

## Women in Leadership Seminar 1/26/07



Anita Sharpe



Sue McLaughlin

### **“Purpose, Passion, and Profit: The Ideal Work/Life Solution: with Sue McLaughlin, CEO – Motto Media & Anita Sharpe – Co-founding Editor**

**Susan (Sue) McLaughlin’s story:** She grew up in the mid-west, a family of academics including her grandfather who was president of two colleges. Always planned to be teacher but when she graduated college, she drove her yellow VW to the big city and took a temporary job with CitiBank.

“I guess people there saw more in me than I saw in myself and moved me along in the business.” Actually, she was with CitiBank for 14 years, was promoted to a top management position and learned a lot about financial services.

“It was a great experience,” she said, “ but I was part of the ‘corporate property.’ I also confused adrenaline for passion and I decided to leave to pursue other opportunities.”

Those opportunities included senior leadership positions with Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY; with BellSouth in Atlanta; and with AGL Resources, also in Atlanta. She left the corporate world several years ago to pursue her true passion, entrepreneurship. While serving on several corporate boards, she also found time to do a “turn around” of a Chicago company and to invest in several entrepreneurial ventures.

Then she met Anita Sharpe and Kevin Salwen – co-founding editors of *Worthwhile Magazine* – whose name has now changed to *Motto Magazine*. She knew she’d found a connection with these two and the mission of their publication: to connect people who want their careers to stand for more than a paycheck and to demonstrate that you can have it all – PURPOSE, PASSION & PROFIT. Sue is now their partner and CEO of Motto Media, the business behind the magazine.

“I’ve found myself at *Motto*,” Sue said, “It’s a great business opportunity AND we can change the world!”

### **A few of Sue’s observations:**

1. Women may have lower expectations: At a dinner with some Georgia Tech MBA students, I asked what salaries they expected to earn. Most of the women looked down and replied in the “\$75 - \$150K” range. The guys, without blinking said, “\$250K” and make the world a better place.
2. Sue is in her early 50’s, no children and never been married. She remembers a time in her career when she honestly had no appreciation for working mothers and fathers. She was holding meetings with her staff at 6 a.m., and a young father said to her, “I’m sorry but I can’t be here at 6 a.m. I have to help get my kids to school.” From that experience she became more aware that work isn’t the only thing in people’s lives and she found it was possible to alter her 6 a.m. meetings and still do what needed to be done for the business.
3. A compelling article in the Harvard Business Journal entitled: “The Allure of the 70-Hour Work Week.” If you haven’t read it, you should.
4. Net Impact – An organization that started among young professionals in northern California – individuals who want to use business to change the world. 2200 people came to a convention in Chicago.

**Anita Sharpe’s story:** She loved her high school English classes so much she decided to abandon math as her expected major and instead majored in English at Vanderbilt where she graduated *magna cum laude*. Anita became editor of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* and under her direction, the ABC twice won the national Gerald Loeb Award, the highest honor in financial journalism and circulation increased ten-fold. Later, at the *Wall Street Journal* – where she and Kevin Salwen would meet – she became a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer.

As her career continued, she said, “I became less interested in pointing fingers at the darkness and more interested in pointing toward the light.” Now she follows her heart everyday by using her writing, editing, creative and business skills to bring the light that’s in her to the public through *Motto*.

“The *Motto* Manifesto talks about individuals and companies and where they come together. We believe it’s possible to have both: passion and purpose in your work AND make money. It’s not either or – Now it’s both. (Go to [www.whatsyourmotto.com](http://www.whatsyourmotto.com) to read the *Motto* Manifesto and share your own motto along with many others )

“In the next issue of our magazine, a well-respected professor at Stanford – argues that passion in your work is overrated. He says you must first have life experience to know what to be passionate about.” Perhaps that’s true.

### **Passion in your work:**

Participant comments:

- “I work for a company where I’m as high in the company as I can go. But what gives me passion is that I respect the company (Porter Keadle Moore) and they

respect me by allowing me to represent them in the community which is where my real passion lies.

- “I agree. Passion for your job is when your job/company has passion for you.”
- “Passion for your work means I would be doing this whether I earned anything or not.”
- “Passion in life comes from the people with whom you work or are associated.”
- Question: Is it possible to have passion in a large company? “Yes its possible. (Joke: Chardonnay helps!) Not taking yourself too seriously also helps. My team and I laugh a lot – in addition to working hard together.”
- “I have a whiteboard in my office and I started writing down memorable quotes. People have started coming by my office to read or add their own. It has helped to build community at work.”
- “If your leader has adrenaline – but no passion then that’s a problem. Personally, my spiritual drive comes from within...”
- “I don’t like it when people say “my people” – we’re a team. Leaders must inspire.”
- “If you want to get ahead in your company, I think you need to focus on why you want that next level, e.g., interaction, professionalism, leadership and working with other people. The truth is - the aura will be gone soon after you’re in the new position. You must figure out if you can add value, and like what you’re doing.”
- (Re money and compensation): “Ask for what you’re worth. It’s important for men and women to know their market value. Women don’t always know their MV.”

