

PEO INSIDE

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THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

SALES & MARKETING

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Value &
The Market

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COVER STORY

A PASSION TO SERVE

2020-2021 NAPEO Chair

Lee Yarborough, Propel HR

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READY FOR THE CHALLENGE

BY LEE C. YARBOROUGH

I remember sitting in last year's NAPEO Annual Membership Meeting and thinking about 2020. As Andy Lubash received the chair's gavel from Barron Guss, I remember feeling nervous, excited, and a little overwhelmed as I projected myself onto that same platform in 2020.

Well, 2020 is here, and like everything else this year, the Annual Membership Meeting and the Annual Conference were different. We did not have a chance to be together on Marco Island, Florida, to celebrate our industry. We missed the fun parties, the exhibit hall, and Pat's many speeches "thanking the sponsors." We missed time learning from the experts in sessions as well as time catching up with our peers at happy hour.

Although the conference was very different this year, it reaffirmed why we belong to NAPEO. This year, more than ever, we have seen our investment at work. NAPEO has done a tremendous job of pivoting during this

unprecedented year and I am so proud to be a part of this association.

I can't imagine being in this industry without the education, research, advocacy, and networking that are provided through NAPEO. As members, we have access to top practitioners who focus on best practices and current regulations. During this pandemic, the education we received from NAPEO was unparalleled.

By spreading the message of PEOs, our association helps every member. The recent marketing campaigns and resources are helping PEOs, large and small. 2020 has been a year full of government regulation and through NAPEO, our voice is being heard at the state and federal levels.

To me, the most valuable benefit of membership is networking. I have formed friendships over the years with many of you who understand life in the trenches as a co-employer. To have the ability to call a fellow business owner and ask for advice on specific issues is worth the price of membership. Although we have not seen each other recently, there has been

an overwhelming sense of togetherness facilitated through NAPEO, and for that I am grateful.

Membership is an investment of both time and resources, but the dividends are high. As with all things in life, *what you put in is what you get out*. For me, it is not enough to just join NAPEO—I know that the real value comes from being involved and making the most of the opportunities. I encourage all of you to get more involved and find your place in NAPEO. My own involvement with this



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organization has been critical to the success of my business as well as my personal development.

I am very proud of our industry and proud of NAPEO. As I begin this year as chair, I am a little nervous, very excited, and humbled. The landscape is quite different than what I had envisioned, but I am ready for the challenge. Remember, NAPEO is your association. I look forward to working with each of you! ■



LEE C. YARBOROUGH
2020-2021 NAPEO Chair
President
Propel HR
Greenville, South Carolina

2020-2021 NAPEO CHAIR LEE YARBOROUGH A PASSION TO SERVE

BY CHRIS CHANEY

Lee Yarbrough is the president of Greenville, South Carolina-based Propel HR. On September 15, 2020, she was elected chair of NAPEO's Board of Directors during NAPEO's Annual Member Meeting. She recently spoke with *PEO Insider* to discuss her background and share where she thinks the industry is headed and how NAPEO can continue to grow.

W HAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPOSURE TO PEO? WHAT WERE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE PEO INDUSTRY AT THAT TIME?

My father, Braxton Cutchin, has always been an entrepreneur, so throughout my childhood he owned all types of businesses. When I was in high school he

bought a company that was using an employee leasing company. He first thought the concept was a waste of money, but quickly realized it was a great arrangement, so a few years later he started his own PEO. After I graduated from college, I decided to work for my father while I was trying to figure out what I really wanted to do with my

career—but I've been working here ever since! He ended up selling his PEO, and we started Propel HR together in 1996. He named me as president right from the beginning, and allowed me to grow, learn, and make my own decisions.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY'S BUSINESS MODEL & PHILOSOPHY?

Because we started as a family business, we really focus on family values. Even though we've grown and evolved, we always stay true to who we are. Family first is an important part of our culture. As a working mother, it's important for me to attend my children's events and I always encourage other employees to do that.



My top priority is to get more people involved. I'd like to see more voices in the room. I think we need more diverse and younger members involved.

HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUR OPERATIONS? HOW HAVE YOU ADAPTED TO CONTINUE SERVING CLIENTS?

Operationally we've had to adjust, pivot, and learn how to do all that we do remotely. We started planning early on for an internal shutdown, and during the beginning only a few employees were on site. Now we're in a voluntary, staggered return-to-work phase.



Helping our clients with Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans has been a big focus for us, because nearly 75 percent of them have received PPP loans. We really took time to walk our clients through all the new legislation that Congress passed, and helped them navigate everything from furloughs and layoffs to 401(k) and paid time off (PTO) changes.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE PEO INDUSTRY? WHAT CONTINUES TO INSPIRE YOU ABOUT THE INDUSTRY?

I think the wonderful thing about our industry is what my dad first saw: This is truly a win-win. We can run a profitable business, and we can really help our clients run profitable businesses. I love the PEO industry because every day is new and gives us the opportunity to propel our clients' businesses forward. Knowing that we give value to business owners is what inspires me. I hope we can continue building on our momentum and

demonstrating our value as an industry to more and more business owners.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INDUSTRY TO GROW? WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING THE INDUSTRY?

Our industry has always had great opportunities to grow when there were challenges to the business world, such as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and COVID-19. These challenges allow PEOs to show and share our value with business owners. It's important that we continue to demonstrate to business owners how PEOs help them navigate complexity and uncertainty.

The commoditization of our industry poses a big challenge because sometimes PEOs hurt each other when we compete on price instead of focusing on the services and value we can provide. We have to appreciate how hard it is to assemble a team of experts who can provide the value that PEOs do.

WHY DID YOU INITIALLY JOIN NAPEO & SEEK TO BECOME INVOLVED?

Joining NAPEO was a no brainer. From day one, we've been members and it's never something that I've questioned. As for getting involved, that's just my personality. If I'm a part of an organization, I'm going to be involved whether it's my children's school or my church or my trade association. It might sound cliché, but you get out what you put in. I don't want to just be a member—my passion is to serve and see how I can help.

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE AS CHAIR? WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

My top priority is to get more people involved. I'd like to see more voices in the room. I think we need more diverse and younger members involved. There are a lot of smart, outside-the-box thinkers who come to our events—we should reach out to them and tap into their energy so we can grow our association and make NAPEO stronger.

OUTSIDE OF WORK, WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES, INTERESTS, & PASSIONS?

My family is my greatest passion. I've been married for 22 years and have two daughters. My oldest is a college freshman studying in Leeds, England, and my youngest is in eighth grade. I'm an avid reader, so much so that I started a book festival called Read Up Greenville for young adult and middle grade readers. My family and I also enjoy being outdoors. We love to camp and hike in the mountains. ■



CHRIS CHANEY

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