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Michelle Blevins Cleaning and Restoration Industry Update

This week we welcomed Michelle Blevins owner and publisher of C&R Magazine. A lot is happening in the industry and Michelle has her finger on the pulse join us as we dug in and learned more about some of the big changes in the cleaning and restoration industry.

Michelle Blevins is a content creator, marketing consultant, and entrepreneur whose career has been centered on education and fostering relationships within the industry she serves. A journalist by trade, Michelle is passionate about running a publication rooted in integrity and valuable education. She views her role as owner and publisher of *C&R Magazine* as a bridge between industry experts and restoration and cleaning contractors.

Since joining the restoration industry, Michelle has made it her business to stay on top of the latest industry trends. She has become a go-to resource for anyone looking to learn more about what's happening within today's restoration industry. This has earned her a spot on many industry stages facilitating panels and helpful discussion with industry experts on the biggest topics facing restorers and cleaners in the current market.

Nuggets mined from today's episode:

What can you tell us about the purchase of C&R? Michelle who began her journalism career at a newspaper and then worked in TV news has always been a fan of print media. From her vantage point, C&R has always been an elevated publication which appealed to a higher level restorer.

R&R magazine was not as technically oriented as Michelle would have liked. Michelle was disappointed when her employer at R&R magazine decided to do away with print. She found it difficult to ask people to write for a totally digital publication. She was uncomfortable with some of the ethical issues of magazine advertisers who sought to buy influence through pay for play.

Michelle initiated the discussion with RIA about acquiring C&R magazine.

She feels that if her publication educates the industry in a good way, that both subscribers and advertisers will come.

While the same small group of experts write most of the content for other digital industry publications, Michelle is helping create new thought leaders.

What will you do with some of the great content from the past? C&R has a long legacy of great information. C&R is an industry trusted resource for information. She currently has everything from 2015 onward in digital format. Pete Consigli and Jon Isaacson are helping her organize it. She is trying to resurrect the pre 2015 content.

Cleaning and Restoration service firms are a hot commodity, why? 65% of the owners of cleaning and restoration firms are baby boomers, between 65 and 75 years old. Retirement, burnout, taxes, health problems, labor challenges and COVID are some of reasons why firms are selling. With firsthand knowledge as a restoration staff recruiter, she has learned in the current market it's really, really hard to recruit restoration employees. From discussions with groups of restoration firms, Michelle has learned that 60%-90% have been approached about selling their businesses.

What will the consolidation do for the customer experience? The customer service experience is rooted in company culture. Each large industry player will need to manage the experiences of their customers. A big name doesn't mean great service. Due to consolidation, customers will have fewer firms to choose from.

What about pricing challenges? RIA's AGA (Advocacy and Government Affairs committee) is making great progress in moving industry pricing in a positive direction. Xactimate® pricing is not the word of God. Paul Davis franchisees are

trained to provide pricing feedback to Xactware® and are monitored by Paul Davis HQ. Providing pricing feedback gives power to the restorer. Ben Justesen is teaching other restorers ways to increase their prices.

What are your current and future plans with the magazine will there be hard copies or will it be all digital? Michelle is committed to publishing 6 print issues per year. Her first issue was circulated at the Experience. Michelle has partnered with industry trainers: Reets, Barb Jackson and Annissa Coy, etc. to give magazines and subscription info to all of their students. She plans to include some restoration 101 content along with new columns by: Scott Walden VetCor (Full Disclosure), Marcie Williams Richardson (Team Talk) Guarantee Restoration, Brandon Reese & Chris Nordyke- Floodlight Consulting (Mit/Resto Moments), David Princeton-Advocate Claims (Dear David).

Is paying more, the answer to finding restoration workers? Pay isn't everything. There is more to it than pay when hiring restoration workers. These workers can make the same money working indoors, not being on call for emergencies, not crawling into wet crawl spaces, etc. A Job and a paycheck doesn't always equate to a good restoration worker. Restoration workers need to care and be compassionate, a servant's heart.

There are good jobs and upward mobility available for both men and women in the restoration field without a college education and without student loans.

Restoration skills are a valuable trade that provides good pay, job security and upward mobility.

New trends? Some restoration firms are trying to cut costs by outsourcing their estimating. Using software programs like DocuSketch® Matterport® data is remotely uploaded from the field to the desk of the service provider who creates the estimate.

RoundUp

Déjà vu all over again- Pete Consigli, Restoration Global Watchdog- Circles Back

- When Pete first heard Marty King use the term "bovine excrementia" at an RIA event he thought it was Latin.

- The Dear David column circles back to C&R columns where Marty King and Steve Spivak answered technical questions.
- Patterned after the Lead Carpenter in home building, the Lead Restoration Technician was the heart and soul of the restoration company. The Lead Restoration Technician often filled the roles of today's Project Manager.
- Low tech remote estimating began when Lead Technicians would take room measurements and Polaroid photos and bring them back to the office where the Lead Tech could answer the owner's questions and the estimate pieced together.
- Insurance companies never wanted to pay for estimators and project managers.
- Opinion pieces by members -Members Forum a hybrid of OpEd & Letter to the Editor.
- Phil McLaughlin CR# 43 wrote an article called "There's No Free Lunch" addressing insurance companies who promised future work in return for free estimates today.
- RIA produced several videos. "After the Fire" and "Water Damage Risk Diagnosis & Repair"
- Lack of Communication is insurance industries biggest criticism of restoration contractors.
- Pete complimented Michelle on her work from behind the scenes on the "Restoration Goodfellows" article for the RIA 70th anniversary.

Michelle Blevins final comment

- Restorers are heroes too!

Z-Man's final comment-

- Recommend you subscribe to C&R Magazine at candrmagazine.com
- I've had little previous interaction with Michelle Blevins. I was impressed by her awards presentation at the RIA 75th Anniversary and I was further impressed by her courage and honesty during today's interview.
- I like her!

Z-Man Signing Off