

Amy Franko: [00:00:00] We have to change the mindset or the language around business development and sales, so that we can create a culture that we want to create.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:07] Welcome to Change your Mindset Podcast, formerly known as Improv is No Joke, where it's all about believing that strong communication skills are the best way in delivering your technical accounting knowledge and growing your business. An effective way of building strong communication skills is by embracing the principles of applied improvisation.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:37] Your host is Peter Margaritis, CPA, a.k.a. the Accidental Accountant. And he will interview financial professionals and business leaders to find their secret in building stronger relationships with their clients, customers, associates, and peers, all the while growing their businesses. So, let's start the show.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:05] Welcome to Episode 28. And my guest today is Amy Franko, who is a strategic sales expert, and author, and a keynote speaker. Amy built a successful business-to-business sales career with global technology companies like IBM and Lenovo.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:21] In 2007, she took a pivot into entrepreneurship and launched a training firm, Impact Instruction Group. She has successfully built a book of business that includes some of the world's most recognized brands, such as IBM, Deloitte, and BKD CPAs.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:40] Amy, now, works with professional service firms, helping them grow their business development results and build firm leaders. In Amy's new book, *The Modern Seller*, it's an Amazon best seller and also named 2018 Top Sales Book by Top Sales World. *The Modern Seller* is not a book about prospecting or negotiating skills, it's a book that explores the five skill sets that individuals and organizations need in order to become successful. These five skill sets are: agile, entrepreneurial, holistic, social, and ambassadors.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:19] In the interview, Amy explains each one of these skill sets in greater detail and focus her thoughts towards the financial service industry. However, no matter what industry you're in, the ability for you to develop these five necessary skill sets is crucial in your career development in today's disruptive business environment that we're operating in today.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:43] Now, before we get to the interview, Change Your Mindset is now being distributed on C-Suite Radio. And you can find Change Your Mindset, as well as many other outstanding business podcasts, on C-Suite Radio by going to www.c-suiteradio.com.

Announcer: [00:03:00] This podcast is part of the C-Suite Radio Network, turning the volume off on business.

Peter Margaritis: [00:03:05] And, now, a word from our sponsor.

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Peter Margaritis: [00:03:57] Now, let's get to the interview with Amy Franko.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:06] Hey, welcome back, everybody. I'm excited today because I got a fellow NSA Ohio, O-H-I-O, speaker with me. Welcome, Amy Franko. And thank you for taking time out on this dreary, dull, rainy Columbus Day.

Amy Franko: [00:04:23] Thank you so much for having me. And O-H.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:28] And Amy has just published a book back in October called The Modern Seller. And that's going to be the basis of our conversation today. But before we do that, if you can give the audience a little taste of your background, how you got to this point that you're a well-known, highly-published author.

Amy Franko: [00:04:49] Sure. So, the cliff notes' version of that, if you will, is that the first 10 years of my career, I spent in technology and in sales. So, I'd call it a traditional B2B selling environment. I worked for IBM and for Lenovo. And then, for the past 12 years, I took a pivot into entrepreneurship.

Amy Franko: [00:05:10] 12 years ago, I founded a learning and development company, which that's a whole other conversation in and of itself. But for the past 12 years, I've been in the learning and development field. And over the past five years, really niched down and got back to my roots in sales.

Amy Franko: [00:05:27] So, what that looks like today is I work primarily in professional services and work with organizations on business development and sales training. And then, also, keynote speaking, which is how you and I crossed paths at NSA Ohio.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:41] Exactly. So, great sales background, great companies you've worked for. What was it about? And so, how you came with, "I need to write this book. I need to get this out of here and onto paper"? Was there a moment, that aha moment?

Amy Franko: [00:05:55] Yeah. Yeah. You know what, I've always loved to write ever since I was a kid. So, I think, reading, writing, those were things I absolutely loved to do. I was the kid who spent my days simultaneously at the pool, and then I would go to the library. So, I loved reading. I loved writing. So, I think that's always been a part of me. And I enjoy writing. I've always enjoyed blogging and writing short-form posts. And so, that just kind of turned into a passion or a spark of an idea of wanting to write this book. So, I kind of say that the book was, sort of, a 20-year dream and a 20-month project.

