

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:00] Welcome to episode eight. And my guest today is Owen Wyss, who's the Financial Controller at Thompson Concrete Construction. Owen can be described by a quote he gave in a recent AICPA article titled Tired of Getting After-Hours Work E-mail? Owen stated, "Given the fact that my company does pay for me to have the ability to access my email on my smartphone, I believe they expect me to be available in an emergency or in order not to delay a project or task, especially since we operate globally." Now, most CPAs don't feel that way, and that is what makes Owen a great leader. Owen embraces the essence of leadership, and he currently sits on two association boards and chairing a committee on another one. Owen is able to manage his time effectively between his job, his volunteer work with the associations, and he does have a wife and a daughter, and his daughter is not even two years old. So, our conversation does touch on his role as a financial controller, his volunteer time, and his family time. I think you'll find this conversation between Owen and I to be very interesting, and he is very inspiring.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:23] A quick announcement before we get to the interview, my new book Taking the Numb Out of Numbers: Explaining and Presenting Financial Information with Confidence and Clarity is available for purchase on Amazon.com. If you'd like to learn more about the book, go to TakingTheNumbOutOfNumbersBook.com to learn more. So, without further ado, let's get to the interview with Owen Wyss.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:48] Hey, welcome back, everybody. Today, my guest is Owen Wyss. And Owen and I go back a number of years. And correct me if I'm wrong here, Owen, I think at one time when you were on the Ohio Society of CPAs Young CPA Board or on the committee, I think I was your mentor at one time. Is that correct?

Owen Wyss: [00:02:09] That is correct. Actually, I still tell my wife to this day that when we're, you know, meeting up after work for a drink or an appetizer that I still consider you a mentor regardless of whether the official designation is now gone.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:25] I appreciate that. And I will have to say when I remembered that, I went, "Holy cow. Look what he's done in his career."

Owen Wyss: [00:02:34] We definitely go back further than that though. All the way, I think, to the first year of my career when my employer at the time brought you in for one of your seminars.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:49] Yes. You were with the Battelle & Battelle at the time, and that's when I did my Humor at Work presentation. And that was the time when I said something like, you know, when you laugh, it has physical benefits it because it releases the endorphins. You know, the endorphins, those crazy fish that swim through your bloodstream to help you fight stress, anxiety, and depression? There were five folks who, on my evaluation, came back with "Mr. Margaritis, dolphins are mammals, not fish."

Owen Wyss: [00:03:19] And in that group that day, that's not all that surprising really.

Peter Margaritis: [00:03:25] I tell that story a lot, but I forgot about that, yeah. We met when you were at Battelle & Battelle, but I am amazed how your career has evolved since the first time we met many years ago. And if you can give the folks, the audience, a little bit about your background, where you started, and what you do today.

Owen Wyss: [00:03:46] Yeah, absolutely. My background after graduating from Wright State started out in public accounting, and really remained there for nine years at two different firms Battelle & Battelle in Dayton, and then Crowe here in Columbus where I'm at now, primarily focused on auditing, manufacturing, distribution, clients. It's simply stated.

Owen Wyss: [00:04:06] From there, I moved on to a role for four years in a manufacturing plant here in Columbus, Diamond Innovations. Then, known as Sandvik Hyperion, went through several evolutions, but, ultimately, they press diamonds for use in tools. They didn't actually make the tools, but press the diamond right here in Columbus, and then send it out to the toolmakers. And I've spent four years there working on -- Mainly, it was a controller role mainly focused on the financial side or finance side, I guess, I should say, related to budgeting, forecasting, and assessing results against that, forwarding it to our executive management team.

Owen Wyss: [00:04:50] Well, not a whole lot of place to go there based on growth, and thought it was time to make another move. And I've moved over to Thompson Concrete now, a family-owned concrete excavation construction company located just south of town, serving nearly all of Central Ohio, and recently expanding a small operation into Louisville, Kentucky.

