

Improv Is No Joke - Episode 69 - Byron Patrick

Byron: [00:00:00] I actually got a tattoo on my right forearm in the shape of a Superman diamond with the backdrop of the Maryland flag and the prestigious CPA letters running across the diamond.

Peter: [00:00:25] Welcome to improv is no joke podcast it's all about becoming a more effective communicator by embracing the principles of improvisation. I'm your host Peter Margarita's the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business. The accidental account. My goal is to provide you with thought provoking interviews with business leaders so you can become an effective improviser which will lead to building stronger relationships with clients customers colleagues and even your family. So let's start to show.

Peter: [00:00:57] Welcome to episode 69 and today my guest is Byron Patrick, who's the managing director of CPA practice at Network Alliance. Byron is known nationally as an industry thought leader and a multi-recipient of the CPA Practice Advisor's 40 under 40 award. Byron has been an active member of the Maryland Association CPAs since the beginning of his career. He is one of the founding members and past chair of the MACPA's new young professionals network. Byron is a past chairman of the board of directors MACPA. In addition Byrons a member of the technology committee and has participated in a number of task force and initiatives over the years. Byron credits much of his professional success to the support and membership of the MACPA, and this is the crux of our conversation. The benefits from volunteering at your state CPA Association is endless. The financial and personal investment Byron has made to the CPA has paid for itself many times over by the people he has come in contact with over the years. I enjoy all of my conversations with my guests and I really enjoy this conversation with Byron because I share the exact same belief as Byron. And our paths are similar in many ways. Well before we get to the interview, I'd like to talk a little bit more about the first 5 episodes of this podcast which are qualified for C-p self-study credit and the Nash but category of personal development. Those interviews are with Clark price the retired CEO the Ohio society CPA Mike scorned Keno author of gratitude marketing Tom Hood who was the current CEO of the Maryland Association of CPA is Edmon Lowitz who is a partner with the firm of Smith and brown and Carl all Rex has an H.R. professional. Gregory in Apel insurance these episodes are located on the MSCP may be ally self-study Web site and they are mobile friendly. Create account and purchase an episode. Then you can listen to them on your daily commute or while you're working out or even at your desk when you are finished. Take the review and final exam on your mobile device or your computer. It's that easy. While oscillated improves no joke. Podcasts are available on my web site. Only those purchased to the CPA Bill ISO study website are eligible for CPE self-study credit. You can get the detailed instructions by visiting my website at. Peter Margarita's dot com. And clicking on the graphic. Listen Learn and Earn improves no podcast on the home page. I hope you enjoy this exciting and flexible new way of receiving C-p credit. OK now let's get to leave you with Byron Patrick.

Peter: [00:03:51] Byron welcome to my podcast. I greatly appreciate you taking time out of your very busy schedule to have a conversation with me today.

Byron: [00:04:01] Yeah thanks for having me Peter. I'm looking forward to hanging out and just having a good time.

Peter: [00:04:09] Byron and I we both spoke at the Southeast accounting show in Atlanta a little over a week ago and after our sessions we were listening in a restaurant maybe in a bar and we were just having a couple of drinks when we got in we got to this really cool conversation. But I asked him if he'd be on the podcast kind of share that with us. And obviously he agreed to it. But you know just so everybody has a little bit of idea of who you are. Can you give us a little bit about your background Byron?

Byron: [00:04:40] Yeah absolutely. I'm a CPA by trade. I started my career with a small CPA firm in Annapolis, Maryland, and when I was there I was kind of the young guy in the office and therefore the only one who knew how to right click.

Peter: [00:04:59] Hahahaha.

