

WHERE MUSIC MEETS MEANING
Dr. Beata Golec's
Vision for Empathetic
Leadership and
Transformative Music
Education

Dr. Beata Golec: Where Music Meets Meaning

In a world where education is increasingly measured through outcomes, Dr. Beata Golec reminds us that the most meaningful forms of learning often begin with something much more human: connection. As Founder and Director of Golec Music Studio, Dr. Golec has built her professional journey around music, education, empathy, creativity, and community service.

With master’s and doctoral degrees from the Eastman School of Music, teaching roles at the State University of New York and Rochester Institute of Technology, and extensive involvement in music assessment and education, Dr. Golec brings deep academic expertise to her work. Yet, what distinguishes her approach is her belief that music education should respond to the individual rather than force every learner into the same framework.

For Dr. Golec, music is much more than a discipline. She describes it as her “ultimate superpower”—something she feels, teaches, analyzes, and, most importantly, shares. This philosophy is reflected throughout Golec Music Studio, where students of different ages, abilities, backgrounds, and aspirations are welcomed into a supportive environment designed to encourage creativity and self-expression.

Her leadership philosophy is equally distinctive. Dr. Golec believes authentic leadership is built upon vulnerability, honesty, accountability, compassion, respect, communication, and active listening. She brings these principles into her teaching, viewing herself not as an intimidating authority figure but as a guide who creates space for students to ask questions, express ideas, and develop confidence.

This people-first philosophy extends beyond the classroom. Through the Young Musicians’ Concerts, founded in 2016, Dr. Golec has created opportunities for young performers while connecting music with community service. Held twice annually, the concerts support local food pantries while giving students a welcoming environment in which to develop performance skills and confidence.

Her journey has also involved confronting challenges faced by women in leadership, including gender stereotypes, discrimination, unequal expectations, and limited support. Rather than allowing these experiences to diminish her purpose, she has emphasized boundaries, resilience, constructive feedback, mentorship, and relationships that encourage growth.

Dr. Golec’s achievements have received significant recognition, including the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, Ontario County ATHENA Leadership Awards recognition, and the 2026 BBB Torch Award for Ethics, among other honors.

Ultimately, however, her definition of success extends beyond awards or financial accomplishments. She places equal importance on health, relationships, inner peace, purpose, and the positive difference one can make in the lives of others.

Dr. Beata Golec represents a powerful model of modern leadership, one where excellence and empathy coexist, entrepreneurship serves a purpose, and education becomes a pathway to confidence and connection. Through music, she continues to create opportunities for others to discover their voices, embrace their creativity, and contribute meaningfully to the communities around them.



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WHERE MUSIC MEETS MEANING **Dr. Beata Golec's**

Founder & Director, Golec Music Studio

Vision for
Empathetic
Leadership and
Transformative
Music Education



Music has the remarkable ability to communicate what words sometimes cannot. It can inspire confidence, create belonging, encourage self-expression, and bring people together across generations and backgrounds. For Dr. Beata Golec, music represents all of these possibilities, and much more. It is her profession, lifelong passion, creative language, educational mission, and a powerful way to serve the community.

As a pianist, composer, music theorist, educator, and supporter of local community initiatives, Dr. Golec has built a career around sharing music and helping others discover their own creative potential. At the center of this journey is Golec Music Studio, an award-winning and BBB-accredited organization dedicated to providing high-quality music education within a supportive and welcoming environment.

Her philosophy is straightforward yet profound: education should address the whole person, leadership should be grounded in empathy, and success should ultimately be measured by the positive difference one makes in the lives of others.

A Lifelong Relationship with Music

For Dr. Golec, music is not simply a subject to be studied or a skill to be mastered. It is an integral part of who she is.

She describes music as her “ultimate superpower.”

She feels, breathes, teaches, analyzes, and shares music, emphasizing that sharing is essential because music cannot truly exist without being shared. This philosophy became one of the central inspirations behind the establishment of Golec Music Studio.

Her academic background provides a strong foundation for this mission. Dr. Golec earned both her master’s and doctoral degrees from the Eastman School of Music and has developed a multifaceted career encompassing performance, composition, theory, education, and community engagement.

She teaches at the State University of New York and Rochester Institute of Technology and serves on boards of examiners for Advanced Placement Music Theory and International Baccalaureate Music, as well as the Board of Assessment Review for the Town of Victor, New York.

