

Women in Leadership Highlights August 26, 2011



Lessons in Life and Leadership: featuring Jackie Parker, Vice President, Corporate Philanthropy and President of Newell Rubbermaid Foundation

Jackie Parker began working for Newell Rubbermaid in 2006 leading the Inclusion and Diversity efforts. Long before that, however, her career started in sales. She says, "Everything I do always has some aspect of selling that ties back to my career in sales." Therefore, she began her talk by sharing an overview of her company and its many different entities and product lines.

Jackie then turned to her own personal life and career journey – sharing some aspects that were rather emotional but which clearly provided the audience with a very inspirational and authentic story of what she referred to as her "starts and stops." She received her bachelor's degree in marketing from Hampton University, after which she immediately went to work for General Foods as a retail sales representative - all the way across the country in Los Angeles, California. By herself and far away from family, she really didn't realize the impact this experience would have on her. Barely a year later, she was diagnosed with a major illness that would eventually require surgery and a move back home three years later.

That was her first "start and stop." After returning to Baltimore and working on her health, she found a job selling cell phones which actually lasted only six months. Next came a job with Helene Curtis, manufacturer of Suave Shampoo, Degree deodorant and Salon Selectives - and there she remained for 4 years.

Jackie realized early on that she did not want to remain a career sales representative, so she enrolled in graduate school attending Johns Hopkins University where she earned a master's degree in marketing in 2 years. During the same time, she and her husband were expecting their first child and Jackie remembers taking her final exam, delivering the baby the next day, and then walking at graduation with her baby in her arms! Not one to be idle for long, she got a job with Quaker Oats and relocated to CA and then her to Atlanta where she has been for almost 19 years.

In May, of this year Jackie was selected Alumnus of the Year by her alma mater, Hampton University. As she sat on the stage with Bill Cosby who was the keynote speaker, she said, "I began to really reflect for the first time on my own success...and I began to cry because my mother wasn't there to share in the moment." Jackie lost her beloved mother to lung cancer in June 2006, but she shared her experience of being

with her in the last seven days of her life - an experience which she describes as a gift. Attributing much of her success and everything else to her mother's influence, Jackie said, "I am who I am because of my mother's confidence, strength, and resilience."

Jackie then shared her "Top 10 Lessons in Life and Leadership":

1. "You are always selling."
 - Personally used her sales skills to "sell" inclusion and diversity objectives within the corporate environment; tried to make it relevant and have value by positioning managing I&D as a brand. You must keep it at eye level.
 - Always thinking about the 4Ps "product, price, placement, promotion."
2. "You must have vision; see yourself in your next role; believe in yourself."
 - If you are allowed to visibly see yourself in a particular role or assignment, then that's VISION. Faith gives you the ability to see things that are not as though they are. If you have a visual image...of where your next role will be then it must exist. It's your job to create the pathway and figure out the direction to get you there!
 - Never discount the power of vision.
3. "Silence your Gremlins."
 - Gremlins (negative thoughts) will paralyze your vision.
 - Gremlins are like an obnoxious neighbor. You have to get rid them by affirming who you are and keeping your vision straight ahead of you. Don't succumb to power of negative thinking.
4. "Be authentic."
 - Get comfortable with who you are. Know what you are good at and build upon those strengths. Always show up and be present. Be true to self.
 - Stop trying to be like someone else by mimicking their examples. There are things you can do better than anyone else. Listen to your inner voice and bravely follow it.
 - You will fail if you're not doing it in your own style.
 - Don't seek validation from people who will never give it to you.
5. "People leadership"
 - Leadership's not about getting people to do, it's about developing people...and if you don't retain talent, you're not leading.
 - Huge lesson – Leadership's about what you do for others.
 - Don't let this be your flaw, don't be the "b word."
 - Help others become successful – by making them "shining stars."
6. "Power of serving others."

- Personally never feels as important as when she's giving back...by serving others. (Ex. feeding the homeless.)

7. "Creating followership."

- Being so great at what you do that others want to follow your lead.
- Building integrity, trust and knowledge into your leadership style

8. "Know your organization."

- Learn every aspect of the business you can; Listen to your quarterly analyst calls, learn how to read the P&L statements, goggle financial terms if you don't know them.

9. "Understand the difference between networking vs. relationship building."

- Relationship building is 2 way, and you start with what you can give – What can I do for you?
- Central theme: not about you.

10. "Managing UP."

- Silence fear; say what you need to say.
- Stand firm on your convictions and know when to jump in the boat and paddle with the others.
- Choose your battles wisely.
- As a leader, it's important to create a tribe of supporters, encouragers, cheerleaders who will advocate on your behalf.

Other

- Audience member suggests she needs to write a book and that it would be helpful to young people.
- An audience member asked how to deal with gremlins/negativity coming from others in your work environment. Jackie said that you should choose your battles; don't give too much attention to negative voices. Also, try to shift the conversation to something positive.
- Another asked, what do you do when you have a failure? Jackie said, you stop, recalibrate, and keep going.
- One asked, How did you change the culture?
 - Helped leaders become comfortable talking about diversity.
- How do you go about choosing mentors? Jackie explained that you should choose mentors base on your deficiencies, and then "ask them on a date."