Amy Franko: [00:06:35] The catalyst for the book though, and maybe for someone who is in the midst of they're evolving their career or maybe changing their career, the catalyst for the book came at the time when I started to really niche down into sales and wanting to create something to build additional credibility, additional visibility in that field. So, that was part of it. Timing was a catalyst.

Amy Franko: [00:07:00] And then, as far as the material for the book, as I was doing more work with clients and sales, I was seeing this need for these skills behind the skills. So, it's not a book about prospecting, or presenting, negotiating, closing. Lots of great resources out there, and those are still much needed skills, But I wanted to dig into the skills behind the skills.

Amy Franko: [00:07:23] So, the book gets into five skill sets or capabilities that I see individuals and organizations needing to build. So, the catalyst was part-timing, and part content, and seeing what was happening in my own clients.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:36] What are the five that you just referenced?

Amy Franko: [00:07:39] Yeah, yeah. So, a modern seller or a modern business developer, whatever you happen to do in your firm, they are agile, they're entrepreneurial, they're holistic, social, and ambassadors. So, the book digs into those five, and what does it look like in your firm or with your clients. And, most importantly, I like to think of it as a field guide. How do you actually build those in yourself, or if you're a partner, a leader, how do you build them in your team and across your organization? So, looking at it from a couple of different angles.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:14] So, agile. When I think of that, I think of adaptability. I think of moving and grooving.

Amy Franko: [00:08:21] Definitely.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:23] And being out there, along with entrepreneurial. And when I think entrepreneurial, I think of fear because I don't think there's a lot of entrepreneurs out there that doesn't live with it, but that's motivating kind of fear.

Amy Franko: [00:08:35] Yeah, absolutely.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:37] How do you explain this to, let's say, the accounting profession?

Amy Franko: [00:08:42] Yeah. So, if I were to dig into it agile, it's a place to start. Agility is something that wasn't even really on the radar up until maybe about 10-15 years ago. It's something that you heard about on the sports field, agility drills, but you really didn't hear about it in a business sense.

Amy Franko: [00:09:02] Center for Creative Leadership has done research, and they've continued to do research on the top skills that organizations are looking to hire for and build. And agility really popped onto the radar maybe about 10 years ago. And by 2022, what they're saying is agility, adaptability, versatility, those are going to be top five skills that organizations are looking to hire for.

Amy Franko: [00:09:29] And I would also suggest, they are top five skills that we need to be thinking about in business development and building because our clients are expecting that of us. They're expecting us to show agility. And so, in order to do that, we have to be building that in ourselves.

Peter Margaritis: [00:09:45] What are some of these drills that you would suggest because one of my favorite quotes from Simon Sinek says like, "Just because you went to a leadership seminar doesn't make you a leader."

Amy Franko: [00:09:57] I know, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:09:59] Yeah. You got to put in the work each and every day. It's those drills. So, what do those drills look like? What does one need to do?

Amy Franko: [00:10:06] Yeah, yeah. And if I could come back to that Simon Sinek point for just a moment. When we were talking a little bit before we get on the podcast, this idea that you can go to a training, you can read a book, but the switch has to be in the application, and applying things, and trying them, and failing at them, and moving forward in them. That's the only way that we learn. Leadership, business development, whatever that is.

Amy Franko: [00:10:35] So, for those who might be in a manager or a senior manager role, and you're looking to grow to a partner level, growing to partner comes through a book of business, and making sure that we're building a book of business.

Amy Franko: [00:10:49] So, back to your question about how do you actually build agility. So, a couple of things. One is building strategic speed. And yes, a strategic speed, I cannot take credit for that phrase. I first came across it from the Forum Corporation in some research that they've done, but strategic speed is the ability to work simultaneously toward the long-term and, also, creating momentum in the short-term.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:16] Okay.