Byron: [00:05:00] Once that was discovered, my trajectory in the accounting industry changed dynamically. I realized that the taxes were not my love and despite loving audit work I somehow just kept getting sucked into this I-T world. So you know after a few changes in 2003 I actually became the detractor of a rather large CPA firm in the Baltimore area, and subsequently in 2008 I started my own company supporting CPA firms as they transition into the quote unquote cloud. You know hung out there for a number of years and sold that, moved onto network alliance where now I can really blend kind of all my loves of the accounting industry, doing the same type of support for CPA firms, but really embracing my involvement in the industry. I was chairman of the board for the Maryland association of CPAs in 2013. Heavily involved with with the Maryland Association, the American Institute of CPAs, or as we refer to it now, The Association of International CPAs... to be official. And you know so now I'm I'm kind of riding the circuit seeking to CPAs all around the country just meeting them and talking about IT security, IT updates. Basically everything and anything that is as nerdy as it can get falls under my perview.

Peter: [00:06:52] I'm still trying to get past You're the only one who could right click.

Byron: [00:06:57] Hahaha. It was in 1999 and 2000 you know the fact that you had two buttons on a mouse was was pretty far out.

Peter: [00:07:07] Haha. So before we get into a conversation you know because we're going to really become such a voluntourism and the benefits of it. Tell me more about what your firm does with other CPA firms. I mean when you provide IT solutions and security, that to me that's a very broad brush there. Can you give me some examples of what you what you do?

Byron: [00:07:32] Absolutely. It is a broad brush because you know we really we're almost like an outsourced I.T. department for your firm. So we have firms that we support everywhere from you know Maryland, Delaware, all the way to Fairbanks, Alaska. And instead of those firms having their traditional you know network, owning servers, and managing updates and you know having the Byrons in the office walk around installing QuickBooks to their computers. We basically relocate that stuff to a tier 4 data center. We have engineers and support team members that that handle everything you would expect of an I.T. department. And you know kind of package that in a monthly fee. So we rebel on the whole hourly billing that typical I.T. consultants give. And you know provide really high level support that, to be honest, most firms

under a hundred people that say they can't even afford this level of support that we provide to do in-house so we kind of create that economies of scales and give them you know the same tools that the big guys are using, and a level playing field.

Peter: [00:08:52] Your business must be exploding then.

Byron: [00:08:55] It's going well. It's very-- I mean that's when I started my business doing in 2008 and that grew really well, and then Network Alliance just has a much larger team than I had built. So having a full team behind it where we're selling the heck out of it really helps a lot. You know given circumstances like what's going on in Houston used and here in a few days Miami Florida you know solutions like ours can give businesses the peace of mind that they don't have to worry about that aspect and can just focus on the family. And you know know that everything else is going to be ready for them to help their clients and whatnot. You know when the time comes out concerns terms of where their data is and if they can use it.

Peter: [00:09:43] Yeah I mean any time we think about a disaster you want to protect your people, your data, and then your assets, and having the deed is already taken care of... Nowhere near, has to be a big piece of mind. For a lot of your clients like you said for the people in Houston and the people in Florida upcoming, I think you know I think a lot of that but sometimes we don't think about it until it's too late. Or after the fact just like oh man I've been in a do this I've I mean... oh crap. I should've done that and yeah. I've always said the P in CPA stands for procrastination.

Byron: [00:10:26] Ha ha ha ha. I think that is a very good answer. I've been fighting for years to figure out how to overcome complacency and procrastination in this industry. And man that thing is embedded.

Peter: [00:10:43] Yeah I think it's once you pass the exam and you get the injection of... they follow it up with the intention of procrastination and complacency, but you know... it's just that complacency just you know a normal human factor at some point in time. But I mean in today's world with the amount of change that's going on we don't have time to be complacent.

Byron: [00:11:08] No. It moves too quick. By the time you're complacent, you're a dinosaur.

Peter: [00:11:13] Oh by the way do you have a BlackBerry I could see?

Byron: [00:11:18] Hahahaha. Man, don't you miss BlackBerry. It was a symbol of.

Peter: [00:11:23] The old crack berry. Thanks for clarifying that. What your business does, and it sounds like you provide an outstanding service. I forgot to mention when we started this you told them that you've been heavily involved with Maryland Society of CPAs, and you are a CPA, but you've got this unique aspect of how proud you are of being a CPA and and a Maryland CPA. Would you like to share that with my audience?

