

TURNING POINT

A career-changing moment or experience

Do the Math, Then Write a Book

After taking an informal survey of my parents' friends and my friends' parents who loved their jobs, I decided to become a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). I noticed that people who liked their jobs were either accountants or doctors. Math came easily to me and business seemed intriguing, so I thought being a CPA would be a great way to understand finance, make money in business and do something I like.

By 1994, I was one of 100 female chief financial officers (CFOs) in the *Fortune* 500 and enjoyed it. I worked for a French company based in Paris, and thought this was the ultimate dream for a Francophile like me.

After 25 years in the workforce, my chosen field not only seemed secure but provided me with the intellectual and global stimulation I craved. Then, the Enron scandal hit the press. Next, Arthur Andersen & Co., my first full-time employer, disappeared from the face of the earth.

These events changed my world. It shocked me to see many talented CPAs lose their jobs because some of their colleagues lost the courage to do what was right and follow the spirit, not just the letter of the law. I felt other CFOs tainted the reputation of what we did and took advantage of people who did

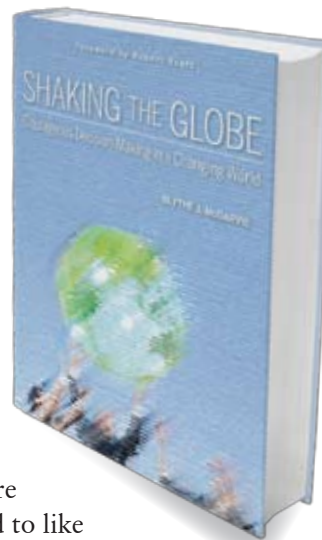
not understand finance, translating CFO as the "Corporate Fraud Operator."

Serving just one company as a CFO no longer seemed like my best choice of profession. I felt a need to help restore trust in business. I wanted to like my job and show how people can make money in business legally, maintain their integrity *and have fun doing it*. So, I decided to leave my position to begin a speaking career to help others find "the joy of business."

Fortunately, I earned a reputation through my work and travel as a leading authority on leadership and change. A leading speakers' bureau in Washington, D.C., agreed to represent me in my speaking career. Through it and personal contacts, I have spoken to large groups nationwide and abroad about my experiences and research. Audience members, who were eager to learn, requested more information.

The speakers' bureau reinforced my observations that I needed to write a book about ethical financial decision making. A book would provide me with credibility and prove that I could present my research in a persuasive manner. I asked a friend in a public relations firm for five names of literary agents.

In pursuing the first name, I heard: "Oh, sure, that agent is great but he



doesn't even return Sidney Sheldon's phone calls!" I persevered until I found an agent who liked my proposal and believed in me. The agent lined up potential publishers based on my book proposal and a sample chapter. As a side note, no publisher wants a book fully completed when he

or she decides to publish your work. The publisher wants to influence the final product.

After meeting a couple of potential publishers, it was clear that the editor at McGraw-Hill was in sync with my message. The time between securing my agent and a book contract was three months. My first book, *Fit In, Stand Out*, hit the bookstores one year later. It may seem like a long time, but I've been told this was a fast-track process.

Writing the book was worth the hard work because it opened the door to more speaking opportunities and provided a platform for me to conduct additional research for my next book. I also enjoy honing my talent as an author combined with my passion for speaking.



Blythe McGarvie has been a professional speaker for six years and serves as a member of boards of directors for several highly visible companies. Her second book, Shaking the Globe: Courageous Decision-Making in a Changing World, recently was published by John Wiley & Sons. McGarvie lives in Williamsburg, Va., and can be reached through www.BlytheMcGarvie.com.

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