Her professional accomplishments have been recognized through numerous honors. She received the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2020, the Victor Business Award and recognition as an honoree of the Ontario County ATHENA Leadership Awards in 2024. In 2025, she supported the “Unmasking the Silence” Masquerade Ball for Suicide and Mental Health Awareness and the 40th Ontario County ATHENA Leadership Awards. Her subsequent recognitions include being a finalist for the 2026 ROC the City Choice Awards and receiving the 2026 Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Ethics, followed by the Trusted Business Award and International Association for Business Excellence Award in July 2026.

Yet, her achievements are not presented as an endpoint. They are part of a larger commitment to education, creativity, and service.

Building a Business Around Purpose

Launching Golec Music Studio allowed Dr. Golec to combine her passion for music with her entrepreneurial vision.

She describes being a business owner as personally and professionally fulfilling. Entrepreneurship has given her autonomy, responsibility, and the opportunity to build something from the ground up while directly serving her community. At the same time, she recognizes the realities of entrepreneurship. Running a business requires her to wear many hats, including those of CEO, finance manager, marketer, scheduler, and customer-support professional.

Rather than viewing these responsibilities as burdens, she embraces them as part of the entrepreneurial journey.

Her philosophy is strongly influenced by her belief in supporting small local businesses. She values direct relationships between business owners and clients, responsiveness, and consistent quality. These same principles guide her own business operations. For Dr. Golec, excellent service is not simply a competitive advantage; it is a commitment to the people who place their trust in her.

This people-first approach has become central to the identity of Golec Music Studio.

A Mission to Inspire and Nurture

Golec Music Studio is dedicated to inspiring and nurturing musical talent while responding

to the individual needs of students. The studio seeks to provide a safe, tranquil, supportive, and welcoming environment and to share music with members of the local community.

Its objectives extend beyond technical instruction. They include providing high-quality education tailored to individual needs, fostering an inclusive community, encouraging creativity and self-expression, creating performance opportunities, developing skills for lifelong musical engagement, promoting collaboration, and supporting local fundraising initiatives.

This breadth is important because no two students arrive with exactly the same needs.

Dr. Golec works with very young pupils, neurodiverse children, adults, retirees, professionals with demanding careers, and individuals returning to music after many years away. Some students seek competitive preparation or academic advancement, while others simply want to reconnect with a creative part of themselves.

The studio accommodates these varied goals through piano, voice, music theory, analysis, composition, masterclasses, educator training, examination preparation, auditions, competitions, performances, weddings, religious celebrations, corporate events, fundraising concerts, and private events.

The studio accepts students aged three and above and offers flexible scheduling for professionals who may not be able to commit to a traditional weekly schedule. It also operates year-round, including school breaks, emphasizing the importance of continuity in musical education. Golec Music Studio is an approved vendor for the New York State Department of Education and Heritage Christian Services to provide lessons to students with learning disabilities.

Leadership Begins with Empathy

Perhaps the strongest defining characteristic of Dr. Golec's leadership is empathy.

She describes authentic leadership as being rooted in vulnerability, honesty, accountability, compassion, and respect. For her, leadership is demonstrated through communication and active listening, but most importantly through how people are treated.

Her leadership philosophy is therefore not based

on intimidation or hierarchy. It is based on trust.

She believes that understanding the needs of others and supporting their growth can improve workplace and classroom environments, sustainability, and morale. Conversely, judgmental or despotic approaches can limit communication, collaboration, creativity, and the willingness to share ideas.

This philosophy is reflected directly in her business strategy.

At Golec Music Studio, the needs and well-being of people are placed ahead of immediate returns. Students, clients, and collaborators are not treated as transactions but as relationships built on loyalty and trust.

Transforming the Traditional Classroom

Dr. Golec brings the same philosophy into her teaching.

She calls her approach "empathetic teaching," emphasizing two-way conversations, emotional support, and active listening. Instead of relying solely on lectures or one-directional instruction, she encourages students to participate actively in their own learning.

At the studio, she sees herself as a guide rather than an intimidating authority figure. This allows students to ask questions, express ideas, and share their creativity more freely. A lesson becomes a dialogue, creating an environment where students feel safe and respected.

This approach is particularly powerful in music education, where confidence and creativity are inseparable from technical ability.

A student may possess extraordinary musical potential but hesitate to perform because of fear of judgment. Creating an environment where mistakes can become part of learning can help transform that fear into confidence.

For Dr. Golec, teaching is therefore not simply about producing technically proficient musicians. It is about helping students develop the confidence to own their creativity and share it with others.

Music Education for Every Stage of Life

Adaptability is another defining quality of her work.