Byron: [00:11:57] Sure absolutely. I never knew how much attention it would actually get. In 2013 as I mentioned I was chairman of the board of Maryland association and you know for anybody who knows Marylanders we have we have great pride in our flag. So you know to kind of commemorate my experience and really attribute my loyalty to the industry and the state I

actually got a tattoo on my and my right forearm in the shape of a Superman diamond with the backdrop of the Maryland flag and the prestigious CPA letters running across the diamond.

Peter: [00:12:44] We're going to put on I'm put in the show notes. You'll take a picture of it I'll put it on the Web site so people when they listen they can see this tattoo.

Byron: [00:12:55] You got it.

Peter: [00:12:55] And I'm glad, when I was chair of the Ohio society, that I hadn't met you yet. I'm I'm I'm not sure where I would put the tattoo...

Byron: [00:13:16] Hahaha. I have yet to see another state chair step up to the plate. I'm determined to get Tom Hood to get one. I want to start like a hash tag that you know create some sort of campaign.

Peter: [00:13:32] Hash tag Tom Hood CPA tattoo trending on Twitter.

Byron: [00:13:38] If we can get that trending. That would be outstanding.

Peter: [00:13:42] Well as I told you this episode is airing two weeks after Tom's episode and I'll make sure to send Tom a note to listen especially to the first 10 15 minutes of the podcast.

Byron: [00:13:57] Awesome.

Peter: [00:13:57] So you became a CPA... and when did you get involved with the Maryland Association?

Byron: [00:14:05] So I you know I was really fortunate. The firm that I started out working for at the time the chairman of the MACPA was the owner of the firm. You know from day one. He basically sucked me into getting involved with with the Maryland Association and they hadn't been able to get rid of me since. I just kind of become a rat. You know every once in a while they put out traps that I just eat cheese and keep going. It's you know but it's man I'm grateful for all of my experience... the relationships and people that you know I've connected with I mean they you of course add to the list. It's it's awesome. It's I I was very fortunate to have that. I don't know if you would call it guidance or forced involvement in the early days but you know it's a definitely laid me out for for a successful future.

Peter: [00:15:09] Yeah I think we did a little bit more voluntold instead of volunteering.

Byron: [00:15:13] Well said.

Peter: [00:15:17] Well do you remember what one of the first things you did as a volunteer for the Maryland Association?

Byron: [00:15:22] Yeah I do actually. So this was pretty cool. The association at the time again this was 2000 I believe was realizing hey you know we can no longer be just the old boys club. We really need to kind of dynamically change ourselves. So they created this strategic governance task force where they they actually split two groups. It was an under 35 group and

an over 35 group, and they said redesign the ideal member association. You know no rules no nothing go off in the corner and do it. So you know I'm put in the room with you know all these young mostly CPAs and we designed just this kick ass solution and it was hilarious because you know eventually we got to present it to the board of directors and you go in the room and well the over 35s... I think they were using the overhead projector transparencies and that you know we're rocking out this awesome PowerPoint presentation, and the board of directors basically combined the great elements of both groups. And at that point I mean if you or even trackback kind of Tom Hood's trajectory when you know Marylander really hit the map... I bet you would track back to that time frame. And so it was I mean I couldn't have timed it better.

Peter: [00:17:05] Wow. What a cool way to start off your relationship with the Maryland association because I got involved with the Ohio society at the same time in 2000. That's when I went into academia and I felt that getting to know the Ohio side of my professional association would be a great way to network as well as get exposure for my students as well as keep up with what's going on in the profession, and I think one of the first things I did is I volunteered to be a chair or volunteered and so I was made a chair of a committee. We were still be doing the recognition of the new CPAs. And we had this luncheon and I was in charge of that luncheon and getting a speaker... We were able to get some the chair at the time of the AICPA whose name is escaping me right now... Yeah that just opened up, one, Like you said the people that you meet and, two, it just opened up a tremendous amount of opportunities at that time.

