

CRAFT OF CONSULTING PODCAST

EPISODE 22: Managing Client Engagements on Time and on Budget—with Marisa Manley

Deb Zahn: Hi, I want to welcome you to Episode 22 of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. My guest today is Marisa Manley, and she is the President of Healthcare Real Estate Advisors. This is a consulting firm that works across the country on everything related to real estate. So what they do is they help organizations of all kinds of different sizes with strategy related to real estate projects, selecting sites, negotiating all the terms and conditions all the way through construction. And Marisa herself has handled \$1.5 billion worth of transactions.

What she and I are going to focus on today is how you manage client projects, and particularly focus on very complex projects that include a lot of moving parts and include a lot of different folks that are involved in it. She's going to talk about what she does to make sure that those are on time, everything's on budget, and ultimately that the client is very happy, not just with the outcome, but they're happy with the process as well. So, she has a lot of terrific information to share. Let's get started.

I want to welcome my guest, Marisa Manley, today. Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast.

Marisa Manley: Deb, it's good to be here. It's always fun to talk about the work we do and why we enjoy it, and how we help our clients.

Deb Zahn: That's great. Well, tell my listeners what type of consulting you do.

Marisa Manley: So Deb, I founded and lead two real estate advisory firms. One deals generally with corporate and institutional clients, and one deals specifically with healthcare clients. One of the things that's important about these firms, when I started commercial tenant real estate representation in 1989, I started it as a what's now called a tenant rep firm, which was quite unusual at the time because the real estate market was then, and continues to be, dominated by entities that represent landlords. So representing the end user is a very important part of what we do. And essentially Deb, we provide end-to-end real estate solutions for corporate and institutional clients. What this means functionally is that we often act like an outsourced real estate department, providing a number of skillsets that many corporations, not-for-profit schools, just don't have in-house.

Deb Zahn: That's great. And I know that we've overlapped with some of the clients that we have, and any time somebody is looking for any type of a real estate project there's a short list of folks that they turn to and I know you're always at the top of it, which is why I thought it would be helpful to have you on the show.

Marisa Manley: Yeah. And I think one of the things, Deb, I just want to add one more, is that we do everything from strategy for clients who really haven't figured out what direction they ought to be going with. For instance, we had a client who had locations overseas and they said, "Should we be in Massachusetts, should we be in Arizona, or should we be in Connecticut?" So that's strategy, and then it goes all the way down the line to actual ground up construction of buildings for our clients.

Deb Zahn: That's great. And how did you personally become a consultant?

Marisa Manley: Yeah, I saw a need. So I'm trained as both an architect and a lawyer, Deb, and I was fortunate to work with IBM early in my career at a time when they were doing a lot of very sophisticated real estate transactions. And as I interacted with that whole world of corporate real estate at that level, I saw that a lot of corporations that were very smart in their own businesses really did not understand real estate and how to make real estate decisions. And since real estate remains the second or third largest fixed cost for many companies, getting real estate right is a very, very important part of having a healthy, whether it's a not-for-profit, again, a school, or a corporation. So I saw a need and figured out how to fill it.

Deb Zahn: That's great. Well, and one of the things that we talked about that is a good part of the need that you actually fill is how to manage the client's projects, which are often very complex, often include many, many different arms, often include other people who are involved, and one of the things that the clients always want you to do in those is to manage them so that they're on time, they're on budget, and that at the end of it, they have a big smile on their face.

So we thought we would talk about that today because regardless of the type of consulting someone does, those are always useful and important things to know how to do. So, can you give a description of sort of a typical complex project that happens within your consulting that you see fairly often?