Dr. Golec recognizes that learners have different physical abilities, experiences, expectations, and motivations. Some adults may have limited



flexibility, memory challenges, illness, or other circumstances that influence how they learn. Others may be professionals looking for flexible scheduling or retirees searching for a renewed sense of purpose.

The studio welcomes these different journeys. Its repertoire also reflects Dr. Golec's versatility, encompassing classical, sacred, modern, experimental, jazz, popular, and music-theater selections. Students can prepare for competitions, auditions, academic examinations, productions, or professional opportunities.

This inclusive model reinforces a central idea within her philosophy: music does not belong to one age group, one ability level, or one definition of success.

From Performance to Community Impact

Dr. Golec's commitment to community service is particularly visible through the Young Musicians' Concerts, which she founded in 2016.

Held twice annually, these concerts serve as both performance opportunities and fundraising initiatives supporting food pantries at Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows Churches in Rochester, New York.

The concerts are intentionally designed to reduce the pressure young performers can experience.

Musicians do not have to memorize their music, and the performance order is not predetermined. Dr. Golec generally begins with one of her own compositions, leading by example, before inviting students to perform. Each student introduces themselves and announces their musical selection.

This structure allows the performers to develop not only musical skills but also communication, confidence, and stage presence. At the same time, the concerts provide tangible support for people facing food insecurity. It is a powerful expression of Dr. Golec's philosophy: artistic development and community responsibility can reinforce one another.

Walking the Walk

For Dr. Golec, leadership is most meaningful when it is demonstrated through action.

She wants young musicians to feel proud of their work, take ownership of their creative ideas, and become confident in presenting those ideas to

others. Young Musicians' Concerts are therefore an important part of her broader educational mission because they allow students to experience those principles firsthand.

Her commitment to ethical leadership has also been recognized externally. She expresses particular gratitude for receiving the 2026 BBB Torch Award for Ethics, as well as the Trusted Business Award and International Association for Business Excellence Award. For her, these recognitions affirm a commitment to ethical standards, customers, community, and high-quality education.

The awards are meaningful because they align with the values she has deliberately embedded into her organization.

The Personal Foundations of Her Leadership

Dr. Golec attributes much of who she has become to her family, supportive parents, early childhood experiences, exposure to the arts, and travel.

Her mother, Alicja Golec, an award-winning educator, has been a particularly important role model, influencing Dr. Golec's views on empathy, fairness, and ethical treatment within education.

Her interactions with musicians and artists from around the world have further shaped her sensitivity toward people from different backgrounds. Working with diverse students and volunteers has also deepened her understanding of the challenges people face in everyday life.

These experiences have reinforced an important lesson: people often carry struggles that are invisible to others.

That understanding has strengthened her commitment to treating people with compassion rather than making assumptions about their circumstances.

Navigating the Challenges Women Leaders Face

Dr. Golec is also candid about the challenges women can encounter in leadership and entrepreneurship.

She points to systemic biases, discrimination, gender stereotypes, unequal pay, lack of support, and the motherhood penalty as continuing realities for women leaders. She describes the "double bind" in which women are expected to demonstrate competence while simultaneously conforming to traditional expectations of being agreeable and approachable.





Her own professional experiences have included comments questioning her abilities and credentials.

Over time, she has learned to distinguish other people's behavior from her own self-worth. She emphasizes setting firm boundaries, remaining focused on constructive feedback, and investing energy in relationships that promote growth rather than diminish confidence.

Her perspective offers an important lesson for emerging women leaders: resilience is not simply about enduring criticism. It is also about knowing which voices deserve attention.

Defining Success on Her Own Terms

Dr. Golec does not measure success exclusively through financial achievement.

She questions whether money, material possessions, or accumulated wealth should be treated as the primary indicators of a successful life. While financial security can provide options and stability, she believes a fulfilling life also requires health, meaningful relationships, inner peace, and purpose.

This philosophy helps explain why she approaches business, education, and community service as interconnected rather than separate responsibilities.

She seeks to enjoy the present, protect her family's privacy, travel to experience other cultures, and avoid excessive exposure to television, gossip, and social media. These choices reflect her belief in maintaining balance and protecting mental well-being.

For Dr. Golec, success is ultimately about creating a life aligned with personal values.

The Next Generation of Leaders and Musicians

Looking ahead, Dr. Golec remains focused on nurturing talent and strengthening community connections.

Among her upcoming initiatives are the Young Musicians' Concerts and the Ontario County ATHENA Leadership Awards, an event particularly meaningful to her because of its recognition of women who lead with passion, determination, and empathy. She was herself an honoree of the 39th Ontario County ATHENA Leadership Awards in 2024.