Owen Wyss: [00:05:10] Here, I call myself a hands-on CFO without the title. The title is financial controller, but I'd say that I do about anything and everything other than my job description originally thought I was going to do. Anywhere from finance and accounting, you know, 20 to 40 percent of the job, to responsibility for HR and benefits, IT, contractor, you name it. It has really become a jack of all trades, and couldn't say more about the learning experience just over a little over three years now. An opportunity to learn more than I ever thought possible on three-year period with lots and lots more to go.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:54] You just described every CFO that I've come across what they do. And I always hear HR and IT, usually, somewhere in that sentence of the responsibilities that they have. But I forgot that you were at Crowe, which jogged my memory. I had lunch with Andrea Meinardi a few weeks ago, and we were talking about you, all good, but I just wanted to let you know she said hello.

Owen Wyss: [00:06:19] Well, I hope she would say that because she recently took over our 401k audit. So, if she's badmouthing, then we've got something to talk about.

Peter Margaritis: [00:06:28] No, it was all good, my friend. It was all good. The question I want to ask is, what made you or why did you become an accountant?

Owen Wyss: [00:06:37] Unfortunately, I can't give a great answer. I will say that it was dumb luck. There is no accounting in my background. There is really no business in my background. I come from a family of farmers out in the country. My mom was an underwriter in insurance for 45 years. And the dumb luck really came down to, at some point, I can't even remember, my junior or senior year in the high school curriculum, I

saw an accounting class. I didn't really know what I was getting myself into, but I thought it might be something good to know when I get out in the world. And that class had a great teacher, and it just stuck. It felt like something I was really good at.

Owen Wyss: [00:07:22] And so, when I went to college, it was definitely something I thought, "There's a real opportunity here," but my dad did have somewhat of an engineering background, so I was balancing between the two. And I will say, to my luck, I think I chose the right way. I ended up declaring a designation or a major in accounting while I was at Wright State.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:43] Did you have Maggie Houston as a professor?

Owen Wyss: [00:07:47] Absolutely, first class, first year.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:50] Oh wow.

Owen Wyss: [00:07:51] One of the greats. I hope she listens to this and gets a chance to hear that. But I will tell you, Wright State was definitely unappreciated for its accounting program, whether it'd be Maggie Houston or Dr. John Talbott, just some great professors I had while I was down there. Really drove me to want to excel in this profession.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:12] Well, it started with that high school professor. Your teacher, who was a good teacher, raised your interest. And then, at your first accounting classes with Maggie, you're hooked.

Owen Wyss: [00:08:22] Yeah, absolutely.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:23] Yeah. She's a great lady. I haven't seen her in a few years, but I hope she is listening because, I mean, she's dynamite in the classroom. She's dynamite outside the classroom. She gets so much energy. She's just a really wonderful person.

Owen Wyss: [00:08:36] Absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:38] So, you kind of fell into this. You just kind of stepped into it. But, man, when you step into something, you build something with it. I mean, thinking about your career and how you've embraced the profession, how you've embraced your role, but I have to ask this question because knowing CPAs, we work a lot, we have a lot of responsibilities, we never retire, but we get sleepless nights. So, what keeps you up at night other than your 16-month-old child?

Owen Wyss: [00:09:11] I know. Actually, I will tell you, she's been a great sleeper since 10 weeks. So, hopefully, there's no one listening to me that is very jealous or hates me for having said that. But my wife figured out a trick somewhere in there, and she's been a great sleeper since then.

Owen Wyss: [00:09:26] You know, I would say it's nothing on an overall professional basis or even personally. It's really where I'm at now. I found a very interesting industry when I entered construction. It really is. It's a different world. And a lot of people when they're interviewing an accountant for construction, nobody can figure out the debits and credits. There are still debits and credits. That's just a given. Anyone can pick it up that's got a good accounting background, but it's a different world from the perspective that it's a different way of doing business. There's not a lot of planning. There is a lot of, "That's always the way we've done it."

