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## How this Former Xerox Exec Used “Managed Growth” to Hit \$1.5 Billion in Sales

Steve Sanduski: Tracy, welcome to the show.

Tracy Tolbert: Thank you, Steve. I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, well it's great to have you here and great to have you here with CEO Coaching International as a coach. And we'll touch on that here in just a little while, but I'd like to get started talking about this idea of managed growth. So you have a tremendous career and background in sales and marketing, growing numerous organizations very significantly. So let's talk about that when we have this idea of managed growth, what do you mean by that?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, it is a great question and I think that many times, particularly in the business world, we have pressure to grow our business and it's good pressure and businesses should want to make sure that they're growing, right? That's how you survive, that's how you thrive is through growth. But that being said, I think you have to have what I call managed growth, which means you don't grow just for growth's sake. You have to make sure that you're growing in a way that you can manage and maintain the growth.

Tracy Tolbert: It's the right kind of growth, right? In other words, you're growing profitably. And so, to me the idea of managed growth sort of catches the right vision for that is that you can't just turn growth loose. And there are some examples in the world today where that's happened. I think WeWork is probably as good of an example. I can think of the company who's left the growth get out in front of them to where it's created catastrophic problems for them. And I think that's the thing you have to be careful about versus growing in a way that builds a good, solid foundation for your company, which means it's helping, it's not stressing the resources too much and it's actually adding profit to the business, which is important.

Steve Sanduski: Well I think WeWork as a really interesting example. And WeWork, I think, tried to position itself as a technology company when in reality it was a real estate company. So because obviously we've had a lot of advances in technology and things in the technology area are just growing rapidly, exponentially if we want to be a little cliché here. But has the improvements and advancements in technology, has that enabled

companies to grow faster in a managed way? And what I mean by that is let's go back 30 years. Okay. Before the internet, let's say. And if we think about what managed growth looked like 30 years ago versus managed growth today, has technology enabled companies to make managed growth faster than say 30 years ago?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah. I think definitely because I think it creates opportunities to grow rapidly. I think many times you have an opportunity, once you develop some great technology, you can leverage technology and you can turn it into profit quicker and if it's the right kind of technology, certainly adopters make the market huge. And so you can have a very, very rapid growth. But I also think that some of the technology, we have to be a little bit cautious about, let's reel it back 20 years when the dot-com bust happened, right? Those were lots and lots of technology companies that were being funded and were showing some of them growth with no profitability. And then when suddenly we had an event, a market event that created a downturn, none of those companies survived or very, very few of them today.

Tracy Tolbert: And I think in some cases there are some technology companies out there today that are existing on private equity dollars and they're growing. But they don't have a pathway to profitability. And I think that's an unhealthy kind of a recipe for a longstanding company. You have to get to a point where you have a product, you have a roadmap to grow, but that growth roadmap has to also include profitability for a company to be sustainable.

Steve Sanduski: And when you think about managed growth, is it a percentage? Is it going to differ from company to company, industry to industry or how do you think of it in terms of those factors?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, I think that's a great question. I think it's different from company to company, whether you're a product company or you're a service company or it's a combination of both or a software company. I think it's very dependent. Let me give you a very simplistic example. I have a daughter who owns a bakery. It's a pie shop. All she makes are pies and she has decent margins on them. She had an opportunity to open a new channel where she had a retail store, in a community not far away, that wanted to nearly double her business overnight by becoming an outlet for her. With the caveat that she would have to sell to them at a few dollars less per pie so that they could make their margin there. So she came to me and said, "Is that the right thing to do?"

Tracy Tolbert: And I said, "Well, I don't know. We ought to try to figure that out because if you double your business, there's a little bit of efficiency that you gained inside of your business. But there's not a ton. You still have to make every one of those pies by hand. So if you're going to take a few dollars, call it three or \$4 less per pie, let's just do the math and see what it does to your business. You double your revenue, which is a good positive thing. But if you actually are making less money or as much money, then you may not want to do that. You may not want to do it because it stresses the resources of your business." So I think that's a really simplistic view on a really, really simple basic product of looking at the growth and trying to decide whether it's the right thing to do.

Tracy Tolbert: Because I think we all, particularly those of us who are responsible for driving growth of companies, any opportunity we have to grow, we sort of jump at. But I think what I mean by managed growth is what we need to stop and take a step back and say, "Is it the kind of growth that's actually going to help sustain us and help us get to where we need to be?"