Marisa Manley: Yeah, absolutely. So a typical project for us, Deb, would be probably 18 months or slightly longer for the engagement, and we start early on really defining, helping the client define their need. And that can be very, very granular down to how many handicap bathrooms do they need for a particular facility, on up to strategy. Are they looking for a particular image? How important is transportation? So, then we talk about market versus site. We do a lot of site searches, which involve complex financial negotiations and analysis. We will then negotiate documents line by line, which would be everything from a lease to a purchase agreement to architectural agreements. We qualify and hire others as part of our scope, and then we actually oversee the work, whether that's interior renovation in an office building or another sort of structure or whether it's ground up construction.

So again, it's 18 months. Typically 18, it could be 24, it could be longer. It's everything from helping the client really articulate their needs and commit to a plan to implementing that plan.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And you operating essentially as their real estate arm is essential because I know for a lot of clients that I've worked with that have real estate or capital projects, they don't have anybody on staff that does that so it ends up being other duties as required for often the COO, the CEO, and others who don't really have the experience that you can bring to bear to this, so that's wonderful.

Marisa Manley: Yeah, and I think that's an important part too, Deb. Just when you talk about if you don't have the right resources and the job goes to the CEO or the COO or whoever it might be, the process really becomes an irritant because it's not their job, and it's how do you make this go away as quickly as possible? Now, so when we come on board, we've removed some element of that irritant, but it's still going to be a challenging period for the client. And so to your point, how do we help them make good decisions, stay on time and on budget, was something that really...decisions that often have a long-term effect on both the financial viability and the operational capabilities of the client we're working with.

Deb Zahn: That's right. I know when you work in the health care space, it also matters in terms of their ability to deliver patient care, which relates to their ability to generate revenue and everything else, and if they make poor decisions at the beginning, they have to live with those and it's going to limit them if they didn't make wise ones.

Marisa Manley: Well, absolutely. And again, depending on the size of the organization, I mean we've worked with not-for-profits, Deb, whose revenue is just a few million dollars a year. And when you're in that capacity, if you make the wrong real estate decision, you're really talking about being able to serve fewer patients or otherwise really having a very strong effect on operations. So, the real estate process requires careful consideration and a good process.

So let's go to your question about when we're in that type of a process I described, 18 months, kind of long, a lot of moving pieces, how do we help the client bring that in on time and on budget? And I think no surprise here, the major, major key strategy tool always is communication, and communication starts with clarity of objective and clarity of scope.

And let's just step back for a minute, because a typical client is not monolithic. So let's take even a small not-for-profit. The client might consist of the leadership team, but also the staff, let's say the healthcare professionals who are actually delivering care, and also the board. And at some level, each of those

entities perspectives, if you will, within the organization has to be satisfied even though there may be one ostensible decision maker.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Marisa Manley: And one of our roles is to get each of these elements within the client to be able to articulate their needs, to understand what the decision-making process is going to be, and then, frankly, to keep them to that process.

And what do I mean by that? Let's say you have a Board [of Directors] that is a, let's call it a dive bomb Board. They sometimes think they're there to make the day to day decisions, supplanting their leadership team, and other times you can't get them together for a meeting.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Marisa Manley: And if you have that situation, right away you're starting a project knowing you are at risk for going way off the timeline and way off the budget. So it is...

Deb Zahn: So let...

Marisa Manley: Go ahead.

Deb Zahn: So let me ask you about that because that's what you just described as common for a lot of different types of consulting. So what do you do before you even sign a contract when you're initially talking with a client prior to the engagement to try and set it on the best path possible?

Marisa Manley: Well, we're very explicit about those issues and what the roles of the different...We're going to talk openly about it. It doesn't mean we're going to change their behavior as an organization, but it does mean we're going to talk openly about what's the role of the Board, what's the role of whether it's the COO, CEO, who is the day-to-day leadership most likely for the project because we tend to work with the C-suite, and what input are we going to get from others in the organization? We need knowledge from every level in the organization, but it can't be a committee decision where there are 16 people who are going to sign off. So we're very, very clear with clients about what structures work and what structures don't.

