

# STEVEN MICHAELSON

## Making magic happen

For more than three decades Steven Michaelson has been leading the charge of creative execution, strategic agility, and talent development in the world of advertising, 25 of those years focused on pharmaceuticals. Steven held creative leadership positions at KPR, FCB, Harrison Star, and Robert A. Becker, where he created successful campaigns for such brands as Mevacor, Zocor, Glucophage, Plavix, EpiPen, Depakote, and Diovan.

Before entering the pharmaceutical industry, Steven created award-winning work for clients such as Ford, Lanvin, Absolut, Omni, Penthouse magazines, and Sassoon jeans.

In 1998, Steven ventured out on his own to found, not one, but two highly successful agency businesses — Wishbone and Calcium — as well as two iconic agency brands.

After 13 years, Wishbone was acquired by Rosetta and then by Publicis. Not ready yet to rest on his considerable laurels, Steven founded Calcium in 2012, pulling together the original Wishbone partners to help guide and run it. In 2014, The Star Group acquired Vox Medica and Calcium NYC, merging them together with their own healthcare agency, Star Life Sciences. This new entity entered the market as Calcium USA. In December 2015, along with his business partner, wife, and fellow PharmaVOICE 100 honoree Judy Capano, Steven purchased the agency and all its assets. As CEO, Steven has been running the agency since August 2015.

**PV: You've been successful for more than two decades as an entrepreneur and agency owner. What are the keys to your leadership strengths?**

**MICHAELSON:** The hallmark of my leadership is transparency. If you are genuine, open, and accessible to people they tend to return the favor. I think being humble is another one of my traits.

I believe leaders should have commitment, integrity, and respect, which are the core values of Calcium. This is how everybody in the agency is judged, not just our leaders.

Funnily enough, these are three things that you really can't teach people, they either learn from experience or are ingrained in them. The first one is commitment. What is commitment? It's your passion, your drive, it's giving 100%, 150%, 200% to what you do. If you are completely committed you will be successful. I am living proof of that because I am not always the sharpest tool in the shed, but what I am is committed to my business and to my people. Commitment will make you successful.

To be a Calciumite, to be a good leader, to be a good employee, and to be a good co-worker you need more than commitment; you need integrity. Integrity is about your word being your bond. You say what you're going to do and then you do what you say you were going to do. This tells everybody around you that you have their back.

The last one, and probably the most important one, is respect. This business is tough. We work with clients that can be demanding and tough and if we can't service them they're going to go somewhere else. The quality of the work has to be there whether it's strategy, creative, digital, etc., so it's all about service. This means long hours and demands that take everybody away from their personal lives and from the things they love to do. So, when people are giving that much, you have to treat everybody with respect. We have a strict no jerks policy.

**PV: Running a successful agency is all about the talent. How do you create a winning culture?**

**MICHAELSON:** People don't get into advertising because they want to get rich. If they wanted to be rich they would have gone into finance or worked on Wall Street. We all got into this business, whether as art director, copywriter, or account director, because it's our passion.

If you're not motivated by money, then you're motivated by what your job is. People need a clear path of succession to get to their career dreams. We want that to happen at Calcium. People need



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In today's complex healthcare environment, achieving the most productive marketing posture can be challenging. Fortunately, Calcium provides a unique balance of strategic, scientific, creative, and digital expertise that can center

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your focus, stretch your resources, and elevate brand performance to a higher plane. We're committed to going to the mat for our clients. But we'll ensure that the process is as serene as possible. So experience a (nourishing) breath of fresh air by contacting:

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to have an actionable goal list. At the top of our review process form are the Calcium core values. If you're living the Calcium core values, we're going to get you to where you want to go, you are going to succeed, and you are going to do great things. It's on us to get you where you need to go. The only commitment we ask is to live the Calcium core values.

When our people excel and grow, it's inspiring. It's a simple formula: great people plus great clients equals success. I think Bruce Springsteen said it the best. When you put together a band you don't have to have the best musicians or the most talented musicians, but you need the right ones. Once you get the right group together, that's when the magic happens. It's intangible and unteachable — it's magic.

**PV: As a serial entrepreneur, what's the best thing about being your own boss?**

**MICHAELSON:** Everything. There's nothing bad, even the worst part, which is getting over the hurdle of the tough times, is the best part. I'll use another saying, tough times come and go, but tough people stick around. We've had some tough times. We've had times where people on the senior-management team had to reduce their salaries, not take bonuses, etc. But they hung around and it paid off in spades. And all of these people are still with us today, it's so rewarding to be here with them sharing in the success.

Judy and I look at this business as a family. Although we're well more than 100 people, we still think about the agency like our extended family. We know everybody by name and we know what they are about. I spend time with every new employee just to get to know them and, more importantly, for them to get to know me.

The best thing about being the boss is more than just watching all of the success. Over the course of the two agencies, multiple people have met each other, fallen in love, gotten married, and had babies. This is the best part, this is really cool.

**PV: Where do you see advertising trends going in the next few years?**

**MICHAELSON:** The only thing I know is at the end of the day this is a simple business. There's always the newest thing. The one thing that is consistent is that as marketers we need to influence people to make decisions. That is the essence of what we do. It's all about strategy and positioning. It doesn't really matter what the channel is, it's getting the positioning of the product, the message development, and the creative right. And then, we can spin it out on multiple different channels.