Owen Wyss: [00:10:15] And, you know, those are the things that keep me up at night. And it's a very, to me, antiquated and fragmented industry. And, actually, I stole that from an article that I can't give accurate credit to that I read a day or two ago that really needs to adapt. And so, I'd say what keeps me up at night is trying to help our leadership be on the cutting edge of adapting. And that's a hard road to tow. It's difficult, you know, especially in this environment where there are contracts galore, and we're trying to make sure we're picking the right ones. You know, change is tough to get behind when you're operating as lean as we do, and there's so much opportunity out there.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:02] Wow. I wasn't expecting that, but that's interesting that you bring that up because construction, I have a very little background, and I used to lend to it, but it is a different world. But you said the word leadership. You used it in a broad sense. So, you weren't more or less talking about the leadership within your organization. You're talking about the leadership within the construction financial arena?

Owen Wyss: [00:11:26] Both. You know, not only within our organization, you know, realizing that, you know, there's some bad things, there's possible bad things ahead that we need to avoid in our own company. But also, then, being part of several different organizations and going back to that fragmented way of doing business. Just the whole owner-contractor-subcontractor creates so many different self-interests in the way that construction is done or the way that things are built that I feel like we've got to find a way to start to align the best interests of all if construction is going to be a successful industry into the future where we expect to keep cutting costs of building.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:14] Wow, yeah. You said self-interest. And, yes, construction has always kind of been more in the self-interest side. And to get them to adapt to a much more bigger picture will be a huge undertaking. And it sounds like, to me, there -- Well, let me ask it a different way. Has there been some movement in adapting to a newer way, or is it still pretty much this is the way we've always done it?

Owen Wyss: [00:12:42] I feel -- I would say the majority of the industry is still this is the way we've always done it. But I am receiving some feedback from the field related to some of the GCs, some of the experienced general contractors that we are finding ourselves working with, are really making an effort. And the one that sticks out to me is Turner Construction who seems to really be pushing down lean manufacturing ideas into the way that they construct. And that, I appreciate.

Owen Wyss: [00:13:16] You know, it's kind of -- I've been talking to our guys, our leadership here locally, just about the Toyota way and Honda way a lot, and how they worked with their manufacturers and subcontractors that weren't within their own plants, and really forced down their ways to realize better margins and more profitability. And I

think that Turner's been taking that on from a construction perspective and with the ideas of lean. And we're trying to start adopting some of that ourselves.

Owen Wyss: [00:13:45] I think that's just a small piece though, as I believe it is important though that the owners, GCs, and subcontractors, and even sub-subcontractors, and suppliers start to find a better way to align their interests. It's not all going to come from lean manufacturing ideas.

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:05] Yeah, that's a good point. There's a thought process that I was just exposed to about a couple of months ago from a gentleman with the National Speakers Association, and he works at IBM. Have you heard of this called design thinking?

Owen Wyss: [00:14:21] No.

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:22] And I will butcher this, but the concept is, you know, as a manufacturer of something, I build this, you buy it. And then, you're not part of that input. To me, you're the consumer. Well, design thinking is going to the point where the organization is partnering with the customer and helping to design the product that meets their needs to eliminate a lot of errors, a lot of -- You know, when you implement an SAP system, somebody goes, "Okay. This is not going run smoothly. There's going to be some type of interruption. There's always something like that with an ERP system," which stands for entities reoccurring problem.

Peter Margaritis: [00:15:04] But with design thinking, it eliminates that because they're partnering with their major customers and helping to design what they need versus, "We've got our engineers. We think we know what you need. We're going to build it." But a lot of times, it doesn't work properly for a while.

Owen Wyss: [00:15:24] And interesting that you say that because maybe from that perspective, construction might actually be a little bit about out front, given the fact that the owners go in with an idea of what they need, and work with the GCs and design people to figure that out. I think it's a little bit more of the actual process of getting it built

that needs to come a long way; whereas, I think, manufacturing is out and front on that piece, and then needs to get more involved in the design piece.

Peter Margaritis: [00:15:56] Okay. So, it sounds like -- So, it's with the subs that seems to be the issue from the GC and the subs, getting that that's done smoothly, and efficiently, and on time, and under budget?

Owen Wyss: [00:16:10] I think that -- Wow, you're asking me to dig into the details here.

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:16] No. Just for a second. I'm just curious.

