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PODCAST

TMA Chicago/Midwest Podcast Hosted by Paul Musser | Christine Melendes on Her Path to CEO and Unlocking the Power of Membership

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In this episode of the Turnaround Management Association's (TMA) Chicago/Midwest podcast, Restructuring Partner and host Paul Musser sat down with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TMA, Christine Melendes. Christine, who became the CEO of TMA in March of this year, is an association executive with more than 20 years of leadership experience, having previously spent over 12 years at the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG), a "cousin organization" to TMA, where she built strategic partnerships, grew membership programs and led innovation across complex global networks. Their discussion covered her non-traditional path to the CEO role, her early priorities and long-term vision, TMA's response to industry trends such as artificial intelligence (AI), and her insights on networking and business development.

Christine shared that although her career has spanned industries from food service and hospitality to equipment manufacturing, financial services, private equity and investment banking, the common thread has been building membership, structuring sponsorship and engaging people through networking. She was drawn to TMA by its mission and its results-focused members who have the capacity and experience to intervene when a business hits bumps in the road. A nearly 30-year Chicagoan, she credited an unexpected influence, the Second City training program, with teaching her the "yes, and" mindset that eases the anxiety of high-stakes work, much like a restructuring where emotions run high and stress levels are astronomical.

Paul and Christine then turned to the central theme of the conversation: her forward-looking vision for TMA, which she has branded "TMA 2030." Christine explained that her first six months centered on listening, joining committee calls and regional events, and shoring up the "unsexy" but critical operational systems that keep a member organization running. She also prepared an assessment for gathering input from members, nonmembers, customers and clients on where the industry is going and how TMA must be ready to support them for what comes next. This readiness effort puts technological change at the forefront, and Christine highlighted an upcoming volunteer-led initiative that will offer five to six AI webinars or courses, launching throughout the fall and at the TMA Annual Meeting in Houston at the end of October.

On membership and business development, Christine made a pointed case for joining TMA, noting that a TMA member has 9,000 professionals and a wealth of education behind them. Both she and Paul emphasized TMA's cross-disciplinary diversity, where attorneys, financial advisors, investment bankers and lenders come together across local chapters, regional conferences such as MARC, global events such as the Distressed Investing Conference in Las Vegas and an international member network beyond the United States and Canada. Christine emphasized the importance of showing up, advising professionals to register for events, doing their homework in advance and following up afterward to nurture new relationships. She also urged professionals to volunteer for committee and board work early and often to increase one's visibility and credibility, adding that TMA relationships can drive 50 percent or more of one's business referrals.

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