Her advice to aspiring musicians and entrepreneurs is simple but powerful: be kind, ask questions, seek strong mentors and sponsors, and build relationships with experienced professionals.

She also rejects the idea of "fake it until you make it." In her view, transparency, active learning, and consistency between personal values and professional behavior create a more credible and sustainable path.

A Legacy Built Through People

Dr. Beata Golec's journey illustrates a form of leadership that does not depend on being the loudest voice in the room.

Her influence comes from creating spaces where other people can find their voices.

Through Golec Music Studio, she has created an environment where children, adults, professionals, retirees, neurodiverse learners, returning musicians, and aspiring performers can pursue music according to their own goals. Through Young Musicians' Concerts, she has connected artistic expression with community service. Through teaching and mentorship, she encourages students to ask questions, take ownership of their creativity, and develop confidence. Through entrepreneurship, she demonstrates that a successful organization can be built around relationships, ethics, and service.

Most importantly, her philosophy is consistent across everything she does. Music should be shared. Education should be empathetic. Leadership should be people-first. Success should have purpose.

In a world increasingly focused on metrics, visibility, and immediate results, Dr. Golec offers a different perspective, one where lasting impact is created through relationships, creativity, kindness, and consistent service.

Her story is therefore not simply the story of a pianist, educator, or entrepreneur. It is the story of a leader who has chosen to use music as a means of connection and education as a means of empowerment.

And as the next generation of musicians steps forward, Dr. Golec continues to do what she has always believed music should do: give people the confidence, freedom, and opportunity to be heard.



CEO WORLD LEADERS



Yuka Hongo

Bridging Cultures, Building Trust, and Redefining Cross-Border Estate Planning

Leading with Purpose in a Globalized Legal Landscape

In today's interconnected world, legal challenges increasingly transcend borders, languages, and cultures. Few professionals understand this reality better than Yuka Hongo, Owner and Managing Attorney of Hongo Law Office, LLLC. Through her unique bicultural perspective and specialized expertise, Hongo has established herself as a trusted legal advisor for individuals and families navigating complex estate planning and administration matters across the United States and Japan.

Her journey is not simply one of professional achievement; it is a story of cultural understanding, perseverance, and a commitment to serving a niche community that often struggles to find legal guidance tailored to its unique needs.

From Japan to the United States: A Journey Shaped by Two Cultures

Born in Japan and raised in both Japanese and American environments, Yuka Hongo's life has been defined by her ability to navigate multiple cultures. While her family built a career in accounting, Hongo chose a different path—one that would ultimately allow her to combine her international outlook with her passion for helping others.

Determined to become an international lawyer, she attended law school in Los Angeles, California, one of the world's most diverse and globally connected cities. The experience provided her with a strong legal foundation and reinforced her desire to work in cross-border environments.

After law school, she gained valuable international experience in Japan before an opportunity emerged that would shape the next chapter of her career. When her family launched a business venture in Hawaii, Hongo relocated to Honolulu and established her own legal practice.

What began as a professional move soon evolved into a mission-driven career.

As she observed the challenges faced by many of her father's Japanese accounting clients, she noticed a recurring issue: estate planning and asset management concerns often lacked adequate legal support from professionals who truly understood both the American and Japanese perspectives.

While many Japanese-speaking attorneys in the United States focus on corporate law or immigration law, Hongo identified a significant gap in estate planning and estate administration services for Japanese and international clients. Recognizing this need, she dedicated her practice to helping individuals and families protect, manage, and transfer wealth across jurisdictions.

Finding Purpose Through Service

For many legal professionals, success is measured by the size of a firm or the number of clients served. For Hongo, success is defined differently.

Her daily motivation comes from knowing that there are people who need legal guidance from someone who understands not only the law but also the cultural nuances that influence important family and financial decisions.

"I know there are clients out there—especially Japanese and international clients—who need help from a lawyer who can speak their language and assist them with U.S. and cross-border estate planning and administration needs," she explains.

What makes her approach distinctive is her humility. Rather than focusing on accolades or titles, Hongo concentrates on providing practical solutions for clients facing complex legal situations.

Her bicultural background enables her to bridge communication gaps, clarify misunderstandings, and create legal strategies that align with both cultural expectations and legal requirements. This ability has become one of her greatest professional strengths and a defining feature of her practice.

Staying Relevant in a Rapidly Changing Legal Environment

The legal profession is constantly evolving. New regulations, changing tax laws, shifting economic conditions, and emerging global trends require attorneys to remain informed and adaptable.