Amy Franko: [00:11:16] So, how do we build agility? Strategic speed is one of the ways that we can build agility. And I can't take credit for that phrase. I first came across that from the Forum Corporation. And building strategic speed is simultaneously being able to work toward a long-term goal. Like, say, you're looking at some kind of strategic initiative in the firm. Maybe it's adding a new service line. Maybe it's growing into a different geography vertical. That's a long-term goal. That's 12 plus months.

Amy Franko: [00:11:47] So, you've set something like that, but you also have to be able to create short-term wins, or quarterly wins, wins every six months to help you continue to build momentum toward the goal. So, it's simultaneous. It's almost looking in two directions: long term and short term. So, that's one way we can build agility.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:05] And you said a word. And it's a four-letter F word, fail.

Amy Franko: [00:12:12] Yeah, right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:15] And nobody likes to fail, nobody, but that's the only way we learn. And kind of like an DNA of a CPA and an accountant is failure is not an option.

Amy Franko: [00:12:27] No.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:28] But that's what changing their mindset is it's okay to fail. It hurts, it doesn't feel comfortable, but remember what you did, and try not to do that again, or try to look at it from a different angle, but the key is don't give up.

Amy Franko: [00:12:48] Yeah. And I didn't specifically say this when you asked me to share about my background but as people probably picked up on, I don't have a CPA, accounting, finance background, whatsoever. So, even coming into this type of environment and building a book of business and professional services, there is a fair amount of failure that goes along with that.

Amy Franko: [00:13:13] And one of the things that I've picked up in my conversations with CPA firms is the idea that, sometimes, failure can be seen as, "If I make a mistake here, I may not be the trusted advisor in my clients' and my prospective clients' eyes, and we're trusted to get everything right." And so, if something doesn't go according to plan, maybe you're out there growing that new geography, growing that new vertical. If something doesn't go according to plan, then we can internalize it, and we take it as a huge failure, but we're not willing to take the risk again. And we have to be able to get past that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:51] Yeah. You got to get back on the horse if you get thrown off. And it hurts. I mean, we all know how it feels, but it feels so much better when we do succeed and, actually, see it through than given up at that point and walking away.

Amy Franko: [00:14:08] Yeah. So, sometimes, the things that don't go right, the failures -- and failure is not -- nothing's ever an absolute success or an absolute failure. There are things that go well and don't go well about everything that we try. But part of agility is being able to pull the lessons out of that, and then you keep those lessons, and kind of let the other stuff go, and those lessons start to become your experience for the next time you're faced with a situation that is completely unrelated. So, being able to apply our experiences to a new situation and figuring out what to do, that's also agility.

Peter Margaritis: [00:14:45] Okay. So, talk about entrepreneur.

Amy Franko: [00:14:48] Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, the idea behind a modern seller being an entrepreneur, being entrepreneurial is if you are -- so, whether you're manager, senior manager, you're someone partner level, at the highest level in your firm, look at yourself or look at the people in your firm. Do they see themselves as employees, or do they see themselves as the founder and the CEO, maybe the chief bootstrapper, in their own book of business? Because that's a real different way of thinking.

Amy Franko: [00:15:21] When you think of your book of business or your team's book of business as a business, you make different decisions. You're looking at the top line, you're looking at the bottom line, you're looking at your best opportunities. You're not just looking in what's right in front of you. You're looking at the much bigger picture, and you make your decisions differently. So, we want to have people in our organization that are thinking entrepreneurially because that's what's going to help us grow.

Peter Margaritis: [00:15:48] I've always said to partners and firms, when you have a new hire, and they come in, their cubicles, their area that's their shop. And the more that you can get them to realize that the revenue and the cost associated with that, by the time they get to the manager, they'll be further ahead than where we are now.

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:09] But part of the reluctance of doing that is I've heard from other parties, "But we don't want to tell them everything." You don't have to tell them everything, but taking time enough to get started, and as they move up that line, the

thought process of an owner, the thought process of an entrepreneur makes you more vested in what you're doing than just, "I'm here just to collect a check."

