

# The Art of Engineering with Denise McIntosh

Episode 005: Michele Bridges, Executive Trainer with [The Great Game of Business](#)

Denise speaks with [Michele Bridges](#) about her work in the medical sales market and how she is able to take difficult concepts and make them easy to understand. Michele also discusses “The Great Game”, and explains how involving every staff member in an organization in making decisions and having accountability on every level has transformed the companies she’s worked with and has helped them grow their profits.

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, welcome, Michele Bridges. This is an honor to have you on today because Custom Powder Systems has recently re-upped playing The Great Game of business. And I got introduced to Michele via a podcast during the COVID lockdown, where she, a coach for The Great Game, was talking about how we're dealing with business during the COVID. So welcome, Michele.*

**Michele Bridges** *Hi, Denise. Thank you so much for letting me be here. This is a treat for me, coming to you from my basement.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, a little background about Michele, because we both live in Springfield, Missouri, we didn't even know that, and we're neighbors. But you have a degree in communication. And we have similar paths in our first lives of careers being in sales territory. So I'd like to hear about yours.*

**Michele Bridges** *My career path was kind of crazy because, when I started out in school, I was not an epic student. I mean, I'm going to be real honest about that. I had a lot of fun in college. And, it's, I went in and I was going to be a business major, and I took accounting, and that threw me into the arms of communication very quickly because accounting terrified me. So I ended up in communications, considered broadcasting, and then just ended up in sales. I mean, if that makes sense.*

*And I sold long distance service right out of college, and then ended up in pharmaceutical sales back when they were going from hiring pharmacists, and nurses, and registered dieticians into hiring people that had communications backgrounds. So I came in at an interesting time in pharmaceuticals because the marketing arm was changing, and they were needing communicators. So it was a tough transition because the people who had the medical backgrounds were wondering what we were doing coming in being able to talk. But over twenty years, I've worn them down.*

**Denise McIntosh** *I imagine you could do that.*

**Michele Bridges** *It took twenty years. But over twenty years, I eventually wore them down.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, it's interesting that you say that because, we, it's even more similar for us. I was in the agriculture field, but I have a degree in economics. I understood the numbers, and, so, I was in the plant food business, not an agronomist.*

**Michele Bridges** *Okay.*

**Denise McIntosh** *So I could, I was not a true sales person. But what I figured out very quickly was that I could be the best assistant buyer they had.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yes.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Because I understood the supply and demand. And in agriculture, it is all about supply and demand. And I probably drove some of my bosses crazy because I was more looking at what's the supply, what's the, you know, what's the crop forecast, what's going on in the international markets. So I, yes, I really, I was an assistant buyer.*

**Michele Bridges** *The thing that I found is that, as I went into this, I was learning subjects that I did not broach in college, and I had to take on learning by breaking things down into very fundamental pieces. So I found out early on that I was able to take super complicated things and break them down into easily-understood concepts. Now, I took for granted, I thought everybody did that. I mean, if I could do it, my self-concept was not strong enough that I was like, "Well, if I can do that, everyone can do that."*

*But I found over time I was really able to break really hard things down to where anyone could understand it. And I think that's why I was able to wear my people down during pharmaceuticals, because I was asking them to teach me as much as I was going in and talking to them. So it became more of a partnership than it did me coming in and, like, "Here buy my stuff." It became more of a partnership, which was an interesting ride.*

**Denise McIntosh** *But those people looked forward to seeing us.*

**Michele Bridges** *I hope so, I hope so. I think, I mean, I think there were, sometimes they were like, "Oh my gosh, she's back." But I carried a lot of chocolate, so maybe that kind of buffered it a little.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes. So, you, I'm just really curious because I had some really wild things happen to me, and in agriculture, and being one of the few women, but what did you encounter as, I mean, I suppose there maybe were more women that you followed?*

**Michele Bridges** *No, no. I literally came in as the old guard was going out. So I had some women who came in front of me that started cleaning it up. And so I was able to come in on the cusp of some great women coming into the industry. There were still, there was still a low hanging disrespect, a doubt of my presence, if that makes sense? And so I did have to gently combat those kinds of biases as I would walk in. I am truly not a confrontational person, but there were times that I had to go face-to-face and confront some people who said some unflattering things. And that was hard. And I had to establish myself. I don't like thinking about the concept of being a salesperson. I want to be a partner.*