For Hongo, continuous learning is not simply a professional responsibility—it's a daily habit.

One of her most notable initiatives is the creation of a monthly newsletter distributed to clients, professional contacts, and industry connections. Through this publication, she analyzes developments in U.S. and Japanese laws, tax regulations, and estate planning strategies.

The process requires extensive research and a commitment to staying informed about changes that could impact her clients.

Beyond legal research, Hongo also dedicates time to reading books on finance, wealth management, and broader economic topics. This multidisciplinary approach allows her to understand the bigger picture surrounding her clients' financial and personal goals.

By combining legal expertise with financial awareness, she ensures that her advice remains relevant in an increasingly complex world.



Building Knowledge Through Global Collaboration

Although Hongo Law Office remains a boutique practice, collaboration plays a significant role in its success.

Hongo maintains strong relationships with attorneys, accountants, and professionals in Japan who regularly exchange knowledge, referrals, and insights. These professional partnerships provide valuable perspectives on developments occurring in both countries and help her deliver more comprehensive support to clients facing cross-border issues.

These collaborations also reflect one of the core principles that guide her career: meaningful professional growth rarely happens in isolation.

By remaining connected to a network of experts across multiple disciplines and jurisdictions, she continues to expand her knowledge while creating stronger outcomes for clients.

The ability to leverage international relationships has become increasingly important as globalization creates more complex legal and financial situations for families with ties to multiple countries.

A Specialized Practice Serving Unique Client Needs

At the heart of Hongo Law Office is a commitment to personalized service.

The firm's primary areas of focus include estate planning, estate administration, probate matters, trusts, wills, and U.S. estate tax filings for non-residents. Additionally, the practice provides guidance on cross-border legal and financial issues affecting international clients.

Many of the firm's clients include Japanese nationals, Japanese-American families, international investors, and married couples in which one spouse is Japanese. These clients often face unique legal considerations that require specialized knowledge of both U.S. and Japanese systems.

Whether helping families preserve wealth across generations or assisting individuals in navigating estate administration after the loss of a loved one, Hongo approaches each matter with sensitivity and attention to detail.

Her ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become a key differentiator in a field where trust, clarity, and understanding are essential.

Leadership Through Empathy and Client-Centered Service

As an entrepreneur and legal professional, Hongo views leadership through the lens of service.

While she acknowledges that her organization is still growing, she has a clear vision for the culture she hopes to build in the future. Rather than focusing solely on operational efficiency or financial metrics, she emphasizes the importance of understanding the client's perspective.

In her view, successful legal representation begins with listening.

Clients seek legal assistance during some of the most important and emotionally significant moments of their lives. Whether creating an estate plan, administering a loved one's estate, or managing cross-border family assets, clients need professionals who genuinely understand their concerns.

Hongo believes that by carefully listening to client needs and delivering thoughtful, personalized solutions, legal professionals can build lasting relationships based on trust.

This philosophy not only enhances client satisfaction but also encourages long-term loyalty and referrals—two critical components of sustainable business growth.

Lessons Learned Through Entrepreneurship

Building a business is rarely a straightforward journey, and Hongo openly acknowledges the challenges that come with entrepreneurship.

Like many business owners, she has faced uncertainty regarding which decisions, strategies, or investments would produce the best results. Yet these experiences have taught her one of the most valuable lessons in leadership: perfection is not always possible.

Instead, success often comes from making the best decision available with the information at hand and adapting as circumstances evolve.

Her perspective reflects a level of resilience that many entrepreneurs develop over time. Mistakes, setbacks, and unexpected outcomes are inevitable, but they also create opportunities for learning and growth.

Rather than allowing challenges to become obstacles, Hongo views them as part of the ongoing process of building a meaningful and sustainable practice.

Creating Balance in a Demanding Profession

The legal profession is known for its demanding workload and high-pressure environment. Maintaining personal well-being can be difficult, particularly for entrepreneurs who manage both client responsibilities and business operations.

For Hongo, balance comes through simplicity.

She enjoys cooking and taking walks along Hawaii's beautiful beaches—activities that allow her to recharge and gain perspective outside of work. Although she continues to explore new hobbies and interests, these moments of relaxation play an important role in maintaining both personal well-being and professional effectiveness.

Her approach serves as a reminder that sustainable success requires more than professional accomplishment. It also requires time for reflection, self-care, and meaningful personal experiences.

