



## **Michelle D. Coussens, Business Strategist**

Michelle Coussens is a frequently sought-after speaker and business strategist for numerous types of organizations on a wide range of topics related to the workplace, including but not limited to talent management, business strategy, and operational effectiveness. She is a resourceful, resilient, and relentless business professional with demonstrated success in building new programs, driving short-term efficiencies, and improving long-term effectiveness all through innovation, rigor, and courageous leadership. She has direct experience with a variety of industries, as well as in consulting, education, and not-for-profit organizations. With consistently high participant ratings, her webinars, seminars, and speaking engagements bring practical value to businesses of every size and type.

For over fifteen years, Ms. Coussens has owned and operated Plan B Consulting. Services span speaking, training, and organizational assistance in preparing strategic and business plans, project management, leadership, operational excellence, ethics, diversity and inclusion, and other related topics. In addition, she facilitates business meetings and retreats and conducts market analysis and competitive intelligence for various types of entrepreneurs and organizations worldwide. Since 2005, she has developed and taught courses for NeighborWorks® America, which provides funding and technical assistance to community development entities nationwide, including courses on strategic and business planning, organizational effectiveness, operational efficiency, and critical thinking for better results. Earlier in her career, she worked in various analytical roles and even performed and led actuarial analysis for a leading insurance carrier.

Michelle is on the faculty of the American Management Association where she teaches numerous different strategic planning, management, and analytical seminars to business professionals around the world and is also on the business faculty at College of DuPage. In addition, she develops and leads business education webinars for *Premier Learning Solutions*, *BusinessWatch Network*, *HR Morning*, *Business Management Research Associates, Inc.*, and *Progressive Women's Leadership*, as well as classes and webinars for attorneys and insurance professionals through the *Real Estate Institute*. To date, she has published more than 200 monthly issues of her newsletter, *Planning Possibilities*, which is currently distributed worldwide to over 4,500 personal clients and contacts.

While also running her consulting business, Michelle served as the founding Dean of the School of Business at Kendall College. She built and managed all aspects of the School, including faculty and curriculum selection and assessment, as well as program development and enhancement. Under her direction, the program quickly grew from start-up to graduating seniors, generating professionally savvy, globally driven, and services-oriented graduates who have been hired by such companies as *Accenture* or who have successfully started their own companies.

Michelle then went on to complete an engagement as Marketing Director at Capsim Management Simulations, Inc., where, reporting to the president, she initiated marketing and sales strategies and processes, resulting in hundreds of leads and numerous six-figure corporate client requests for proposals.

During her time of employment at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Michelle conducted and oversaw policy work and applied research, as well as financial services management reporting and administrative oversight of the research department. She also moonlighted at DePaul University as an adjunct instructor. Earlier, she spent 15 years at CNA Financial, working in personal, commercial, and professional liability lines of business. During her career, she has performed technical roles, run operations, developed new products, and published applied research.

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Michelle also holds personal interest in assisting not-for-profit organizations. Her work in this area originally began through her applied research focused on community development, most specifically related to financial literacy initiatives. She has published related papers in Federal Reserve publications, as well as in the American Council on Consumer Interests Annual.

Active in the community, Michelle has served and assisted several organizations in a voluntary capacity. In 2012, she was appointed by Northwestern University President Morton Shapiro to the prestigious Northwestern Council of One Hundred, co-leading development of the Council's strategic plan, and then serving two consecutive terms as operations lead on its executive committee. She continues to serve on the Council as an emeritus member and mentor to female students and alumni,. In January 2012, she also became the founding chair of the Illinois Diversity Council Board of Directors and became a founding advisory board member for Guidestar.org in 2013. She has participated as a presenter to Chicago Step Up Women's Network and has held membership in the Chicago Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Earlier, Ms. Coussens served on the advisory board of Provena Pine View Care Center and created their first annual fundraiser, and for over twenty years, she served as an annual fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. She also served on the board of the Chicago Women in Publishing (CWIP) for two years, including as Vice President of Business Operations. While at the Chicago Fed, she served as an economics instructor for Junior Achievement, later bringing JA workshops to Kendall College and continuing to volunteer for JA today. In 2010, she initiated a business leadership program between Kendall and the American Management Association targeted for urban Chicago high school students.

Ms. Coussens holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from Northwestern University and a Master's in Business Administration, with a concentration in Marketing, from DePaul University. She also has achieved several professional insurance designations—Associate in Risk Management (ARM), Chartered Property/Casualty Underwriter (CPCU), and Registered Professional Liability Underwriter (RPLU) and has completed actuarial exams in Calculus, Statistics, Operations Research, and Economics. She also holds an Illinois insurance license.