



PERSONAL  
FINANCIAL  
PLANNING

SUMMIT  
JOURNAL



FOR LEADERS  
AMONG  
LEADERS



## Table of Contents

AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit 2017	2
Letter From the Editor . . . . .	3
Building Trust With Your Clients . . . . .	4
Transformative Financial Planning . . . . .	6
Succession Planning From All Angles . . . . .	8
The Future of the Profession . . . . .	11
Leadership Pipeline . . . . .	13
Lessons of a Limitless Leader . . . . .	16

## AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit 2017

This was the inaugural year of the AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit. As Bob Veres stated, “This event has been the missing ingredient in our profession. A community was created in year one, which is unheard of, and this will become the leadership group of the profession.” Nothing compares to the in-person experience of the Summit. But we’ve created this journal to summarize the ideas that were covered, with the goal of giving attendees and non-attendees a flavor of the event. We appreciate the work of Sue Stevens, our editor, and our writers for sharing their insights from the sessions. We are especially grateful to those who attended our inaugural event and made it such a success. We also want to recognize the AICPA staff who made the Summit possible.

The personal and professional growth that occurred over the three days of the Summit was palpable. Held at the beautiful Terranea resort in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, the Summit hosted about 100 professionals. Attendees had the opportunity to gather in a beautiful and serene setting conducive both to learning new things and refreshing the spirit. The agenda included time for attendees to network in innovative ways, such as hiking, cooking and painting. We were thrilled to hear glowing compliments about the Summit experience, including the relationships attendees built with their colleagues — relationships that will likely last for many years to come. We hope attendees will share their experiences and what they learned with their colleagues at home and encourage them to attend next year.

With this Journal, we seek to continue the dialogue among the thought leaders in the important areas that we covered at Summit. We all have a responsibility to continue to improve our profession as it evolves. We encourage you, if you haven’t already, to check out the robust resources the **AICPA Personal Financial Planning Section** offers. Having access to such a strong collection of tools in the areas of tax, estate, investment, retirement and risk management planning throughout the year will help you to find the improvement for which we all strive.

We have already started planning for Summit 2018, to be held once again at Terranea in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA. With a theme of “Connect. Grow. Lead,” **register today** for what will be an unforgettable event taking place Jan. 7–10, 2018. The more thought leaders throughout the profession that we can bring together, the more powerful the program becomes. We hope you will be part of this community in 2018!



Lyle K. Benson Jr., CPA/PFS, CFP®



Michael Goodman, CPA/PFS, CFP®

## Letter From the Editor

### Trust. Transformation. Vision. Leadership.

As leaders in the financial planning profession, part of our journey is to learn from each other, to look inward, to become better practitioners and shape the future of our profession. That's what we experienced at the newly conceived AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit.

Lyle Benson and Michael Goodman's vision for this conference was something in between a study group and a larger, more technical conference. Personal and professional transformation was one of several goals. The process of transformation needs a setting of trust and intimacy — a place to be vulnerable with your peers.

This event is purposely designed so only about 100 people can participate. That allows for deeper conversations, exploration of ways to elevate your practice, learning from masters while contributing your own insights, and paving the way for future advisers to flourish while helping others. Jill Schlesinger, Emmy-nominated business analyst for CBS News, and a former adviser herself, facilitated conversations among presenters and attendees and made for a much richer experience.

We delved into Building Trust With Your Clients, Transformative Financial Planning, Succession Planning, the Future of the Profession and multiple dimensions of Leadership. My colleagues and I will highlight the topics we covered and give you a glimpse of what you can discover for yourself at the 2018 AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit for Leaders Among Leaders.

We invite you to experience a little of what we learned. Our goal: to help successful financial planners take their firms and lives to the next level.