We also, Deb, walk clients through the type of documents we use and tools we give them to help them make decisions, and one of the things we insist on early on is a statement of objectives. And if it's a site search, we have a statement of site selection criteria, and everything is articulated, the client signs off, and we always say to the client, "This is your job. You're completely free to change your mind at any time, but if you do change your mind, it means that it's going to take more time. It's going to add cost to the project."

We also, Deb, are very, very explicit about talking with clients initially in our world that there are always going to be bumps in the road.

Deb Zahn: Right.

Marisa Manley: And we're going to lay out a process, and we've got milestones and we've got dates and we've got budgets, but we will tell our clients that there are going to be bumps in the road and here's how we're going to deal with those, and part of that is having a contingency in the budget. Part of that may be saying, "OK, we're going to keep you operational throughout this 10-month construction period and if something happens and we can't, how do we double up? How do we do this?"

So, we need to let the client know that there are likely to be bumps in the road and also that we have solutions and ways to manage those problems. But I think it is so important to have that dialogue up front and to give them examples of what can go wrong. But it's very, very important, Deb, that the client understands their role.

Deb Zahn: Right. Well and the managing client expectations is...I mean, everything you're describing, that's a huge piece of it. I really like how you have written artifacts that essentially spell out the criteria and then that gives you something to manage against, as opposed to what often happens in client conversations where people sit around the room and then they walk out and other things happen in their lives and they don't remember what you talked about.

So that's an important piece, and how do you use those then? So if you have a client and you've agreed to these, you've said this is the expectation, here's the criteria by which we're going to make decisions, then how on a day-to-day basis do you use that to help keep them on track? Because I know there can be drift, because of course there is, they have lots of other things happening.

Marisa Manley: Absolutely. So again, no magic here, pretty straight forward, but it has to be done rigorously. So on a typical project of the kind I discussed, we're probably going to have biweekly project team meetings, and those biweekly project team meetings are going to have an agenda of course, and every meeting is going to be followed up with meeting minutes and specifically with action items. And so, we like to make it very simple for people. So the action items are probably going to be a table, right? You don't have to search through the minutes to find out who's doing what.

Deb Zahn: Right, right.

Marisa Manley:

It's an addition to the minutes where you can just look at a little picture and it tells you what the item is, who's responsible, what the delivery date is, and the next meeting starts with a review. And if something wasn't delivered, why not?

And not why not in the sense of give us an excuse, but why not in the case of how does it affect what we're doing today? Do we need to give you something else? Another thing I want to emphasize, Deb, in our world we build project teams. So again, the project team is going to have certain members from the client, it's going to have perhaps probably an architect, it will have at some point a general contractor most likely, and then there might be from time to time, maybe an environmental consultant is part of the team. Maybe the furniture consultant is part of the team, or the equipment vendor, or the IT.

So there's a core team, and again, the important thing is that we really look to have everybody be part of the team. Not a minion who's just doing stuff. We really try to select, again, different entities that have a different level of importance in most projects, but with each one we try to select people who are really committed to an objective, understand how to work systematically through a process. Sometimes you have to shoot from the hip, but most of the time we need to be working systematically through a process, and being willing to speak up, give their opinions and participate in the give and flow.

That's why it's important when we do team meetings and again, seems like kind of a banal thing, but we really try to schedule those meetings first of all, so that people who need to participate can have a time, they can come in, they can do what they need to do and then they can move on.

Part of that is what it takes to make a meeting successful. If you invite somebody to come to a meeting and they have to sit there for three hours to talk for five minutes about why the light fixtures are still on a truck from Virginia instead of being on the site, that's not a very successful experience for them. If they get to come in at a certain point on the agenda and say, "Here's what's going on, here's the solution, here's how I propose to handle it," and there's a 12-minute discussion and they can move on with the rest of their day, you get a lot more buy in for the process.

And also the client sees, "OK, these people came, they made a commitment." We understand we've got to go up the line now and get another \$7,000, or tell the operating group that they're going to be two weeks away of getting into their space.