Amy Franko: [00:16:34] Yeah, yeah. And the more -- so, to that point, the earlier on in their time with you that they can be involved in opportunities, go on business development calls, be a part of RFPs and pursuits if that's something that's part of what you do, the earlier they get involved in that, the more exposure they get to the business as a whole, and they see that business as a whole, and they start to be given that opportunity to start thinking like that owner.

Amy Franko: [00:17:06] The other piece on that transparency part, I can understand reluctance to, sometimes, share everything that goes on behind the scenes, warts and all, right. But part of engagement and part of retaining that top talent is having a level of transparency that they really understand all the good, maybe some of the things that aren't working so well in the business because they may have your next awesome idea that's going to fix that problem or catapult the business forward. And we need to give them the opportunity to develop those skills.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:42] Exactly. And if they take the mindset of, "I'm investing into my people," versus "What's this training going to cost?" as well as -- I still think -- and I think you'd agree with me that when you think of business, when we go, and speak, and do workshops and stuff, that's an event for us. We're there, we're gone. Now, it's the responsibility of the organization to see it through and not revert. It's so easy to revert back to the rut that we've been in because this is new, and hard, and different. Senior management, partners, whomever, have to be accountable to keep the message moving forward in order for it to be a success.

Amy Franko: [00:18:24] Right. That's the reinforcement piece. And every time I am doing a speaking engagement, a keynote, or any kind of maybe longer-term learning initiative, it's figuring out the most important ways to help them retain and reinforce, so that they can take it beyond that day. And I'm helping them to make sure that it's getting embedded into their culture.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:48] Yeah, exactly. I believe the third one you mentioned was holistic.

Amy Franko: [00:18:53] Yeah, yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:54] Holistic.

Amy Franko: [00:18:55] Yeah. There is one thing that you said that I wanted to come back to and make a point on. And this is something I've started to do for myself. It's the language between cost and investment. And I've started to think for myself, instead of using the word cost for something, "This costs X number of dollars. This costs x amount of time," it's thinking about it in terms of an investment. I mean, "I'm choosing to invest this amount of time. I'm choosing to invest this financially."

Amy Franko: [00:19:28] And that flip of the switch has helped me to think a little differently about the decisions that I'm making about where I'm investing my time and where I'm investing my financial resources. And I would encourage anyone in any role in a CPA firm to start thinking about these types of skills as investments versus costs and seeing if that language change helps propel you forward.

Peter Margaritis: [00:19:54] Oh, it will. It will. And I remember who introduced that concept to me, Steve Gilliland. And it served me well. And I share that with other CPAs about get rid of the word cost. It's negative. It's the investment. I believe the third one of the five is holistic, which I'm still trying to get my mind about what you mean by that, holistic.

Amy Franko: [00:20:22] Yeah. So, it really takes -- I look at it two ways in this particular capability. So, the first part of holistic is this idea that, in any given day, we have a finite amount of resources when it comes to our time, our energy, our motivation, and our discipline. The way in which we choose to invest those resources on any given day directly impacts our business development results, whatever results it is that we happen to be going for, business development or otherwise. And it's the sum of those daily

investments that determine whether or not we get those long-term goals or even those short-term goals. So, that's the one way that I look at holistic in the book.

Amy Franko: [00:21:11] The other way is holistic when it comes to working with our clients and our prospective clients. And are we looking at the way we're building a relationship with them? Holistic, are we looking at it holistically in the sense of mapping their buying expectations to the way that we happen to develop business? Are we looking at the entire ecosystem of our partners' internal or external to help them reach their goals? So, it's a personal look and a business look.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:43] Okay, got it. You keeping saying the word "business development."

Amy Franko: [00:21:45] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:21:47] And I was a banker at one point in my life, and that was my favorite part of the job was the actual business development, but it also scares people because, now, oh God, that's networking.

