Making A Difference

How can I make my workplace and the world around me a better place? Hopefully this is a question we all stop and ask ourselves periodically. While one person may not be able to shift a corporate culture, there are things each of us can do to make a difference.

The Western Michigan Chapter of CFMA now has over 140 members. If all of us at CFMA would take some small steps to make a difference, think of how many companies and communities would be impacted. Here are a few areas I have been trying to work on, both personally and professionally that I thought might be helpful to the rest of the chapter.

Put others before yourself.

Where do we as financial professionals fit in? At times we all feel we are the most indispensable employee in the company, especially when we deal with the finances. If we stop and think about it though, for a construction company, which group of individuals has the greatest financial impact? Is it the finance department, project managers, superintendents, sales personnel, the owner, or rank and file field personnel? Many times, the finance department may have one of the smallest financial impacts to the company’s bottom line out of any of these groups. Obtaining a job with a high profit margin, building a job more efficiently, or landing a key new customer are extremely important to the success of a company. While it is important for us to get the information we need from these groups to do our jobs properly (receipts, expense reports, job projections), do we treat them like they are our customers or our subordinates?

One of the lessons my dad taught me when I was younger is that one of my primary responsibilities as an employee is to make my supervisor and those around me look better and help them be successful. If we can accomplish that, things will generally work out better for us too.

Learn how to deal with disappointment.

Unfortunately, disappointment is a fact of life for all of us. Over the past several years I have gotten into cycling as a way to get some fresh air and exercise on a regular basis. I signed up to participate in the Iceman mountain bike again this year...
and worked to be in better shape so I could improve my personal best time. For the entire week before the race it rained basically nonstop, which resulted in deep sandy mud for large portions of the course. A half hour into the race there was a long narrow section where the progress came to a complete stop and everyone had to get off their bikes and walk through the mud. It looked like the line for a TSA checkpoint at a major airport. I had a choice to make because I was starting to get mad. This wasn’t fair. My personal goals were fading away and many of those who were able to start before me didn’t have to wait in this line. I could either let this ruin my day, or I could roll with it.

Each time disappointment comes our way we have a choice to make in how we respond. Our response often doesn’t even affect the outcome of the situation, we just end up with a bad attitude. In my example I started to talk to those around me and spent the next 45 minutes making some new friends.

After the traffic cleared and I was able to get underway again, I became thankful my fortunes were better than many of the other individuals I rode by that had experienced flat tires, broken chains, and other mechanical issues that I was fortunate enough to avoid. When I finally did make it to the end of the race my time was way slower than I was hoping for, but I found my finishing position was better than prior years. What did I learn from this? Everyone gets a curveball thrown their way periodically, but it is still my responsibility to deal with those situations properly.

While this example is insignificant compared to many things in our lives, how we handle a situation can often change the outcome, but if it doesn’t it can at least change our perspective.

Be nice.
This seems like such a simple thing to say but is often difficult to put into practice. I believe we live in the best nation on earth but one area where I feel we struggle is how we treat others. We see this in how our politicians interact with each other, how we often respond when someone cuts us off on the road, and how we treat each other in the workplace.

There are not any two people on earth that agree with each other on every single thing. There are also not any of us that don’t make it through a day without making mistakes. When did it become socially acceptable to treat others poorly when we disagree with them or when they mess up?

We all have disagreements at work, and we all have stress and bad days. If we were all a little nicer to each other, our workplaces and communities would be much better places to be.

What is one thing each of us can do today to improve in even one of these areas? We often establish financial goals, are there any goals we can establish in these areas? If we each put in even a little more effort than we currently do, I think we would be surprised with the results. Sometimes doing the right thing is just good business.
Golf Outing Recap
The 4th Annual CFMA West Michigan Jon Penning Memorial Golf Scramble was held Tuesday, June 18, 2019 at Thornapple Pointe. Approximately 60 golfers participated in a fun day of golfing, networking, great food, and door prizes. We ended up having a beautiful day this year!

The first place team was made up of Scott Bishop, Matt Kelly, Andy VerMeilen, & Josh Burgess.

In addition, the Promotions Committee organized a food drive to the local food pantry, which provides a pantry of food and other personal products to those in need. They were very grateful for our donation!

Thanks to everyone who organized, participated, and volunteered at this year’s outing, and we look forward to the 5th Annual CFMA West Michigan Jon Penning Memorial Golf Outing next year!
Chapter News (Past Events)

Axe Throwing Recap
A group of members joined up in November for a fun event of axe throwing at Target Axe Throwing. Thanks to all who participated in this event!

General Membership Meeting Recaps
At September’s General Membership meeting, the CFMA West Michigan Chapter meeting featured a presentation by Bob VandePol, Executive Director of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services’ Employee Assistance and Church Assistance programs. Thanks to Bob for his presentation!

October’s General Membership meeting featured a presentation by Joy Matthews, Community Outreach Deputy, on an introductory course to “Civilian Response to Active Shooter.” Thanks to Joy for joining us as a guest speaker!

Roundtable Program
Thank you to those who are involved in the Roundtable program, a great networking and relationship building program. For further information, see Grace Silva.

Reminders
Anyone interested in joining one of our committees? We’d love to have you join! See page 2 for a listing of all of the Western Michigan Chapter committees and committee chairpersons.
I attended the 2019 CFMA National Conference in Las Vegas and was lucky enough to have won a scholarship from our local chapter to help fund the cost of the conference. This was the 5th CFMA National Conference I have attended and it once again didn’t disappoint. The conference always has so many great options for educational classes to take that I can’t ever get to all of them I would like to attend. I have made so many connections and friends from across the country that I get to see and catch up with every year at the conference as well. The chance to network with fellow CFMA members and to visit so many of the vendors that we do business with directly in the exhibit hall is another great benefit of the conference. I would recommend to anyone thinking about going to go, you won’t regret it.