**Denise McIntosh** *A partner.*

**Michele Bridges** *A partner with people. And so a partnership means trust, it means communication, it means a mutual respect. And so if that respect is fractured in any way, we're not going to have a relationship. So there were times I had to confront people who were undermining what I was trying to establish. So it was easy at that time to write off people and say some unflattering things, you know what I'm saying? And I don't want to dignify them, but there were some confrontations that were difficult for me. But I did find some power in standing up and saying, "No, no." You know, "You can call me any name in the book. You know, I may not be the friendliest human being on the planet, but you're not going to say this, this, and this."*

**Denise McIntosh** *You know, of the most, I hadn't thought of this in years, but one of the most interesting things that happened to me in my sales role was being accosted by a very drunk customer, not my customer, but the company's customer in an elevator. Now, thank goodness he was drunk enough that I was quick enough to get away. But I had breakfast the next morning with my boss, and I said, "This is what happened. I have thought about this through the night, and I know that there is nothing you can do because he is a big customer, and it's my word against his. He's not even going to remember that it happened. But," I said, "I want you to be aware that this goes on in this industry and I need you to believe me."*

**Michele Bridges** *Oh, that is fantastic.*

**Denise McIntosh** *And he did. He did. And he said, "Thank you for coming to the conclusion that it would be very, very awkward to... I mean, we're a multi-national international company."*

**Michele Bridges** *I was blessed with, I had a sandwich experience as far as management in my pharma career. I had one boss who was very command and control, motivated by fear, not nurturing at all. I lived in fear during that in-between time. And then I had a very, I mean, great person, but very insecure in their position, at the end of it. But, in between, I had wildly protective managers. So I was never required to do night events, I was never required to entertain people outside of their office.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Oh, wow.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah. So, I mean, I would go in and I would do lunches and things like that, but I was never, my bosses did not want me in a position that I would be in trouble.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Interesting.*

**Michele Bridges** *Now, verbally, people, I would call them and say, "Listen, they just said this, this and this." And I had one boss who was kind of spicy. He's like, "You need me to drive down there?" And I'm like, "I got this." And, you know, that was empowering to me at that time. I didn't need anyone, but I needed to know that someone had my back*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, and yeah, I'm glad because the two bosses I had were raising daughters. I was older than they were, but they could see. Yes. Yes. So very supportive, which was one of the reasons I told. Because I said, "I'm just going to tell you that if I'm ever close to this individual again, I'm gonna depart. I will depart."*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah. And, I, there are so many women who have run into that. I get furious in the fact that they have been made to feel, you were made to feel, at a moment, vulnerable. But I love the fact that you chose, "I was quick enough. I was quick enough to get out of there." It is, when we feel that kind of vulnerability, it takes us out of our abilities and it puts us into survival. And I hate that.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes.*

**Michele Bridges** *I hate that.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, because, if we could really focus on our abilities ninety-five-plus percent of the time, wow, what could we become?*

**Michele Bridges** *Okay, that is an awesome question. Because we are taken off of our game. There are times that, as women, we are taken off of our game because we are also mothers, we are also daughters, we are nurturers. I think, overall, the majority of the women I know, we are nurturers. We are. And because of that nurturing spirit, because of that, we sometimes undermine our abilities. We are put into boxes that, "Oh, it's just..."*

*I know in my classes, there are a lot of my classes that I teach right now, that we have to remove four words. I ban four words from our lexicon. "But." We take "but" out because "but" is an eraser. "But" is the magic eraser of any kind thing that you say. "However" is the Ivy League version of "but." It is, "Well, however..." It is the Ivy League version of it. That when you say, you can say, "Hey, Denise, you did great on this, but..." That I got to learn.*

*There was a wonderful client of mine, Tom Bagwell, and he's just a phenomenal human being. And he told me, "You take 'but' out, you take 'however' out, and you take 'just.'" You have to remove the word "just" because "just" moves a person from their power into a weakened position. It is, you're literally transporting them like you're on Star Trek. They transport, and they move into a corner that they have to fight out of. So instead of owning their space, they're fighting out of this corner that you put them into. And then we also remove "they." There is no "they", every "they" has a name. I'm done with that.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes. Who are "they"?*