Owen Wyss: [00:16:18] It is. It is a function, I think, of all three that you just mentioned. I mean, they're pushing. Owners are pushing margins lower, you know, which obviously should drive the general contractors to push costs lower, which ultimately should drive the subcontractors to push costs lower. But I believe what you're seeing is just shrinking margins because there's not a great effort to look at how we can make construction more efficient. And like I said, I kind of keep going back to what I think. There are some GCs out there who see major opportunities with lean thought processes to do that and are trying to work with some of their closer general contractors to do or/and subcontractors to do the same.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:06] Cool. That's interesting. Like I said, I've got a limited -- I have to be a little bit dangerous. I haven't been able to get rid of that memory of lending back in the -- Well, just way back in that time, but still have some of that floating around. So, I was really kind of curious about that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:24] We'll change gears for a bit. The one thing that I'm so happy that you're doing, and I'm really envious of you and how you've approached this, is you find it very important to give your time back to the profession and to the community. And I'd like for you to talk about that because you're currently Vice Chair of Finance for the Ohio Society of CPAs. You've been on the board of JDRF, Juvenile

Diabetes Research Foundation. You're currently also on the board of the Construction Financial Management Association. Am I forgetting anything?

Owen Wyss: [00:18:07] Not that -- There were a few earlier in my career, you know, young CPA, young leadership boards that I participated in around the state and Columbus for that matter. But other than that, no, not at all. Not that I'm trying to fill any gaps either there, but, you know, it really started off as --

Owen Wyss: [00:18:31] And it's interesting because I hate to say this, it was never meant to be giving back, but it really did start off at Battelle & Battelle in Dayton where they were very connected to a charitable organization. You know, for that matter, JDRF. They had a corporate bond with that organization. And, you know, therefore, it was easy to get involved because it was being driven from the top. And that was just a great chance to network, and get out, and do something. But it became more than that. You know, it really. You go, and you hear the stories, and it became much more of a connection outside of the networking and getting my own name out in the community. So, it really stuck.

Owen Wyss: [00:19:15] And when I moved to Columbus, actually, I passed up a chance to be more intimately involved with the board at the Dayton chapter, but I still wanted to continue that connection even though where I was moving to, I had no connection with that organization, it was important for me to maintain that. You know, it really is just finding something that you're passionate about. And I stick with it to this day. I did the boards then. Now, I'm co-chairing their annual walk here in Columbus. And it's just something I've become passionate about and has given me -- Not only am I passionate about it and continue to do it, I've also met some amazing people around this city because of those connections.

Owen Wyss: [00:19:56] So, I encourage, first, for everybody to find something they're passionate about; and second, to find an organization that aligns with them and realize that what will come of that are some great friendships, some great networking opportunities and business connections.

Owen Wyss: [00:20:13] And then, you know, the connections with the Ohio Society and with the CFMA, Construction Financial Management Association, those have both been driven from my professional relationships, and you find some really, really great and passionate people when you are working in organizations like that, people who want to drive change in industry. And it's just a great opportunity to meet passionate people and other successful people in their profession, and get a feel for how they got to where they're at now, which is where I'm aspiring to go in the next 20 or 30 years.

Owen Wyss: [00:20:58] So, I can't encourage it more. It is a drain sometimes on personal life. And I shouldn't call it a drain. It does take away from from being able to be at home or even sometimes at work. You know, there are during the day meetings, but it's delivered tenfold back to me, not only for how I interact daily at work, but also how I interact at home.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:23] So, just so the audience knows, let's go back to JDRF for a little while. You're very passionate about this organization, but you're not a diabetic.

