, I know I'm not a CPA but, I think that the math starts to make margins pretty small. We really do need to look at other ways to price our work.



Now, with that said, if you price things based on what they're actually worth to the customer, sometimes you have to make hard choices, such as "Hey, if it's only worth this to the customer, and that's all they would be willing to pay for it, maybe I don't really want to do that work. Maybe that's not the best use of my time, to do that kind of work, because it's not valued highly in the marketplace. Or, is there something I can do to put more value with that work to make it more highly valued in the marketplace, and therefore more worth it to me?" So, we talk about worth; it has to be good for everybody. It has to be worth it to the client to pay the price that they're going to pay; it has to be worth it to you to do the work at that price. If it's not, I'd sure want to know before I send somebody a bill, if they don't think that the amount that I need to charge them is worth it. We've been really lazy in our profession about having conversations about what something's actually going to cost, because we have this crutch, justifying, "Well, it took me 10 hours to do it, so that's my price," and I don't think it's the right way to do business. I don't think it's the most responsible way. If we don't know how much something's going to cost, and we're charging for it, who does know? Should our clients all walk up to us with a blank check, should we expect them to trust us, if we can't even give them a definitive price for the work that we're going to help them with?

Jean: You bring up an interesting point. Even one of the keynote speakers at Practitioners in Orlando talked about how we're spending our time, what we're doing with our time, how there should be a component of our work in things that we are passionate about. The idea of giving back. I think a lot of people, I'll admit, people my age, we're giving a lot of thought to that. There is so much time, what do we want to be doing with it? What are the best, most valuable things or enjoyable things that we can spend our time on? How does that correlate to your client base, and how you are living your work life?

Michelle: It's choices, right? The CPAs are doing that, too. It's really no different than when we're asking CPAs to focus on a specialty. We're asking them to invest their energy and time in growing their knowledge about a particular, one or five or 10 areas they might work in. We're asking them to commit to growth there.

It is very much similar. Giving back, and that's the other thing, too. For us to really add value, and I think maybe that's the answer to where we're going in the next few years, is what we're doing worthwhile? I had an awesome conversation with [Jason Blumer](#), I don't know if you know Jason, from [Thriveal](#).

Jean: I know of him. I haven't had the opportunity to meet him.

Michelle: He's a crazy rebel accountant who left a big firm, started his own gig, and he got really disenchanted. He was about five or six years in the practice and he got really disenchanted because clients would ask him, "I don't even understand why I need these financial statements. I don't do anything with them." He started really looking, and he's



like, "You don't. They're not helpful to your future. They're just a written snapshot of the past. They're not helping you." Sometimes we try and kind of BS our way out of it, "Well, you know, your audit report is going to help you make decisions going forward." No, it's a management letter with some points on it. . .

Jean: Right, and your banker needs it.

Michelle: Yes, and your banker needs it, but, your management letter's got points on it that are still going to be there next year. It's not groundbreaking. It's not changing that organization. It's not creating a transformational experience for the company. We actually, as business advisers, have to do things in addition to the compliance work to be transformational for the client. Otherwise, it truly is a commodity. CPAs are the only ones who can do an audit. Yet, we go out and we underbid each other over and over and over. We were just up against a much bigger firm in the Top 100 who came in at 20% of what we quoted to get the work. We're just sitting there like they're going lose so badly on that work. We had actually built in a profit margin. They obviously went in expecting a substantial loss. We're not willing to do that. We're not willing to fight for that work in that new market that hard. No, if the client isn't going to respect our value from the start, that's not the kind of client we want to have.

What you're seeing with audit and tax work, you're going to see that increase more and more. If you think about it, with the audit, who values the audit, really? It's going to be the shareholders. In a public company, it's the shareholders. It's the people choosing whether or not that company was worth investing in, if their books can be validated. It's really the stock market. So, when the corporation is the one buying the audit, it really should be Wall Street buying the audit. We're not neutral at all. We want that client back next year. It should be the stock market buying the audit, etc. Accountants should be doing much better, deeper, richer stuff with the products that we're providing. We should be out there helping people transform their businesses to be stronger in the future. I think shareholders, whether a public company or just a private group of stakeholders, would be much more excited about spending the same amount of money on something that's going to help them truly transform their business rather than just meet a banker's or bonding agent's requirements.