**Michele Bridges** *Who are "they"? Come on, "they", come out of that "just" corner. But we remove "they" from conversations because as soon as you see a face and a name, then all of a sudden you have a deeper understanding of who it is that you're dealing with. And I think that that is empowering, you know, truth. There's no downside to truth. It can hurt, but there's no downside to it.*

**Denise McIntosh** *So I'm very curious now about how you transitioned from, because you are a communicator, Dear, how you transitioned from helping people buy things to coaching. Because that podcast I saw was like, I have to know this woman.*

**Michele Bridges** *Well, thank you. I was, I know that in the pharmaceutical industry, they're famous for a few things. And one thing is they do amazing purges. I mean, is, with, they change on a dime. In dark corners of corporate America they put forth a*

*strategy and then suddenly an entire salesforce is called on a Wednesday night, and told to be at their desk on a Thursday morning, and they'll let you know if you still have a job. No, I mean, there were clues beforehand, but no indication. So my entire team, and we were one of the top teams in the United States, we had this well-oiled machine of people. We were friends, we were close, we had all had twenty plus years except for a few people. By the end of the day, that crazy day in March, all of us but three people were unemployed. And it was all of the twenty-year reps.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Wow.*

**Michele Bridges** *So yeah, so we were part of a purge. And, now, here's the blessing in that. The marketing was changing to an area that I was not comfortable with. And so I had just told my husband, "I don't like where this is going. I have always had complete confidence in what we were bringing to market, and why we were bringing it to market, and I'm not comfortable right now." We were going into an area that it was going away from relationships and into a different type of selling. I didn't want any part of that. So we, the old people blessed in the, well, okay, let me take that back. The old people that were in a position to hunker down, stay in, and figure out what they wanted to do. I cannot doubt that it was divine intervention.*

*It was in 2009, I was laid off, I was given an amazing severance package. So I got paid to stay home with my son, and my husband got his dream job at [SRC](#). So in 2009, I got to leave a job that was, like, shackled to me because you don't leave pharmaceutical jobs. You just don't. You are abundantly provided for to do a job that you may not love. So I would not be, I mean, I had a car, I carried our family's benefits. So...*

**Denise McIntosh** *All of that.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah. So, I mean, I was shackled to this job. So anyway, that ended, my husband went to work at SRC. Well, when the people at Great Games started hearing that a former pharma-trained person was in their house playing with Legos they started saying, "Hey, why don't you come to work for us?" And I'm like, "I have no clue what you do. No, I'm staying at home with my son." So in 2013, my son was thirteen years old. And, you know, I would periodically check in with him. "Do you think it's time for Mom to go back to work?" "No, we're still having fun." "Okay, cool." And in 2013, he comes flying in the garage.*

*Well, at that, I was getting rumblings of wanting to do something. Now, I knew I never wanted to touch sales again. Never. I knew that that wasn't going to happen. So then I was going through the crisis of belief on, "What can I do?" You know? And I was telling*

my husband, "Well, I guess I can do these jobs and these jobs." And he's like, "Would you just stop? Something's going to happen. Would you just stop? Because you're undermining what you can do." I mean, I had started seminary.

**Denise McIntosh** Oh.

**Michele Bridges** I had started in seminary, had to stop that. So it, because when I ended up getting purged, and so I knew that I wanted to be in something that I was teaching. I knew that I wanted to be in something that I was bringing something to people that would plant seeds of growth in them, that I could easily plant that, and then they would take that seed, nurture it, and explore it. So I didn't know what realm I wanted to go into. So I was in seminary, I stayed home, I was frustrated. You know, my son was 13. You know what happens with that.

So I'm defrosting the refrigerator, and the ice is kind of back, and my mascara's running down, and I'm, you know, kind of angry that day, and my son comes flying by, and he makes a smart aleck comment. And I looked at him, I go, "Listen, You. I used to have a real job. I used to leave this house. I used to do big stuff." And he grabs an ice cream bar, tilts his head, looks at me, he goes, "You are so precious when you're needy." He goes running out, and right then one of the VPs from Great Game called to talk to my husband, and the first thing he said is, "Are you ready to come to work for us?" And I said, "Yes. Yes, I am." So it was a crazy way for me to end up at Great Game.

