



Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

March 24, 2016

Topic- March 24: “Lessons in Leadership, Talent Development, and Corporate Compliance” featuring Kelly Barrett, VP Internal Audits and Corporate Compliance, The Home Depot.



Kelly Barrett spoke at Women in Leadership about her “Lessons in Leadership, Talent Development, and Corporate Compliance.” She began by sharing her journey that led to her working at The Home Depot and then shared the many lessons she’s gained while working there. Kelly, a whirlwind of energy and positivity, kept the group at Women in Leadership engaged and laughing as she shared her story and personal insights from her adventures in the business world.

Kelly was born and raised in Atlanta, and has spent her whole life and career here. She is a (very) proud alumna of the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she got a degree in accounting at their business school. Kelly is a Certified Public Accountant by background, though she stated that she never went the “public accounting route” after graduating from Georgia Tech. Instead, she began working at Coca-Cola where she previously had a summer internship. In addition to working at Coca-Cola, Kelly worked at a few other organizations before ending up at The Home Depot. Kelly said that she now “bleeds orange, just like the rest of us at Home Depot,” and she’s extremely grateful to be part of such a positive organization.

Kelly wanted the guests of Women in Leadership to leave with at least four main takeaways. These, she stated, were the lessons that were most critical to her as she grew in her career and life. The takeaways are as follows:

- **Always find a way to say yes**

Kelly stated that people want to surround themselves with people who want to say yes and who are willing to do things. In a world where people are constantly trying to balance different aspects of their lives – work, family, friends, hobbies – people who say yes are the people you can turn to and depend upon. Positivity is so important and people who say yes create a positive environment. Kelly added that this doesn’t mean always saying yes to exactly what people ask – there can be stipulations to make sure you don’t get overwhelmed. However, she pointed out that she still values the person who says they can do something but it may not be in the shortest timeline – simply because that person is willing to help.

- **The importance of your network and brand**

Kelly focused specifically on the fact that your brand is with you every time you do something. This means that every interaction you have and everything you agree to do reflects back on you. Take the moments when you realize that you need to grow. Be intentional - take the steps you need to take to improve.

Kelly also reminded the group that developing your network is a process – you have to make a conscious effort to constantly develop your network. Make sure to use the networks you already have available to you – school, professional, community, etc. Kelly urged the group to absolutely get involved in the community as a part of network-building. Find something you're passionate about and do something about it. She said, "When you give back, good things happen. To the community and to you."

- **Mind-Body-Spirit**

You have to take care of yourself first – take care of yourself before you do anything else. If you're not healthy, you can't be happy or productive. Kelly pointed out that having a positive, healthy attitude is so important to being successful, and we owe it to ourselves to focus on being healthy – in our mind, body, and spirit.

- **Stop pursuing perfection**

Kelly's noticed that women are typically focused on perfection. We should stop. We're not perfect, and it's ok. Kelly realized at one point that she really needed to stop caring so much about so many little things. She cared too much about things in her life that were not particularly important. No one notices us as much as we notice ourselves, and if we stop trying to be perfect, it will simply be more freeing for us. (Excellence rather than perfection is the goal.)

Kelly ended her talk on one final positive note. The best thing you can do in life and in your career is to be you, only better.

Q&A

Describe your earliest childhood experience in a leadership role and how it played out later in your career.

- I was in Junior Civitan, and I was president of the Junior Civitan club in high school and then got elected to be the treasurer for the state of Georgia. That was my first leadership role, and I had to manage the finances of the state Civitan. That experience helped me learn to live in the moment about what you're doing – there is no such thing as balance. What does exist is being in the moment and really thinking about what

you're doing in the moment. Your brand is in the moment and so many career things you do are in the moment.

How do you find a way to always say yes but maintain the edge so you don't get stuck where you are?

- I don't know what the answer is here but I do know that a lot of the opportunities I have been presented with have been because I said yes to something that led me to something else.

What tips do you have for time management and prioritizing your day?

- Some people do office hours to help temper the interruptions. Most people who want to talk to you don't want to interrupt your day but they do want to communicate with you. Also, emails need to be set aside – you don't have to deal with them all at once or all immediately.

Have you ever experienced imposter syndrome? When did you believe you had a seat at the table?

- I'm always been fairly confident and been secure with myself. But that doesn't mean you won't ever have doubt. You have to be able to pull up your boots and keep going. You have to sit at the table and own it.