So you really create an environment by the way the process is managed that encourages people both to communicate openly, to respect the other people on the team, even though they may not be there for the full duration, and to honor their commitments.

Deb Zahn: So this for some folks, particularly because these will be folks from the client, these will be folks from, as you said, companies or solo practitioners who don't work for you.

Marisa Manley: Right.

Deb Zahn: And so, I would imagine for some of them that this is a whole different world of working, and it may be very different than the culture that they're used to. So I absolutely love where you're trying to get them to, and certainly have seen this with managing other types of teams. How do you get them used to this new way of working?

Marisa Manley: Yeah. So that's great, because at one point we had a client who wanted to use a particular GC, General Contractor. We understood they wanted to use somebody local. The contractor didn't really have the experience of working in larger, more complex teams, and hadn't addressed issues like this. So that was a particular example where we really had to bring them along in terms of how does this process work, what kind of information is going to be expected from you that you may have never produced for a client before, because it wasn't a black box bid, it was very much an open book. And so the answer is, first of all you've got to have good people. If you're a solo consultant you've got to do it yourself, or you've got to have good people on your team who can interact with the, let's say, less experienced vendor and bring them into the process. And again, there's a lot that can be done, Deb, with meeting minutes, action items, and follow up, follow up, follow up. Just don't let it slip.

Deb Zahn: That's right. It becomes unavoidable, this new way of working.

Marisa Manley: Yeah, and if somebody is not performing, I think it's very important, again, with the mindset of once the team has been formed, we want the team to work. We've kicked people off teams, we've let GCs go, but you don't want to switch horses in the middle of the river if you can avoid it. Right? So the mindset is always, "How do you make it work?" And I think it's important then if somebody's slipping, if they're not meeting their deadlines, if the onsite project manager is careless and gives bad information, it's important to have that conversation.

Deb Zahn: That's great. How does that work when things change? So I imagine in any type of complex project, and I've seen this, timeline changes, budget changes, deliverables maybe even change, based on all the different folks that are involved in it. How do you manage that so that again, everything stays on track, but the client always sees that you're going to get them where they want to get to?

Marisa Manley:

So I think the answer is different depending on the reason for the change. So for instance, major construction project, we had a timeline and we had a budget, and two things that were very significant happened. The project was a healthcare facility being built in a residential area. We felt that based on the initial engineering reports there were going to be no problems with the site, the site work itself, digging the foundation. Lo and behold, when we started digging the foundation, we found out there had been an old school on the site and there was a lot of heavy, heavy construction debris. Imagine a school building versus a house on a site. A house is framed construction. It's match sticks, you pick it up. Brick and concrete, it's harder to make it go away, and it took more time. So we had a budget and a timeline issue. There, we had it in the contingency. Right? So that's one of the things you build in for.

Another thing happened. It was several years ago. One of those very, very cold winters that we had and we just could not do some of the work on schedule. So there, we talked with the client. "OK, we thought we were going to be able to deliver in May. It looks like it's going to be June or July. How do we help you maintain your operations so that you can continue to see patients in the existing facility, and then how is that going to affect budget?" And yes, there was a modest effect on budget because we had to continue certain trades that have been mobilized, but we didn't have the full load that we would have had during those winter months. So again, it's a matter of communication. It's a matter of having solutions.

Now, we have another situation where, let's just make it brief. The client had signed off on a design. Then the client went to somebody else in their organization and said, "Hey, what do you think of this?" And this was months after they signed off, and that person said, "Oh no, no, no. You really ought to do this, that, and the other thing," which resulted in a roughly 20% increase in the space they wanted.

So we said to the client, "Absolutely, we will be happy to do this for you, and here's the effect." And so the client had to look at the timing, because we literally had to go from one location to another. Fortunately, we were able to accommodate within the same building. Fortunately, we haven't started construction. We'll go back to the building owner, we'll tell them why we're giving them such a good deal in terms of making this change, and we'll try to negotiate some savings for you compared to what you would've had in the smaller facility, but there is still going to be additional cost for redesign or additional management.