**Denise McIntosh** So, tell us about The Great Game.

**Michele Bridges** Oh, The Great Game. Now my husband read the book, changed his world when he was in college, so he was a devotee. I had never read the book, so before I went in to interview with him, I'm like, "Fine. I'm finally going to read the book." I sat on my back porch and, in one day, consumed this book. And I sat there and I was hit with a wave of regret because I thought back to when I was in pharmaceuticals. And I thought, "If I would have known this, everything would have been different. If I would have been empowered with this knowledge back then, they wouldn't have needed a purge because we would have owned, we would have owned that company."

So I come in thinking, I walk into The Great Game thinking, "Oh, I can teach stuff." Alright, no. I go to the first basic financial literacy class, and I am dumber than a box of rocks because it is in a language I don't understand. They were speaking in numbers, and I went in and got intimidated by the numbers. And then I remembered what Jack said, "Numbers are stories about people." So I was like, "Oh, I can tell a story."

**Denise McIntosh** Yes.

**Michele Bridges** *So then the amazing team at Great Game allowed me to learn it the way I needed to learn it. So now I don't teach financial literacy, I teach stories. But those stories are based on numbers. Now, so I will tell you about the Great Game and why I will love this methodology 'til the day I'm done. We walk into an organization, and we do not focus on C-suite. If I do not touch every person in that company, then I feel like I failed because what we are doing is, we are carrying in, we are working with leaders who are so, they're so brave. They are so empowered, and they believe in the abilities of every person that walks in their company.*

*Now, how many companies have you worked with that people who work on the floor are cogs? "You're a cog." That is not how our leaders believe. Our leaders believe that every person in that organization is an owner, that they have the entrepreneurial spirit in them, and they have a profound ability to learn. I get to go teach people stuff they didn't know they wanted to know. I get to walk in, and I get to look at people who hated school, in some situations hated math, in some situations believed God made accountants for a reason, and they never have to touch that. And we teach them these concepts, and suddenly these financial concepts are going home.*

**Denise McIntosh** *And we don't have to call it accounting.*

**Michele Bridges** *No, we don't. We don't have to call it accounting. But every, okay, what is the number one stressor families have right now?*

**Denise McIntosh** *It's finance.*

**Michele Bridges** *It's cash. I mean, Dave Ramsey says that the one thing that we have to be aware of is: people who don't understand money end up giving their money to people that do. So when I walk into an organization, my people do understand, and they are going to take their money, and they're going to invest in their lives, and they are going to build their quality of life at home and at work. And so if The Great Game gives us a structure to walk in and educate people, how they can feel an ownership mentality, whether they own the company or not, it's an intrinsic ownership. And when you have an intrinsic ownership at the job that you do, what kind of energy does that give you?*

**Denise McIntosh** *It's amazing. I mean, we have just restarted this, and I'll go back a little bit, because we build custom-designed equipment for food, pharmaceutical, chemical, and what we realized over the years, because this equipment gets more and more complex, and the process has to get more complex.*



**Michele Bridges** Yes.

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, one of the things that we missed along the way were how much time and money we were spending in engineering. And we had engineering in GS&A rather than its own work center. So the whole idea of moving those engineering, and the onsite activities, and the documentation, and all of that to its own work center so that we could actually track it, and we could actually figure out how to charge for it without giving it away, has just been a revelation. And what a great concept to play The Game with when you have all those pieces. So yes, we have people jumping in with both feet. It's just, it's fun.*

**Michele Bridges** *It is so, I think my favorite moments, and the thing, my husband has had to deal with me being very grumpy lately because I'm home in my basement. I'm not in the middle of my people while they're learning and getting to watch. I get to watch their faces when all of a sudden something makes sense. And I get to watch them get excited when they put out an idea and everyone's like, "We didn't even think about that. That is so awesome." Because the people that touch the process are the expert.*

**Denise McIntosh** Yes.

**Michele Bridges** *When we take away that intrinsic ownership of that person touching that process, we're taking away their creativity, we're taking away their innovation. If we have a company full of innovators, can you actually stop that company? No.*

**Denise McIntosh** No, no.

**Michele Bridges** *So I, what has excited me, during COVID there have been moments of just sheer bliss. And it has been talking to my clients who have sent me emails, and I have listened to them being interviewed. Did you see the podcast with Hook and Ladder?*

