



AMCEA Member Spotlight – James Brandes

How did you get your start in credit?

After graduating with a Finance degree 1987, I discovered an opportunity with a John Deere heavy equipment dealer. The position was in their credit department performing credit and collection activities around the rentals, leasing, and financing of construction equipment. I landed the job and that started my career in the credit field. Along the way, I spent time at McCaw Cellular and Sysco Foods before finding an awesome home at the Austin American Statesman which is owned by Cox Media Group.

Things I like about the job.

I like the variety of challenges faced on a daily basis. I enjoy and value all of the many relationships built over the years from finance, sales, to the production teams. I enjoy the satisfaction of seeing team members succeed and grow in their careers. I especially enjoy my current role of leading a shared services team. The experience has been much like a start-up, from staff build up, process design, development, and deployment with much collaboration and the leading of change management. It is an exciting time to be involved in the media credit field.

Person(s) who influenced me the most (Business or non-Business)

I'm very fortunate for having had the opportunity to learn from 3 great media finance leaders - Bob Stewart, Eddie Burns, and Melody Darch. These individuals have been excellent mentors. They have enabled me to grow and develop throughout my career, from initially learning the newspaper business to building a shared services team.

However, the person that I would like to recognize as influencing me the most is my 18 year old daughter Madison Brandes. On June 22, 2014 Madison suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result of a drunk driver. Madison required 3 emergency brain surgeries, 10 days in a coma, and a 4th brain surgery on September 8th. Madison has shown an incredible amount of strength and courage as she works through her daily rehabilitation. She has brought new perspective to my life as I watch in her daily progress. She handles all this with such grace, determination, and a positive attitude. I have truly learned through Madison's example of how to accept adversity and overcome any challenge that comes my way.

TV Show: The Office, Movie: Saving Private Ryan

Food: Tex-Mex from Austin Texas, the list would include Matt's El Rancho, Torchy's, and Benji's

Vacation Spot: Playa Del Carmen

Leisure Activity: Cooking, spending time with family and friends, and watching college football