Amy Franko: [00:22:01] It's sales.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:01] It's sales and networking, and those words that we really like. And I ask them about networking, and do they like networking, most people don't. And I look them square in the eyes and say, "I blame your mother." And they look at me like, "What?" "So, what did your mother always tell you? Never talk to-

Amy Franko: [00:22:21] Strangers.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:22] Right.

Amy Franko: [00:22:23] Right, that's right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:24] But there's no such thing as a stranger in a business environment. They're just potential opportunities.

Amy Franko: [00:22:32] Yep. And I like to think of business developments, sales, whatever we happen to call it, we have to build cultures, a sales culture, a business development culture in our firms if we're going to continue to be successful today and into the future. And I like to think of business development as creating the right relationships. So, to your point, networking.

Amy Franko: [00:22:56] And, also, looking at it as I am helping my professional services clients solve some of their biggest challenges. I'm a problem solver and a trusted advisor, I'm someone who's strategic to their business. And what I bring is valuable. And we're creating a mutually valuable relationship. We have to change that mindset or the language around business development and sales, so that we can create the culture that we want to create.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:22] And the only way we can become better at business development, better at sales is do it every single day. This is the-

Amy Franko: [00:23:28] I love it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:28] This is the pot calling the kettle black. I will be transparent. It is. This is something that I'm working on every single day as an entrepreneur. I should be working on content. When I'm working on content, I should be able to do marketing. It's-

Amy Franko: [00:23:42] I know.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:42] But without the marketing, you'll have the opportunities, so I won't need the content. And it's a key challenge to change that mindset but do it in small baby steps.

Amy Franko: [00:23:54] And to that point, one of the things that's helped me is, now, I have CRM tools. I am actually looking at my desk. I have a good, old, handwritten notepad here with my prospecting list on it. And if we can invest as little as 30 to 60 minutes a day, if you have more, great, but to your point of baby steps, if we can block out 30 to 60 minutes a day of true focus on business development, we're going to make progress. If we can block two hours a day on business development, we'll make even more progress.

Amy Franko: [00:24:32] The idea - and this is around the holistic of where we're investing our time, energy, discipline, motivation - is finding where we have the most energy in a given day and blocking our most important activities for those times of the day.

Peter Margaritis: [00:24:48] Exactly. And I'm doing a better job at it, and we all should do a better job at where do we invest that time, and what are we most productive. I feel, when I was writing the book, most productive comes first thing in the morning. So, that's when I would write. I'm still doing some writing but, now, that first part of the morning, I invest in, okay, my marketing efforts, and what do I need to be doing because, then, I have the energy. Then, in the afternoon, I'll do the other boring, tedious stuff.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:14] Now, I was able to download a chapter from your book, and it was this fourth one on social. And I will say when I saw the word social, "Is she going down the social media path?" I'm going. But as I was reading through, you are not go down the social media path. So, it was very interesting. So, talk about social.

Amy Franko: [00:25:35] I get that reaction a lot is, "Oh, I'm ready for a whole section on social selling or social media." And one of the things I really tried to steer clear of in the book was too much technology talk. Technology tools are enablers in a good way, I should say. They are enablers. And when we know the goals that we're looking to accomplish, the relationships that we're looking to build, the tools are out there to help us reach those goals. But I purposefully tried to steer clear of specific technology and tools for that reason because the tools always change.

Peter Margaritis: [00:26:14] Right.

Amy Franko: [00:26:14] The idea behind the social capability or the social dimension of the Modern Seller is social capital is never going to have a line item on a P&L. I don't think it will anyway. I've never seen it. But the idea behind it is that individuals and organizations that really understand social capital - and I'll give it a definition here in a moment - they really understand social capital, they understand the power of strategic relationships and investing intentionally in the right relationships because that's going to help them accelerate their business development goals, any other goals. And you do it in a much more rewarding, impactful way when you approach a relationship-building with intention, and you're very strategic about it.