**Denise McIntosh** Yes.

**Michele Bridges** *Oh, I have never been, I mean, I'm sitting, listening to Caleb and Tony and I'm crying because they were one of mine.*

**Denise McIntosh** *I knew that.*

**Michele Bridges** *I got to work with their coach, Katherine, and I got to go in and help teach too. And them saying that putting The Great Game in place before this happened is why they are still able to do what they do... We've heard stories out of Tasty Catering, that amazing company out of Chicago, who, because of The Great Game, their entire team looked at what they were facing, they decided that everyone collectively volunteered to cut their hours back so more people could stay on, and then they started innovating ideas on, "How are we going to continue to bring in revenue?" So they started driving around Chicago, looking at the parking lots who were essential, and allowing their marketing team to call and say, "Hey, we know you're locked in there. Can we pre-package some meals for you and bring them in so you can keep doing what you do?"*

**Denise McIntosh** *That was such a great story. Along with following other catering trucks to see where they were going. I love that one.*

**Michele Bridges** *I know that this is empowering your frontline people to own their space. That is what I am working... Okay, we go in, and the first group we work with as a design team, and it is a cross-functional group that we bring together. It's not just the leadership. It is a cross-functional group that we teach The Game so we're able to touch more people as we're teaching this. How fun is it to watch this stretch through an organization and start hearing their biggest problem is, "We have too many mini-games going on right now. Is this too much?" Yeah, no, no, you're good. You're good.*

*We've needed this. We have needed to know that our methodology, that has been around since 1983 and was not created in an academic think tank, it was created on a shop floor with a bunch of people who were working with the company that they just bought to save their jobs, and they created this so they could keep having a little bit of fun, keep having a sense of humor, and save this company.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, and you know, I think about that because we are going through an unprecedented time right now. I mean, we have probably the lowest booking numbers we've seen, maybe since we've been in business. I haven't checked that completely, and it's not that we're losing business because people... It was interesting, when this first started, we were talking to engineers who were finally getting to work on projects that they wanted to, you know, push past the line, you know, get to us. Well, somewhere along the way, it got to the CFOs and the money people, and they're going, "Wait a minute. We don't know if we can do this."*

*So I will tell you that having The Great Game say, "Look out those thirteen weeks, figure out how you're going to take care of the next thirteen weeks, and what you're going to*

*do with your people, and what you, you know, what this looks like. Look out that far.” Well, that was the ticket because it was like, “Okay, okay. We may not be able to get together in a room to do this, but we can jump on Microsoft Teams and we’re going to talk about this.” And we’re talking about it every day at two o’clock.*

**Michele Bridges** *Oh, and having that natural huddle rhythm, having that communication, and knowing that you have the freedom to look out that far and not feel closed in today. I, my heart hurts for the companies who are thinking about today and right now with no vision for their path going forward. That’s where my heart hurts right now, for the people who are just absolutely trying to survive today. That’s crushing.*

*So it has been really fun. It has been really fun to hear about my companies who have looked out that far. So, who are able to capture these moments to take on the, “If we only had time, we would do this.” We have companies who are spending their time with their people who are furloughed doing cross-functional training, cleaning out warehouses. I mean, they’re bringing people in to get their inventory straight, and get their warehouses straight, and they’re utilizing their people to create their environment for when everything comes back, “We’re good to go.” So, you know, a lot of restaurants, they’re like, “We’re not laying our people off. We’re going to keep paying them because the second our doors open, we don’t want to have to retrain people.”*

**Denise McIntosh** *It’s still hard.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah, I mean, can you imagine stumbling to start getting back? How terrifying is that?*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes. It’s like trying to find engineers. Or, it’s like trying to find master craftsman fabricators and polishers because they aren’t on every corner. And even some of those don’t understand the kinds of finishes that are required for pharmaceutical equipment. I mean, you’ve been in those places, they need to look like a mirror.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah, they do. Okay, so when you’re talking about your master craftsman, when you’re talking about these people who their job is their art, this is the time that they need to be mentoring people. This is the time that they need to be handing down their craft. Have we given them time to do that? With The Great Game, we enable these artists to share their craft, to be open with the way that they do things. We, when you plant the seed of entrepreneurialism of business ownership, an owner wants to share what they do. They don’t want to keep it hidden because it’s theirs and*

