



## Resilient podcast series

# Advocate for yourself: Growing a network of sponsors, mentors, and coaches

### Host:

**Katie Glynn**, Partner, Center for Controllershship, Deloitte & Touche LLP

### Guest:

**Andy Dahl**, SVP, Corporate Controller and Principal Accounting Officer at Edwards Lifesciences

**Katie Glynn:** Hello, resilient leaders, and welcome. I'm Katie Glynn and you're listening to the Resilient Controller Podcast, a space where personal journeys meet professional growth. Each episode, we dive into authentic discussions that illuminate how real-world resilience shapes leaders, careers, and companies. Thank you for being part of our vibrant and curious community.

Today, I'm honored to welcome Andy Dahl from Edwards Lifesciences, a leader whose story epitomizes growth through evolving challenges, bold choices, and a commitment to learning at every turn.

Andy brings incredible depth of experience across public accounting, audit, and industry leadership, and who has navigated twists and turns with both courage and humility.

**Andy Dahl:** Be willing to take those risks and really speak up for what it is that you want to accomplish and want to achieve.

**Katie Glynn:** Get ready for a captivating conversation as we dive into Andy's resilient journey, revealing his methods for managing the complexities of both his career and personal life. So, settle in with your favorite beverage, relax and join us for a discussion that transcends business, exploring life, challenges, and the remarkable resilience that drives us all. Welcome, welcome, welcome to the Resilient Controller Podcast.

Andy, thank you so much for joining us today on the Resilient Controller Podcast. We're so excited to have you today. How are you?

**Andy Dahl:** I'm great. Thrilled to be here, so thanks for the invitation, and I'm just really looking forward to the conversation.

**Katie Glynn:** Agreed. I thought it would be interesting to start letting our audience know where your journey began, and I know that was here in Southern California. So, tell us a little bit about, Andy, what drew you to accounting? How did your journey in this career begin?

**Andy Dahl:** Yeah, that's fun to think back on. Certainly, when I went to college, I probably, like many people, then and now, I really had no idea what I wanted to do when I grew up. But one thing I was interested in was business, and so of course, I picked a liberal arts school and planned to focus on something business.

And I think when I got into my sophomore year and really started diving into accounting, it just clicked, you know. Something clicked with those classes, and I was really desperately looking for a sign, some path to follow. And this actually worked out really well.

**Katie Glynn:** Excellent. And when you talk about accounting clicking, it was the same for me. You want to talk about that first role that you had?

**Andy Dahl:** I started my career at Arthur Andersen. For me, it was just a gut feel and a fit. It's fun because I still have so many friends and connections, close friends, in my network from working at Arthur Andersen. And I was there for a few years, and those days were very impressionable on me and my career and the things that were core to the profession and just to building who I am as a person, what do I believe in, what do I aspire to be, and who are my role models. And so, I spent a lot of time paying attention and just soaking things in during those first few years while I was at Andersen.

**Katie Glynn:** Those are the foundational years. I will say, too, I feel like in those first few years in public accounting, you really learn how much you can work! [laughs]

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely.

**Katie Glynn:** You didn't know you had it in you, until you spent a few years as a new associate in public accounting.

**Andy Dahl:** And it's the right time, generally speaking, because you've got some time on your hands.

**Katie Glynn:** Following your career in public accounting, you know, the routine nature of being within industry, was that a concern for you when you were thinking about leaving public and looking for those next opportunities in industry?

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely, yes. I certainly was worried about that for many years actually, before I really got serious about looking outside of public accounting. I was worried about going to the same office every day, sitting at the same desk, the same cube, and really losing what I thought of as the diversity in my schedule and into my learning.

And what I ultimately found to be true, and it is a little bit of a leap of faith, but once you do make that leap, it's really exciting. There's all of a sudden all of this energy and focus that goes toward one company and one mission, and there's so many things that you don't even begin to touch as a public accounting professional when you're looking from the outside in. It certainly taught me very quickly that life is very fast-paced on the other side of the fence as well.

