

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

May 30th, 2014



Topic: *“Why It Matters to Know, to Lead with, and to Live Your Personal Brand” featuring Carol Godfrey, VP of Marketing and Product Development, Southwire – Energy Division.*

Carol Godfrey works with Southwire, a privately held company, and one of the largest manufacturers of wire and cable in the world. Carol helps maintain the company’s presence in the power and renewable energy industry. An Auburn engineering graduate, she has many years of marketing, sales, and manufacturing leadership roles with other companies like Hubbell Inc., Alcan, Ralston Purina, and Tampa Electric. Within her current company she’s respected for her common sense leadership approach, her authenticity, and for co-leading Southwire’s Engineering Academy, a cooperative internship program with Carrollton High School.

Carol joined us this May to share why it matters to know, to live by, and to lead with a personal brand. She began her presentation by taking us back to her first year in college. This was before the time of Facebook, and she described using the Freshman Register as a method of searching for other students. During this time she was taking an advanced chemistry course, and being terrified of “failing” the course seemed to be the only aspect of her life that she could attend to during this stressful time. Carol told us that her younger sister had called her on the phone to tell her about a note she had found in their old school before it was to be renovated. Carol admitted that she was not fully attentive to this conversation, and dismissively told her sister to send it to her. Upon receiving the letter, Carol was surprised to read that it was a small essay she had written in the first grade. The title was “Why I Need an Education”, and the essay read similar to this: “So that I can ride a car so that I can help my sister so that I can teach my child to read so that I can get a job so that I can learn more about my job.”

This essay she wrote in the first grade impacted Carol. She remembers reading it, thinking to herself that this is a personal anchor. Even to this day she can find themes that were already her roots. In fact, Carol still keeps this in her office and it reminds her who Carol Godfrey is going to be as a person. She shared with us her own brand statement...

“ Care Intensely ”

Why this for her personal brand? Carol let us know that it is natural to her personality and functioning as a person. She cares about her people, her projects, and her family. She mentioned how she cares enough to get a task or project done, and that the caring component comes in the ability to lead. Carol mentions how this is not an innovative concept: many people also have brand statements. She asked for us to all consider what our statements would be, and she emphasized how this is something we must be able to live up to every single day.

Throughout her own experiences, Carol has developed a sense of how to live by a personal brand. According to Carol, it is pertinent to develop checks and balances, and to hold yourself accountable to these. Her own example is a symbolic one; more specifically, Carol uses her name badge at work as a checkpoint. As she is “badging out” of work each day, she pauses for a moment to ask herself, “Have I lived by my personal brand today and done as well as I could?”

Carol ended her presentation by sharing some mistakes she has made along the way (so we don’t have to!). First, be aware of your pi. No, not the food, be aware of what level of detail you need when solving a problem. Carol said what helped her become more efficient and better at her job was knowing if she needed to provide the number for pi at 3.14 or at 3.14159265359. The devil is in the details, so know how much information will

truly be helpful. Second, if you are really great at something, people will recognize this and give you more and more of this to do; however, then you only end up doing that. Don't get stuck in that niche, make it clear that you'd like to move on a try new things. Third, she reminds us that it is unnecessary to live under a magnifying glass. She explained that things are going to go wrong, and they do. Stand there and take the heat for a minute to understand what happened, but don't stand there for too long – it doesn't help to bask in your mistakes, it is important to move on.

Q&A

- How would you describe yourself as a leader?

Usually for me, leading is often listening a lot because things do not usually show up at your table unless they are complex. Often I have to lead people to conclusions and solutions. I listen and decompile, and then shorten it down so I can figure out what to do with a problem.

- Can you tell us more about the programs you have for students?

Southwire as a company and Carol personally are committed to changing educational outcomes through very unique public/private partnerships with local schools. The two flagship programs that she has been involved with are:

1. 12 for Life (www.12forlife.com). Partnered with Carrollton county schools and others, high school students who are at risk to graduate are engaged in a very unique and transformative school/work learning environment whereby students attend classes for ½ day and then transition to the work environment for 4 hours. At a facility built uniquely for student-age-appropriate work, 12 for Life employees further manufacture and finish goods sold to Southwire's most prestigious customers, like Lowes and Home Depot. Student/Employees earn a paycheck (they would work other places, like fast food, etc.), but the total emphasis is on getting their high school diploma (12 year of education ... hence 12 for Life). Over 800 students have graduated through the program.
2. The Southwire Engineering Academy (www.southwireea.com); Junior and Senior high school Students who are accelerated in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) spend the last two period of the day, every other day, under the supervision of Engineering mentors, solve real engineering challenges at Southwire. Teams work together throughout the year and have developed app, work on line efficiency and other business required engineering. Carol and her colleague are the executive sponsors of the project, bringing it to life in cooperation with the Carrollton City Schools in a true educational partnership.

- "Care intensely" – how do you decide what to care about and what to let go?

I use the analogy that there are 3 legs on the Carol Godfrey stool:

1. Family
2. Work
3. Carol

I try to get myself in harmony when I notice that they're getting out of balance. I don't always keep it balanced, but I also try to be kind to myself.

- How do you handle hearing things people say about you if it's not something you would have expected someone to say?

When I was 50, I got to a point where I had to figure out what I needed to work on and what I want to do. I created my own program called my "Points of Light." I gathered a group of people close to me in different part of my life – work, family, friends – and essentially interviewed them to see what I needed to work on and where I should go with my life. It was great insight into myself and my brand. A couple of people told me that sometimes I'm so intense that people wonder if I've thought things through, and that helped me understand that 'sometimes your strength can be your weakness.'

- How long have you had your personal brand?
I've had it for about 6 or 7 years now, and it has stood the test of time.
- In a male dominated industry, what is it like working in a male dominated world?
This started pretty young, but my father told me that you always have to know your stuff. It's easier when you know what you're doing and what you're talking about. Once you know your stuff and you deliver on it, it's magic! You're memorable!