*they don't want to share it. So we want to increase that innovation. We want to increase people owning their space and being proud to show what they do.*

**Denise McIntosh** *So I have a great example of that, Michele. We have two young men, and we build a lot of what are considered intermediate bulk containers. So if you can imagine, in a facility like Mead Johnson, there are big, big bins of materials that go into a mixture to make whatever the final product is. We build those pieces of equipment. So we have two young men who work close to each other, and they're building some bins for one of our pharmaceutical companies, and one of our owners came, just in a conversation, said, "You need to go out on the shop floor because there are two young men who have built two of the best bins we've ever seen."*

*So, and there's more to the story. So I go out and I say, "You know, I understand that, you know, these two are..." and they were far enough apart. I visited with both of them, grins from ear to ear, it was just fun. So the rest of the story is, "So these look so good when they've been welded that the polishing is, it doesn't require a lot." So what The Game brings is that you get to look at the whole picture. You get to look at the hours that were allocated for each work center and collaborate to say, "Wow, if we can teach the rest of the welding group to weld like these two young men, then those master craftsmen polishing people are the ones going, 'I want his because, man, that makes my job easier, and it makes the cleanup easier, and boom, they're out the door.'" Wow. It's that circle of information, that is, yes, it's magic.*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah, no silos. It breaks down silos. We have, we are able to focus people on a process. And so I think when people are threatened, I mean, I know when people are threatened they go inside and they just want to do their work. We want engaged employees who are willing to share and reach across boundaries to figure out how the process works better.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yeah.*

**Michele Bridges** *I mean, in an ideal world, in a perfect place, that is what we need. So it, and I think circling back to when I first came in, I know after the first time I went to a basic financial literacy class, and it was this language I did not understand, Darren walks in, and I'm crying, and I'm like, "I don't understand what they're saying." And he's like, "Honey, it'll come. It'll come." And it has.*

**Denise McIntosh** *And now you teach it.*

**Michele Bridges** *Well, okay, but basic, basic. It's so funny because I'll have people and, I mean, I've got the basic now, I got, I jam on this. There are some questions that I'm looking at going, "Yeah, can't touch that." But luckily I work with brilliant people, so I am able to, via text, get answers.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes.*

**Michele Bridges** *The fun thing is watching. I'm working with two companies right now who are really just wanting to enhance their mini-game. So they're really wanting to bring it to a higher level of mini-game. And we're really focusing on bringing everybody in to understand not the accounting process, but to understand where they touch the number so they can watch it go up and down. That's all we need. A number is a placeholder for attitudes, actions, and behaviors. That's it.*

*So, you know, we are digging down deep into, "Are you managing your time cards effectively? Are your different divisions communicate?" You know, there are foundational things that you have to start. We start on covering a lot. When you play with an income statement, you learn a lot of stories if you dig. But those stories are telling you what your weak points are, and those are your opportunities to grow. How fun when everyone's looking at the same thing? Yeah.*

**Denise McIntosh** *So I'm curious what all different kinds of companies have you worked with?*

**Michele Bridges** *Just about, okay, catering, manufacturing, lots of service, vet clinics, which is awesome cause there's puppies there. Yeah, so I can go, I'm like, "Okay, I need a break. There's a puppy right there that I need to touch." Different food industry, within a food industry, I have trained in beautiful churches with stained glass windows. I have also trained in open, cold warehouses in Boston during the winter when we had to wear our coats to do it because that was the only place that we could house everybody. Spent a lot of time in Canada, which is awesome. Electricians.*

*Here's what's beautiful. We fit anywhere. The Great Game of business is not just about manufacturing. We touch any industry you want to put our structure into. We give everyone a structure to just open up and start sharing the numbers. And, but you share it, if you get stuck on the metrics, you lose a strategy. So it is not just sharing the numbers. If you get stuck on, "This is the number we have to meet this number, blah, blah, blah, blah," you lose the heart and you lose the spirit behind it. The number's a placeholder, that's it. So I can't stress that enough. If you stop telling stories, you lose*

*The Game. So The Game is about story, in my mind. Now I may get spanked for saying that, but I don't think so. We want people to keep telling their stories.*