**Katie Glynn:** And I bet for you, in this first role outside of your public accounting career, all of your energy goes to this one organization. I would imagine it allows you an opportunity to go deeper, to learn more about the business and have a different appreciation. Is that what you found?

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely, maybe not as deep in some instances as I would've liked. So, that was one thing I was always hungry for is learning more about the business and trying to understand through the lens of others what really drives the business and how to stay close to that, and how does my role impact that.

**Katie Glynn:** We continue to see that shift in the role of the controller, chief accounting officer, from still handling the day-to-day operations, right? Still responsible for the completeness, the accuracy of the financial reporting, but being a better business partner to the broader business, to be that more strategic partner to help sit at the table when some of the decisions or the execution of some of the strategy takes place. And it sounds like even in that very first role, some of that was evident in your position as well.

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely, Katie. It's interesting, when you say that, I think about it definitely matters who you work for and the culture of the organization, too, in terms of what kind of a seat at the table somebody like me, let's just say in a controllership role, has. It's been one of my career goals to try to navigate that and anticipate that through some of the different job changes that I've made.

You recognize it when you see it and when you land somewhere where your skill set is appreciated and you are brought to the table and you are given opportunities to participate. Those are the experiences that I really have loved and have hung onto and try to emulate some of that here in my current role—and try to replicate, I should say, some of those experiences.

**Katie Glynn:** Are there experiences where that wasn't the case?

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely. Without getting specific, it certainly is not lost on me that there were things that I would do differently if I had them to do over again. And one of those things was just to really be my own advocate, to be willing to take a risk and to step out and maybe abort or pivot, do something to create change rather than just hoping that maybe you'd get tapped on the shoulder.

**Katie Glynn:** I think we've all had periods in our career where we're performing well, we're doing the right things, we feel we're positioned, but for whatever reason, it's not happening. And it's always hindsight to be able to look back and say, maybe I'd do this differently. You and I have talked a little bit about this, around being more proactive, being that advocate for yourself. What are some ways that you would think you would've done things differently to be more proactive to effect some of those changes?

**Andy Dahl:** I think sometimes it's just actually speaking up for yourself. Finding the right vehicle or maybe the right time and place to do so. And so many times I maybe had intentions, but I maybe let the moment slip by, or I really just didn't stand up and create the moment.

I can think of the times when I did and I look back on that and think the result was much better. All of a sudden I was very clearly communicating with whoever it might be, whether it was my boss or a sponsor or a mentor or somebody who I wanted to work for, and just being very articulate about what I could bring to the table, and what my expectations are, what my career goals were.

**Katie Glynn:** Right.

**Andy Dahl:** And being more that self-advocate and I think it comes along with losing some of the self-doubt, just kind of stuffing it and putting that behind. That was a really big part of my learning over the past five to 10 years is, I can do this. I have the right training, and I've had the right people behind me through the years to give me the appropriate critical thinking skills, the appropriate leadership skills. I just need to push everything aside and move through that.

**Katie Glynn:** Get out of your own way. Right?

**Andy Dahl:** Somebody once talked about the different voices inside you, and for me, the doubter voice, I was encouraged to tangibly notice when that voice was present and just learning how to deal with it, learning how to put that aside and balance it with some of the other voices.

I always encourage people to really come to terms with their self-doubt because we all have it. And nobody is good enough, everybody's going to make mistakes, and that's just part of learning, and that's part of being a successful leader. I've watched it in the bosses that I've had. I've seen them making mistakes and sometimes admit to those and move on and sometimes make the same mistakes over and over again.

**Katie Glynn:** [laughs] It just ties back into the name of this podcast—being resilient is being willing to take the risks, being willing to push past some of the challenges or failures and develop because of them.

You've kind of led me right into my next topic and just talking about kind of that self-development and the self-reflection, and I know, you've had certain roles in your career where there has giving you the space and maybe the resources to kind of help you focus on the personal development, the personal professional development, and what that looked like for you. Would you maybe share a little bit about that?

**Andy Dahl:** Yeah, absolutely. There have been a number of different tools that I've used and enjoyed. You know, StrengthsFinder is one of them. And I've done that assessment a few different times in my career.