Steve Sanduski: And do you think there's a big difference here between, let's say, publicly traded companies who have shareholders, they want to get the stock price up. The executives of those public companies have strong incentives to get the stock price up because they're going to make a lot more money. So they may be focused on growth at all costs, let's say, in the example like WeWork, even though it's not a public company, but they had all kinds of capital funding that enabled them to grow pretty crazily. Versus say a privately held company that may not have the sources of cash that a private equity funded company might or a venture capital company might or a publicly traded company might have. So do you think about managed growth differently depending on whether you're, say, a private company versus a public company?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, I do. I think the pressures that come from, particularly public companies, the pressures to show growth quarter after quarter, I think those pressures create an environment where we're looking for growth at sometimes any cost. And I think that's, the WeWork is an example of that, I think, although not publicly traded, I think the investors there were looking for ways to grow. And I think that that pressure creates an environment where sometimes we don't get the chance to look at sustainable managed growth. And I ran sales organizations for a couple of very, very large publicly traded companies and I understand that pressure very, very well.

Tracy Tolbert: When I was at Affiliated Computer Services, the new projects, the new contracts that we brought on board in the outsourcing world were typically pretty capital intensive for us. And there were a lot of startup costs with every project and the cost that you can't capitalize, so you have to expense them. So growth always came at a cost to us, a literal cost to the bottom line. And so, we would have quarters where we would have great growth and so we would show great top line, everybody's happy. But then we'd have a quarter after that where they said, "Well, it affects profitability every time we grow."

Tracy Tolbert: And so it was almost this yin and yang. It was like a stair step. If you looked at our growth charts, we'd go up and we'd flatten out a little bit while we caught up to ourselves. Then we grow up again and that's the way we positioned it to the market and to the shareholders. And if they understand that, then they can accept it. And I think that is part of managing the growth, that you understand that there's going to be a cost to the growth that you're experiencing.

Steve Sanduski: And then how do you think about companies that, and maybe we could use WeWork as an example, maybe Uber and Lyft as examples where let's say they're pioneering a new market. And a lot of people would say, "Well, if you're a pioneering a new market, and let's say you've got a first mover advantage, you need to just flood the market. You need to grow at all costs. You need to get your venture capital money and really stake your claim in the market and be the first one to get network effects, let's say." How do you

think about that versus we need to have managed growth, we need to do it profitably. And if you do that, maybe you're going to fall behind to an aggressive competitor like an Uber or a WeWork?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah. No, I think that's a really, really good question and I think you bring up an interesting nuance. I think that you can grow and I don't want to confuse ... profitability I think is ultimately where shareholders always want you to be. But I think in the case of a Lyft and an Uber, you absolutely, if you're flooding a new market, you're disrupting an entire industry and your plan of attack along with your investors and your shareholders is that we are going to do X. These are the things that we're going to do that will enable us to grow. And it's going to come in a way that will not provide profits to the company for however long it is. And sometimes you don't know what that is, but you have an idea and you have a plan with that.

Tracy Tolbert: And as long as everyone is bought into that and you follow the plan, you're still managing growth. You're still managing the growth and you're following it and doing it in a way that you are saying that you're doing and you're meeting expectations around how much money you may lose. Because regardless of the company, and again, WeWork's a great example, right? No matter how big the bucket is, there's still a finite amount of investment dollars that you have before suddenly you're in trouble. And so you always have to watch that and make sure that you're being measured in the way that you do it. And that doesn't always mean it's profitability, but it also means that you're managing the growth against the cash on hand. That makes sense?

Steve Sanduski: It does. Yeah. And then how do you think about the sales people within these organizations? So if we've got a company that is "managing growth," do you think about sales compensation in a different way? Meaning that you want to grow profitably, you want to grow at a reasonable pace that the company can support and still be able to provide great service. So how do you think about sales compensation in that type of environment versus more of a growth at all costs type of sales environment? Is there a difference in how you're going to be compensating salespeople in those two scenarios?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, for sure. That's another really good question. And we could do an entire podcast on sales compensation, but I think there are a lot of ways to specifically compensate. And I do think part of a managed growth is that you incentivize the particular action that you want out of your salespeople. So, if you want them to just grow rapidly and it doesn't matter that you had sent them to do that. If you're trying to grow profitably and you're trying to target specific margins on whatever it is that you're selling, then you build your compensation plan around those margin targets and you make that an element of the plan. If there are products within your mix that you want to accelerate because they're more highly profitable than something else, then you want to target those products.

