



**Wendy:** I did. It's hard to believe. It's been 11 years.

**Lisa:** Well, I just remember one of your former partners, Tom Frauch, and he said to me, "Lisa, you have to meet Wendy. You are going to love Wendy." I remember where we ate lunch. Do you remember?

**Wendy:** Yes.

**Lisa:** Yes, exactly. He's like, "Oh my goodness, you're going to love her." He was right. I just count you as a dear friend. Again, we love your service. BKD does a great, great job. We can definitely talk more about that. I'm going to put you on the spot for one minute. I know this is going to embarrass you. I was just reading yesterday, you were one of two of the partners that just got recognized in June with the PRIDE award.

**Wendy:** I did. [laughs]

**Lisa:** I'm like, "Wow, she didn't say anything about that or anything." I love it. The PRIDE is the core values. I'm going to put you on the spot. What are the core values? [laughs]

**Wendy:** Our core values- the acronym is PRIDE, so it's Passion, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Excellence. We've had those core values for years and really celebrate how we serve our clients and how we serve each other and really having that impact in leading forward. Each year, we award the PRIDE award to one partner and one employee in the firm. I was just shocked. I'm still shocked that I received it. It's just a great honor to receive that award.

**Lisa:** Well, here is what was said of you about that. "Wendy always holds herself to be the best person that she can be. Those who've worked with Wendy consistently mention her integrity and how she strives to be excellent in everything she does."

She is one of the great leaders at BKD." I see that with those core values and the excellence in everything she does. I have served on boards with you. I've done all kinds of things. I totally see that about you. St. Louis is very, very lucky to have you, Wendy.

**Wendy:** Well, thank you, Lisa, for sharing that.

**Lisa:** Let me go back. I want to talk a little about how you grew up and then let's get into your career a little bit. We're going to talk about a lot of things there.

**Wendy:** Okay. Well, perfect. Well, I grew up-- Mom and Dad and I have two younger brothers. I was the oldest and really was the first in my immediate family to go to college. It just wasn't what my family really did, but I really wanted to. Early on, I wanted to go into medicine, but I took a chemistry class and hated it. I had to pivot. [laughs] At the same time, this is in high school, I was taking internal bookkeeping. I just went around and it was really easy for me. I watched my friends struggle.

I started to think maybe there are some aptitude here that I need to explore. Declared accounting as my major right away in college and just continued down that path. It's just been a labor of love for me ever since. You have that core that's very technical, but it's also a very people-oriented business because you're really working closely with your clients and figuring out their needs and what they need for their business to be successful. It's just been a blast. It's been 37 years, I've been doing this.

**Lisa:** You look like you're 29. That's a good deal. You knew that I have an accounting background as well, but unlike you, I practiced for about five years. I'm like, "I'm not sure." [laughs] I see myself doing this forever so I pivoted and went into corporate sales. Then of course, then Greg and I jumped on the entrepreneurial wagon. For people out there, for young people that are thinking about business, I think it's a wonderful foundation. You've got to understand your financials.

**Wendy:** From there, you can go anywhere and do anything. It's just such a great framework and you might enjoy it. You might want to stay in it or you can pivot and do anything else.

**Lisa:** When you graduate, what was your first job?

**Wendy:** I actually started with Deloitte Haskins & Sells. That was back when there was the BK. I left now. When somebody asks me, I usually just say Deloitte because the younger generation doesn't even remember that there are used to be a Deloitte Haskins & Sells.

**Lisa:** I think Deloitte's in the top three at least now.

**Wendy:** Yes.

**Lisa:** There's one other thing that I wanted to say. If you're a young person, you're thinking about accounting, there's a couple different paths you can go, but if you're really thinking accounting is something that you're going to enjoy, I think getting that big firm experience is gold. I really do. I think it's golden. EYs, the Deloitte's of the world, the PwCs, it's a great, great foundation because you're going to see across a lot. Aren't you, Wendy? It's not just one company. You're going to see across a lot of different organizations.