Byron: [00:18:18] Yup. And what people don't realize to your point is when you show up as a volunteer, there's no shortage of opportunities. It's the fresh blood and all of a sudden you know you're an important body in the room.

Peter: [00:18:34] So you were chair 2013. I was 2000. I remember somebody asked me what keeps me up at night being chair. And my immediate response was this bucket that had a huge hole in the bottom of it and that was the baby boomers that were leaving and going retiring. But we weren't replenishing that membership because of the younger generation... There was no being voluntold or maybe being shown or told or explain the benefits of joining the professional association, and all of a sudden now membership is beginning to shrink. And in your mind how do you engage, Get excited, This actually I'll say under 30s who are who are CPAs... so they're not staff but they might be in the senior or the manager level, to get involved. As well as I still believe that you got to go into the classroom you got to inspire the students and join in. And we do by giving them a free membership but there's there's got to be other hook there.

Byron: [00:19:55] Yeah and I mean to me the hook is is getting involved. You know it's I think that the student involvement is the gateway. You know I think Ohio does a similar thing with CPA day, at the state house every year to meet with our politicians and it's been growing every year. The number of students who show up and it's such an awesome opportunity to see what being part of this industry and what being part of the association is about, and getting access to things that are beyond their wildest dreams they never realized they would have access to. So you know I seen those future CPAs getting involved and staying involved longer. And you know the people who are in it all we pay our dues without question. It's the people who kind of sit back and don't get involved where it becomes a struggle to sustain the value. So you have to get involved and you've got to create opportunities in all different ways to do it.

Peter: [00:21:12] And I think part of the struggle is those who are who are out of school, whether it's in public, whether it's an industry, those first few years you're overwhelmed, and to carve out time to you know do something after hours... I kind of get that. But at some point you know we get to the point that we got to quit looking. You know will my employer pay my dues? No. OK. I'm not going to join. Wait a minute. We've got this problem because you're looking at it as a cost, when really it's an investment in your career.

Byron: [00:21:50] Oh yeah.

Peter: [00:21:51] And I think that's part of the challenge is showing the value of that investment and your dues into your career and how you grow your career. And I think maybe that's where we're missing the boat.

Byron: [00:22:06] Oh I agree. And you know if you can do it early I think you know then it becomes a given. I know for a fact you know when I was changing jobs and doing interviews I walked in every interview and I said you will be paying my dues and you will be supporting my time out of office being involved with the association. And if they didn't support it well I knew right away the culture of the firm wasn't for me. And then seeing that that was so important for me changed the conversation. So if we can show that value early on, then it becomes a given. And it's just part of the package.

Peter: [00:22:52] Showing that value. So everything of value is built on trust. That's from David Horsager, who wrote The Trust Edge, and he also stated that the lack of trust is the biggest expense organizations incur. So in taking David's words applying it here. The membership lost trust in their association because they're not seeing the value.

Byron: [00:23:16] I think that is a safe assumption. I you know. Yeah that's a really interesting perspective and I can't argue with that.

Peter: [00:23:26] As I sit there and think of it that value that we're trying to show that value lost that trust... have they lost trust because going back to your earlier point that we become complacent? I'm fortunate to be able to travel the country in a lot of state associations, CPA societies... Creating change within an organization... Most organizations is difficult, and to have that type of change... we might want to do it. And when it comes time there's that fear that we'll maybe screw up so we don't do it. So we we looked the same way as we do as we did back in 1990.

Byron: [00:24:12] Yeah.

Peter: [00:24:12] I take Maryland out of that equation to some degree because obviously Tom is an innovator, and he's restructured, changed, and moved Maryland to the head of the class. A lot of these other states, in talking with them, it's just that well this is the way we've always done it. It's like you know we're focusing on a product but rather we need to be focusing on the client, the customer, the member.