Amy Franko: [00:27:02] And if I could give it a working definition to social capital, I see social capital as the collective value that our networks are able to build. So, I have a network. You, Peter, have a network. If we are combining our networks together in the service of a greater goal, we are creating social capital because our two networks are combined, are more powerful than us just as individuals.

Peter Margaritis: [00:27:31] Exactly. And so, how do you do that? Because I always look at you want to put the right people in your network. There is always somebody who I wanted to meet that I hadn't met. So, I was always having to try to find someone for the introduction, or if I happened to be in an event that they were there, I would walk up, introduce myself, and try to start up a little bit of a conversation, and then follow up, and continue that have a drip, drip, drip campaign to build that relationship, to build that trust within the relationship. But once again, there's no [indiscernible]. It just takes time. And a lot of times, we don't have time.

Amy Franko: [00:28:09] Right, or we see that it takes time, and then we make a choice about whether or not we want to continue making that time investment. We have the time. It's just choosing where we invest the time. But, yes, for really strong relationships, I would say that you can create good value in a short amount of time if you have the right intention and you know what's important to them. And sure, we have to build that that longer-term trust over time.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:45] Yes. And I want to go down a little different path with this because-

Amy Franko: [00:28:49] Yeah, sure.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:51] ... when we said invest, that's part of the holistic aspect. So, I see how this is all tied in together. But getting the attention of folks who are protective prospects within business, and sometimes it's hard to get past that gatekeeper. I've been challenging a lot of folks these days to when's the last time they wrote an article on their expertise and had it published in some journal, some accounting journal, or in a newsletter within your organization to highlight yourself?

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:24] I had a former student of mine who has worked for Deloitte. She was on the tax side. When she got a new job, and she was writing, it was getting published in Business First. I'm like, "Holy cow."

Amy Franko: [00:29:31] Great.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:33] And then, we reconnected.

Amy Franko: [00:29:35] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:35] So, that's another way. And to the point of I wanted to try to find somebody, there was a partner, and there was a firm called WithumSmith+Brown, and I wanted to meet somebody in that firm. I don't know anybody in the firm, but I saw that one of the parties writes an article for Accounting Today. So, I got to them, I sent them e-mails, and I read, and just trying to get that door open, and it worked.

Amy Franko: [00:30:01] Yeah. And know, those are great door openers. I'm thinking of a prospect meeting that I have later this week that I was introduced to through Association for Accounting Marketing because I've done quite a bit of work for that

association. I've done webinars, I've published articles, I've spoken at their conferences. So, I have, hopefully, proven my value by being part of that association. And then, an introduction was made for me by that association to this firm. And I would have never been able to open a door that quickly on my own, but that door was opened for me through a trusted relationship.

Amy Franko: [00:30:45] Now, that does not mean we're going to necessarily do business together. It is simply an introduction for a conversation to understand more about what is it that they're looking to accomplish. Could I be the right person? If so, great. Let's continue the conversation. If not, maybe there's someone in my network I can introduce them to. And that right there, if having your network and being willing to leverage your network in the service of others, that will keep the door open -- that will open a door and keep it open every time.

Peter Margaritis: [00:31:15] Exactly. And I try to do that as well. If I'm not the right fit, do I know somebody who could be? Let me give you a referral.

Amy Franko: [00:31:22] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:31:24] So, last but not least is of the five?

Amy Franko: [00:31:27] Ambassador.

Peter Margaritis: [00:31:29] Ambassador. So, is this the one that's going to tie all the other four together in, or is this just a thread that runs through all?

Amy Franko: [00:31:39] I think it's a little bit of the "Yes and." There is a -- I love that [indiscernible].

Peter Margaritis: [00:31:46] Yeah, I love it. Yeah.

Amy Franko: [00:31:46] So, this one, it absolutely stands independently, but there is a thread. I would say that ambassador, in many ways, ties together agile, entrepreneurial,

holistic, and social. Someone who is an ambassador, if we think about an ambassador in a global sense, an ambassador is someone who is a bridge between countries and cultures. We are ambassadors in much the same way. We're ambassadors from our organizations to our clients and prospects. We are a bridge into the greater community, into our industries, into our associations.