Sue Stevens, CPA/PFS, CFP®, CFA, MBA, M.S., CAP

## Building Trust With Your Clients

By Jean-Luc Bourdon, CPA/PFS

We all aspire to be a source of strength in our clients' lives — to achieve "client primacy." It is a privilege to be one of the first people your clients call when there is literally life and death news that affects them to the core.

David Richman, national director of Eaton Vance Advisor Institute, led the discussion on building client trust. His message was we need to inspire our clients over and over again. We motivate. We tell stories and back them up with facts. We personify integrity, and that starts with honesty and authenticity.

### Process and Pricing Integrity

Beyond the personal qualities that command respect and trust, David introduced the concept of "process integrity." Using the passage of time as the catalyst, an adviser can systematically introduce new questions to reassess client needs over time. Think of it as scheduled car maintenance or medical preventive screenings. Such standards of care lead advisers to continuously ask new questions to long-standing clients. It's never too late to deepen the conversation.

A consistent standard of care and appropriate process serve both long-standing clients and new clients — with the same fresh eyes and up-to-date knowledge. Audience participant Ernest Clark of the BAM Alliance shared how he teaches advisers to conduct re-discovery meetings. Whether through probing questions with genuine curiosity or tools like Mind Maps or the AICPA Personal Finance Report Card, advisers can revisit multiple areas of financial planning progress. These conversations allow for additional ways for us to serve and hold the space for clients to better understand their own needs.

Other aspects of process integrity include who we accept as clients and how we establish and follow a pricing policy. Accepting new clients for whom we don't have time, capacity or respect, or a genuine interest to serve well, lacks process-integrity. Although there is no universal ideal client or pricing policy, having one and sticking to it establishes integrity. Business often pressures us to say "yes" when integrity calls on us to say "no."

### Falling in Love and Staying in Love

According to David Richman, developing trust involves three dimensions: visceral, objective and experiential. The visceral dimension of trust is the client's gut reaction. Essentially, do they like us? To make the decision to hire us, it may even be "do they love us?" Being genuinely interested and listening caringly to clients helps further that dimension.

To that end, David introduced the concept of being an “agenda-less listener” who tries to really know clients rather than an “angle listener” looking for an opening to talk about ourselves. When others share their story, do we chime in with our own story at the first chance or do we follow up with a question? It’s not enough for our clients to fall in love with us at the start of an engagement. We must continually listen deeply and ask questions to keep the relationship authentic and connected.

The second dimension of trust is “objective.” That involves what we say to allow clients to evaluate how good we are at what we do. What we offer must be substantive and logical. David emphasized that having a point of view is essential to establishing objective trust. It is important to share our views and opinions of what we think may lie ahead — and what should be done about it. Communicating our thinking is fundamental to what clients will come to expect from us.

But clients also must experience trust with their advisers. What does it feel like to be our client? A fundamental aspect of what clients experience involves transparency. Are we transparent about our fees, service level, responsiveness, communication and the risks involved? Do we opine on the probability of our clients attaining the outcome they hope for? Simply put, do we set real expectations and tell the truth?

### **Expressing Our Values**

As David covered aspects of building trust with clients and stirred up interaction and reactions, it occurred to me that the group of advisers he was addressing already shared a common mindset rooted in long-established ethics and professional values essential to trust. However, how we express these values is essential for reflection. How do we demonstrate our values through our words and process? Are our opinions clear and strong enough to matter, position us to be a prime contact that clients seek out, and ultimately make a difference? Will our processes guide clients to the outcomes they seek?

### **Inspiring Intentional Outcomes**

My favorite definition of trust is the expectation of a particular outcome. That outcome relies on both the ability and willingness to reach it. Within an able group of advanced professionals, technical ability certainly isn’t a concern. But David’s thoughts on building trust brought up an interesting question: how willing are we to open ourselves to clients and create an ideal environment for caring listening, candid communication, transparency and reliable expectations to flourish? As much as our technical ability, that answer will determine our clients’ outcomes.

