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## FIRM MANAGEMENT

# Mathew Heggem – 2015 40 Under 40 Honoree

This year's 40 Under 40 honorees are among the best and brightest talent in the accounting profession. They are all active in the professional community, as well as in their local communities, where many are small business owners and employers.

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**Mathew Heggem – 30**

**CEO, [SUM Innovation](#)**

**New York, NY**

**Website: [www.suminnovation.com](http://www.suminnovation.com)**

**What is the name of one book that has been a great influence to you?**

I recently had the pleasure of completing “The Soul of Money: Reclaiming the Wealth of Our Inner Resources” by Lynne Twist. This book helped me to understand that we are not on this planet to hoard dollars into a bank account; rather, we are here to see to it that money flows through us like water – as a resource towards the things that matter most in our world. We have plenty to be happy and live in harmony, for example, to solve world hunger; instead, we need to choose more consciously how to

allocate our financial resources for the betterment of humanity. This was an eye-opening book that helped me to see wealth in a new way.

**In what ways have you contributed to your firm/company to make it better?**

I have been diligent in my dedication to becoming a firm of the future and challenging my team to challenge themselves, so that we may fully grow and embrace the opportunities of our industry. This is an exciting time in the world of accounting – an industry that is being transformed by new tech – and I’m honored to take my team to the front-lines on this frontier. But, it’s not just about technology: it’s also about being a community and creating a culture that is supportive of the growth and development of all people engaged with SUM Innovation – whether they are a client, an employee, a partner, or a supplier. So, I am excited to engage in this work as a holistic leader too and bring an untraditional face to the otherwise traditionalist industry.

**In what ways do you participate in the professional community to change/improve the accounting profession?**

I do not accept status-quo. I do not accept ‘business as usual’. I do not accept apathy. I do not accept bare-minimum. I do not accept that we cannot lead and inspire the world of business as powerful – and super sexy – accounting pros! I do not accept the public perception of what an accountant is – no matter what people say. I do not accept being anything other than what I am. I am true to myself, to the things I am passionate about, and ask that all others do the same. So, I remain committed to being a progressive accounting professional. I remain committed to testing my own boundaries. And so, I remain committed to leading my team as a small-but-mighty force of CEO Superheroes!

**In what ways do you participate in your local community to help others?**

I am the Board President of the Greenwich Village Chelsea Chamber of Commerce (GVCCC), and an active member in various other Chambers throughout NYC, to support the needs and rights of small businesses. It’s important that our voice is heard and that we work together to build a thriving community, where we recognize that small businesses are the key to job growth. I am compelled to advocate for small business rights – and provide every entrepreneur with access to the knowledge, expertise, insights and resources they need to keep our workforce alive. I am committed, therefore, to local economic development through my work with the Chambers.

I am also a recent member of the Conscious Capitalism movement and a local event-organizer in New York City. I would like to bring the best of business to the forefront and provide leaders with a perspective on how to run a business that contributes positively to the socio-economic landscape.

**What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession of the near future (3-5 years)?**

Data automation will continue to transform our industry, especially for the role of the bookkeeper. Due to these changes, and the on-going development of technology, I would therefore hope to see a transformation in the education and certification standards of accounting professionals who do not hold a bachelor's degree. Though I'm not sure where we are truly at – or where we can begin – I'd love to imagine that we are training a workforce of the future that is prepared for the small businesses of tomorrow. Let us hope that such great work as that of The Sleeter Group is making its way back to colleges and universities too.

I'd love to also see more dialogue occur among entrepreneurs, accountants (or numbers folks) and developers on a regular basis. The more that we can support this dialogue, the greater the innovation and intelligence in the startup world.

Lastly, I expect cultural attitudes around who/what makes for a great accountant to shift to a more progressive perspective – and one that supports the value-added conversation. It is not okay to accept the bare-minimum and I hope that business owners will put their foot down: if a CPA doesn't truly care about how the accounting is handled on a day to day basis, nor that outcomes are greater than a few forms well-filled, that s/he in fact treats their own industry as a commodity to be traded by the billable minute, then these are not acceptable attitudes – that is not an accountant that should be helping small businesses to thrive.

Perhaps it's summed up as a dream that accounting will be valued well beyond the obligation to meet government regulation – and seen as a tool for transforming business performance!

**How do you see yourself participating in shaping the future of the accounting profession?**

I will continue to investigate this intersection between accounting and technology, so that I may bridge the gap for my customers. I will also continue to help my team be exemplary of the future workforce for this industry. As such, I am dedicated to

continuing my leadership role and embarking more heavily on a journey towards building a stronger accounting workforce.

### **What is your career philosophy?**

Be who you want to be – and be that fully. I do not come from a traditional background. I am, perhaps, the only one of this list that can claim national recognition as a dancer. I was a professional performer in NYC for several years and received little business education, other than what I acquired on my own accord. Despite my lack of traditional education in the world of accounting, I have demonstrated my success and leadership in this industry. It’s amazing to know that hard work does pay off and that we can all achieve whatever it is that we set out to do. There are many doors open – many roads available to travel. You simply need to make a conscious choice to take action and, as one of my beloved college professors proclaimed, ‘do, do, do!’

### **Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped change your life.**

I often like to talk about my coach, when asked the ‘one person’ question. Her name is Carol Dacey Charles and she helped me to purge the dirty word ‘should’ from my regular vocabulary. As a perfectionist seeking excellence in a highly technical world (full of amazing and intelligent people) and as a CEO, I am constantly striving to be the best – for myself, my business, and my community. It’s hard not to look at other leaders in the field and compare one’s self to others. But, to think that you ‘should’ do this or that – to exhibit the behaviors, actions, attitudes or motives of others – is a position that could put you in jeopardy of not being your full self. Be proud of who you are. Know that you are enough. Know that you are on your own path – this is your own journey. And, trust the process that is your unwavering commitment to your vision and the fulfillment of your dreams. In short, the only thing you ‘should’ do is ‘be your self!’

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[See all of the “40 Under 40” honorees for 2015.](#)

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