Byron: [00:24:39] Yeah. Absolutely and you know I get that there is a struggle in the sense that a lot of these state societies have really been based on just providing CPE, and that you know now we're in a world of of free CPE ad nauseum. But you know but I think to your point you

know with Maryland is you know Tom and the entire Maryland team have embraced like... CPA that... sure we have the technical stuff, but then we have the stuff that you do right? I mean there's the things that develop us as team members, as individuals. For me when I'm looking at CPE... I don't just want it for for the office. Like I want the self development where I go home and maybe apply something I learned in my personal life, and stepping it up... we've got to step up the game and get people to understand that you know some free webinars from a vendor that barely qualifies for CPE. Sure that checks a box on your license every every renewal period. But you know that's really not helping you in any way.

Peter: [00:26:04] Yeah. When I look at I think about NASBA.. even though a lot of angst with them, but the one thing they did too I thought was right is that they allow personal development courses to qualify for CPE.

Byron: [00:26:20] Yup.

Peter: [00:26:21] Now it's up to the state to decide what they want to do, and I'm not going in the state but there's a state out there that when I was looking through their CPE requirements what it takes. Personal development did not qualify.

Byron: [00:26:36] Such a shame.

Peter: [00:26:38] But it goes back to what you just said. So you get in at that personal development that helps you in your business as well as in in life. Yeah I think you know that goes back to... we haven't changed. But I do see work work with BLI and the clients that they put me in front of, and the privilege of doing that. The attitude about soft skills... I tell you they may be soft but they're pretty hard to master.

Byron: [00:27:15] Well said.

Peter: [00:27:16] I see more and more firms more and more companies doing more of that these days to augment the technical side, where during the recession you soft skills? Pfft. Yeah I'm sorry. We're not we're not paying for that as an investment. It's called an investment. And now it seems.... Well I'll just say this. At one point in time, 90 percent of my business was technical, 10 percent on the soft skills of personal development.

Byron: [00:27:45] Oh wow.

Peter: [00:27:45] Today my business is ninety nine point nine percent personal involvement. Point 1 percent technical.

Byron: [00:27:53] It's awesome. It's awesome. And I can tell you I mean from your session down in Atlanta I can't tell you how many times I've brought up to people now that silent and listen have the same letter. I mean that alone was worth the price of admission.

Peter: [00:28:11] Thank you very much. I got a little nervous there for a moment.

Byron: [00:28:16] It could have gone down so many roads.

Peter: [00:28:22] So your your involvement with the Maryland association. I mean you've been... you've met a ton of people.

Byron: [00:28:31] Oh yeah.

Peter: [00:28:31] And you've met the movers and shakers in the CPA world in Maryland, as well as nationally.

Byron: [00:28:38] And even international.

Peter: [00:28:40] Oh yeah.

Byron: [00:28:41] Yeah. And and and then I mean you know obviously it's it's a community of you know... the paparazzi isn't following any of us, but you know I can say you know I personally know so many people who are the rock stars of the accounting industry globally. I mean you know that is pretty powerful to be able to have you know personal conversation with you know folks who are experienced and have more connections. I mean that doesn't happen without the involvement.

Peter: [00:29:18] Right. And having that involvement, having the commitment, and gaining trust within your network, as well as within the management the Maryland association, because they didn't one day just pull your name out of the hat of all the members went oh it's Byron's time to be president.

Byron: [00:29:40] Hahaha. I drew the short straw that year.

Peter: [00:29:45] Haha. You know it's an investment of time that really has a huge return on investment. It's just hard to calculate sometimes.

Byron: [00:29:54] Yeah yeah. There's no tangible calculation, you can't quantify it. And if you're expecting quantifiable ROI on your involvement, you know you may be barking up the wrong tree.

Peter: [00:30:11] Yeah. But you know when you when you say that you've met some of the rock stars in the accounting profession. Name drop for me if you would just.