Tracy Tolbert: And so you might put in a little higher compensation based on those specific products and say, "You're going to get X if you sell the normal product, but there's a subset here that we want you to really focus on because there are higher margins to the company and we're going to pay you a little bit more for that. You can do that." So you have

different elements within the comp plan that will help you to grow. And I think that's part of the process, that's part of managing the growth in the right way.

Steve Sanduski: Are there other variables that you would mention here? So you mentioned maybe you've got a certain product that has a higher profit margin so we can pay you a higher comp on it. Are there other variables that you would look at in the sales compensation structure that would really fall in line here with this idea of managed growth?

Tracy Tolbert: Sure. I mean, you could do, you might look at geographies, right? You might look and say if any new business that we can get into a certain geography we differently because we're interested in growing there rapidly. There may be markets that we want to take a product, a new market that we want to open up. And so we want to incentivize our sales organization to focus on those markets. There may be competition, there may be things where we take away a business from a specific competitor that we want to incentivize our sales organization differently. And one of the things I've learned after 35 years of managing salespeople is that they will do what you pay them to do. So when you design a compensation plan to get them to have specific actions, that's what they'll do. They're in sales because they're motivated by the comp. And so you design the plan to get them to do the things that you want them to do.

Steve Sanduski: And I think over your career you've facilitated a large number of transactions or acquisitions. So as you think about that as a growth strategy, as a way to either manage growth or maybe very fast growth. How do you think about acquisitions as it fits into this idea of managed growth? What are some of the variables that you look at when you're considering making an acquisition and how that fits in with the overall corporate strategy?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, that's an interesting one because there's a lot of variability to bringing in an acquired organization together with an existing organization. And I think compensation is one of those issues. Culture is another issue. Measurement reporting are other issues and they all are complicated pieces. We tended, in most of my careers, and we did quite a few acquisitions. As we did acquisitions, we always wanted to, first of all, make sure culturally there was an alignment. In other words, that the company would fit with the culture that we had and that they would be comfortable doing business the way we did business. Once you get to that point and the numbers work out and you decided to do the acquisition, we would typically let an organization run, as they had been running for a period of time. In other words, we wouldn't go in and try to disrupt them and say, "Okay, here's a new comp plan to the sales organization," the first day.

Tracy Tolbert: Being acquired is, and I've been acquired a couple of different times in my career as well. That's a psychologically scary time for people. And so you don't want to spook them too much. You want them to get used to the new company and what you're doing there. But what I would always try to do is that, at some point in time, and it may take a year, it may take two years even. You want to create as much consistency as you can across the sales organization particularly, you don't want one organization feeling like, "We're treated differently, we're not treated as well as another organization is or whatever." You try to create as much consistency in their comp plans and their rewards

and their recognition and all the other things that you have so that they can feel like they're part of the team. They're not a stepchild if you will. And it's a difficult thing to do and it takes time and you have to be careful about the way you do it.

Steve Sanduski: And I think that gets into this idea that not all growth is the same. So growth via acquisition is one growth strategy. Growth along the WeWork path of having a lot of venture capital and trying to just grow like crazy is another one. And then this idea of managed growth is another one. Any other thoughts on this idea of all growth not being the same?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, I think if you just recognize that and realize that all growth is not going to be the same. And inside of an organization you can have a subset of the organization that may have less than profitable growth and that's okay. But what you want to do is make sure that you have a different part of the organization that's going to more than make up for that. Because I think particularly in publicly traded companies, right, they care very, very much about the profitability of the company. I've worked in organizations where we had multiple, multiple organizations with different products that we're delivering or services and they had different margins and we had some that were very, very low margins, but they were good long-term contracts that were safe.

Tracy Tolbert: And we were willing to accept those and knew that's what that market provided. Because we had another part of the business that was a services kind of a business that had extremely high margins. And so when you do the balancing of the portfolio that you get to the target margins that you know you need to. And so, you can try to drive growth in that way, but you got to make sure that you're always balancing it to achieve whatever it is that the shareholders are interested in making sure that you achieve.

Steve Sanduski: So we touched a little bit on the sales compensation, so maybe it's a segue around that as well. Let's talk about growing the sales team. So you do have some tremendous experience in building sales organizations. And so what are some of your thoughts on a leader that wants to grow their sales team? What should they be looking out for there?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, it's one of the keys that any sales leader is going to have to do, is that as the company grows, the organization grows. You're going to have to be continually building your sales organization. And that means that you potentially, and probably, and hopefully are going to be having some rollover in your sales organization. In other words, you're going to have people who are going to fall out of the organization naturally and some of them who you may manage out of the organization because they don't perform. So I think it's something that a sales leaders always got to be thinking about. You can't be just comfortable with the way that your sales organization sits at any given time. I think the most successful sales leaders that I know are always targeting growing the sales organization.