Really pushing through on highlighting what your strengths are and working on your strengths versus necessarily getting overly focused on development areas or weakness, has definitely been something that I continue to follow. And a lot of people have come to that realization long before me, but when I work with my team, I'm always trying to understand what are the strengths of my team members and really help them to focus on those areas because it really is amazing what can happen when we're all focused on our strengths. Somebody else picks up where you leave off.

**Katie Glynn:** Right. Right. You don't have to be good at everything.

**Andy Dahl:** Exactly. Another thing from a self-development standpoint that I've learned is, you can't do it alone. You need support along the way. You need mentors, you need coaches, you need sponsors. And I never really knew exactly what it meant to be a sponsor, to have a sponsor until I finally had a really great sponsor.

**Katie Glynn:** Yeah, almost a situation of you don't know what you're missing until you have it.

**Andy Dahl:** Absolutely. It was so clear that I had been missing that. It kind of goes back to, yeah, to an extent you have to be your own sponsor, right? You do have to advocate for yourself, but you might think that you have sponsors, but when you really find somebody who's truly potentially looking out for your interest before their own even, right, you just know that you've found gold.

And I think for me, having that person that was willing to, first of all, encourage me beyond the self-doubt, helping me to actually push that aside and imagine the possibilities, and then for that person to be talking about me and on my behalf and for me when I'm not in the room was critical. And I just didn't even know that it was missing until all of a sudden it was there.

And I've spent time since then making sure that I always have a sponsor of some sort or multiple sponsors, and if I don't, maybe I need to look around and understand why that is.

**Katie Glynn:** Andy, talk to me a little bit about how do you go about that, to get your sponsors aligned to you to build that team?

**Andy Dahl:** It's a good question. The main thing that people presume is that their sponsor needs to be their boss [laughs], and that is sometimes the case, but very rarely, I think. I've definitely leveraged my network. I've always tried to keep the doors of communication open with people that I've met in the past and people that I maybe don't have a lot of reason to connect with, right, but you build industry group connections, you build peer connections, you stay connected with high school and college acquaintances and classmates, and you build connections with people in your neighborhood and at your church, and it's amazing.

Before you know it, you have a lot of people to draw from, and all along you're building your brand with those people and you're putting marbles in a trust jar, right, you know, you're building the trust that they have in you, and you're also assessing them as a potential ally or advocate. And when you have a need, you have a pretty broad network to leverage. So, I've always talked about the importance of keeping that network alive, and it's difficult.

I've listened to some podcasts lately that talk about the cognitive ability to how many effective network connections can you actually have? I think I've heard the number 150, right? When you think about it, you can have a lot more, and you might just reconnect here and there and have certain connections that are maybe more active from one time to another. But never burning bridges, never closing doors, always assuming that you might need to come back someday, and really enjoy that connection that you built, whatever it is that you had in common with that person.

**Katie Glynn:** I'm going to go back now, I'm going to think about my 150 and see where I'm landing. [laughs] It takes a lot of work to network. It takes time, it takes energy. It's a dedicated effort, I would call it, right? You have to be intentional about maintaining the network and finding the time to do it, and making sure that you're spending that time in a place that you are getting something out of it, as well as the others are getting something from you.

I know that you lead what I would call a very successful industry group for the medtech industry leaders. Talk to us a little bit about this, because I think the model that you've developed here and the way that you stay connected with these leaders is probably one pocket of networks that you have, but I know that it's a model that many in your position would be really keen to understand and potentially create for themselves. So, maybe talk to us a little bit about that medtech industry group that you lead.

**Andy Dahl:** Yeah, absolutely. I'm glad you brought that up because it's so important. It's not just my opinion, but many of my medtech peers and other colleagues in our industry that participated in this industry group have talked about these connections. Long before I was even engaged and involved in the group, it existed and it was a very sacred thing. To be able to reach out to your peers, your competitors, in this space, in this small medtech world, you know, from an accounting and finance standpoint, we can share a lot. And we learn a lot from each other. That definitely doesn't break the lines or doesn't push the boundaries of competitive information, and so we're very careful about that.