Owen Wyss: [00:21:33] That is correct, I'm not. But I'll you what, you hang around some people at that organization who are diabetics, and who are passionate, and it's hard not to feel the same way they do.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:45] Yes. And, obviously, being a diabetic, I tip my hat to you because I applaud the work that you're doing at JDRF and have done at JDRF. And I've met some folks at JDRF. I've met some of the doctors whose children have had diabetes, and they do a lot of work at JDRF. And that's another organization. That's kind of how -- I didn't realize, you had posted something on Facebook. It was around the Super Bowl or something, tickets to JDRF.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:19] And you were the one who introduced me, who is the Executive Director, Cathy Paessun, at the time. And I went talk to Cathy and wanted to volunteer. And then, she moved to the Central Ohio Diabetes Association. And we've talked about this. Honey, my wife, if you're listening to this, please turn it off because you're going to get really upset with me. But like I told you, I would still like to do and

help something out at JDRF as I do at the Central Ohio Diabetes Associations. I'm just going to put that out there. And it's recorded, so it can't be taken back. And I know you can make it happen, like I said. And hit me up here soon. We need to get together for another afterwork appetizer and talk about potential opportunities over there.

Owen Wyss: [00:23:05] Absolutely.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:05] But you've been on the board for how many years now at the Ohio Society?

Owen Wyss: [00:23:11] I believe I just entered my fifth and final. And when I say final, I mean final, as in I do have to roll off for a period of time, but that's going to be tough. I've made some great, great relationships there. And it's going to be -- It will actually be quite a system shock to not be able to catch up with some of those fellow board members, at least, quarterly for an all day meeting, and then at our annual retreat. So, it's going to be a shock. But, you know, that's also a teaching opportunity for myself. And then, I realized that I've got to make sure even if we were not assigned to be together that I continue to reach out and stay in contact with them, which sometimes, personally, will be tough for me.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:58] And you had a very unique time on the board because I believe when you first started, didn't Clarke Price has retired, and Scott had just come on as a new CEO?

Owen Wyss: [00:24:11] I believe I became a board member in Scott's second year-

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:17] Okay.

Owen Wyss: [00:24:18] ... as CEO. So, Clarke was transitioned out, but, you know, it's been a five-year string of that. I can't wait to talk more about that when the opportunity allows. And I shouldn't say not that I can't, but just it hasn't been -- You know, I don't get a whole lot of interest from my friends who aren't accountants to talk about this. But it's been so interesting to watch an organization try and fight through the supposed dying

membership model and pick a strategy that will help the organization survive for years. I will be able to use things I've learned in this five years throughout every piece of my life, primarily in business, but I'm sure in many things.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:05] Yeah. You've been on the board for as long as you have. It's a wonderful experience. I'm remembering when I first was on the board, I thought it was a cool thing because they really didn't talk technical accounting. They were talking about the big picture things. And at the time, it was all about IFRS, and was it going to happen, and some things about peer review, and look at the profession, you know, five years ahead, and realizing, we're five years there.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:31] And, yeah, a lot of this did happen. Some of that didn't. But it's -- Yeah, you're going to miss being that connected. Trust me. When I rolled off the chairs, I was off of all communication, and I was going through withdrawals. I was shaking, you know. Just foaming at the mouth at times because you're so connected. You're in the know. Then, all of a sudden, you know nothing.

Owen Wyss: [00:25:56] Yeah. You know, I will say that that's probably a little bit of it too is trying to figure out. I'm so passionate about the mission now in navigating this dying membership model that it's going to be hard to not be in the know. And not even the decision making part of it or helping the organization make decisions, but just being out of the loop. And I know it will be hard to figure out how to get back, stay in that loop even if it is on the edge.

Peter Margaritis: [00:26:26] Can you talk about anything about this dying membership model and the approach that the Ohio Society is doing, or is it still at board level and hasn't trickled out to the general public?

Owen Wyss: [00:26:39] No, absolutely. I can absolutely talk about it. And it is still very much an evolving process. First, it would be my contention. And, you know, I'm sure that the society could summarize this much better than I will, but I'll give my take on it here. You know, at first, the first evolution, I think, was to experiment outside the membership model with an organizational membership model. And we've learned a lot

from that. And that is still something that we are pushing forward on, maybe not quite as we did on day one, but still today just with some tweaks to the plan.

Owen Wyss: [00:27:23] And then, you know, I think the other big change and evolution that we're going through, and this is going to take years to perfect, if ever perfected, I guess I should say, is moving from a place where we deemed what learning that accountants in Ohio and beyond needed to a place where we're working and consulting with organizations on their training needs and trying to bring solutions to them. And so, I think from that perspective, maybe both things I'm saying you can kind of hear us moving slightly away from our membership model and even more towards mainly an industry or business model.

