



## SPEAKING UP FOR BUSINESS

**DESPITE STANDING** front and center as senior vice president of communications for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MACOC), Esther Campi, 36, claims she's actually an introvert.

"People who know me laugh when I say that," she says. "I guess I overcame my introversion because of my curiosity. I'm interested in the way the world works, and I believe every person has an interesting story to tell."

And she shares this tidbit of family lore. "My grandfather worked for a traveling carnival," she says. "He went to each new town to build relationships with the mayor or other officials, making sure there weren't going to be any problems when the carnival arrived. He had the ability to talk to anyone."

Whether it was nurture or nature, there's no doubt that Campi's gift for communication fueled her already diverse career.

Though she moved frequently as a youngster, Campi claims Nashville, Tenn., where she graduated from high school, as her hometown. She says those early moves added to her skill set.

"You learn how to talk to people and find common ground," she says. "You learn that there's not just one way of doing things."

After earning a degree in journalism from Middle

Tennessee State University, Campi earned her master's in journalism from Northwestern University in Chicago.

"I knew I always wanted to be a reporter," she says. "But I couldn't have mapped out my career. The bright, common line is that my job has been about getting to the heart of an idea and then explaining it in a way people will understand and care about it."

She accomplished that both as a journalist in Biloxi, Miss., writing for the

**"The right idea can change the world but you have to have the right words," says the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce's Esther Campi.**

*Sun-Herald* and in upstate New York writing for *The Ithaca Journal* and as a press aide to former U.S. Sen. Fred Thompson (R-TN) in Washington, DC.

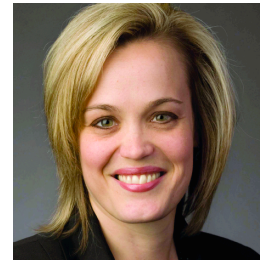
"I had worked for Senator Thompson as an intern and told him I was leaving to become a reporter," Campi says. "He told me that working for him would teach me more about journalism than any school!"

Each morning they read 16 newspapers. A news and politics junkie, Campi recalled the day she was in the office and saw Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Bob Woodward on one side of the office and then Attorney General Janet

Reno on the other. "I thought I was in heaven," she says.

Then there was the staff meeting when Thompson went around the room gathering opinions. "He asked what I thought, and I didn't expect to be called on," Campi says. "It taught me that no matter how young you are, you should be prepared and ready to contribute. I try to do the same thing in my staff meetings today. I want everyone to know their brain is part of the process."

have to have the right words. We have a fantastic communications team (at MACOC)," Campi says. "We meet each morning at 9 a.m., everyone presents for 90 seconds about what they're doing. We read six newspapers, local and national, and talk about the news of the day. We're constantly watching the news and anticipating our next move and we work hand in hand with the economic



METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER

**No Spin:** Esther Campi

development and public policy arms of MACOC to make sure we're supporting their ideas."

Just don't call her a 'spin doctor.' "There's no such thing as 'spin,'" Campi says. "My job is to tell the truth, explain the intention, and behave with consistent trustworthiness. You can't really expect people to understand what you're attempting to do unless you explain your intentions, usually over and over again. I try to cut through the jargon and the complexity of an issue to explain why people should care."