**CONFERENCE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**MARGARETA PETROVIC**

Hello everyone. I want to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for giving me the opportunity to speak with all of you today and I’d like to acknowledge the rest of you for taking the time to listen!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... and while we know that Accenture is a multinational force in the business world, I know that our corporate culture is comprised of our considerable and diverse **HUMAN** resources and narratives. I am proud and humbled to share a bit of my own story and I look forward to learning about yours.

Twelve years ago I came to the US. For a young woman leaving her homeland, the journey to the United States provided enormous tests to my resourcefulness, my fortitude, and my resilience. Simply put, I had to start my life over again.... at just (**give your age at the time**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years old. Talk about **ADVENTURE**!! . Believe it or not, emigrating was much more challenging than enduring war torn Yugoslavia... the crises... the bombings... the personal losses that I managed to survive. Eleanor Roosevelt said, “A woman is like a tea bag... you never know how strong she is until she’s placed in hot water...” I’d like to share with you how my career became “**steeped**” in security and in consulting. (**Wait for the laugh**).

I landed and hit the ground running... literally. I figured how to speak English, I found my way around Chicago, and began working as a DBA. I utilized my analytical skills while talking to as few people as possible. **SERIOUSLY**. Luckily, I met Jena, a lawyer. She had recently moved to Chicago and we quickly became friends. During the week, I would work... **A LOT.** One day, I noticed my servers were misbehaving. Oddly, those issues had perfect timing... problems started every Friday night so I had to troubleshoot on the weekend. It was me against the servers. I created code that captured all changes, commands, IPs, usernames... I discovered that developers were using my boss’ username and password to deploy unreviewed and unapproved changes in production **every Friday**.... While it might have been the highlight of **their** week, it certainly wasn’t **MINE**... I liked my weekends!! I approached my boss to report my discoveries. He ordered me not to share my findings with **anyone**... I wanted my weekends back... and I wanted to support corporate integrity. I went to my boss’s boss who also told me to keep quiet. ...not so easy... I needed my time and I needed to find opportunity and solutions to a problem. One weekend, Jena and I went for brunch and I decided to vent with my friend, not expecting that she would understand any techy stuff. All of a sudden, she got excited. It turned out that she was our VP of Security. She understood the situation **AND** she was able to clean up the mess by using the evidence I collected. Surprisingly, I became a shining star. The reality? I was fighting for my time off!! Instead, I became fascinated with the security world and here I am.

Soon after, Jena went to California. I was invited to join her as Compliance Manager. She **REALLY** believed in me... remember... I had no idea what the word “Audit” meant... translation into Serbian proved useless. Believing that “Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing,” I accepted the offer.... \_\_\_\_\_\_ months pregnant. I told my husband I was moving to Orange County and that we’d figure out how to get him to move with me... he got confused … didn’t he know me by then?? (**Wait for the laugh**)

New adventures awaited. I quickly learned what “audit” meant along with other new words... which I won’t repeat (**Wait for the laugh**). I was still working my old DBA job part time remotely, at night, and had to get my necessary certification within the first year of employment. **Trust me**... there was no time for morning sicknesses!!

The year passed, my English improved, the baby was born and my husband moved to California. I gave up my second job. Life became **TOO** normal....**not good at all**. I thrive on action and noticed my consulting friends seemed like they were having fun. **Brainstorm**!!!

I needed my mentor’s advice, but she was also my boss. Should I be **that** honest? I went to talk to Jena to tell her that I needed a change. Guess what? She was supportive and acknowledged that I outgrew my position. How great!! I was ready to transition to a consultant position ... although I had practically no experience.

One of the interviews was with E&Y in Phoenix. That was at 9am, meaning I had to get from Orange County to Phoenix... **EARLY**. My husband was out of town and I had no one to look after my baby, still in diapers. Thank goodness I still had my mentor...my friend... my boss, Jena ... you know...with no baby-sitting experience. But she had always been incredibly supportive, so I left Alex with her and went to LAX for a 6am flight. I have to say, I couldn’t stop thinking about the circus going on with Jena and the baby back in Orange County. I must have managed **somehow** as I got an offer for a position higher than what I applied for. Ironically, the person who wanted to hire me at E&Y was Reza Chapman. I’m glad I reassessed and joined Accenture. I’m also glad that Reza took a similar step and here we both are!! .

I’m thankful for the recognition and respect I have garnered along my professional path. I’ve grown to realize how trust-based relationships matter as does the value of people that believe in you. My passion is evident...and I remind myself that “Impossible is just an opinion”.

My experience at Accenture has helped me discover and hone my capabilities. We cannot underestimate the value of teamwork and mutual respect and support, nor can we underestimate our own talents and resilience. While **most** times my life appears to be a circus.... thankfully, I’ve learned to juggle. I’ve come to realize that we are limited by our own considerations. Live in a condition of “**YES**!” and find a way to greet **OPPORTUNITY**. I invite us to maintain optimism... it’s from that POV that we will grow as people... as professionals... and as an effective, impactful **TEAM**. thank you all!

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