Tracy Tolbert: In other words, they're always recruiting, they always have open requisitions, they always are networking and looking for people who may fit into the organization. They never stop doing that because it takes time to find the right kind of people to fit into your organization, whatever they may be. And when you're in a company that's growing

very, very quickly, that's probably one of the biggest challenges, particularly in a market like we have today where unemployment is so low. You don't have people lining up to come into your sales job. You have to go out and find them and you have to be willing to do creative things to get them to come to work for you. And so I think the most important thing that a sales leader can do is to always be looking to grow your sales organization.

Tracy Tolbert: Even if you're in an area where you may have a hiring freeze on, and I've managed through that in the past. It doesn't mean you stop hiring sales people. Because if you're managing your organization correctly, you're going to have salespeople who are not performing at the level you need them to. So they would be leaving the organization one way or another. And so you have to always be backfilling them. And then if you're growing, whether it's in specific markets or you're adding new products, or you're acquiring a company that creates new opportunities, you have to always be adding salespeople.

Tracy Tolbert: So you have to be looking at that continually and those who actually carry quotas as well as the support organizations that go with it. And I think it's something that sometimes it gets lost. Salespeople are hustling so much, sales leaders, to try to get help their team achieve the goals that they need to, they're out doing deals, they're in front of customers and they're doing all those things that they need to and they're not thinking about hiring. And that's one that you just can't ever lose sight of because when you get behind, it's really hard to catch up.

Steve Sanduski: So I think a natural question then is if you are always looking for sales talent, where should you be looking? Have you found any pockets of where you tend to find good talented salespeople?

Tracy Tolbert: Well, I think it depends a lot on organizations. I think a lot of companies do a really, really good job in hiring sales talent right out of school. And they have good training programs and they teach them, they coach them, they grow them up in a way that they need to. For the biggest part of my career, we needed to hire seasoned salespeople, people who had been doing the kinds of things that we did for eight or 10 years or so. And I think there's great opportunity in both of those. I think companies who have the patience and they have the structure in place to actually grow, homegrown sales talent, hiring young people right out of school. I think that's as good a way as there is to do it.

Tracy Tolbert: But it takes time. You have to be patient. Those sales people are typically not going to deliver big numbers to you right out of the gate, it's going to take some time for them to get there. So I think it just depends on what you're looking for and what it is that you're trying to do. But I would say this is a general thing. I love to hire athletes. People who like to compete, I think the best salespeople in the world are those who love competition. Those who like to win. I think there's a psychology to selling that if you want to be a winner and you want to go out and compete with people, that's a really good trait to have in a salesperson. So I would look for people like that wherever I could find them.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, that's a great point. In fact, we had another guest on the podcast who mentioned a similar idea in terms of hiring athletes for their sales organization and what he was specifically looking for were Division III athletes. And the reason why he was looking for Division III athletes is in Division III here in the US you cannot give athletic scholarships. So, he said, "These were people who were just passionate about competition and they were doing it not because they were getting a free education, but just because they were competitive and passionate about it." And so he specifically looked for the D-III folks and that worked out super well for him. Now-

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah. And I think in addition to that, I think finding athletes who continue to compete, who continue to run marathons or triathletes or whatever, and they're just doing it for the love of doing it. Again, they're not paid to do it. So I think it's a great trait.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. Well, speaking of the traits then, what are some other traits that you've seen in successful salespeople?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, to me, the very, very, very first trait that I need to have a salesperson be is honest. They have to be honest in the way that they represent themselves. They have to be honest in the way they deal with their customers. They have to be honest in their expense accounting and in all of the things that they do. And I think many times sales organizations get a bad name because you get an occasional salesperson who isn't honest. And I think that's something that you always look for and obviously you don't always know that when you hire someone, everyone would represent to you that they are an honest person, that they have integrity. But you have to ferret that out very, very quickly. And if you find one that doesn't have that trait, I think you have to deal with it very, very quickly.

Tracy Tolbert: So that would be number one for me. Number two is I was like salespeople who are good listeners and not all salespeople are good listeners. They tend, because they have extroverted personalities, salespeople tend to like to talk. And when you're talking, you're not listening. And so, we were always trying to teach that trait if salespeople didn't have it. But that's an important one as well. And then most of the businesses that I've been in, because they were services type businesses that would span multiple areas of business, whether it's in government or commercial, I always look for people who are just smart, they knew and understood business. They just didn't memorize a script. But they had to be able to think about how you could solve a business problem.