Byron: [00:30:20] Oh well I mean for one right now the queen of the industry, Kimberly Ellison-Taylor I mean... So she'll tell you like her and my friendship dates back to you know 2000. We both got involved about the same time. So I mean you know clearly a personal friend. Let's let's go to the next incoming chair of the AICPA, Bill Reed. Just great guy that You know I have been connected with for a number of years. I mean obviously we've already said Tom Hood ad nauseum. You know I mean there's few people who get above that. How about Jim and Gary Boomer? These guys have been influentially involved in the Association for years and I consider them you know... and not just colleagues in a sense but personal friends. So it's a you know there's there's a lot of people out there who I really do that are to be friends that, without this involvement, they'd just be names that I'd read about.

Peter: [00:31:41] Yeah. And when you said Kimberly I get goosebumps. And I met Kimberly some years ago worked with Bill... I was in Las Vegas because the National Association of Black accountants and she went to dinner with Tom Hood, myself, and Karl Ahlrichs, and I fell in love.

Byron: [00:32:06] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:32:07] She had she had me at hello. One, the woman is the energizer bunny.

Byron: [00:32:13] Yes.

Peter: [00:32:13] I don't know how she keeps up that pace, but just her story of growing up in inner city of Baltimore and where she is today and all that she does. And you know I really wanted to be there when when... the year that started at that breakfast. Unfortunately I had a speaking engagement. But I have run into Kimberly a number of times over the past year. And you know Kimberly if you are listening I hope I can call your friend because I told you just call me anytime. I'll be happy to do anything... I've had some interesting conversations with her. I think the ones that you know getting to know Barry Melancon on the AICPA that's... he's got an interesting story as well.

Byron: [00:32:58] Oh yeah.

Peter: [00:32:59] I mean the guy smarter than... But I mean the exposure even in my own state the people that I've met... that I still keep in contact with. And you know being on different committees you know sharing different things being part of it and getting to know that network. It's been priceless.

Byron: [00:33:28] Oh yeah absolutely. I mean I look at again my friendship with Mark Koziel at the AICPA, and I mean man like despite the fact that I I at a moment's notice will go and hang out and just grab drinks with a guy... to have you know a friendship with somebody, a relationship with somebody, you know in his position at the AICPA is just... you know it definitely has it's opportunities.

Peter: [00:34:02] Yeah it really does. And so let's steer this in just a little bit of a different direction, but circle back to your business. With all the contacts that you have made through your volunteership in Maryland, I have to believe that that has turned into referrals, that has turned into revenue, that's turned into profits.

Byron: [00:34:26] 100 percent. There's... not that I couldn't have done it without it. But the path sure as heck would have been a lot different. And a I mean you know just as of last night I got a Facebook message from our mutual friend Jennifer Elder, with a referral.

Peter: [00:34:48] Oh!

Byron: [00:34:48] I mean you know... Jennifer's another one that I never would know her outside of my involvement. She's she's an awesome rock star to you know have in the list of friends.

Peter: [00:35:01] I don't know if you know this but Jennifer is my office wife.

Byron: [00:35:06] I didn't know that.

Peter: [00:35:08] I'm the office husband. She and I... she and I met five years ago at a BLI thought leader conference and about a year later she had this wonderful idea of developing a course called the eight hour MBA, and I helped her with the content of that and I mean for a while we were like talking all the time and like OK this is the office husband and wife, and you're right it's another rock star. I pulled up your LinkedIn page and you know a friend I haven't seen him in years, who I went to graduate school with at Case Western.

Byron: [00:35:48] Really?

Peter: [00:35:49] You know Dave Sharkey?

Byron: [00:35:51] Oh yeah absolutely. I mean we... I know Dave basically through a potential customer opportunity here. So that's how I met Dave.

Peter: [00:36:06] Dave is a great guy and when we talk about the people that we know you're one of the few that I'm hooked up with in LinkedIn that we have 74 mutual connections.

Byron: [00:36:18] Hahaha. That's awesome.

Peter: [00:36:19] I've heard six degrees from Kevin Bacon but we're 74 degrees from something.

