

## **August 2016 Spotlight**

### **Member Spotlight: Brooke Evans**

**Company:** CFO Alliance, Inc.

**Title:** CEO

**Length of FEI membership:** Joined this year



**Tell us a little bit about your career, educational/professional background and how you got to where you are today.**

Like many other people in our profession, I started my career in public accounting and learned a tremendous amount in my 10 years at Arthur Andersen and Deloitte & Touche. I made the leap out of public accounting and into a CFO role for a large private company, and then ultimately started my own firm, CFO Alliance, in 2008.

If I were to describe my journey as a finance executive, I'd say that there have been a few key chapters that have helped me evolve into the financial leader that I am today. First, my years in public accounting were formative in helping me develop complex problem solving skills and deeply technical accounting expertise, both of which created a solid foundation.

However, my growth as a financial leader has been significantly more expansive since starting CFO Alliance. Most importantly, this role has taught me so much about the art of relationships, developing people, and influencing success. These are things I didn't think about much (but should have!) in the early part of my career. What I've discovered is that it's these interpersonal skills that set great leaders apart.

There is something magic about focusing first on people and secondarily on the technical elements. I'll admit that I've had amazing opportunities at CFO Alliance to be involved with just about every facet of accounting and finance with our clients, from start-up to sale, and everything in between. But the most enriching part of my career journey so far has been everything I've learned about developing other leaders.

**Have you ever done anything out of the ordinary to apply for and/or get a job?**

Not anything extraordinary to apply for or get a job. But, I did leave public accounting when I was nine months pregnant. I received my offer to become a CFO on a Friday, and planned to resign from Deloitte on Monday. After my first of two partner meetings that Monday, I went into labor and wasn't able to make my second meeting to officially resign.

**What is one piece of information you wish someone had told you when you first started your finance career?**

It's okay to create your own career path and to be non-traditional. In school, you're taught that there are very specific accounting and finance career paths. I personally felt that if I didn't follow one of those paths, it would be detrimental to my success. In reality, it's ok to take left-turns. In fact, it's often beneficial.

**What do you love most about working as a financial executive?**

Being able to help shape the future for companies and developing people. Finding win/win solutions even in the face of the most difficult situations, and being deeply trusted to help stakeholders reach their most monumental goals.

**Do you think it takes a certain kind of personality to thrive in finance? What traits are most important?**

Being a life-long learner who continuously seeks out challenges and new learning opportunities, having commitment and perseverance, adaptability, courage, communication skills, empathy, humility, and emotional intelligence are all traits I think are important to have when working in finance.

**What is your best networking tip?**

Be genuinely curious about the people you meet and be an excellent listener. Make other people feel heard, understood and important. And whenever possible, make people laugh!

**How did you discover your passion for finance?**

I love what makes business's work! Each business model has its own DNA. I have always had a curiosity to know how the operations work, the culture and the story of why they do what they do, and how they see the company in the future.

## **Sponsor Spotlight: Bob Watts**

**Company:** Metaformers, Inc.

**Title:** Regional Manager

**Length of FEI sponsorship:** Served as a sponsor with another company. Metaformers, Inc. became a sponsor this year.

**Tell us a little bit about your career, educational/professional background and how you got to where you are today.**



It's been a long career! But the short answer is I started my professional career writing accounting software that improved IBM's accounts receivable process. For more than 30 years I have worked in various capacities to improve the efficiency of organizations around the country and abroad. I continue to do what I do because I have a passion for improvement.

**What is one piece of information you wish someone had told you when you first started your career?**

Embrace change! Everything is always going somewhere.

**What is your best networking tip?**

Genuinely enjoy the person standing in front of you. Listen, because everyone is unique and offers something new.

**Why does your company sponsor FEI Tampa Bay Chapter?**

Having been involved with FEI in the past, I believe it is one of the best organizations in the area. The opportunity to be a sponsor and associate with such a fine organization was an opportunity too good to pass up.

**What are some of your personal hobbies outside of work?**

Outside of work, I enjoy reading. The great American novels are some of my favorites. I also enjoy playing guitar and golf (not at the same time), and most activities that involve being in and around the water.