Looking Toward the Future

As she continues to expand her practice, Hongo remains focused on growth opportunities that align with client needs and market demand.

One area of particular interest is real estate law, which she hopes to explore further in the future. Given Hawaii's unique real estate market and the growing number of international investors with interests in U.S. property, this expansion represents a natural evolution of her expertise.

At the same time, she remains committed to strengthening the firm's existing capabilities in estate planning, estate administration, and cross-border legal services.

Her long-term vision is not simply about growing a larger practice. It is about creating greater value for clients while continuing to serve as a trusted bridge between cultures.

A Legacy Beyond the Practice of Law

When asked about the legacy she hopes to leave behind, Hongo's answer extends beyond legal accomplishments or business success.

As someone who was born in Japan and moved to the United States during her teenage years, she has spent much of her life navigating two cultural identities.

Rather than viewing this experience as a challenge, she has transformed it into a source of strength.

Her goal is to demonstrate that bicultural and bilingual individuals possess unique advantages that can create meaningful impact in professional and personal settings. By embracing both sides of her identity, she has built a career dedicated to helping others navigate complex cross-cultural environments.

For future generations of professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders, her story offers an important message: differences can become strengths when used to serve others.

Through her work, Yuka Hongo continues to prove that legal expertise combined with cultural understanding can create extraordinary value. In a world where international connections are becoming increasingly common, her commitment to bridging cultures, building trust, and empowering clients stands as a powerful example of modern leadership.

As she continues her journey, one thing remains clear—her impact reaches far beyond legal documents and court proceedings. It is reflected in the families she helps, the relationships she builds, and the example she sets for professionals navigating multiple cultures in an increasingly globalized world.



**The Man, The Mission, The
Movement:**

CHAD BEAM

**Leads the 3 Betties Foundation with
Authenticity and Unwavering Purpose**

**President and
Founder**



re landscape where cancer support is often dominated by sprawling national nonprofits with massive budgets, the quiet, rural communities of West Virginia can easily fall through the cracks. Beyond the ed, families are engulfed by the logistical nightmares of travel and finances, and a profound lack of man guidance within a strained and impersonal system that too often replaces genuine understanding l sympathy.

dly into this gap is Chad Beam, President and Founder of the 3 Betties Foundation, who is not ther distant charity but leading a deeply personal movement rooted in the belief that true support e medical jargon ends. Armed with the hard-won credibility of lived experience and a team of so have all "been there and done that," Beam is redefining community cancer care by replacing empty ith the simple, healing power of saying, "We get it." Born from the profound personal loss of his many other family members to cancer, and shaped by the silent sacrifice of his aunt, who hid her own protect her family from having to deal with the specter of having 3 members battling concurrently, his storms grief into a grassroots lifeline, proving that the most visionary leadership often rises from the l of struggles.



The Invisible Industry

the Hidden Power of Trade Shows

By all appearances, trade shows are temporary events. Booths rise overnight, crowds flood convention halls for a few days, and then everything disappears as if nothing had happened. Yet behind those brief moments lies one of the most powerful economic engines in the modern world: an industry responsible for millions of jobs, billions in tax revenues, and the launching pad of products and partnerships that shape global commerce.

For more than fifty years, Larry Kulchawik lived inside that world. As an exhibit designer, executive, industry leader, author, and international advocate, he witnessed firsthand how trade shows evolved from local exhibitions into a trillion-dollar global ecosystem. Today, through his books *The Invisible Industry* and *Trade Shows from One Country to the Next*, Kulchawik is finally giving this hidden business community the recognition it deserves.

“Every major business deal, every product launch, every brand that changed the way you live your life, somewhere along the way, a trade show was involved,” Kulchawik explains. “Yet almost nobody talks about the industry that made it all possible.”

This realization became the driving force behind his writing and his mission: to shine a spotlight on an industry that has long operated beneath public awareness while quietly fueling economies around the world.

The Origins of an Industry Hidden in Plain Sight

The roots of modern trade shows can be traced back to the great World’s Fairs of Europe and America. Those historic exhibitions introduced revolutionary inventions, new technologies, and groundbreaking ideas to the public. They became the stages where nations demonstrated industrial progress and businesses unveiled their innovations that would transform society.

According to Kulchawik, the World Fairs inspired industries to create specialized events dedicated to their own products and services. Early exhibitions in the United States included automobile shows, bicycle shows, electrical expositions, and home and garden fairs. Over time, the concept evolved into business-to-business trade shows where attendance was limited to qualified professionals and buyers.