## Transformative Financial Planning

By Sue Stevens, CPA/PFS, CFP®, CFA, MBA, M.S., CAP

People come to us as financial advisers seeking solutions, reassurance, motivation, or as Bob Veres says “permission to be audacious.” All the number crunching, data gathering, investment models, mind maps we produce are a means to an end — to help our clients be more resilient and to motivate them to connect with their deepest aspirations.

Dr. Robert Brooks, faculty member of Harvard’s Medical School, transcended any particular professional industry to share his vision of how to create a motivating environment characterized by mutual trust, collaboration and empowerment. In today’s chaotic political and digital world, we as advisers must do this more than ever.

### Helping Clients Be More Resilient

A “charismatic adviser” is an adult from whom others gather strength. We need to ask probing questions to better understand our clients’ mindsets. We need deep listening skills, emotional intelligence, intuition and empathy.

Many of us have been ingrained with telling our own stories to build rapport with prospects and clients. But to facilitate transformative discussions, and set the stage for conversations of discernment, we need to ask questions about our clients’ stories and let them find their “aha” moments. If you’ve mastered this skill yourself as a more senior adviser, you need to let your younger generation watch how you do that with clients so they can build their own skill sets.

We are in a particularly transformative period since the last presidential election. I’m sure we’ve all had conversations with our clients where they expressed a wide range of opinions about our country’s leadership, policies and uncertain outcomes. Times of great change are a wonderful opportunity for us as advisers to help clients articulate what they are feeling and show them how to “put their money where their hearts are.” I’ve found philanthropy to be resonating with many clients as they seek to advocate through aligning meaning and their money. You can help transform their fear to hope and self-determination.

### Passion

Three advisers shared their stories with the AICPA Leaders Among Leaders audience:

- Mackey McNeill: an adviser in Kentucky who authored “The Intersection of Joy and Money” and who builds her practice around a process featuring prosperity
- Jean-Luc Bourdon: an adviser in the Santa Barbara, CA, area, and a member of the BAM Alliance, who shared his experiences of learning from a great mentor how to be an empathetic coach for his clients

- David Oransky: a devotee of the George Kinder philosophy of financial empowerment, David shared his stories of moving from a more corporate financial planning approach to creating his own firm in St Louis, MO, that gives him freedom and creativity to serve clients in a more meaningful way to him

These individuals personified what Dr. Brooks spoke about as he shared how you help create a transformative experience for clients. Positive emotions combined with deeper feeling of meaning and purpose translate into happiness: a positive mood in the present and a positive outlook for the future. Clients sense when we are passionate about what we do.

One factor that helps both clients and ourselves be more resilient is what Brooks calls “charitable activities” that serve to enrich the lives of others. Engagement in such activities connects with the client’s deepest self. Brooks encouraged us to ask our clients what brings purpose and meaning to their lives. And our panel of fellow advisers also reminded us we need to ask the same questions of ourselves. Are we really tapping into our best selves and finding our own happiness?

### **Happiness Breeds Success**

Frequently people think if only they achieve something they’ve always wanted to do, they’ll find happiness—or even success in life. But transformative financial planning flips that adage on its head. It’s happiness — right now — that breeds success. Perhaps you can think of it as gratitude.

Cheryl Holland, a speaker and an audience participant, knows this secret. She has infused her practice in South Carolina with moments of gratitude — to start staff meetings or to share with clients. Just taking the time to literally count your blessings can completely change your outlook. This isn’t just the soft side of financial planning — it’s coming from studies and statistics quoted by a Harvard Medical School Ph.D.

Dr. Brooks cited study after study that showed how mindset affects outcome. Think about how your clients feel when they leave your office — and what they are going to tell their friends and family. Did you transform their outlook and give them hope? Did you show them how to achieve what they perhaps never put into words before? Have you incorporated new technologies and software that bring these concepts to life? Fusing the science of facts and figures with emotional mastery for the clients’ best interest is what we’re striving to achieve.