Jean: Truly being that business adviser to help business owners look forward in their business instead of recording what has already happened.

Michelle: Unless we've learned from what's happened, but really, what are the learnings? Could we maybe summarize those learnings in a new, better way? Other than telling them, "Well, you have risk here, and you need some different internal controls," I don't know what significant value we're adding in the audit area without adding extra products to it. Benchmarking is dandy, but for me, I'm now a partner in a CPA firm, and people tell me all the time, "Oh, you need to look at this accounting benchmarking report," and that's all well and good, but we're not like other accounting firms in so



many ways. That's just kind of a navel-gazing that I'm really not very interested in doing. I want to outperform other CPA firms. I do look at areas where we lag behind others, but on the flip side, our business model is really different. Our personnel ratios are quite different. How we price is quite different. Oddly so, our margins are pretty comparable to most firms, even though we don't price the traditional way for the majority of our clients, but I'd like to break that number way out.

Jean: You've only been there a short time. I know you'll be blazing another trail, Michelle.

Michelle: Patience is not my virtue, Jean.

Jean: We know lots of marketers, right? What skills or factors enable accounting marketers to be successful?

Michelle: I think it's the same ones that enable our CPAs to be successful. I think it's passion. I think it's diplomacy. I think it's care. I think it's winning people over one at a time. I've watched a lot of marketers over the last 20, 25 years who are so adept, so skilled and brilliant, and come in and they're passionate to begin with. I've watched them boldly charge into the boardroom and make lots of great recommendations, recommendations I would be 100% behind because they're right and with all the right reasons. But, either feeling like they're running into a brick wall, fighting a losing battle, not getting funding, I can list probably the 10 things that I would say lead to the marketers feeling of failure, whether it's the firm feeling like the marketer wasn't a good fit or the marketer feeling like the firm wasn't a fit. I would say that it's patience and understanding that you need to win over, not just the partners, it's partners, managers, and staff, literally one person at a time. You will not have everyone supporting you. It's just not going to happen, but if you can make one person successful in a way that they weren't successful before you interacted with them, that word will spread. They will become your advocate and pretty soon, somebody will come in and say, "Hey Jean, I saw what you did for Don, can you do that for me?" It will just grow organically. So, I would say patience, understanding, learning the field, just like we tell our CPAs to learn the industry, learn the accounting field. Learn what the terminology means. Learn how clients think about CPAs and help teach CPAs how clients think about them.

One other thing that I would throw in there, because I don't like easy answers. I would say one other thing is help those CPAs be less myopic. Accounting firms think about everything in terms of themselves, instead of from the client's perspective. If you can constantly take the voice of the client and say, "Well, what's in it for the client if we say this? Isn't that all about us, not all about the client?" Oh, wow. It's a default position. It's a very self-centered default position. It's very natural for a business to think that way, but we have to be thinking about everything we do and say as we go to market. We have to be thinking about the client's perspective. I had a law firm that I worked with for a long, long time, and one of the lawyers came back from a conference, and said, "I



think we need to put up on our website how technologically advanced we are, that we use three monitors." I can feel your eyes rolling, Jean. I'm like, no. No, no, no, no, no. First of all, have you ever watched [Simon Sinek](#)? Have you seen his TED talk?

Jean: Yes, I have. I saw him speak at the HubSpot conference last year.