Byron: [00:36:26] There's no doubt in some way shape or form. I think we may be connected to everyone.

Peter: [00:36:32] I think so. And I think I told you this, in all transparency, when you were in my session in Atlanta, you were kind of towards the front which I thought was really you know most CPAs are stuck in the back. But but I looked I didn't recognize you at first. I went where do I know this guy? It's been a few years and all I had to do was look down at your forearm.

Byron: [00:36:57] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:36:57] And I think I said you are you lost? You're in Georgia when you're supposed to be in Maryland.

Byron: [00:37:06] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:37:06] I think I think the biggest I think that the biggest benefit of being a member of an association is this piece of it is the worst kept secret... or maybe... I don't know. But when I talk to other CPAs like ourselves and talk about the network that we have been able to grow, how my business wouldn't have started if I hadn't had my involvement at the Ohio society and the CPE director at the time kind of gave me my start, and she was there to help me and then I just kept meeting more people and more people. I always wondered if I hadn't gotten involved... It takes that road and and lengthens it. Well would I have gotten here? Yeah. But it would have

taken a lot more blood sweat and tears when you know... as long as you're doing a great job and you're trustworthy and you're reliable and you're not a pain in the behind, people will talk good about you.

Byron: [00:38:14] That's right. Absolutely. And you know so you're talking about you talked about the things that kept you up at night when you were chair. And for me it was all of our members who were missing out on these opportunities. And my big message during my chair year was be selfish and get involved because you know as much as I do to give to the industry and association, and everything else, my take away is a thousand fold. And it's it's ok. I am perfectly fine with you getting involved if it's to be selfish, because once you show up you're not going to leave.

Peter: [00:39:04] Right. But I think sometimes there comes a time that you've gone through just about everything that you can... like the pinnacle is being chair of the association's executive board. Then it kind I don't know about you but I missed that responsibility. I missed that interaction. It was like a drug.

Byron: [00:39:26] Yeah.

Peter: [00:39:26] I mean here you were on the pulse and then all of a sudden... I'm like Clark's not texting me anymore. I'm... getting e-mails. And I I went a few years without getting really involved in anything and then I started getting involved with the National Speakers Association, the Ohio chapter, and a couple of years ago and they put me on the board and be careful what you wish for because I'm now president elect.

Byron: [00:39:59] Hahaha. Rinse and repeat.

Peter: [00:40:04] Exactly. My wife just shakes her head and I went Yeah I know. It just eats time, but it doesn't really eat time. It's just people who... who I have access to.

Byron: [00:40:15] Yeah.

Peter: [00:40:16] And if you want to be the best, you want to surround yourself, you want access to the best, and the best is the network that you can build. You don't want to be one of the top five people in your network. You want to be the weakest link.

Byron: [00:40:30] Oh yeah.

Peter: [00:40:31] And I think that I have built and continue to build a network where I want to be the weakest link and I want to be surrounded with some of the best and the brightest. That's access.

Byron: [00:40:43] Oh. 100 percent. And to your point... I mean in fact I don't know why we didn't meet each other at that thought leaders dinner. I'm fairly certain I've been there but you know I'm, like you, have been fortunate being invited into you know a variety of these like thought leader meetings dinners whatever you want. And yeah I walk in the room and I go like what the hell am I doing here? Like you know like these are like superstars and I'm just kind of like get to

witness it. I am totally with you. It's having people around me who are smarter stronger faster. You know that just keeps the fire burning.

Peter: [00:41:32] Yeah it does. As you were describing that, it took me back to my first time walking in at AICPA Council as a council member. And I'm sitting there going.... What man did what do they know? I better be quiet and not say anything. I mean I was... starstruck is probably not the right word, but I was to some degree intimidated because I start realizing these are all heavy hitters in industry. Yeah. It was just like... ok.

Byron: [00:42:10] Somebody made a mistake and I ended up here.

Peter: [00:42:14] They need to go back and count the ballots.

Byron: [00:42:16] Haha right.