So again, there's no magic answer, Deb, but I think it can come back again and again to communication. It was very clear to the client that they had signed off on the previous design.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I think the other thing is you're not shielding them or hiding the consequences of the choices that they're making or the tradeoffs related to those choices. And I think that's, again, whether it's construction or somebody trying to redesign their operations or whatever it is, there's always trade offs and there's always consequences to any choice that you make, and I've seen other consultants who tend more towards, "Yes, yeah, we can do anything," gloss over that, and then there's surprises for the client when the timeline's blown, the budget's blown, etc.

So I like this specific way that you're communicating, which is complete clarity about, "Here's what can be done. Here's what can't be. Here are the implications of that. Here're some potential solutions for you." So it is this very robust communication about everything they need to actually make a decision that's as informed as possible.

Marisa Manley: Yeah, and I'll say a critically important part of that, Deb, what you said is the open communication is that it builds trust. Because clients can know, OK if there's a mistake, we're always again, we're very upfront with our clients. We always tell them, "We've had a lot of projects that are very successful. Some not so much. When that happens, we really try to learn from it, and we're going to let you know. We don't hide bad news, we figure out how to create solutions."

And that's very important in terms of we have been fortunate, Deb, to keep clients for 20 years and longer even as they move from organization to organization, and I'll say it comes back to the trust factor. We're highly competent, of course. We deliver what we say we're going to deliver, and the clients know that they're going to get a straight story from us. And it's part of that robust communication.

Now I'll say one other thing and then we can move on. So it gets back to who is the client. Well, the client is the institution, but let's say we're working most closely with the C suite, and so they ultimately have to deliver that message let's say to the board, and we make it easy for them to do that. Often we will be at the board meetings and make a presentation, so to that extent we can take some heat off the CEO or the COO, but we always make sure our clients have all the data that they need to present bad news, if it is, to the board. And that's another thing that builds that trust.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Well, and trust based on real relationships, because what you're describing is not you make everything work for them and you never give them bad news. That the trust is being straight with them, and I think for a lot of new consultants in particular, that's new. That's different than what they might be thinking consultants do, which is only make people happy all the time, where the reality is they just want to know that you want the best outcome for them, and sometimes that means you have to deliver bad news to them.

Marisa Manley: Again, we start with that at the very beginning. At the first meeting we have with a prospective client, we talk with them about what a process is like. We talk with them about different types of outcomes that might be possible for them, and we absolutely a hundred percent let them know real estate is a complex, tricky world and there are very likely to be bumps in the road.

Deb Zahn: That's great. So if you were advising sort of another consultant working with a client on any type of complex arrangement, whether it's real estate or other, what would you tell another consultant to never do with a client?

Marisa Manley: Well, I would turn it around. I would say always be honest. That's key. I mean, that's key for the consultant personally, I believe. It's key for the relationship with the client. It's something that I will say we regard ourselves as fiduciaries for our client. It's something that is owed to the client. And if you made a mistake and said, "You know what, we didn't have this line item, or we had an error." Sometimes you're human, but I would say the first thing I would tell a consultant is be honest.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Yeah, that'll get you a long way. And I've found that, because I've certainly made mistakes, clients know you're human and as long as it doesn't destroy their world, they're generally pretty understanding about it, just as you are when they make a mistake.

Marisa Manley: Yeah. Come in with a solution, but be honest.

Deb Zahn: That's great. So any last words of wisdom you want to say about how to manage projects on time, on budget to the degree that they can be?

Marisa Manley: I think we've covered a lot of it. I would say so with the communication, make sure you've got the items that will support that. Whether it's a visual timeline you're going to show, the biweekly meeting is very, very important. So communicate and show it.