Owen Wyss: [00:28:07] And, you know, we're still so early. It's hard to tell whether we've achieved success because, at this point in time, the organization still is very largely based on individual membership. So, we're really trying to turn that slide around and hoping that we see that slide reverse course here shortly, maybe even the next four months.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:29] And that membership model, yeah, too. That's a big battleship to turn on a dime, to move away from that, even though that membership model is any more. It's like how do you engage the younger generation to join, to be a part of?

Owen Wyss: [00:28:52] And you're absolutely right. I mean, it is. You know, we've talked about my involvement from a board level, and I'll even extend this into a membership level, you know. And I won't get into naming generations. I will say I'm one year out of what is considered a millennial. So, you know, many people probably would still lump me in there, not that I think that they need designated names.

Owen Wyss: [00:29:18] But, you know, just even talking about the friends that I hang out with every day, who many of them are outside of this profession. And, really, it enlightens me as to why the Ohio Society is not the only organization having membership trouble. The younger generations, really, it's not something that they --At

least, from what I personally experienced, it's not something that they feel is just something they have to do. If you can't find a way to make that personal connection, they've got no problem paying.

Owen Wyss: [00:29:52] But, sometimes, I think it's tough. You know, I look back at myself and realize that if it wasn't for jumping into the Ohio Society as a volunteer because I wanted to expand my network, I don't know that I would have spent enough time reading e-mails or watching Facebook videos to understand what the Ohio Society really is doing for me. And it's because I made a decision to want to network that, today, I'm so passionate about what I know that organization is accomplishing on a daily basis.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:26] Amen, brother. I mean, it's kind of -- I remember when I got involved because I was teaching at Franklin University, I felt like I needed to get involved. And I think the same thing. If it wasn't for that, and I wasn't -- You know, I'm just trying to do it for the students, as well as build my network within the state. And, over the years, I think I did a very great job of doing that. I met some wonderful people.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:49] But it gets frustrating from those who are active, and from those who don't read e-mails, or don't get involved. But then, you ask, "Well, why are they members?" And a lot of the feedback I get is like from an AICPA level, I've heard some AICPA members say that the reason they keep their membership is for the insurance, which I find really amusing to some degree, but it's life insurance. And I hear some say that, "I just want to, you know, make sure I'm still in the know," or "I take it for the cheaper CPE." And I still look at this much more to that organization than just that, but I might have been -- Just like as you said, I might have been one of those folks if I hadn't throw my hat in the ring, and jumped two feet, and became a volunteer.

Owen Wyss: [00:31:49] I mean, absolutely true. I mean, sometimes we're -- And we're wavering on how to sell, you know. Sell is such a bad word, but how to sell the organization because I can tell anybody that's a CPA that needs CPE that the Ohio Society provides 12 hours per year, and just for paying your membership fees. And if you look at the cost of CPE, that pays for itself. I mean, you've officially paid for your membership if you take all 12 CPE hours.

Owen Wyss: [00:32:21] The organization is doing so much more. You know, we've got the advantage of being a sizable state and having a heavy membership for the Ohio Society. So, I think, you'd never know if you don't take the time to sit and listen or read an article. But Ohio, from a business and tax perspective, especially the Ohio Society of CPAs, is not only playing in Ohio. I mean, they really are and do have a national presence. And it's an organization I can speak to accomplishing so much that if anybody, an Ohio CPA and not a member is listening to this, I couldn't encourage them more to do their research and get involved.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:02] Yeah, it's finding that value, "What value are you bringing to me as a member?" versus, back in the day, we were taken. You need to do this. It's kind of like the told model versus now. But when you look at the members, you can't -- Well, I look at it this way. We're looking at our members as like we're playing checkers or we're playing chess. Because if you think of the game of checkers, each piece can move in any direction it wants to, but in checkers, it's a strategic move. So, it's almost like an a la carte. I can't give it one thing to the masses. I have to tailor it to meet those different audiences that I'm trying to appeal to.