Michelle: He's so amazing. He has this [Start with Why](#) book. What he talks about is, people don't care about what you do, which we list. All our websites have, We do this service, we do audits, we do tax returns, we do estate plans, we do this, we do that. People don't care what you do, and they don't care how you do it. We use three monitors. We use eight, you know. I use this software, I use that software. I have an MBA, I don't. We don't care how you do it. What we care about is why you do it. I was just talking to one of our young partners this morning. She's going to sit down with a client that we've had for about a year, and talk to them about how to basically price the next year because we're losing a lot of money, etc. I said, "I don't want you to list all the pieces of paper that you hand them. I don't want you to give them the task list of this product, and this product, and this product. Come in with a line item that says – this was a construction company – 'satisfy your bonding agent's requirements so you get your bond back.' That's why. That's all you need. They don't need to know what eight documents it's going to take to do that. They need to know what the outcome is for them. We need to satisfy the bonding agent to get your bond back. That's what we need. That's what we need to put out there. That's the client's perspective. It's not my to-do list.

Jean: That's a whole mind shift. You're right. That book, it's on my shelf, having read it. I think [Tom Hood](#) recommended it to me, as well, focusing why you do something and not what or how.

Michelle: I can't emphasize it enough.

Jean: Michelle, which of your personal skills contributes most to your success? You've done a lot. You've done many interesting things. You're a published author. You're a TEDx presenter. You've been on the consulting side and now you're back on the firm side in a very high-level role within your firm. Which one of your skills contributed most to making that happen?

Michelle: It's kind of funny because I think the skill that has kept me alive is also the skill that's gotten me fired. I would probably have to say, revolutionary thinking. I'm not satisfied with status quo. That's just me, though. I know lots of people who aren't pushy that way and aren't always telling people they have to try different things or break out of that box. I would say it's not being satisfied with status quo. The way I translate that into something that is less scary, because my audience, my beloved CPAs, can be really frightened by my craziness sometimes that way. I would say, and this is my why, because after watching Simon Sinek, I sat down and I crafted my why. The thing that



quote "turns me on" in my career, about what it is that I do every day, I don't need you to change what you're doing based on having talked to me ever. I just will be so satisfied if you see something a new way. If I can see that light will go on to where somebody goes, "Oh, I didn't think of it that way," or, "Oh, that didn't occur to me," that right there, that makes my day.

Getting somebody to see something in a new way, and I'll tell you how this works, in pricing, I do that all the time. Just like that conversation that we just had about presenting a compilation and review for a bonding agent and satisfying the agent to get your bond back, okay, so that's a new way to think about it that's going to resonate with the client. I do it now with pricing. It was the same thing with social media. When I started down the path of social media (that's what I wrote the book about). I am so over social media, Jean, I don't ever want talk about it ever again. But the similarity there, how do you go from social media to pricing or whatever it was before that? It's because I sat down with partners and I helped them to see that social media is not scary. That was 10 years ago. I started blogging about 10 or 11 years ago and as soon as I started blogging, I'm like, "Oh my gosh! This is what our CPAs need to be doing! They have personalities! They have passion! They need to be putting it out there so people can find it and see how cool they are, and how different they are." I had to show them that it's not as frightening as you think.

A breakthrough for me was, one time, I was facilitating a meeting for [DFK](#), a managing partner meeting. We were in that meeting and talking about technology and social media, and some of the partners said, "You know what? We have some people in our firm who sit around with their iPods and they've got earbuds in their ears, and they're tuning everything out and I don't like it. I don't like the fact that they're sitting there listening to their music while they're working." I laughed. Well, I didn't laugh a lot out loud yet, but I did laugh a little bit later, and everybody laughed out loud. I said, "So, how do you think those kids that are sitting there with iPods got through school and got the straight A's that made them appeal to you? While they were studying, what were they doing?"

"Well, yeah, they were listening to their music." And, I said, "When you studied, when you were back in college, what did you do? Did you have a stereo?" "Well, yeah, I had records."

People said, "I had eight tracks, I had cassettes," you know, you had all those different types of media, right? It went from radio to records to cassettes to CDs. They were like, "Yeah, I had that." I said, "Show of hands, how many of you have a stereo system in your office?" A whole bunch of hands went up. I said, "Then what is the problem with you getting mad about the kids with their iPods?"