As industries expanded, hotels could no longer accommodate the scale of these gatherings. Major American cities responded by building convention centers that became the backbone of a rapidly growing events industry. Around these centers emerged a sophisticated support network of contractors, designers, logistics providers, hospitality workers, marketers, and production specialists, as well as hotels and restaurants.

What began as a simple exhibition eventually transformed into a financial ecosystem generating more than a trillion dollars in economic impact for each city.

“The convention and events industry does not make products,” Kulchawik says.

“It makes the conditions under which products are introduced to the world.”

That distinction defines the true power of the trade show industry. It is not merely about displays and exhibits. It is about creating environments where relationships are formed, deals are negotiated, ideas are exchanged, products are displayed, and industries prosper.



A Career Built by Accident and Passion

Ironically, Larry Kulchawik never planned to enter the trade show business.

After studying design at Southern Illinois University, where legendary futurist and inventor Buckminster Fuller influenced his thinking about creativity and problem-solving, Kulchawik returned to Chicago searching for a job. At that exact moment, Chicago’s famous McCormick Place convention center had suffered a devastating fire and was being rebuilt.

This reconstruction created opportunities in exhibit design, and Kulchawik took a position in the field almost by chance.

“I had a degree in design,” he recalls. “But design what?”

That accidental beginning became a lifelong calling.

Kulchawik eventually joined Greyhound Exhibitgroup, then the largest exhibit company in the world, where he rose through the ranks to become president of the Chicago division. Along the way, he developed a deep understanding of how trade shows influenced industries, economies, and international business relationships.

But more importantly, he discovered something else: almost nobody intentionally entered the industry.

“Most people working in this industry had never gone to school to prepare for it,” Kulchawik explains. “Like me, they stumbled into it and learned by trial and error.”

Yet once they discovered the energy and excitement of the business, many stayed for life.

Trade shows require rapid problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, technical skill, and the ability to perform under pressure. Every event comes with hard deadlines and high expectations. For people who thrive in dynamic environments, the work becomes addictive.

“A trade show is only three or four days long,” Kulchawik says, “but it can take three months to prepare for, unlike a building that can take a year.”

The Industry Nobody Sees

Despite its enormous economic influence, the trade show world remains largely invisible to the general public.

Unlike concerts or sporting events, most trade shows are private gatherings restricted to industry professionals. They receive little mainstream advertising because attendance is invitation-based. As a result, millions of people pass convention centers every day without realizing the economic activity unfolding inside.

Kulchawik compares the industry to a stealth operation working quietly beneath the surface.

“Trade shows are stealth bombers flying below the radar,” he says. “They nurture businesses, launch products, and stimulate local economies without most people even noticing.”

Behind every successful event exists a vast workforce. Carpenters construct booths. Electricians wire displays. Graphic designers produce branding materials. Forklift operators move freight. Audio-visual technicians create immersive experiences.

Caterers feed thousands of attendees.

Travel coordinators manage logistics. Marketing teams promote exhibitors. Event managers oversee operations.

Together, these professionals form an intricate support system that allows exhibitions to function seamlessly.

The scale of each event is staggering.

In the United States alone, the events and exhibitions industry supports approximately 6.6 million jobs and generates hundreds of billions of dollars in direct spending across hotels, restaurants, airlines, transportation services, retail businesses, and entertainment venues.

Yet for decades, the people driving this economic engine rarely received public recognition.

That invisibility became one of the central themes behind Kulchawik’s book *The Invisible Industry*.



Writing the History of a Hidden World

After fifty years in the business, Kulchawik retired in 2025 alongside colleague and co-author Bob McGlincy. Rather than simply stepping away, the two veterans decided to document the history and evolution of the trade show industry for future generations.

McGlincy, a passionate historian, focused on the origins of World’s Fairs and the early development of exhibitions in Europe and America. Kulchawik concentrated on the rise of convention centers, exhibit companies, industry associations, and the individual people who shaped the modern events business.

Together, they created a comprehensive narrative explaining how trade shows became one of the world’s most influential economic systems.

Their work also addresses an important educational gap.

For decades, there were few formal pathways into the industry. Most professionals entered through unrelated careers and learned on the job. Kulchawik believes that must change.

“The industry realized we could no longer depend on people simply fumbling into it,” he explains.

Today, universities and professional organizations are beginning to create structured training programs in exhibit design, event management, and meeting planning. Institutions such as UNLV, Auburn University, Bemidji State University, and FIT in New York now offer specialized programs connected to the events industry.