## Succession Planning From All Angles

By Sue Stevens, CPA/PFS, CFP®, CFA, MBA, M.S., CAP

An intimate setting of about 100 experienced advisers at the AICPA PFP Summit was the perfect place to delve into the vulnerabilities that both buyers and sellers face in a succession transaction. Sellers often can't separate themselves from their firm because they may have founded the business and brought it to life. Buyers are trying to step into the founder's shoes and yet want to put their own unique stamp on the future of the enterprise. Both parties take great risks. And the rewards can be life changing.

Eric Hehman, CEO, Austin Asset, and co-author of *Success and Succession*, brought the perspective of a younger adviser who succeeded a charismatic founder. He described his feelings of vulnerability when he had to discuss what wasn't working with his boss and how they worked through feelings of awkwardness and insecurity.

Cheryl Holland, CFP®, CBFA, and founder of Abacus in South Carolina, told her story of how she is learning to let go. She discovered she was really good at many tasks within her firm, but other team members could be nurtured to excel in areas that she no longer needed to control.

Michael J. Anderson, J.D., CFP®, is an owner of True North in Dallas and an alumni of Evensky and Katz as well as Texas Tech. Mike is not only vice president of financial planning and a senior wealth manager, but also supervises the operations team for his firm. He is now helping younger advisers in his firm position themselves to clients as they transition their roles.

### A Fixer Upper

It's not uncommon for the founder of the firm to take pride in the organization he or she built from nothing. Long hours, sacrifice and commitment were not guarantees of creating a successful and sustainable business.

But in the eyes of the successor, this business is a "fixer upper." The future owner sees how they can bring their own skills, technology and areas of expertise to take the firm to the next level.

In the best transitions, there is some kind of chemistry between buyer and seller that helps them get through the difficult or awkward changes. Clients will look to someone new for financial guidance. That corner office may need to be re-purposed. Both parties take a major financial risk because they share a vision that the outcome is in the best interest of the client and the firm as a whole.

Successions often take years of working at transforming the practice. Deep reflection on both parts can help clarify what's important and how we can change for the better.

Founders will need new, meaningful roles. Successors need support and guidance as their visions take shape. A leadership development plan can be invaluable.

### **Operational, Financial and Emotional Transitions**

Eric Hehman presented three aspects of any succession: operational, financial and emotional. The first two are what most succession conversations focus on. But the emotional aspect may be the most essential component to understand and work through.

**Operational:** For a firm to grow, there has to be a transition of who will work with the clients. Each time the firm hires or promotes an individual to the adviser level, there needs to be a transition of ownership of the client relationship. With an internal transition, this usually happens over a period of time. There also must be a plan for transition of management: who will mentor the staff, who will drive business development and operations.

In an external transition, that runway to succession may be shorter. Additionally, in an external succession, adequate time must be allocated to work through all the changes to technical systems, financial planning methodologies, who will process client service requests and a myriad of other details. It's important for owners considering an external succession to evaluate the resources of the new firm's transition team.

One tip from our panel was for the owner to strategically be out of the office for longer and longer time periods. Perhaps you finally take that two-week vacation and next year make it three weeks. Let your team handle the business and get a feel for how to deal with issues that arise that may be difficult or complex.

**Financial:** Both owner and successor have to think about the financial aspects of a transition. The owner needs to use their own financial planning skills to determine for themselves just how much is enough. Taxes, legal and consulting fees will reduce that bottom line, so planning is crucial. The successor is making the biggest investment he or she will probably make in their life. So being able to realize a return on that investment over time is critical.

**Emotional:** All panelists emphasized the enormity of the emotional aspects of succession. Taking on new roles may leave an owner feeling adrift and vulnerable. Successors may feel the weight of a large financial commitment and the need to grow the firm to make this a good investment. They also can feel isolated in the new "boss" role and have to adjust how they relate to their peers. Both owners and successors need to consider their deal breakers and on what they can compromise. Hiring consultants can help take some of the emotion out of the succession process.