Owen Wyss: [00:33:46] Absolutely. And it's tough to -- And, you know, we're seeing it in social media every day today. It's tough to strategize those communications to know that you're getting the right communication to the right member or potential member. You know, here at Thompson, we're talking about taking on some social media presence. We have the slightest right now that I manage also myself, but we're really talking about bringing in somebody who is an expert at aiming social media.

Owen Wyss: [00:34:20] And that just shows you how poorly I can speak about this when I say aiming social media, but, you know, if we're looking to hire, we do have demographics that fit what our typical employees ought to fit in best here. I have no idea how to direct that. But, you know, that person does, and it's become an incredible expertise, And I continue to hear more about that other organizations should definitely be looking into.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:48] Exactly. There was some committee meeting the other day. Somebody mentioned that they hired a social media expert intern. And within a 12-month period of time, their social media activity followers just exploded. It was up, I feel like, about 300% or something crazy like that. But if you think about that, and a lot of conversations being had out in social media, you're just raising your visibility, your presence.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:18] And having a social media strategist for, I think, all organizations, all businesses, to raise their profile, that's more than likely an investment that would provide great ROI, But, a lot of times, we go, " But what does it do? Am I not be getting sales? I might not. How do you measure?" But I think it's much more than that, the aspect of just that visibility and being out in front of people. And when I need something done, social media, that's first place I think of, and I'll go to, and that's my lifestyle.

Owen Wyss: [00:35:54] And I hate to admit, you know, I get asked the question on a survey here that I find myself taking, what's your primary news source? And my primary news source is Facebook. And I know I just dated myself there, but my primary news source is Facebook. Now, don't get me wrong. The news sources on Facebook are still your ABCs, and your CNNs, Fox News, and whatever else it is that I might have liked in the past, but I'm not even doing a search. If it's important, it'll show up in my newsfeed.

Peter Margaritis: [00:36:27] That's interesting. I used to be a newspaper guy. But then, they took them all away. So, I get my news via some apps that will go out and gather information from a variety of sources to bring it in. And that's the first thing I do every morning is kind of sift through. I just kind of go through it. But I still have the Wall Street Journal on my app on my iPad, and I still struggle at times to read through the Wall Street Journal or Harvard Business Review. I can do that, which is really that's not like a CPA to say something like that.

Owen Wyss: [00:37:03] And I will be completely honest here, you know, I am of the generation, whatever generation that might be, that still likes its news, and/or does like its news, and does like what it reads to be 30 seconds or less. You know, if you want

me to delve into a longer thought process on it, it's got to be something that I've become incredibly interested in in the first 30 sec.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:31] And in journalism, they call that don't bury the lead because the lead gets you to dig in. And I forgot where I was reading this. Don't bury the lead, the lead gets your interest, and the major content has to be of those first three to four paragraphs of that because the longer the article is, they probably won't get to the end or even halfway through, but they'll consume that first three or four paragraphs, and then move on to the next. But if the lead doesn't attract in today's age, we're just going to move to the next. And that's kind of like the top process towards that audience. How are we getting their attention? What's that lead that we need to create and not bury?

Owen Wyss: [00:38:16] And I think you're absolutely right. And, you know, a little bit of me even equates that to what I do at work every day. It's a jack of all trades. And yes, I need to be a subject matter around some things, but, in a lot of cases, it's better that I can speak at a high level about a lot of things. You know, and then if I need to dig into something, I will set that time aside or develop a team here that can help me do so.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:46] Exactly. I find that Sundays are a nice quiet time where I can go through and dig deeper in some of the stuff. I put a lot of my articles that I want to read for that Sunday out on my Evernote account, so I can just pull them up, sit on a couch, have a cup of coffee, and read through about an hour, an hour or two every Sunday, and try to get, you know, a little bit deeper.

Peter Margaritis: [00:39:08] The one that I still haven't done yet, and I've got a lot of articles on it is that new intestinal disorder called block chain. I am starting to begin to understand it, and I need to dig into it deeper, but that one kind of, yeah.