There's so much power in being able to send a text or send an email or put a line out when something is different, right? Like that's one thing I've noticed in my job, that you're always encountering new situations and new guidance that comes out, new economic factors, whatever it might be. And we're all dealing with these things in one way, shape, or form, and so doing it together really helps.

So, we've just established a cadence where probably 10-plus years ago, a few of the larger companies in medtech got together and created this concept of getting together, whether it's quarterly. We get together once in person a year, and I really feel that that's important because those in-person meetings, those in-person connections are way different. We carry ourselves differently, we share different things. We get to know each other on a different level. You don't have time to do that every quarter, but once a year, we make the time and it's a good investment. And we also bring in the firms to help round out our experience. And they are, in many cases, subject matter experts on some of the things that we're discussing. And I think that they learn from us and we learn from them. So, stepping back, it's definitely professionally been a great thing, but I also have made some really great friendships.

**Katie Glynn:** I think it's in that theme of networking, professional networking, and having a cohort of individuals that you can lean on, a lot of leaders are involved. A lot of leaders are very transparent and willing to come to the table. That symbiotic relationship of sharing and also receiving from the group as an important aspect of that, but I commend you on the model. I think it's a really great group that you all have there.

**Andy Dahl:** Thank you. And thanks to Deloitte for getting involved with the group too. We wouldn't be where we are without that help, so thank you.

**Katie Glynn:** Absolutely. We've talked a bit about thinking, relationships, sponsors, mentors, other leaders that you've had. I want to talk a little bit about your teams and your leadership style with your teams and how that has evolved over the years and how you might classify your leadership style when it comes to managing your teams.

**Andy Dahl:** This is an area that I take very seriously and maybe too seriously sometimes. And you know, when I pull out my own scorecard, sometimes I'm maybe a little too hard on myself in terms of how effective I've been at developing the people on my team. It really needs to be at the very top of the list, and I think it starts with getting to know people at a very personal level in the hiring process. Unless it's a case where I've inherited a team, right; then it's a little different, but trying to really understand the working style, the personal needs, the professional goals and aspirations, and how to place the right people in the right roles, and then to encourage them to learn other skills. Because most of us are interested in learning new things and developing ourselves beyond our current role and our current capability.

**Katie Glynn:** What are some of the ways that you encourage your teams to continue on that development? Are there certain areas now in today's world that are more important for you to have your teams kind of focused in on?

**Andy Dahl:** For us, we've done a number of different organizational structure changes that brings about change that people aren't expecting maybe, but more importantly, I think it brings opportunity. And so, in some of those moments, I've taken the opportunity to try to suggest or encourage somebody to try something different, right. Or to spin something on its head and see what we can get out of maybe what's an unexpected change or potentially viewed as an unfortunate change and kind of turning that to be to the positive.

**Katie Glynn:** That's back to your glass half full. [laughs]

**Andy Dahl:** Glass half full, absolutely. That's right. Yeah. I mean, I think just optimism.

**Katie Glynn:** How do you challenge yourself to be that continuous learner, to continue expanding your skill sets and your base?

**Andy Dahl:** For me, it's listening to people. It's learning. It's intentionally listening so that I can learn something new. I feel like I'm learning something new every day in my role, and sometimes it's about writing it down. Sometimes it's just about making a mental note. And then finding the time to actually step away and take a little bit of time to think about strategy and think about what do I want to accomplish in the next week, month, year, and how am I going to get that done?

And so we all kind of go through that period of goal setting as a part of our normal operating cycle, but for me, you have to be in the right head space and maybe you take opportunities to do that throughout the year when the spirit moves. And when you really feel inspired to do something differently or to go after something.

For me, usually it's about hiring smart people and learning from them and encouraging them to make the change that's going to make an impact on the organization and our business and how we do process in finance and controllership. Sometimes they're learning from me, but more often than not, I'm learning from them.

**Katie Glynn:** I like the approach of filling your team and maybe filling gaps on your team with those smart folks that can bring more to your table, and as a team, you can go really conquer anything.