Peter: [00:42:16] But it was also so cool because I think the one speaker that was there that I'll always remember was Sal Khan.

Byron: [00:42:28] Yeah. Oh that was my favorite one ever.

Peter: [00:42:30] Yeah. That was that was really cool. And then they've had futurists on, and there's been some interesting speakers, but just getting to meet other individuals from different states... and I still keep in contact with a few of these guys over the past... oh it's been almost seven eight nine years something like that.

Byron: [00:42:51] Yeah.

Peter: [00:42:53] I mean the reason why I wanted to have you on on the podcast is because we had this conversation and you know they have it recorded and to be able to use it in order to help those who are hesitant or those who don't see the value in joining your state CPA Association... hopefully the conversation that we've had will inspire some to step in, Lean In, take a risk, take a chance.

Byron: [00:43:28] I hope so.

Peter: [00:43:29] I would assume to call anybody to man an association that's on staff, in Ohio calling me on the Ohio society staff, or anywhere in the country, called a state association, tell them who you are and you want to volunteer to do something. Be careful you might be chair of the board later.

Byron: [00:43:46] That's right.

Peter: [00:43:46] But what a great outcome that is though.

Byron: [00:43:50] Oh man Absolutely. Absolutely. If a few people just get that inspired, that would be just phenomenal.

Peter: [00:44:00] Well I agree and Byron I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule. I had a blast in Atlanta, but you don't live in Maryland anymore? You're on the Virginia side now right?

Byron: [00:44:16] So I work on the Virginia side but I'm still in Maryland.

Peter: [00:44:21] Well I will be back up in Maryland soon and we'll definitely get together for dinner and catch up, but I appreciate it. I love the conversation we had in Atlanta I love this conversation. And I think just the passion in both of our voices may inspire, whether it's students, young CPA, or somebody who has some seasoning to them, to get involved and it's all just it's all just a good thing.

Byron: [00:44:50] Oh yeah yeah. Absolutely and when you're in the town... I want to get good feedback from a Kentucky whiskey tongue on the Sagamore whiskey. I can envision a drink or two that may include that.

Peter: [00:45:14] Hahaha. For those who aren't in Maryland, you have to before you wrap this up you explain Sagamore.

Byron: [00:45:24] Well so. So for those of you, Kevin Plank, the owner of Under Armor, has a large horse farm in Maryland called Sagamore farms that has a very unique feature of freshwater that runs across limestone, which is ideal for rye whiskeys. So he has created Sagamore whiskey out of Baltimore with a whole lot of Maryland tradition. And it's it is definitely one of my favorite whiskeys.

Peter: [00:46:02] I told you I'm born and raised in Kentucky and I'm a Kentucky bourbon snob. I know that. I admit that, but if anybody offers me free whiskey I'll try.

Byron: [00:46:13] Hahaha. Done.

Peter: [00:46:18] We'll get that on the calendar. I appreciate Byron again thank you very much. Can't wait to be sipping some whiskey with you.

Byron: [00:46:26] Can't wait, brother.

Peter: [00:46:30] I would like to thank Byron for giving his time to discuss the benefits of volunteering at a state CPA society. For those in my audience, it's now up to you to pick up the phone, call your state society, and volunteer. I'd like to talk a little bit more about the first five episodes of this podcast which are qualified for CPE self-study credit under the nice but category of personal development. Those interviews are with Clark price retired CEO of the Ohio society of CPA Mike scorn. Teano author of gratitude marketing. Tom Hood who is the current CEO of the Maryland Association of CPA is Edmon low wit who is a partner with the firm of wasn't Smith and brown and Carl all Rex who was an H.R. professional and Gregory and Apel insurance. These episodes are located on the MSCP belie self-study website and they are mobile friendly. Create account and purchase an episode. Then you can listen to them on your daily commute or while you're working out or even at your desk when you are finished. Take the review and final exam on your mobile device or your computer. It's that easy while also like improv is no joke. Podcasts are available on my web site. Only those purchased through the

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