Amy Franko: [00:32:30] So, when we start to think of ourselves as a bridge in that way, our job is to build those relationships, build those opportunities. Something that an ambassador is really, really good at, they are really great at being able to embody the values of their firm, but they also stand really uniquely tall in their own expertise, their own brand, something that makes them unique and stand out. They do not fall into the world of sameness. They absolutely stand out, but they embody the values of their firm too. And it makes them so valuable to the firm, to their prospects and clients, to the industry, et cetera.

Peter Margaritis: [00:33:14] So, thinking about the ambassador and how you describe it, it's that visibility aspect. And I think a great way that's underutilized about this ambassadorship is called volunteering or being part of a not-for-profit board, or volunteering at your state CPA society or association. And meeting everybody, but then building your brand, building that ambassadorship and thought leadership to a whole new level.

Amy Franko: [00:33:50] Absolutely. So, finding those organizations where you can stand out, and you can contribute. And I always try to challenge myself, for any organization that I want to contribute more to, what's the highest profile, most impactful committee that I can find? And can I become a part of that? So, that's absolutely one way that I look to grow my brand, and it's through that association involvement.

Amy Franko: [00:34:18] And there's a kind of a fine line. There's so many associations that we can become a part of. And so, I kind of segment mine. I think about the ones where I am joining because it's for my professional development. And then, I look at the ones, yeah, they're still going to have a professional development piece to it, but I look at the ones that I can also say, "All right. Can this association, if I really provide value,

can I become more visible to organizations that I'd like to do business with? Can I leverage it for business development?"

Amy Franko: [00:34:57] So, when I segment my organizations in that way, that helps me make better decisions about where I'm going to invest extra time to volunteer. If it gets back to being holistic, we have a finite amount of resources in a given day, and we have to be selective about where we're investing those resources.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:16] So, let me just sum up what I heard. Amy Franko is going to be the new president of the National Speakers Association Ohio chapter in the future.

Amy Franko: [00:35:26] Is that what you heard?

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:28] That's exactly what I heard.

Amy Franko: [00:35:30] Did you all hear that if you're listening? Did you hear anything?

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:32] I'm going to make sure that everybody at the chapter hears this.

Amy Franko: [00:35:39] I love it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:40] You would be an excellent, excellent president.

Amy Franko: [00:35:43] Thank you. I appreciate that.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:47] Gosh. I've just -- I mean -- but you are investing. When you said professional development, you are investing that time into the organization, into the association, and to always continue to hone our skills. And I'll tell you what, there's no better place, if you ever do anything like we do - keynotes, training, or whatever - National Speakers Association around the country is a great place to invest your time into because that return on that investment is huge.

Amy Franko: [00:36:19] It's such a high-caliber organization. I totally agree. And your last point about the return on investment, taking some time to think about what would you like that return on your investment to be for yourself, so that you can make choices about how to best invest your time.

Amy Franko: [00:36:38] I'll use a quick example of something that has really helped me to develop business over time. And I think it falls well into the ambassador capability. I was part of the Association for Talent Development for a number of years. I still am. But at one time, I was very heavily invested locally, and I had created a couple of leadership forums.

Amy Franko: [00:37:00] And I ran these forums quarterly for a number of years, and I would use it as an opportunity to invite decision makers and leaders in my given spaces to come together as a networking opportunity and an educational opportunity for them. It was invitation-only, they had to be of a certain level in their organization, and there was no selling involved whatsoever. This is an idea anybody could adapt no matter what industry you're in.

Amy Franko: [00:37:27] And I would bring these people together once a quarter over lunch. I would bring topics of interest to them. I would pull them, and I'd bring topics of interest to them. And that's what we spent the time doing for 90 minutes once a quarter. Not once did I ever pitch my services or myself, but I can't tell you how valuable it was for relationship-building, allowing these people to create their own networks with one another, and problem-solve with one another.