**Wendy:** Any of the large firms. I would say any of the top 20. BKD falls in that as well. Just the experiences that you're going to have. Right out of college, you're working with business owners. Having those interactions and talking to them about their business, just the learning curve and the business acumen that you start to develop and doing that is so quick and it's just an amazing experience to have that on your resume and to gain that experience.

**Lisa:** Great advice. I want to back up just one step here. You said something that I didn't know about you that you were the first in your family to go to college. Wendy, what was the precipice for that? Did you have anybody speaking in to you to say how important education was or was this just something, Wendy, looked in the world, and said, "Yes, I think I probably need to go to college and get an education."

**Wendy:** I think it was mostly an internal desire to be independent on my own. Graduated from high school in 1979. You looked around and I wanted to be able to drive my own success. The only way for me to do that is to have an education. My family was supportive, but it wasn't something where they were saying, "You have to do this. You have to do this."

**Lisa:** It wasn't really expected. It's funny that you were thinking about going into medicine. I was thinking about going into medicine. Actually, I was going to be a physical therapist and then ended up pivoting in college. The cool thing about it is you've got to boys- [laughs]

**Wendy:** That are both doctors.

**Lisa:** - that are doctors.

**Wendy:** I know. They're doing what didn't want to do.

**Lisa:** That is so awesome. You've been here for 11 years. My goodness, Wendy, you came in like a force. You just came in with both feet. You've got involved very quickly. In fact, I laughingly say, "Yes, very quickly. If you came, you start to recruit me first off." [laughs] You say, "Come on, Lisa. Be a part of Go Red for Women." I joined the Go Red for Women ELT and the rest is history but I know that's been in your DNA and I read somewhere and I may get the Stat wrong but since you've been the managing partner for the St. Louis in Decatur office, this office has increased revenues by something like 30 something percent and increased giving by 43%.

**Wendy:** I'm not sure if that's the exact numbers, but we have continued to grow. We've definitely increased giving. All of us been involved in the community. One of the things I've always believed, it was taught to me early on as a professional and I've just carried that on is that if you're a professional working in a community, you have to be a part of the community, you have to give back, you have to support the community that supports you.















**Wendy:** What I would tell you, Lisa, and again, this is something I probably learned later, one of the things I wish I would have understood earlier in my career. As a leader, you have to do what's equitable for the people you're leading, not what's equal. For the longest time, as I was starting to lead, I felt like I had to treat everyone equally, and not everyone needs the same thing. As a leader, my job is to bring out the best in my team and that's something different for each person. As I've been on this D&I journey, and helping us think about that, it's really been crystallized for me in that I have to think about equitable, what's equitable?

There's a great little cartoon about three little boys standing and trying to look over a fence at a baseball game. They're each different sizes. The short one can't see over the fence, if you get each one of them a stepstool that fits their size, they can all look over the fence, and all see the game. It's a great visual for this whole movement.

**Lisa:** Wow, that'll be one that I won't forget. Thank you for that, [chuckles] Wendy. I want to give you the opportunity to talk about whatever it is that you want to talk about. You're going to talk about your awesome firm I think. What would you like to tell our listeners about BKD?

**Wendy:** Well, I would just say thank you for this opportunity. It's always fun to visit with you. I would just say, if you don't know about BKD, please check us out. We are a wonderful, firm really focused on serving our clients well. You heard about our PRIDE values. We also have our unmatched Client Service Standards that is just our guidebook to how we do business. For those of you that might have a business that need advice, we're here. If you're an accountant looking for a home, we're here. We're always looking for great people and great clients. We're always transitioning in the services that we provide as well.

During COVID, we've really pivoted, and we have a lot of resources for PPP loans, and all of the things that were happening during COVID. You can find all of those on our website. One of the services that I'm really proud of is how we've pivoted and really started to focus on accounting, outsourcing, servicing not for profit organizations.



I know that your story, I know that your wisdom and all your insights are going to really help our listeners. Thank you so much for making the time.

**Wendy:** Well, thank you, Lisa, it's always great to visit with you.

**Lisa:** Very good.

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