Industry groups, like IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions & Events), and the Exhibition and Events Workforce Development Federation, and others continue to play a vital role in shaping talent pipelines, strengthening industry awareness, and driving long-term innovation across the sector.

“The gears are now in motion,” Kulchawik says. “The industry is no longer going to remain invisible.”

The COVID Crisis and the Industry’s Resilience

Perhaps no event tested the trade show industry more severely than the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtually overnight, conventions, meetings, and exhibitions around the world came to a halt. Convention centers emptied. Workers lost jobs. Supply chains collapsed. Many businesses faced uncertainty about whether live events would ever fully recover.

Virtual meetings briefly emerged as an alternative. Companies experimented with online exhibitions and digital networking platforms. But according to Kulchawik, the industry quickly discovered that technology could not replicate the emotional power of face-to-face interaction.

“No other communication method could replace the power of in-person selling,” he says.

Human connection remains central to business relationships. Buyers want to see products firsthand. Companies want direct conversations with clients. Exhibitors want emotional engagement that digital screens simply cannot deliver. When restrictions were lifted, the industry rebounded with remarkable speed.

Trade shows returned stronger than expected, proving that live experiences still hold enormous value in a digital world. However, the pandemic also revealed workforce shortages, prompting renewed efforts to recruit and train skilled labor across the industry.

For Kulchawik, the recovery reinforced a simple truth: trade shows are not optional luxuries. They are essential drivers of commerce, innovation, and economic growth.

Taking Trade Shows Global

While *The Invisible Industry* explored the historical and economic foundation of exhibitions, Kulchawik’s second book tackled a different challenge: international trade show strategy.

After serving as president of the Exhibit Designers & Producers Association (EDPA), Kulchawik recognized that many American companies lacked experience exhibiting overseas. While European and Asian businesses had long embraced international trade fairs, U.S. companies traditionally focused primarily on domestic markets.

That began to change in the early 2000s as globalization accelerated and companies sought new opportunities abroad. Kulchawik became deeply involved with IFES, the International Federation of Exhibition and Event Services, eventually becoming the first American president in the organization’s history.

His work exposed him to exhibit professionals from dozens of countries, each with unique business customs, cultural expectations, labor systems, and exhibition styles.

He soon recognized a recurring problem: companies often assumed their domestic trade show strategies would work the same way internationally. “They don’t,” Kulchawik says bluntly.

A successful exhibit approach in Las Vegas may fail completely in Dubai, Paris, Shanghai, or São Paulo. Cultural expectations differ dramatically. Communication styles vary. Business etiquette changes from country to country. To address these challenges, Kulchawik gathered insights from exhibition experts across 45 nations and compiled them into *Trade Shows from One Country to the Next* — a practical guidebook designed to help companies navigate international exhibiting successfully.

His core message is simple but powerful:

“There is no right way or wrong way,” he explains. “There is only a different way.”

The book emphasizes cultural awareness, adaptability, and respect for local business practices principles increasingly critical in today’s interconnected economy.

The Human Side of Trade Shows

Beyond economics and strategy, Kulchawik believes the exhibition industry ultimately revolves around human behavior.

Trade shows create environments where people gather to exchange ideas, build trust, solve problems, and create opportunities. In many ways, they reflect one of humanity’s oldest instincts: coming together in marketplaces to share goods and knowledge.

“We didn’t invent trade shows,” Kulchawik says. “We inherited them, and we made them better.”

That perspective helps explain why the industry has endured despite technological disruption, economic downturns, and global crises. Human beings still crave direct interaction. Relationships still matter. Experiences still influence decisions.

In an age increasingly dominated by automation and digital communication, trade shows continue to provide something irreplaceable personal connection.

A Legacy Beyond Exhibits

Today, Larry Kulchawik’s legacy extends far beyond exhibit halls and convention centers.

Through his leadership roles, international advocacy, and writing, he has helped document the history of an industry that quietly shapes the modern economy. More importantly, he has elevated awareness about the millions of people whose careers depend on live events and exhibitions.

His books are not merely historical records; they are calls for recognition. Recognition for the designers who create immersive brand experiences. Recognition for the crews who work overnight to build convention floors. Recognition for the organizers who coordinate massive events behind the scenes. Recognition for the educators preparing the next generation of professionals. Recognition for an industry that drives innovation while remaining largely unseen. Trade shows may still operate behind the scenes, but thanks to voices like Larry Kulchawik’s, the world is finally beginning to understand their true impact. And perhaps that is the greatest achievement of all: transforming an invisible industry into a visible force worthy of appreciation, investment, and future growth.





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