

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

October 25, 2013



Topic: "Google: An Insider's Perspective – How the Culture Really Works"

Kathy Daly-Jennings, Head of Industry, Retail Practice at Google, joined us this month at the 125th consecutive Women in Leadership seminar to share her insights and perspective on the Google culture. Kathy began her career as a receptionist and quickly climbed the ladder after getting her MBA and developing an interest in interactive marketing.

Early on, Kathy worked at the Weather Channel and was asked to build their first website ever. She advanced to careers at USWeb and Home Depot and helped launch many new brands before coming to Google.

Kathy shared with the group her perspective on the Google culture. In 2004, Google founders stated, "Google is not a conventional company and it does not intend to become one." This set an important tone from the company's beginning as to how it determined to position itself in the future. The SVP of People Operations also highlights the importance of making the world a better place through technology and the official mission of Google, "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." Kathy says that leadership at Google is truly transparent and constantly being challenged to do the right things. As a Googler, you are expected to participate and make it a great company as well.

Kathy shared several interesting practices that Google has implemented that have shaped the company's culture:

- Retro-fit Buildings – Google typically does not build new offices, but rather revamps existing spaces
- Shared Office Spaces – very few people have their own office
- Free breakfast and lunch everyday
- Free bikes at Mountain View campus
- TGIT – leaders speak to the whole company on Thursdays
- Interview process – the perfect number of interviews is 4
- Ideas come from everywhere, so there are white boards all over the organization that are not cleaned to retain ideas and foster creativity
- "Googlegeist" – an annual employee survey
- "Googler" – the name for those who work at Google, because they are expected to act like owners; Googlers get to "work on cool stuff that matters."

Key points from Q&A:

- Google has a culture that facilitates innovation through giving smart people great tools and expecting them to collaborate.
- Senior leaders have a huge influence on the company culture
- When joining Google, Kathy says she had to change her personal behavior and her approach to management.
- Kathy says she is as much a team member as she is a manager.
- "If you give people freedom, they will amaze you."