

## Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

November 16, 2012



**Topic:** *“Lessons in Collaboration and Leadership”* featuring Lisa King, Ph.D., - VP, Insights and Innovation, Newell Rubbermaid

**Dr. Lisa King** joined us this morning to share her leadership and collaboration insights. A Florida native, Lisa was raised in Georgia and was the first in her family to achieve an advanced degree (two of which she holds from Georgia Tech).

Beginning her career at Boeing, Lisa worked on the International space station project. She also worked at BellSouth in Science & Technology before joining Newell Rubbermaid in 2003.

Lisa’s insights centered on the themes of authenticity, teamwork and collaboration. “Authenticity,” she says, “is being your best true self. But, there are many barriers to being the authentic true you, such as jealousy (e.g., you might like someone else’s authenticity better than your own!) or fear (what if people don’t like your authentic self?) and laziness (it may be easier to pretend to be something you’re not than to be yourself.)”

Lisa also encourages herself and others to make the behaviors of teamwork and collaboration the “default” behavior.

As she continued to share her compelling insights, she spoke about the importance of gratitude. “Gratitude is a spirit that I try to bring to the table everyday. I really try *not* to get caught up in the little hassles of life, but rather to remember how good each day is. I’m optimistic by nature and I strive to make any effort I’m involved in have a positive impact. Life can be hard, but with a little bit of effort, we can make it unbearable.” (The latter comment is a great example of how Lisa uses humor to tell her story and to make significant points but to do so with levity.)

*How do we make teamwork and collaboration behaviors a habit?*

- 1.) **Aspire to it** – “I say a little prayer each morning before I get out of bed. I don’t get it right all the time, but I aspire to. It’s tough to get it right. When things go wrong, I don’t think of it as a failure, but as learning!”
- 2.) **Excellence vs. Perfectionism** – “The objective should be excellence not perfectionism. Don’t beat yourself up over things that no one else will notice. For example, when I was working on the international space station, I was part of a very large, global team. It was *not* my job to do everything myself!”
- 3.) **Optimism** – “You have to share and see the optimistic future in order to expect your direct reports to do so. You can practice being optimistic and make it a habit! Little things can make you feel good. You just have to stop yourself when you are being negative.”

4.) **Introverts** – “You have to make your passion and point of view known. People can’t read your mind. Consider how you show up in the teamwork setting and do what is most comfortable for you but make sure your presence is felt. Extraverts should leverage quieter voices and consider the ways that people are different.”

5.) **Simple Rules** – “Find things that speak to you at the time. I use the book, [“The Rules of the Red Rubber Ball”](#). This book shares simple lessons, such as - Commit to it, Work out your creative muscle, Prepare to shine, and Maximize the day.”

*How do we work in teams to accomplish these things?*

1.) **Alignment** – “For example, having a project charter that states the purpose of the team, the goals, and how ‘good’ is defined.”

2.) **Role Clarity** – “Figure out which role you are good at.”

3.) **Process and Practice** – “Consider how you stay focused on the problem; don’t get bogged down in conflict although understand that conflict is inevitable.”

According to Lisa, when you can collaborate and work effectively as a team, you are a more confident and engaged learner, and a more effective leader. It also heightens the impact for positive change.

Lisa challenged the group to consider how each of us shows up in the team setting. She stated, “You add value by enabling others’ excellence. Your power as a leader is amplified when others are doing things for themselves – not for you!”

#### Q&A:

- **Which of your innovation pursuits have been particularly successful?**  
One of my most successful projects was actually redesigning the packaging of a hair product to better reach the appropriate market.
- **What tools do you use when working in teams?**  
Growth Game Plan is an alignment tool that Newell Rubbermaid uses. Everyone has a copy of it and knows it. Also, creating a charter and having a team work through decision rules up front is a successful team tool.
- **Can you tell us more about your personal career journey?**  
I have been open to opportunities not specific to my domain. I have been willing to take chances, even though I consider myself risk-averse. Honestly, I credit a lot of where I am to being in the right place at the right time and having the right opportunities and the right preparation.
- **Are you doing what you like the most?**  
I love to invest in the potential of others. I have a broader impact by energizing others. I have realized that leadership is not about me, but those working with me. When I am successful at helping others win, I thrive.
- **What was the significance of relationships in getting you to your current position?**  
I am a bad networker. With no family in business, I didn’t know how! Thus, I have taken to observationally role modeling the individuals whose behaviors I liked in the

business setting. It was important for me to have a mentor early on, and also to have professional peer relationships. Peers provide honest, trustworthy feedback.

- **Do you strive for innovation that creates jobs (vs. cost-cutting and effectiveness)?**  
Newell Rubbermaid's focus is on successful commercialization – DOES IT SELL? It is important to consider what you are really trying to achieve.
- **How can we fast-track our children to learn these important lessons about innovation?**  
Our children are growing up in a completely different way than we did. It is their reality. Social media helps accomplish this.
- **What do you tell women about failing faster?**  
Don't worry that failing will derail your career. Don't let failure control you. Test and learn.
- **How do you find balance?**  
I know my internal limits and capabilities and that all limits have consequences.