

# Melissa Fors Shackelford, MBA, NACD.DC, APR

KEYNOTE SPEAKER · TRUST. PURPOSE. RESILIENCE.

"Helping leaders turn purpose into performance and vision into action"

TEDx Speaker · 100,000+ views | Amazon #1 Bestselling Author, *Harnessing Purpose* | 25 years leading teams at Fortune 50 and national nonprofit organizations



TEDXDULUTH · 100,000+ VIEWS



OLAFSON ETHICS SYMPOSIUM - UND



EMI HOUSTON



## Watch the speaker reel

Two minutes on stage, live audience.  
[youtu.be/IyVesD8tQ0k](https://youtu.be/IyVesD8tQ0k)



## Watch the TEDx talk

"How to Make Purpose Your Lifeline When Life Gets Hard"  
[youtu.be/epH-Tftu4Oo](https://youtu.be/epH-Tftu4Oo)

## About Melissa

Melissa Fors Shackelford spent twenty-five years leading marketing and communications teams through change inside Fortune 50 companies and national nonprofits, including Optum, Cigna's Evernorth, and Hazelden Betty Ford. She now runs Shackelford Strategies, where she advises CEOs and leadership teams across healthcare, technology, and mission-driven organizations on growth that does not cost them their culture.

She is the author of the Amazon #1 bestseller *Harnessing Purpose* and the TEDx speaker behind "How to Make Purpose Your Lifeline When Life Gets Hard," viewed more than 100,000 times. She serves as chair of the Governance and Nominations Committee at Asbury Communities and on the boards of Women's Health Leadership TRUST and the American Hospital Association's SHSMD Advisory Board. She has been named to Ragan Communications and PR Daily's Top Women in Marketing Class of 2026, Nonprofit Marketer of the Year by the American Marketing Association, and one of the Top 50 Women in Healthcare.

### FEATURED KEYNOTE

## The Shared Purpose Payoff

Why connection to purpose makes people more engaged, more fulfilled, and more effective.

**Two out of three people feel disconnected from the work they do. That gap is not a morale problem. It is a performance problem, and it shows up as turnover, burnout, and teams that are present but not switched on.**

Melissa has spent twenty-five years inside that gap, leading teams through it and studying what actually closes it. She makes the business case first, then the human one, then the part most talks skip: what makes purpose hold when conditions get hard and people are being asked to do more with less. She takes on psychological safety and burnout directly, without the usual lip service. Leaders leave with three specific moves they can make Monday morning, and a clear answer to the question their people are quietly asking, which is whether any of this matters.

### ATTENDEES WILL LEAVE ABLE TO

- Name the real cost of disconnection in their own organization, in the terms leadership already tracks: retention, productivity, and burnout.
- Give every person on their team line of sight to who benefits from their work, including the roles that sit two steps removed from the customer or resident.
- Identify what energizes each individual and shift one thing toward it, using a two-question approach they can run in their next one-on-one.
- Build alignment through collaboration instead of mandate, so purpose is something their team articulates rather than something handed to them.

**Built for:** all-leader meetings and leadership summits, executive and HR conferences, women's leadership events, and employee resource groups. Available as a 45 or 60 minute keynote, or a half-day workshop.

## Also Available

### AI Can't Rebuild Trust

*The human side of innovation.*

AI can predict patterns, speed decisions, and flag risk. It cannot manufacture trust, and without trust, adoption stalls. This keynote reframes innovation around human proof, clarity, and accountability, drawing on Melissa's work in high-stakes industries where the cost of getting trust wrong is measured in people, not clicks.

**Audience leaves with:** a trust-by-design framework, plain-language do's and don'ts for communicating AI and automation, and a way to measure trust that goes past satisfaction scores.

### Marketing With a Conscience

*Reclaiming integrity in a purpose-driven age.*

In a market this skeptical, integrity is not a nice-to-have. Melissa uses real cases, including the addiction treatment industry's ban from Google Ads, to show how systems drift from their ethics and how leaders course-correct before the drift becomes a reputational problem.

**Audience leaves with:** an ethical decision checklist, a trust and harm pre-mortem method, and language guidelines for being transparent without overpromising.

## What Hosts Say

*"Melissa was an outstanding speaker for our Olafson Ethics Symposium. She brought insightful stories, real-world experiences, and thought provoking discussion to our students and campus community."*

**Laura Arneson, University of North Dakota**

*"The conversation was energizing, leaving me with a clear takeaway: the critical importance of leading with your full, authentic self."*

**Lindsay Amundson, CMO, Sabrosura Foods**

*"It is so refreshing to hear your passion for healthcare marketing and how there are real outcomes with the content we put out there."*

**Andy Pondillo, The Making of a Marketer**

## Recognition

- #1 Amazon Bestseller, *Harnessing Purpose: A Marketer's Guide to Inspiring Connection*
- TEDx speaker, 100,000+ views
- Top Women in Marketing, Class of 2026, Ragan Communications and PR Daily
- Nonprofit Marketer of the Year, American Marketing Association
- Women's Health Leadership TRUST Award
- Top 50 Women in Healthcare (2025)
- NACD.DC board director designation



### SELECTED STAGES

TEDx  
Duluth

American Marketing  
Association

University of Minnesota  
Women's Leadership Conference

UND Nistler College of  
Business & Public Administration

American Hospital Association's  
SHSMD

Forum for Healthcare  
Strategists

## Book Melissa for your next event

For availability, fees, and custom program design, get in touch directly.

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