Jennifer Murphy / Pleune Service Company

This summer I was lucky enough to attend the CFMA National Conference in Las Vegas. I had already planned on attending the conference prior to receiving the scholarship from the West Michigan Chapter; however, this made it a much easier decision on whether I would attend the mini-conference offered on Saturday and Sunday as well.

From the moment I started my first session on Saturday morning I knew I would not be leaving this conference without learning a great deal. All the sessions that I attended had something new to offer and were diverse enough to recognize that a CFM in a company had to have more than just knowledge of GAAP and taxation. The organizers of the conference also seemed to recognize the importance of networking and provided numerous activities for one to meet new people. It was interesting to talk with other people who are in the same industry and in the same field of work to find the commonality of our issues as well as the differences that each region of the country faces. Everyone I met at the conference was willing and open to discussing issues they have encountered and provide solutions that worked for them at their company. Due to the diversity of size, region, and type of construction attendees’ companies were in, people seemed to discuss things more candidly than they typically would. I am looking forward to attending this conference again in the future!

Nicolle Taylor-Sheafor / Hardman Construction, Inc.

CFMA Western Michigan Chapter Mission Statement

As the source and resource of construction financial management in West Michigan, our Association unites individuals having financial responsibilities in the construction industry. We provide a forum through which the Association’s members can meet to network and exchange ideas. We promote and encourage leadership within the construction industry, as well as our Association. We develop and coordinate educational programs dedicated to the purpose of improving the professional standards of the industry and enhancing the value of construction financial managers to their respective companies.

Student Members

We currently do not have any student members and are hoping to increase student involvement by offering an initial free lunch at our General Membership meetings. If you know any students or student groups that may be interested, please email Sarah Vlasblom at svlasblom@beenegarter.com.
Chapter Calendar

1/23/20
General Membership Meeting

2/28/20
30th Anniversary Celebration in the evening

3/11/20
Combined Meeting with ASA from 2 – 5 p.m.

4/23/20
General Membership Meeting

5/28/20
General Membership Meeting

6/16/20
Jon Penning Memorial Golf Outing

National Conference – CFMA’s upcoming national annual conference will be held in Washington, DC, May 30 - June 3, 2020.

Volunteer Opportunities – The CFMA is always looking for ways to connect its members to the community. Please let a Board or Promotion Committee know of any volunteer opportunities.

Social Media – Remember to like us on social media!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBER UPDATE

Membership Update

New General Members:
Steven Salasky / Design Heating and Air Conditioning
Penny Schuiling / Vos Glass, Inc.
Patrick A. Cebelak / Triangle Associates
Brandy N. Wisz / Frederick Construction, Inc.
Katie Grotenhuis / The Bouma Corporation
Elizabeth Sheren / Sheren Plumbing & Heating
Gabe Genovese / Kent Power
Kristi Gentry / Van Dyken Mechanical, Inc.

New Associate Members:
Michael Watts / The Hartford
Zach Gebben / Merrill Lynch
Kelly VanWinkle / Enterprise Fleet Management

Welcome to all of our new members. Thanks to those who participated in our member profiles section. We look forward to seeing more profiles in next quarter’s newsletter!

Know anyone who may like to join the CFMA Western Michigan Chapter? Click here for a membership application. Please invite a guest to an upcoming lunch—their lunch will be free! Contact Sarah Vlasblom at svlasblom@beenegarter.com for details.
CFMA Member Spotlight
Welcome to some of our newest members:

Patrick A. Cebelak  
CPA, CCIFP / TRIANGLE ASSOCIATES
1) How long have you been with your company and what areas of the business do you work in?
I joined Triangle Associates the first of May 2019. I am the Senior Vice President of Finance. Human Resources and IT report to me as well. I am part of the companies Executive Leadership Team.

2) What do you enjoy most about working at your company?
I enjoy the fast-paced environment of construction. We have a great team of dedicated people. The Triangle team has made my transition to West Michigan easier.

3) What interested you in joining the CFMA West Michigan Chapter and what membership benefits do you hope to attain?
I have been a CFMA member since 1999, officer in the Lansing Chapter and a former National Chairman. I believe in CFMA and have always enjoyed the networking and education. I am looking forward to making new friends and helping the West Michigan Chapter be even stronger.

4) What is your favorite hobby or activity to do when you’re not working?
I enjoy boating in the summer months on Lake Michigan. We have kept a boat on White Lake in Montague for 24 years and we enjoy the sun and water.

CONTINUED
Welcome to some of our newest members:

Michael Watts  THE HARTFORD

1) How long have you been with your company and what areas of the business do you work in?
I've been with Hartford Surety for about a year and a half now as a construction surety underwriter. I'm based out of Troy, Michigan and my area of coverage includes Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky.

2) What do you enjoy most about working at your company?
I enjoy the diverse set of projects and people I get to work with across a wide geographic region. I'm always experiencing or learning something new every day.

3) What interested you in joining the CFMA West Michigan Chapter and what membership benefits do you hope to attain?
I already attended a few meetings last year, with my fellow co-workers and business partners already involved in CFMA Michigan it was natural that I became a full-fledged member as well. There were plenty of interesting discussions at the meetings and I'm eager to continue to learn about topics relevant to our industry as well as network with other construction professionals.

4) What is your favorite hobby or activity to do when you're not working?
In my spare time I participate in a variety of activities such as playing guitar, bass, and drums as well as golfing whenever I get the chance (though that's still a work-in-progress).