Amy Franko: [00:37:54] And it came back to me in spades in so many ways. Relationships, it did come back to me in terms of business development, business opportunities. So, that kind of winds a number of those dimensions together. It's just one idea.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:10] Yes, it does. You've just described something that's been in the back of my head for a year.

Amy Franko: [00:38:15] Yeah?

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:16] Yeah. And, actually, I have thought about doing something very similar to that, to getting a group of partners and firms, and then also CFOs on meeting quarterly, but not as partners, and then the CFOs, and the partners, and the CFOs. And I've actually explored that idea. And I appreciate you bringing it up because I'd like to do a list again. It's just that investment of time. But I will have to ask your advice on that when we're done.

Amy Franko: [00:38:50] Yes, absolutely.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:51] And what I was trying to accomplish. So, as we begin to wrap up, how do you put a nice bow on top of your book?

Amy Franko: [00:39:00] Yeah. So, how do I put a bow on it? So, one of the things, as I was writing the book and doing the research for the book, and this is very much a learning and development principle, we tend to learn in -- I call it modular. We tend to learn in a way that's modular, and we want things to build off of one another. So, anything that you learn, and then you pick up a new skill, you want those things to connect together.

Amy Franko: [00:39:24] So, the way that I wrote the book is that it's in these five unique sections or dimensions. And as you were thinking about this conversation today, which one of those five really stands out to you the most? So, if you're listening in to this, which one of those five caught your attention the most? That's where I always recommend to start because when you start there, you'll start to see other -- you'll start to see improvements in some of the other dimensions as well, So, that's how I like to put the bow on it in terms of learning and development.

Peter Margaritis: [00:40:00] So, the one that stuck out to me, and I'll resonate on as well is the holistic side because that was probably the big surprise at how you described it. It wasn't what I was expecting, but I'm a big believer in that investment and that time. So, where can they find the book, The Modern Seller?

Amy Franko: [00:40:22] Yeah. So, if you go to amyfranko.com, you can find everything that you need about the book. You can download a free chapter. And it's also available on Amazon hardcover, Kindle, and in about 60 days, audible.

Peter Margaritis: [00:40:37] So, let me just say it, Amy Franko, and it's F-R-A-N-K-O, just to make sure everybody gets that, dot com. And I'm looking forward to seeing it come out in audible. And so, did you read it?

Amy Franko: [00:40:52] I did, yeah. I was the narrator. And after talking to a number of authors who had maybe they narrated it themselves or they outsourced the narration to a person, they all said, "Make sure to narrate your own book as the author. It's your connection to your audience." So, the narration out there is me.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:14] Yeah, I narrated my book a couple of years ago, but I never uploaded to audible. It was shown up on my website, but I've decided the book has been out there so long, I'm going to launch it in audible, but I think I got it planned by June, the first book.

Amy Franko: [00:41:29] Okay, that's exciting.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:30] Well, congratulations on that. Thank you so very much, Amy.

Amy Franko: [00:41:33] Thank you.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:34] I'm really excited about this book. I'd like to say, if you want to get a hold of Amy, go to her website, amyfranko.com, everything you need. You can e-mail her. And I wish you all the best of luck and, hopefully, see you at a future NSA Ohio meeting.

Amy Franko: [00:41:49] Thank you, Peter. I appreciate it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:55] Now, that you listened to this episode, what are your next steps in the pursuit of becoming a modern seller? What are the five skill sets have you fully developed? Which of the five skill sets is your weakest? Will you build a strategy in strengthening your weakest and leveraging your strongest? Well, now is the time for action. Devise a strategy and work on it every single day. It takes baby steps in order to change a habit.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:26] So, thank you for listening. And if you're enjoying the podcast, please subscribe and share this episode with a friend. Also please visit www.c-suiteradio.com to listen to many of the excellent podcasts that they have in their network.

Announcer: [00:42:49] Like what you just heard? Because it's c-suiteradio.com. C-Suite Radio, turning the volume up on business.