**Low point stories, i.e., examples of a bad work or career experience and how someone recovered or learned from it:**

- “My sister had a very successful career at CNN but the news wasn’t her passion after 9/11. So, she chucked it all to pursue a dream. Not knowing if she could even get a job in Hollywood, she went there, got a temporary assignment and ended up becoming a successful writer for the daytime soap opera - NBC’s General Hospital.
- “In my earlier career when I worked for AT&T, I took what everyone thought was a dead end job in a factory. I was told to fix it or close it – but clearly the

expectation was that I would get rid of the people and shut it down. Instead we were able to do a turnaround and surprised everyone. “

- (Sue McLaughlin): “I made a career mistake when I accepted my last corporate job, but it also afforded me one of the best learning experiences of my career. I learned three important lessons. First: Trust your instincts; Second: I could not by force of will make things better; and Third: You must have Values consistency with those you work with.”
- (Anita Sharpe): “When I joined the WSJ, I thought it was the perfect job for life. Great reputation, great benefits. But when I was 42, I realized I couldn’t stay there. I was / am notoriously non-confrontational and there were people I dealt with everyday that drove me crazy. I just left. Jumped off the high dive...had a child to raise and didn’t know what I was going to do next. Fortunately, Kevin – my co-founding editor at *Motto*, and I took the plunge together and *Worthwhile* – now *Motto* – was born.
- (Susan Hitchcock) “My low point came after nearly 25 years in my corporate job. For years I loved the company and the work, and I needed to love it because I was a workaholic and worked to live – even at the expense of my family life. In 1991, I surprised myself by deciding to accept the first early retirement package ever offered. The reason – I felt burned-out and I wanted to go in another direction. But I had no idea if I’d ever be successful again or if I was making a terrible financial mistake. After talking to a financial planner and assuring myself I was not taking our family to the ‘poorhouse’ – I left with the expectation of going to graduate school to get a doctorate in psychology, the road not taken. However, providence had something else in mind. I was introduced to Bob and Lyn Turknett and thus my career with Turknett Leadership Group began. Fourteen years later...I realized I made the best possible decision and went from a low point to a very high point in life. Working with Turknett has given me the opportunity to do what I love – leadership development, building relationships, and being an advocate for the advancement of women and women’s leadership!
- “I had a low point in my career when I was asked to shut down an initiative and deal with all of the HR issues. I did it but I looked at it from a spiritual perspective. I got through it by leaving it up to God and I helping others to do the same.”
- “I’m at a very low point right now in my job. My spirit has been killed by my director. What can I do?”
- (Response from participants): “The first thing I would say is that everything’s temporary. If you love your boss or hate your boss, that will change.”
- (Response): “I’ve learned the most from leaders I did not want to emulate, some of the worst leaders. “

- (Response): “Think about it like a hurricane: you know the storm is coming. You have to develop and draw from inner strength to deal with the situation.”
- “Whatever you’re dealing with, you have a choice. You can change your mindset and that will change how you perceive it.”
- There’s a very wise saying that “If you change the way you look at things, things change the way they look.”
- “I know someone whose boss was extremely hard on her and she thought he was just being harsh. But she later found out that he thought of her as someone with the most promise in his group and he considered what he was doing as development.”
- “Have you seen the movie, “The Secret?” It’s not what you want that happens. It’s what you expect.”
- (Anita Sharpe) – “I think we all need some ‘rituals’ to deal with the low points and difficulties in life. I have rituals I call my ‘handrails.’ One is a ‘sacred hour’ of the day when I can meditate or be alone or do something for me. Also, for me, a cappuccino break or a bike ride are handrails too.”

**Final participant story:** Where there’s a will there’s a way.

- “Once I received very devastating feedback from my boss – negative feedback without any constructive suggestions about what I should do to improve. Just criticism. I had always worked hard and was totally taken aback by this. I went home and cried and complained for a week to my husband about my boss and what happened. Then, I realized that before I drove my husband and myself crazy, I needed to come up with a plan of action, not just whine about it. So, I decided to request a meeting with my boss via an email, a time to talk about the feedback more thoroughly. I waited a day before sending it to be sure it was objective and that I stated what I wanted from him. I told him that if we couldn’t discuss it, I would take the matter to his boss. After sending the email, I saw my boss later in the day, and asked if he’d received it. He had but hadn’t responded. I politely but firmly said “I’d really like to talk today or very soon.” (What a good example of self efficacy, someone taking responsibility to confront an important issue, not just ignoring it or being bitter and staying mad.”

**Sample of Participant Mottos from WIL 1/26/07**

- “To improve the life in a small way for every person with whom I come in contact.”
- “Follow my instincts”

- “Be true to who I am and whose I am.”
- “Work hard now, play longer later!”
- “There’s no mission without a goal!”
- “Live each day to the fullest. Jump right in.”
- “Be the inspiration for the people around me.”
- “Control my wings – they touch beyond my sight.”
- “Don’t look back! There’s too much ahead!”
- “Scatter joy.” (Emerson and Anita Sharpe)
- “If you stand facing the sun all the shadows fall behind you.” (Sue McLaughlin)

**What’s your motto for your life?? Feel free to share it at**

**[www.whatsyourmotto.com](http://www.whatsyourmotto.com).**