

## Highlights

### April 21<sup>st</sup> Women In Leadership Seminar

#### **Guest Speakers / Discussion Leaders:**

**Gwen Jolley, Chief Information Officer / Business Insurance – Choicepoint**

**Chris Cole, VP – HR – Oxford Industries, Inc.**

**Gwen:** Grew up in Arkansas and went from family having a “chicken farm” to “living in London next door to Buckingham Palace.” Mother told her “Anything is possible” and she believes it’s true.

From an early age, she knew the value of a female support network, beginning with her mother and sister. Her sister taught her to “think outside the box” long before others were using the phrase.

Even though she chose to major in English, she was always good in math and she moved up quickly at the IRS where she began her career in IT. She learned early on to “ask for what you want” and “you might just get it.” While she’s had an outstanding career as a CIO and senior IT consultant from the U.S. to England to Australia, she is especially proud of being part of “FANs” – otherwise known as her “2 a.m. network of females supporters” / Fresh Air Network. This group has been a turning point in her life and career.

#### **Q. How did you pick your “2 a.m. network of female supporters?”**

A. Clear about our expectations ...

- Established unconditional trust
- Looked for eclectic mix of interests / experience / backgrounds
- One person initiated the “group” / added one person at a time up to 13
- Decided to make our network national – women from all across the country
- Only one person from each company / organization
- Have been “networked” since 1993
- Continues to call on different ones for advice and counsel, e.g., when she negotiates her own hiring contract, one network member helps her get significantly more than she would ordinarily ask for. Most recently, she negotiated for a driver so she could get more done during the long commute in the Atlanta traffic!!!

Gwen also said she tries to “burn no bridges” when she leaves one position or company and moves to another. She actually maintains relationships and keeps in touch with people she worked with years ago. “You never know who knows whom” and who can help you open a door down the road.

#### **Q: What do you know now that you wish you knew then?**

A: “Personal financials – what I’m worth in the marketplace...”

**Chris:** Chris has a manufacturing and telecommunications background and hasn’t always been in HR. She joined the FANs group for different reasons than Gwen, mainly to have female peers to interact with – because she worked in a predominantly male environment and didn’t have time to join traditional clubs. One member of the Network introduced her.

#### **Major benefits / learning points:**

- Network allowed her to stay true to her principles of leadership, specifically women’s style of leadership

- Knows she can do anything but “how” you do it is the important thing
- Being part of the network is different from just being friends because their primary focus is professional life, work and career
- Learned that it's not a weakness to ask for help
- Believes one of the strengths women bring to the leadership table is that we “manage more for the long-term”

**Q: What if women could change the world of business – what would be different?**

A: More long-term focus and...

- We'd learn from negative role models (i.e., what not to emulate) as much as from positive ones
- Greater collaboration
- Look at problems differently
- Hold executive meetings in the ladies room!