Deb Zahn: Yeah, exactly. Don't just tell but put it in front of them so all kinds of learners can actually see it and grasp it. I love that.

Marisa Manley: Yeah. And I guess to that, I would add, again in these complex projects, most likely they're going to be audiences for the decisions, for the materials, that you as the consultant do not come into direct contact with. So when you're preparing your documents, whether it's a simple memo, consider that it's going to be seen by somebody else who may not have all the context, so make the document, the timeline, the PowerPoint, whatever it is, accessible and meaningful to that audience as well.

Deb Zahn: That's right. In which case, that's where you may need to ask your clients who's going to see it so that you can adapt it accordingly. And then the other piece I always tell folks is, "If you leave blanks in people's knowledge and understanding, most people will try and fill it in and they won't fill it in with what you want them to, so don't give them that opportunity. Fill it in for them. Tell them a complete story that they need to hear in order to make decisions or understand it."

Marisa Manley: Absolutely. Very good.

Deb Zahn: So, you obviously have a lot of happy clients out there, as you've said, who've worked with you for decades. How do you take those great engagements and happy clients that you have and leverage that to build your business? Because I know you do some things very deliberately and very well to do that.

Marisa Manley: So Deb, I think part of what we've been able to do is stay engaged with the client, give them information that's useful. You and I have talked about the fact that we like to use case studies. So we will write up something about a project, a solution, a challenge that is absolutely respectful of the client's confidentiality.

Actually, we'll have a writer interview the client and talk to the client about what was important to the client about project, so generally what happens is not what we pick, but actually what the client has picked. And then after that's done, obviously the client looks at it again and says, yeah, they're comfortable with that. And that becomes then, yes, it's a way that people can get to know us by seeing the case studies and seeing how we've worked with others, but it's also educational for the prospective client or anybody else who's looking at it to say, "Ah, I didn't realize that could happen. Ah, I didn't know that was so important."

So the case studies for us serve multiple purposes and that's a very good way, and most clients, again, we always preserve confidentiality, like to be able to tell their story and share their experience because often these complex projects are significant in the life of the individual who's handling it.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Marisa Manley: They're significant for the entity, and that's something that people are interested in letting others know about.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. And if their world was made better by you working with them, I find clients want to share that.

Yeah, I'll have a link to your website on my show notes because I think it's worth folks taking a look at how you do it. I stumbled across them actually a few years

ago and thought that they were so good, I shared them with someone who was creating some and said, "No, no, no, they should look like this."

Marisa Manley: Thank you. Good, I'm glad they were useful.

Deb Zahn: But yeah, and they had heart too, which is the other thing. Which I'm now not surprised that you said that you interview the clients to get their perspective and their thoughts and feelings, because that came across and it made them qualitatively different than some of the dry, boring ones I've seen.

Marisa Manley: Yeah, and actually the thing I'd add is we have a third-party writer do the interview so that the client is free to say, "This didn't work so well or here's what we really like," and I think that's an important part of how the voice comes across.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that's wonderful. So do you have any advice for accomplished professionals who are out in the world and they're looking at becoming consultants and trying to figure out how to establish and grow their business over time? Any advice that you would give them as they're just starting out?

Marisa Manley: Yeah, I think there are two things I would say, Deb. And this is really the business part of running a business. So first of all, be sure there's a need, and if you're competent, you've been out there for a while, you should be able to find that because there's so many niches and so many ways to do something that you really like to do and fill that need that some other entity or organization has.

And then as a consultant, I think it's really important to be mindful. Most consultants are going to be project based, and what tends to happen is that the consultant spent a lot of time selling and then you've sold that project, and now you're busy, busy, busy on the project and you're not bringing in new business, so there's a valley and a peak, valley and a peak, valley and a peak. So really from a business standpoint, I think it's important for anybody who's engaged in project work to understand that part of the business, if you're going to be viable and be able to provide those good services, is to allow some good time to be out there talking to clients and keeping business coming in so you avoid that peak, trough, peak, trough cycle.