In your role as a controller, we're always being asked to stay on top of the regulatory environment, which I know is constantly changing, be it our standard regulations, emerging regulations, things that are on the docket, global regulations. Your industry brings a lot more to the table than other industries in the world of regulations. How do you balance all of that, Andy? How do you stay on top of what's important for your organization while you're balancing everything else that we've been talking about? How do you stay on top of those regulatory changes?

**Andy Dahl:** The thing that comes to my mind first is just all of the different ways that we're fed information. It's definitely information overload in this day and age, and it's great. It's at our fingertips all the time, but you have to sort through it still and kind of weed out the noise. And there is a lot of noise. I mean, when I look back and think about some of the things that we've spent time on as an industry, actually beyond just our industry, but I even just think about some of the ESG reporting regulations and how much time we have all spent, and it feels like we should be further along, right?

And then all of a sudden the timeline shifts or there's a change in administration or you're starting over, you're back to square one. I do think that we all still learn a lot through that process, but trying to figure out, you know, and prioritize some of that information. I always just think about what do I need to do today, tomorrow, this week, and this month? And it's sort of this one-day-at-a-time mantra because you will be overwhelmed and get overloaded. You also have to be forward-thinking, and I'm not trying to downplay that, but really trying to prioritize what's going to make the biggest impact on your group, your business, your industry, and focusing in on that.

And I have a really talented team, and again, going back to strengths, some of the folks that I rely on, they're really good at synthesizing information. They have their head in eight different news sources at all times, and they're able to pick out what's really important, and that's a skill that I value.

**Katie Glynn:** Yeah, absolutely.

Well, Andy, thank you for sharing today. This has been very insightful and I do appreciate you being so transparent in talking about your journey.

To close out and reflect on resilience, here's the definition that I received about personal professional resilience from my Deloitte AI assistant. "Refers to an individual's ability to effectively adapt, recover, and grow in response to challenges, setbacks, or pressures encountered in a work setting."

That, I feel like is the perfect wrapper for the conversation that we've just had. Your career progression and the different roles that you've taken on and the personal learning journey that you've been on, and the reflection and evaluation of each of the roles, Andy, that you've been through absolutely show what a resilient leader that you are and how you've continued to develop and now pass those lessons on to the different teams. I'm just, I'm very grateful for your time, and I have one last question for you before we close out.

**Andy Dahl:** OK. Let's hear it.

**Katie Glynn:** If there was one piece of advice that you would give to the young Andy Dahl, what would it be?

**Andy Dahl:** I think it would absolutely have to be advocate for yourself. In your career and in your professional journey be willing to take those risks, and really speak up for what it is that you want to accomplish and want to achieve.

And then, of course, alongside that, I would have to say, put aside the doubter voice. Recognize it for what it is. It's there for a reason. It does help to balance us and keep us humble and keep us focused, but it can get in the way. I would've shoved that aside a bit earlier in my career, but I think it's all part of the process.

**Katie Glynn:** Absolutely. Very good. Well, Andy, thank you so much. Thank you for being here with us today. It's been a pleasure.

**Andy Dahl:** Thanks, Katie. It's been a lot of fun. Appreciate you. Thank you so much.

**Katie Glynn:** Thank you.

Thank you for tuning in to this episode where we dove deep into Andy Dahl's remarkable career journey. From his first public accounting classes in San Diego to leadership roles, including his current role now at Edwards LifeSciences. Andy's story reminds us that careers are rarely linear, and sometimes you learn more from what doesn't fit than from what does.

If Andy's path teaches us anything, it's to be bold, keep learning, and challenge our own awareness, both in our careers and in our daily lives. So, whether you're just starting out navigating your own crossroads or facing changes in the marketplace, remember Andy's advice: Don't let someone else manage your career. Embrace transparency and make connections that matter.

Thanks for joining us today. If you've found Andy's insights valuable, share this episode and let us know what lessons you are taking away. Until next time, keep growing, keep leading, and don't be afraid to drive your own journey.



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