Tracy Tolbert: And I think salespeople in any kind of a role selling, whether they're selling products or services or software or anything else, if they think in the way of how can I help solve a problem for my customer? Then they're going to be more successful at it. And so I always look for people who are really well rounded and who could think instead of just memorize a script. And I think those are just a handful of things that I think of, that I always look for in salespeople regardless.

Steve Sanduski: Well, related to that, so you were the Executive Vice President of Global Sales for Xerox Services for a number of years. You were generating over 1.5 billion in annual recurring revenue, growing at more than 15% per year. So Xerox has historically been known as a

great sales organization, a sales training organization. Anything that you can share with us in terms of your time at Xerox as it relates to sales training or some of the things that were embedded in the Xerox culture that led to it being a great sales organization?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, Xerox does have a great legacy of sales, a training sales organization. They are one of those companies that would invest big dollars. And I remember when I graduated from college, there were three places you wanted to go work if you were going to do sales. One was Xerox, one was IBM, and the other was anywhere in the medical field. And the reason for that is because those companies were willing to invest in sales training. Unfortunately in the case of Xerox, that's something they've gotten away from as times have gotten a little bit tougher for them. And there's been a shift in the market for them and they don't see as much on what we call the legacy business, which are the printers, scanners, copiers, that business is eroding. And so it's been difficult for them. And one of the ways that they've tried to contract as they don't invest as much in sales.

Tracy Tolbert: When they acquired us, Affiliated Computer Services, our culture was very, very different. We were not building up sales people, we weren't hiring right out of college. We were hiring seasoned sales executives only. And so it was actually, that was one of the ways it was a good merger there, because we had the ACS where we didn't invest a lot in training sales people and we had Xerox who did. And as we came together, we began to spend more and more dollars helping to develop the existing salespeople that we had, teaching them new skills, sharpening the saw and helping them to be better. But we still didn't get to a point where Xerox was, 20 years ago, where they would go and recruit and hire salespeople out of the universities and put them into a program where they had very, very structured sales schools even, where they would teach basic selling skills.

Tracy Tolbert: So it's an interesting phenomenon. I think some of the tech companies today are doing a really good job with that, because they are trying to grow quite rapidly. They need to hire salespeople and get them up to speed pretty quickly. And because most of the tech companies, a lot of them have a young culture that's energetic and the millennials, if you will, they hire out of the universities and they have very, very sophisticated training programs where they're teaching them how to sell properly. And I think that's a good way to go. I think it's a way that you get to get salespeople to act the way you want them to act. They don't have any bad habits. They aren't doing it a way that they did at their last company. This is where they come, and they're open and they're eager and you can mold them to be the kind of salespeople that you want them to be. And I think if you could afford to do that and you have the time to do that, that's a really good way to do it.

Steve Sanduski: And what do you think is, say, the biggest mistake that people make when it comes to the sales area? In terms of like being a sales leader, and the mistakes that sales leaders have made in working with their salespeople? What would you say that might be?

Tracy Tolbert: I think there's a couple of things. One is I think any of us, as sales leaders, probably do not, we're not quick enough to act with those who are struggling. And by act I don't mean that you unnecessarily let someone go, but I think it's, we're probably a little more

patient than we need to be in terms of identifying under-performers and trying to put them in a position that they can be successful. Teaching them, coaching them, mentoring them, helping them to achieve the goals that they want to achieve as well as you want them to achieve at the organization. I think we don't do that quick enough and then truly then identifying those who really aren't going to be successful and moving them out of the organization and replacing them with someone who actually can be successful. I think most sales leaders don't do that as quickly as they ought to. I think that's an important one.

Tracy Tolbert: I think another thing that I see that sales leaders, that tends to happen as a company, as an organization gets bigger, the sales leaders' job sometimes becomes more of an inwardly focused job. In other words, they spend more time dealing with the internal organization, reporting, meetings and all of the things that they do, and they spend less time in front of the customers. And I think that's a fallacy. I think one of the most important things that a sales leader can do is to stay connected to the customer base and to the prospect base. And I think as a company gets bigger, you fight really, really hard.

