

MICHIGAN CFO ASSOCIATES

The CFO's for Small-Business

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NEWSLETTER



U.S. NATIONAL DEBT AS OF:

June 2026

\$39,204,974,715,248

June 2025

\$36,213,761,221,110

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message:

Why Asking a Controller to Think Like a CFO Usually Backfires

What's Happening?

*Michigan CFO Associates celebrates 20 Years!
Welcome New Clients
Happy Anniversaries
Off the Clock with our CFO's
AMBA Conference 2026
Cars & Cigars smoke Detroit!*

Our CFO'S:

Todd Rammler
Lauren Pecoraro
Daniel Beardslee
Sanford Wexler
Dennis Weist
Tom Carbone
Jim Dostine
Mike Lynn
Rinay Bhowmath
Dylan Straka
Vittorio Bonanni

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www.michigancfo.com

Why Asking a Controller to Think Like a CFO Usually Backfires

It makes complete sense on paper. Your business has grown to the point where you need more financial horsepower, but a full-time CFO feels like a big number. You've got a solid controller — or you're thinking about hiring one — and the idea of expanding that role seems like a reasonable middle ground. One person, broader responsibilities, problem solved.

It's a logical instinct. And it's one of the most common and costly miscalculations growing businesses make.

The reason it doesn't work isn't about capability or effort. It's about how these two roles are fundamentally different from each other — not just in what they do, but in how they're wired to think.



Two different jobs, two different orientations.

A great controller is precise, thorough, and detail-driven by design. They make sure the books close accurately and on time. Transactions are coded correctly. Reconciliations are clean. The financial machinery runs the way it's supposed to. That work is genuinely essential — without it, nothing else in the finance function holds together.

But the traits that make a controller excellent at that job are almost the inverse of what makes a CFO effective. A CFO's job isn't to confirm that the numbers are right. It's to ask what the numbers mean, whether the business is heading in the right direction, and what

needs to change. That requires a different orientation entirely — curious, forward-looking, comfortable sitting with ambiguity, and willing to challenge assumptions that everyone else stopped questioning a long time ago.

Controllers aren't wired that way because their jobs have never rewarded it. Precision is rewarded. Consistency is rewarded. Staying in the lane and delivering clean, accurate work is rewarded. The controller who starts pushing back on strategy or challenging the business model is often seen as overstepping. So over time, they learn to stay in their lane — which is exactly where a controller should be.

Asking that same person to suddenly shift into strategic mode isn't a promotion. It's a request to fundamentally change how they think.

The forest and the trees.

There's a reason the old expression resonates: you can't see the forest for the trees. A controller working through close, reconciling accounts, and managing the details is standing deep in the forest — which is exactly where their job requires them to be.

A CFO needs to be standing at the edge, looking at the whole picture. Asking why things are structured the way they are. Noticing that growth is happening in the wrong area. Questioning whether the current strategy still makes sense given where the numbers are pointing.

Those are two different vantage points. Most people are genuinely better suited for one than the other, and being excellent at one doesn't transfer automatically to the other. When you ask a controller to occupy both positions, what typically happens is that the tactical work gets done well — because that's where their instincts take them — and the strategic work quietly doesn't happen at all.

Continued, Pg 2 ➔

What you're actually paying for.

When a fractional CFO relationship works, the value isn't in the reporting. It's in the conversation that wouldn't have happened otherwise — the business plan assumption that gets challenged, the cash flow pattern that finally gets explained in plain terms, the uncomfortable question that needed to be asked six months ago.

That kind of contribution comes from someone who has operated at that level before, in real companies, through real cycles. It comes from genuine curiosity about how a business works and why it works that way. And it comes from a willingness to push back — respectfully, constructively, but clearly — when something doesn't add up.

That's not something you can layer onto a controller role, any more than you'd ask your accountant to handle your legal work because both jobs involve a lot of documents.