Owen Wyss: [00:39:27] I need to ask a favor then because I have tried, and I still have no idea what it is. I understand what I think it does. I don't know what it is or how it does it. And I've made an effort. So, next time we get together, I'm going that you give me a little training and schooling.

Peter Margaritis: [00:39:50] I most certainly will, and that will be in 2020. You know, actually, I was speaking at the National Association of Black Accountants, and one of our colleagues was doing a session on block chain. So, I sat to his hour long session, and I walked out with, "I think I got it. I think I finally kind of understand what they're talking about." So, yes, I will brush up on it the next time that we get together.

Peter Margaritis: [00:40:16] Before we wrap up, so, let's recap. You're a husband, you're a father, financial controller, volunteer at a variety of organizations. So, what do you do if you have any spare time just for you?

Owen Wyss: [00:40:34] This time of year, yard work. And the rain has been killing me this year. It makes it really tough to get to. And now, I'm going to jinx myself with that because we'll have drought the rest of the summer, and my yard would be brown, which would even frustrate me more. You know, I have a passion for a lot of things. It's so interesting. And my friends would probably tell you that my passions for a lot of things last for about a year and a half to two years at a time.

Owen Wyss: [00:41:05] Anything with an engine, I am a complete car guy. I have a few and love to tinker. I don't know that I'm diving into them if I don't know what I'm doing. I do have that hold up, but I do love to tinker with them. And then, just, you know, love to be outside. The summer is a great time of year, and just play some softball here and there. Kind of have slowed down in the past few years from the three to four nights a week of softball and volleyball with marriage and a kid. But when I do get a chance to get out, I still love to do so.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:36] That's cool. That's great. And I was talking to someone recently, and in their interview, they asked, "What do you do in your spare time?" because, basically, if they don't do anything, that means -- And this is the way it was told me, and I agree that they don't have an outlet. And anymore we need an outlet, a place that we can get rid of that stress, so it doesn't continually build up, build up, build up.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:59] And I applaud you on so many accounts. I'm so proud of what you've accomplished, but the cool thing is I'm going to be around to watch you do even more. And I'm looking for it. And I'm not going to jinx it, but I truly believe. But I will put it on the record that I believe that somewhere in your near future that you may actually be the chair of the Ohio Society of CPAs, and run that organization, and be the face of the organization for a year.

Owen Wyss: [00:42:29] Thank you for that. Now, I don't have to publicly speak in front of a room of 400, I'd be much more open to that than what I might even when I first joined the board.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:40] I can fix that for you. I can fix that publicly speaking piece to 400 people. And they may tell you to look at them naked, don't ever do that. That's the worst piece of advice, but I can help you in that realm.

Owen Wyss: [00:42:53] I know you can. And we're probably going to need to start that training sooner than later if I plan to reach all of the heights I'd like to in my working career.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:05] We have it on record. I'm going to hold you to it. Owen, I can't thank you enough spending time. I look forward, and I'll send you an e-mail on trying to figure out some time between now and the end of August to get together. And, man, just keep knocking it out of the park, my friend. Just keep knocking it out of the park.

Owen Wyss: [00:43:26] Peter, thank you very much for your time. This has been a thoroughly enjoyable. And I hope that it sounds good to everybody as it did in my head.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:33] Yeah, mine too.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:39] I want to thank Owen again for taking time out of his very busy schedule on being a guest on my podcast. As you can tell listening to our

conversation that Owen is passionate about everything he does and is a great role model for both young and old. I am very proud of him, and I'm envious of his drive.

Peter Margaritis: [00:43:59] In episode 9, my guest is Byron Patrick, who is the Managing Director at CPA Practice at Network Alliance. He recently presented five sessions at the AICPA ENGAGE Conference on a variety of IT topics, and that is the focus of our conversation. Thank you for listening. And begin the process of changing your mindset and getting out of your comfort zone to develop new skill sets to become more future-ready. Your call to action is to ask yourself if you can do more to have a greater impact on your career and on your community. Remember, a part of being future ready is to be an improviser. Yes, and - I'm out.