Tracy Tolbert: When I was running the sales organization for an \$11 billion organization, it was almost impossible for me to be in front of customers. I had to really work hard to make sure that I did that on a regular basis. And so, I think you have to make that a priority or it becomes something where you actually don't understand the market and then you kind of have one hand tied behind your back.

Steve Sanduski: Well, as we get ready to wrap up here. So I think I got a couple more things I want to quickly jump into, but before I get to that, is there anything else that you want to add here that we haven't talked about yet?

Tracy Tolbert: No, I think we've had a good winding discussion, so I appreciate it.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, yeah. We talked about a couple of things here. One is this idea of managed growth and then we segued a bit here into the sales function and sales compensation, sales leadership, finding salespeople. So I think a nice mix there. So yeah, let's just finish up with a couple of things. So one is you're a coach here at CEO Coaching International. So what is it that you found attractive about CEO Coaching that made you want to be a coach here?

Tracy Tolbert: Well, I think a couple of things. Number one, I met Mark and he and I had been working together at one of the clients of CEO Coaches, one of his. And I had been coaching another member of their organization. I didn't know Mark. And so we've had a year or so where we've been together working, doing some planning sessions together. And I've watched Mark, I've watched him use the processes that he has developed and I've seen the way that he could affect the organization and the way that they react to him. And I think that's been really, really good for me. So that's certainly spurred my interest.

Tracy Tolbert: And then I think the idea that, in my career, some of the most satisfying experiences that I've had is this opportunity to teach and coach and mentor those who are rising in

the organization. And I find that to be the most satisfying. And so it was a good natural fit for me at this point in my career.

Steve Sanduski: And then what do you hope to achieve in working with your coaching clients?

Tracy Tolbert: Well, I think obviously, as we've discussed here today, I think trying to help them grow their businesses and develop as leaders, regardless of where they fit in the organization, growing the business, developing as leaders, but growing the business in a meaningful way, helping them to achieve whatever the goals that they are that they need to do. And to me, that will be this idea of managed growth and it is setting out objectives and going out and making sure that you're meeting them both on the top line and the bottom.

Steve Sanduski: Great. Well, why don't we just wrap up here with a few rapid fire questions. And of course we love to read here at CEO Coaching International. So what would be one of your favorite books?

Tracy Tolbert: So I really like the Malcolm Gladwell's book Outliers and maybe that's because I'm a believer in hard work and I think that you can really achieve anything that you want to in the world if you work hard enough for it. And so the idea of the 10,000 hour rule, that resonates with me very, very well. And I admire people who are willing to put in the time and the work to do that. So, that's one of the greatest business books I think that's been written.

Steve Sanduski: And how about, as you look back on your career and the positions that you had as you continued to grow and the company continued to grow, what was the hardest activity for you to let go of as your responsibilities expanded over time?

Tracy Tolbert: Yeah, at ACS, as we began to grow, I was in the early days intimately involved in writing and rewriting, reviewing the RFP, the proposals that we sent out in response to RFPs. And that became something that I became very possessive about. And as we got bigger and literally got to the point where we were turning out hundreds of those every month, we were responding because our business was so broad. Not being able to review that, trusting other people to do that work, the work that ultimately would be in front of your potential customers, was very, very hard for me to let go of.

Steve Sanduski: And how did you actually overcome that? How'd you let that go?

Tracy Tolbert: Well, more than anything else, it happened to a point where I just couldn't do it. And then I think I got to a point where I had some people who worked for me, who I began to trust. And after a few times I could see that they were not going to let us do subpar work and that they would do it at the same level that I felt like I could do it. And once you start to do that, then you can let go of it.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. So really got back to trusting your people.

Tracy Tolbert: Absolutely.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. All right, well, final one here. I'm just going to start a sentence and I'd like you to finish it. So the start of the sentence is what I know to be true is.

Tracy Tolbert: What I know to be true. I always say to people, unnatural things never survive. I know that to be true. And by that I mean in nature, unnatural things never survived. We see pictures of a two-headed calf or a two-headed snake or some unnatural thing in nature, and those things never survive. And I think in business it's true as well. I think sometimes we get wound up about somebody who's in a position that we don't think is right or that they're not capable of or whatever. And I think this idea that unnatural things never survive, it's very, very true. If you're patient, things tend to work out the way that they're supposed to in a natural and proper way.

Steve Sanduski: Excellent. All right, well, we will wrap there. So Tracy, appreciate you being on the show today and congratulations on all the great success in your career and the coaching clients that you're working with here at CEO Coaching International.

Tracy Tolbert: Thanks, Steve. I appreciate it very much.

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