## Not One Size Fits All

Michael Kitces, both presenter and audience participant, shared a story of his own journey. When he was contemplating taking on more partner responsibility at Pinnacle, he realized that he didn't want the traditional path of working more hours on more and more clients. He was able to be honest about his feelings with the partners of the firm and they worked out a more entrepreneurial role for Michael to focus on his passions and still make a significant contribution to his firm and our industry.

In external successions, it's critical there be an alignment of cultures. Both firms need to have similar investment and financial planning approaches, an understanding of the roles of both teams, and how they will work to put the best interest of the clients first. In internal successions, a clear leadership plan that describes how roles will change over time can help smooth out what could be awkward transitions. Mutual respect, a sense of humor and freedom to be the unique people we all are can help create a whole range of solutions where change creates something to celebrate and embrace.



## The Future of the Profession

By Lyle Benson, CPA/PFS, CFP®

The inaugural AICPA Personal Financial Planning Summit for Leaders Among Leaders provided a great opportunity to talk about what the future may bring to our profession — and we realized that future is coming very fast! Complacency may be our biggest enemy. Bob Veres, Michael Kitces, Sue Stevens and myself had a spirited discussion of some of the most pressing issues affecting our industry.

Many people are making comparisons between the medical profession and the financial planning profession. We are a much younger industry, but we are evolving very quickly. One analogy was made that electronic “robo” advice is like an HMO plan, money management has become like the general practitioner and servicing high net worth clients is more of a specialty practice — like brain surgery.

### Transitioning From Managing Assets to Managing Clients

Bob Veres observed that as a profession we are evolving to a client-centric model for our practices instead of one based either on product sales or assets under management. To succeed in this new era, we must distinguish ourselves and our firms. Much of what we’ve discussed in these sessions showcases these value propositions: becoming a charismatic adviser who can motivate and build resiliency, creating “aha” moments through deep listening and discernment, reaching the client where and when they choose by leveraging technology, and building communities around passions we share with our clients.

### The Planning Advantage

We need a continuum of not only technology-based advice, but hourly consultative advice for the masses and concierge services for the high net worth. Instead of fearing new planning and service models, we need to look at how we can leverage these advances to provide even more value to our targeted client bases. Studies have shown that over 100,000 CPAs are providing some form of personal financial planning advice. With much of the audience tax specialists, it’s worth noting that this knowledge sets us apart as we integrate it into complex holistic financial planning.

### Technology’s Inflection Point

Michael Kitces is passionate about harnessing technology to more efficiently deliver our services and reach a broader audience. More advisers will shift to national practices as location is no longer a barrier. Face-to-screen relationships will enhance and expand in-person meetings. Interacting with technology and our clients makes the planning process more engaging for the client and gives them more ownership of the outcome.

## Greater Freedom to Be Who You Are

The people on this visionary panel, and the audience as a whole, are a testament to expanding the limits of personal financial planning. Everyone has carved out a niche for themselves largely based on their own personality and unique abilities. We all are passionate about serving clients and doing it with integrity and authenticity. To have this kind of freedom in structuring your practice, you need to be introspective and re-examine what excites you about who you help and how you do that. This transformative process can encourage younger generations about identifying new areas of service and new ways of connecting with clients.

## Training and Education

One of the greatest problems facing growing firms is finding talent. Programs that are turning out CFP candidates like Texas Tech and Utah Valley cannot keep up with the demand in the profession. The top graduates from these programs generally are committed to a firm where they have interned early in their undergraduate career.

The AICPA PFP Section has also developed a graduate level course to introduce accounting students to financial planning as a profession, and it is being adopted in many top tier accounting programs. Building a good leadership pipeline will be critical to attracting the top talent to firms in the future.