*So I have worked with so many, I never know. I never know what I'm walking into, which is so cool. That is part of what has me grieving right now, is I just worked with this awesome company in Australia the other night, and we were on Zoom, and I couldn't hear a lot. I could hear their questions and things like that, but I missed out, and they are a super dynamic company, and fun, and I missed being in the room with them. So that's been the tough part. I'm grieving that because I was on the road every week. So it's, that's been the fun part. So long answer for a short question. There's, I don't think there are very many industries I haven't been in.*

**Denise McIntosh** *So here's a question that just came to me. Does The Great Game help women see other opportunities within their organizations?*

**Michele Bridges** *I will tell you that The Great Game has no bias. I mean, it is, The Great Game, we're telling stories about numbers and everyone touches a number. There is not, if you look, okay, let's go to an income statement. Gross margin, net profit. When you take an income statement, and you put the actions that drive that number, who drives revenue, who drives costs of goods, who touches expenses, everybody is listed. There is not one employee that does not touch that income statement. So if you touch it, you own it, Baby. If you touch it, you impact that number. So, if done the way The Game is supposed to be played, we're touching hearts and minds.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Yes.*

**Michele Bridges** *We are educating every, I mean, we are touching every level of every organization. If I am doing a full-team launch, it's full-team. Every person that touches that company is brought in, and there's no withholding. So, depending on the culture of the company, there's no holding back. And the thing that I love is I am seeing women empowered when we walk in because they're owning the process. They get to own this process. They get to determine how they touch this number. Their innovation, their ideas are coming out. So, now, a lot of times I walk in, and it's a heavy male-dominated, but they're not, I am handled with complete respect. I am an advisor to them. I am someone that they have chosen to bring in. So they empower me, and I see them empowering their people as well.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, that's interesting because it takes a degree of humility and, I can't think of the other word, to even say, "We're going to open the books. The numbers are what they are, and we're sharing them all. It's out there."*

**Michele Bridges** *Good, bad, and ugly.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Good, bad, and ugly. And, "If you know why we haven't had a broken bonus program, here's the reason,"*

**Michele Bridges** *This is why. I've got a story for you. I mentioned Tom Bagwell earlier. He was a client that I worked with in the very beginning of my career. He was transformational for me because I came into Great Game and I'm like, "Well, I know I can teach. I know I can teach. I know." So I was writing on what I knew. "I can do this. I can walk in and I can do this." Tom stopped me after I was done working with his group, and he goes, "May I give you some feedback?" And I said, "Yeah." And he goes, "You know you can be so much better." And I was like, "I really don't know how to respond to this." And he started sharing with me a lot of his journey. And his journey has been one from not being seen as a super nice, inclusive person to being one of the most magnetic, transformative leaders I've ever known.*

*And his journey came by becoming, and these are The Great Game. When we study The Great Game leaders, the ones who thrive in a Great Game atmosphere, they're vulnerable, they're humble. They have great courage and they're servant leaders. They want to make sure their people are taken care of, and then you build it up. But Tom came into Peterson, and they, he followed up with a leader who had lied, they were hemorrhaging money. And so Tom looked at it and he's like, "I can't do this by myself." So he brought The Great Game in. The people have been lied to for so long that the atmosphere of that organization was not good. So they walked in and they said, "Okay, guys, we're going to tell you the good, the bad, and the ugly." And we opened it up, and they were relieved. They loved Tom's leadership. And so instead of being angry that they had been lied to before, they looked at it, and they go, "You tell us how we can fix this."*

**Denise McIntosh** *"We came here for the ugly, now let us hear the good."*

**Michele Bridges** *And you have never been in a more fun atmosphere than you are when you walk in there because every single person owns their space. And they have their frontline people walking through all of the huddles, walking through all the numbers saying, "Here we are with this variance right now." And then they follow it up with, "What this means for you is..."*

**Denise McIntosh** *Story! Story!*

**Michele Bridges** *Yeah. Tell me that's not the coolest thing? I mean, I sat in the back of the room when I heard that and I was like, "Mic drop, I can quit today. My world is complete." Yeah. One group saying, "What this means for you is..." Yes.*

**Denise McIntosh** *Well, Michele, thank you for joining me today. And we need to keep The Great Game going, and we need to keep women factoring in all these spaces, and coaching, and all of this going together.*