Deb Zahn: Yeah, or the feast and famine as folks also refer to it, is you always want to have somebody. So, that's great advice.

And yeah, I've seen the same thing where you work, you work, you work, you work to get clients. You've got clients and then you dive into it because you're so excited to finally be offering value to folks, but you need to pay attention to what you're going to be doing the rest of the year and beyond, as well. That's great.

Marisa Manley: Right. That's the business side, right? It just is.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful. So let me ask you a last question. I ask everybody this because I do think having life balance is so important, and work excites us, we love it, but it's only part of our life. So what do you do to create balance in your life?

Marisa Manley: I'm not sure balance is exactly the word. So Deb, I happen to live in Connecticut, and I think Connecticut is a great state. It's beautiful, they're wonderful people, and it's got all kinds of good things, but we've got some terrible, terrible fiscal problems. People are leaving the state.

So during the 2018 election cycle, I ran for Governor of Connecticut as an independent candidate, and that was really putting together a team, we had to get people from elsewhere around the country, and it was going around the state and talking to a lot of people about why Connecticut's great and what we need to change to keep people here. We didn't get as far as we'd like, but it was a great experience and a good opportunity I think to share ideas. And so, I'm continuing to work on that by developing strategies that I think would be useful for some of the reforms we need here.

Deb Zahn: Oh, great.

Marisa Manley: Right now, that's a very low key activity for me. Primarily some writing and some speaking. So, that's one thing that I do.

Another thing that I'm involved with now, and it sounds very Connecticut, which is not typical for me. But there's called the Run 169 Towns Society. There are 169 towns and cities in the state, and the goal is to run a race, a timed published race in every town or city in the state. So many weekends I get in my car and I drive to some tiny little town I've never heard of and would have never gone to, and there are a whole bunch of people doing the same thing so you're meeting people from around the state. You're running a race, you're having some conversation, and so that's a lot of fun.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that sounds great.

Marisa Manley: So, there are 169. I started last October. I'm approaching 40, so I figure that's about a four-year project.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and it's a project with a very clear goal. I love how you picked something complex just like your work life, which tells you something. But that's wonderful.

Yeah, I work a whole lot in Connecticut. I love the folks there. It's a great state.

Marisa Manley: It really is. And then the final thing is that we've always had cats. We lost a cat recently, so last weekend we got two cats from a shelter and now we are up late at night trying to help these little folks to be comfortable.

Deb Zahn: Well, you know you're talking to a cat rescuer, so I wish we had scheduled this earlier because I've got three kittens in my guest room that need homes.

Marisa Manley: Oh, we just got them last weekend.

Deb Zahn: Aw shucks. I should have asked you!

Marisa Manley: Two little boys. OK.

Deb Zahn: But that's, I mean again, doing animal rescue and things like that are partly how I bring balance to my life because it's a whole different pace, you have to focus on different things, and I keep having to work in new states so I can find more homes for them.

Marisa Manley: There you go. Right? Indeed. A good strategy.

Deb Zahn: Well Marissa, I want to thank you so much for this. This was really helpful and I think for a lot of new consultants, you spelled out some of the things that they need to be doing once they get a project. Getting a project, that's its own thing, but once you actually start doing it, now you've got to pay attention to all of the things to manage the engagement itself and manage expectations, so you added a lot of great value to that. So, thank you so much.

Marisa Manley: Deb, I'm glad we had a chance to talk.

Deb Zahn: Thank you.

Thank you so much for listening to Episode 22 of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. I have a lot of other terrific guests that are going to be coming on, so definitely hit subscribe so you don't miss anything. And also if you want to, I'd love to have you review the podcast and leave me any comments. Leave an honest review. I definitely want to hear what you think about it.

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So thanks again, and I will talk with you next time. Bye-bye.