They laughed and said, "Oh, my God, it's the same thing." Then one guy goes, "Yeah, when we come in on Saturdays, people knock on my door and tell me to turn it down!"



See? It's thinking of something in a new way. Instead of getting mad about this technology, realize that that's their focus. These kids are sitting in cubicles where I'd rather them listen to whoever it is that they're listening to on their iPod than listening to their cubemate across the way have an argument with his wife.

Jean: It's just a whole new way of thinking. There are similarities and differences that you're pointing out. You know? The similarities are, we all had our own way of studying, getting through school, and learning things. We were all trying to get to the same point, we just did it in a different way.

Michelle: Exactly, and that's how you focus. There was that story you probably heard about, a bunch of executives in a boardroom with an intern in there. They were all pondering, how do we get the answer to this particular question? And the intern, nobody's paying attention to the intern, pulls out his cell phone and texts somebody something. A few minutes later he comes up with the answer and everybody's like, "How did you do that?" He said, "I asked my buddy." And, they said, "Oh."

Jean: Or you Google. I have a friend that said just being able to search for anything on your phone, it has reduced the number of arguments he has because you could find out the right answer right away. There's no back and forth about who's right.

Michelle: There's probably fewer bar fights.

Jean: Oh, my goodness.

Michelle: Yeah, bar fights. There are fewer bar fights, that's for sure.

Jean: Let me ask you the final two questions. Put yourself in the shoes of the accounting marketers again. What is your best piece of advice for them?

Michelle: That's a toughie. I would say it's a toss-up between having patience and not giving up, which are polar ends. Find that balance. Pick your battles.

Don't give up on the really big important stuff. Look at the big picture. Maintain, but be willing to say, this is my recommendation and ... A very big difference between those two words – *and* and *but* – this is my recommendation *and* it's ultimately your decision, because you own the firm. They will respect that.

The very first consulting gig I ever had was working with [Anders](#) in St. Louis. It was a local firm. I was sitting there with the then managing partner and the marketing partner. Bob asked me a question, Bob Minkler, and I looked at him and said, "Do you want the politically correct answer or do you want know what I really think?" He said, "I want know what you really think." I'm thinking, I am not going to get this job but I told him what I really thought. I'm thinking, I know what he wants to hear. Don't do that, even if



you're in-house. If they don't want to hear what you really think, you're in the wrong place. You can find a firm, if you like accounting, which it's a wonderful [profession]. It's where I've chosen to make my career. There isn't a better group of people to work with. I've worked in law firms. I've worked in accounting firms. I've worked in public companies. There's no better group. If you like accounting, find a firm with a culture that works with you. Do not change who you are for the firm.

Jean: That's key. So our closing question: what's your best piece of advice for managing partners?

Michelle: That's a fun one. Okay. As it regards marketers? I would say hire a great marketer and listen to them. Let them advise you. Do not start taking over and telling them how marketing should be, because that's not generally the managing partner's skill set. Listen to them. Give it a couple years. It takes two to three years to start seeing the fruits of those labors bubble up. Be patient. Listen. You have to give them budget. Don't go out and hire your somewhere between \$50,000 and \$150,000 a year person and not expect to give them a budget to work with. The budget isn't just their salary. They have to have something to work with that's different than what you already allocate to marketing.

Jean: Absolutely. That's great advice. Marketers think differently than partners do, but in many cases, it complements each other, and that's how you accomplish things within a firm, working from everybody's strengths.

Michelle: And don't be scared, partners. Don't be scared.

Jean: Don't be scared of marketers?

Michelle: Don't be scared of marketers. They're outgoing. They're scary. They're loud. They say, "Good morning." Don't be afraid of that.

Jean: That's right. Embrace it. Right, Michelle? We've been talking today to Michelle Golden, who is the newest inductee into the Association for Accounting Marketing Hall of Fame. Michelle, I knew you would not disappoint. I appreciate your thoughts today, and thanks for your time.

Michelle: Oh, my pleasure, Jean. Thank you so much for having me. It's always fun talking with you.

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