What's going to come and go is the flavor of the month, that particular hot button that everybody needs to have. But, it's a simple business that hasn't really changed. We have to position our

clients' products to outperform and outmaneuver the competing products

**PV: You started your career as a creative innovator. What is it that you love about the creative process?**

**MICHAELSON:** Before I became an art director, I started out as an artist and a painter. I went to art school. What art teaches you, whether you're painting or whether you're designing a logo or creating an advertising campaign, is to problem-solve. You learn how to make something look right, how to work with the medium, and figure out the composition. It's all about problem-solving.

I've applied those skills to business, which has been extremely helpful for me. I look at every problem the same way I did in art school — from a graphic design standpoint, from a strategic standpoint, from an architectural standpoint, from a spatial standpoint. Everything always goes back to art school.

I look at business from a creative standpoint as well. Whether I'm managing the budget, figuring out how to build out our capabilities, or staffing

appropriately, it's all fun, it's all problem-solving. This is what you're trained to do as an artist.

**PV: Having been involved in many award-winning creative executions, does one campaign stand out for you, aside from the great Calcium "moo" campaign?**

**MICHAELSON:** I have two favorite campaigns, the Zpmig Bunny campaign, 'Fast just got Faster,' for migraine from Medpoint. The other is the Mevacor wolf. The campaign was a wolf peering out behind a tree, but you could just only see one eye. We added an overall tint of Mevacor blue and the eye was the Mevacor yellow. It was just a very alarming image. The headline was, "Don't be fooled by the science of atherosclerosis." This was also the first time for me — because Mevacor was owned the market share — that we were able to promote the disease and not have to worry about growing market for the competitors. I learned a lot from Tom Di Domenico and Lester Barnett at FCB. I watched them carefully and they pulled me under their wing and supported me and made me feel like I was the best that there ever was. **PV**



**Steven Michaelson**

**TITLE:** Founder and CEO

**COMPANY:** Calcium

**EDUCATION:** BFA, Pratt Institute

**INDUSTRY AWARDS:** 2021, The Pinnacle Award; Winner, MM&M, 2019 Industry Person of the Year; MedAdNews 2018, Entrepreneur of the Year

**COMPANY AWARDS:** 2021 & 2018, Agency of the Year, MedAdNews; 2020 & 2019, Agency of the Year, Gold Winner, PM360; 2018 & 2017, Agency of the Year, Silver Winner, PM360

*Sparking innovation by...  
creating opportunities  
for talent to flourish*



# IGNITE

## 2021 PharmaVOICE 100 Celebration



### VIRTUAL EVENT

**SEPTEMBER 9, 2021**

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

► **Ask the PV100s**

30-minute Q&A sessions with small groups of PharmaVOICE 100s.

- 9:30am ET
- 11am ET
- 1pm ET
- 3pm ET

► **Fireside Chat Panels**

Casual conversations with PharmaVOICE 100s whose passions are ignited by purpose and blazing new frontiers

- 10-11am ET - Sparks of Leadership
- 12-1pm ET - Sparks of Inspiration
- 2-3pm ET - Sparks of Innovation

► **Igniting Change: The Red Jacket Panel**

An in-depth conversation with our 2021 Red Jackets who shine their light on a transforming industry

- 4-5:30pm - A Panel of Red Jackets

► **Light it Up Happy Hour**

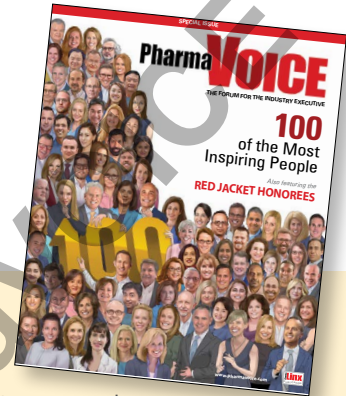
Meet the PharmaVOICE 100s during a fun-filled hour of trivia and prizes

- 5:30pm - Happy Hour



Join us as the PharmaVOICE 100 share how they spark inspiration, ignite change, and blaze new trails.

Celebrate their personal stories of success and learn what fuels their passion for the industry.



### SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

**\$25,000 Signature Sponsor**

Benefits of Event, Blaze, and Spark Sponsorships ... plus opportunity to introduce the Red Jacket Panel (up to 3 minutes)

**\$10,000 Blaze Sponsor** (12 available)

Benefits of Event and Spark Sponsorships ... plus seat for a PV100 on one of the panels

**\$5,000 Spark Sponsor** (Unlimited quantity available)

Benefits of Event Sponsorship ... plus 3-min Spark video interview

**\$5,000 Ask the PharmaVOICE 100 Session Sponsor** (4 available)

Branding on event website and marketing materials ... plus seat for a PV100 in this 30-minute session

**\$2,500 Prize Sponsor** (Unlimited quantity available)

Branding on event website and marketing materials ... plus 5 give away items provided by sponsor to be gifted to one attendee from each panel session

**\$1,000 Event Sponsor** (Unlimited quantity available)

Branding on event website and marketing materials ... plus "Looking for Inspiration" quote that will be featured during the event and on event emails

### \*Event Sponsor Benefits

- Company branding on the event registration page
- Company branding during panels
- Company branding on event emails
- Social media exposure
- Branding on OnDemand videos
- Company branding featured in an event wrap-up in the October issue of PharmaVOICE

**FREE REGISTRATION**  
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For more details or to secure a sponsorship, contact Lisa Banket, Publisher, at 609-730-0196 or [lbasket@pharmavoicel00.com](mailto:lbasket@pharmavoicel00.com); Suzanne Besse at 561-465-5102 or [sbesse@pharmavoicel00.com](mailto:sbesse@pharmavoicel00.com); or Amy Bishop at 267-374-8891 or [abishop@pharmavoicel00.com](mailto:abishop@pharmavoicel00.com).



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