Along with the CPA/PFS community, we need to look at career changers, professionals from related fields like CFAs, or management-track professionals from MBA programs to continue to fill our open positions. Women seeking part-time flexibility are also a rich source of talent. We can use our staff meetings to continue training for everyone and encourage additional education through subsidizing relevant courses and classes.

## Demographics

Demographic changes are having a real impact on our practices and our lives. Michael Kitces detailed what his XY Planning Network members look like and how they practice — often very differently than first generation firms. Their business models are designed to serve the millennial client who may not have significant assets to manage — yet. But they are willing to pay for advice! We have seen similar needs among the younger members of the AICPA PFP Section with our emerging leader efforts.

It's not just the younger generation that needs greater attention. Elder care now takes a greater percentage of our time as our client base ages. Jean-Luc Bourdon is one of many advisers who have created new templates and service models to help meet the growing needs of seniors as well as protect our own practices as we witness the rise of dementia-related illnesses.

The future of the profession is ever-changing and exciting. Change can be daunting for some, but for the visionary leaders attending this conference, it is exhilarating and inviting. We need to share our enthusiasm with our teams and work to create opportunity for everyone.

## Leadership Pipeline

By Beth Gamel, CPA/PFS, AEP®

With many attendees at the AICPA PFP Summit identifying staffing as a primary concern, Cheryl Holland's presentation was very timely and well received. Cheryl is the founder of Abacus in South Carolina.

Cheryl not only shared in great detail her firm's program for recruiting, mentoring and developing the next generation, she did so with warmth and passion. It was obvious from her presentation that Cheryl has devoted considerable time and money to developing her program. She's an extraordinary example of someone who works as hard "on her business" as "in her business."

### Purpose of the Leadership Pipeline

Cheryl started to think seriously about how best to develop her staff about eight years after founding Abacus in 1998. She began the process by evaluating her personal style — "jump into the deep water and start swimming"— and realizing that didn't work for all employees. Her firm's program developed over two years, using multiple resources on career development, leadership and personal effectiveness. The result is a comprehensive program that provides the following:

- Road map for developing talent
- Sequences of skills to be successful
- Ways to identify missing capabilities
- Clarity on expected behaviors
- Empowering team members to guide their own career

In her charming, self-effacing way, Cheryl reminded the audience that as an organization grows, "it's not about you." The focus needs to be on the firm's strategy and values and how each staff member can grow and be a meaningful contributor.

## Constructing the Leadership Pipeline

Cheryl's Leadership Pipeline identifies the work habits and values employees must acquire at each level.

Level	No. of Years	Work Habits	Values
1	1-5	Timely, accurate	Punctuality, quality, reliability, keep promises and commitments
2	5-10	Able to prioritize, organize, execute, get work done through others	Values success of others and management coaching and mentoring
3	10+	Role model, coach, buck stops with you	Holistic, think of whole firm, values leadership, industry thought leader, community presence

This framework answers a critical staff question: "What do I need to be competent at your firm?" It progresses from managing oneself to managing others to managing the firm. Cheryl makes clear that it requires that the firm leader "outbehave at all times."

### Core Competencies

All staff members must acquire these core competencies:

- Basic work habits
- Relationships
- Communication skills
- Business acumen
- Technical skills

## Learning Behaviors

Reflecting her view that even small things matter, Abacus personnel must acquire these “how to” behaviors:

- Dress professionally
- Write a thank-you note
- Network
- Delegate
- Respond to the media
- Give a proper apology
- Develop strategy
- Lead change

## Reinforcing Behavior and Skill Development

Abacus weaves The Leadership Pipeline into its DNA via:

- On boarding
- 90-day review
- Performance reviews
- Peer reviews
- Shareholder luncheons
- Giving praise and critical feedback
- Strategic planning
- Invitations to ownership and/or leadership

Cheryl admits there are roadblocks and obstacles in instituting a pipeline like hers, but she believes the long-term return on investment outweighs the challenges. To those at the conference who share her view, Cheryl provided numerous resources to get attendees started on developing their firm’s talent and next generation of leaders.