The businesses that work through this — often after trying the hybrid approach first — usually land in the same place: they wish they'd made the distinction sooner. Not because the controller let them down, but because they finally understood what they'd been missing.

A controller keeps score. A CFO helps you figure out how to win. Both matter. They're just not the same job.

Todd R.



Sandy Wexler

When summer arrives in Michigan, you'll likely find me on the golf course or out on the water. If anyone invents a way to golf and boat at the same time, let me know. As for essentials, there's always Diet Coke in my refrigerator—and in my opinion, McDonald's serves the best one around.



Dennis Weist

A perfect Michigan summer includes camping at Holland State Park and spending time at the beach. Energy drinks are a staple in my refrigerator, and I firmly believe pineapple and ham belong on pizza. If I weren't a CFO, I'd be chasing a different dream as a professional motocross rider.



Rinay Bhowmath

I enjoy spending time with my family! With two kids at home, the refrigerator is always stocked with the essentials: ketchup, chicken nuggets, and fish sticks. If I weren't a CFO, I'd be living my dream of running a cattle farm—since I couldn't bring myself to slaughter cattle, I'd focus on selling organic milk and pasture-raised eggs.

AMBA Conference 2026 "Ideas Ignite!"

In May, we headed back to Grand Rapids for the American Mold Builders Association's annual conference — and the energy was high!

For the second consecutive year, Michigan CFO Associates was on the ground connecting with mold manufacturers and industry leaders from across the country.



Pictured above: **Dennis Weist**, **Rachel Wasserman**, and **Todd Rammler** back representing the firm and connecting with AMBA members who are doing the hard work of keeping U.S. manufacturing competitive. If you're an AMBA member or mold manufacturer and missed us at the conference, we'd love to continue the conversation.

Reach out at info@michigancfo.com

WELCOME, New Clients!



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Fey Printing

Custom Printing of
Highly Specialized Products

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CARS & CIGARS SMOKE *Detroit*

We had an incredible evening at the 12th Annual Cars & Cigars Charity Event, held at Freedom Hill on June 4th. Year after year, this outstanding event draws a sold-out crowd while raising meaningful support for both the Celani Family Foundation and Hunger Free in the D.




CELANI FAMILY
FOUNDATION

"Money is a tool. Used properly, it makes something beautiful."

— Brad Henry



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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

11 Years	RightBrain Networks RBN.AI
8 Years	Huron Tool HURON-TOOL.COM
3 Years	BlueFlite BLUEFLITE.COM
3 Years	City Contracting Services, Inc CITYCONTRACTINGSERVICES.COM
2 Years	Advanced Animal Emergency ADVANCEDANIMALEMERGENCY.COM
2 Years	American Photo Marketing APMPHOTO.COM
2 Years	TCR Integrated Stamping Systems STAMPINGSYSTEMS.COM
2 Years	Zero Tolerance, LLC ZEROTOLERANCECNC.COM
1 Year	ASL Stone ASLSTONE.COM

**THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US
WITH YOUR BUSINESS**

20 years ago, when we started this business, the world looked very different. The national debt was under \$9 trillion (vs. \$39 trillion today!). Netflix mailed DVDs. The first iPhone hadn't even been released yet. Remote work was rare, AI sounded futuristic, and social media was barely part of business strategy!



Since 2006, technology, communication, and the way companies operate have transformed at an incredible pace. Entire industries have evolved overnight. But through all the change, one thing has remained constant: the importance of strong relationships, trusted partnerships, and great people.

As we celebrate 20 years in business, we're grateful for every client, partner, employee, and supporter who has been part of the journey — from the early days to where we are today.



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MICHIGAN CFO ASSOCIATES

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Outsourced CFO, Controller & Recruiting Services Including:

- ✓ TRENDSPOTTER™ Financial Statement Analysis
- ✓ Cost & Profit Margin Analysis
- ✓ Bank Financing Packages and Negotiations
- ✓ Financial Projections
- ✓ Cash Planning & Management