## Lessons of a Limitless Leader

By Michael Goodman, CPA/PFS, CFP®

Stephanie Bogan wants us to live life as limitless leaders. You may remember Stephanie as the creator of Quantuvis — a terrific practice management tool that was sold to Genworth. She went off the grid to Costa Rica in 2014 to spend time with her family and do some much needed soul searching. She is now planning the launch of Educe Consulting where she will work with clients on creating limitless businesses.

Her session at the AICPA PFP Summit was critically important because it forced the attendees to look at themselves in a way that they might not have done before. The very concept that we, the leaders of our own firms, block our own deeper success with our conscious and unconscious fears was an awakening. Stephanie shared some of these lessons and then, with the help of two participants, demonstrated how these fears are limiting success.

Keep in mind: Success is defined by you and not by some outside group or person.

### Sharing Stories

Stephanie spent a significant time upfront sharing her own stories of difficulty and pain in her personal life. She was wise to share her own vulnerabilities first. Her personal struggles and willingness to open up in front of the audience set the stage for all of us to be open. We were not only empathetic to the speaker's trials, but introspective to our own internal issues.

Sharing stories is one of the best ways to connect with clients and each other. Stepping away from the facts and figures and zeroing in on emotion is powerful. Stephanie helped show us how to get to the "aha" moment and see what had been hidden before.

### Learning Lessons

Stephanie shared three lessons with us. The first is that we are unconsciously competent. Eighty percent of our thinking is unconscious and we are driven by our belief system. In effect, we are on autopilot. Have you ever asked yourself, "If I were to look back on the last ten years, what would I do differently?" Well, how many of us do? And if we do, how many of us consciously implement change for the next 10 years?

The second lesson is that the only limits we have are the ones we place on ourselves. Apparently, these are also mostly unconscious limits. We have 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts a day and more than 80% of them are negative. Ninety-five percent of these thoughts repeat. After hearing this, I couldn't help but think it is amazing that we are successful at all!

Finally, lesson number three was that success without fulfillment is failure. I had a hard time at first with this one because, for some, survival is success and not some defined lofty perch. Then I realized that if success is survival and you survive, you are fulfilled. Or perhaps once you achieve survival, your definition of success can change.

### **Two Volunteers From the Audience**

Stephanie then demonstrated these concepts with two volunteers. In advance of the session, Stephanie scheduled phone meetings with them to work through what was preventing them from being limitless leaders. Now, on site at the session, Stephanie sat with each of the volunteers — in front of everybody — and reenacted the call. It is noteworthy that both participants rated their success and happiness within their practices as a seven or eight, out of 10 — a fairly high level of satisfaction. When prompted to talk about what would make it higher, both were able to quickly share that they each knew what they needed to do to achieve this, but were uncomfortable with the next steps or impact.

Through some exploration and questioning, Stephanie was able to pinpoint solutions in a remarkably quick fashion. She identified the fears and negative thoughts driving the limits. Stephanie said the reason the solutions were so quick and simple was that most of us already know what to do, but the aforementioned lessons are blocking us from change.

### **Facing Our Fears**

For volunteer number one, it was a fear of becoming irrelevant and for volunteer two, it was a fear of declining income. Interestingly, both fears were tied to ego. The solution was to discuss ways in which these fears could be overcome so that the organizations could move on and grow, giving greater fulfillment in their respective successes.

In reflecting on this session, it was clear that we are complex and not always conscious of our thoughts and actions. We all have baggage and fears that drive us and at the same time hold us back in different ways. However, if we can learn to harness these and turn them into useful tools, we will be better off or more limitless.

If the goal is to be a limitless leader, “limitless” may not be attainable, since I learned how much we block our own success. However, the old adage that it is the journey to limitless and not the destination of being limitless, is the ultimate goal.

