



## Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Topic: “Doing It All: Insights from a Business Leader, Entrepreneur, Marketing Expert, Mentor & Volunteer”** featuring Moira Vetter, Founder & CEO – Modo Modo Agency.



**Moira Vetter** joined the Women in Leadership series and spoke on the 21<sup>st</sup> century goal of doing it all! Speaking on her life experiences, she discussed her roles as entrepreneur, business leader, marketing expert, mentor, and volunteer. The development of these roles taught her the valuable lesson of how to make time for everything in a busy world.

Moira is the Founder and CEO of Modo Modo Agency, a strategy, marketing, branding and advertising business filled with employees who “don’t think like agency people. [They] think like business people.” Modo Modo Agency works mostly with technology companies and entrepreneurs, and she loves speaking to groups about her experiences in business and entrepreneurship.

Moira started her talk with the provocative statement, “Doing it all – the work-life balance idea – is a fallacy. I don’t understand it, and I **don’t** do it. What I want you to ask yourself today is ‘How do I just keep doing more all the time?’” Moira took us through her decades of experience and how she learned to do more all the time while keeping herself wholly intact.

### **First Decade – Start Where You Heard Everything**

Moira’s mom was a beauty queen of Delaware. She was proposed to by her high school sweetheart, declined, and the soon after went to New York City to decide what she wanted to do in life. While she was a well-mannered and charming woman with a beauty queen background, her mother was not one to shy away from risk. Moira’s dad was twenty years older than her mom. He was born into great wealth in Hungary, and after the communist regime took over, he lost his fortune and had to escape from Hungary to the safety and opportunity that he knew existing only in the United States. Since both her parents had such different views than most people about what constitutes risk, Moira said she learned from them that it’s more important to love what you do and focus on those things than to spend too much time calculating risks.

When she was seven, Moira began working in her parents’ pharmacy. Since she was too short to reach the register, she wore roller skates to help customers. She quickly understood the value of being a “jack of all trades.” Her parents emphasized the importance of having a role in the community. Their business

served as their way to be involved in and connected to the community, and Moira emphasizes that with her business relationships today.

## **Second Decade**

Moira candidly joked that in her second decade, she became a proud Agnes Scott drop out. After going to the Atlanta-based college for a year, she dropped out to work in Atlanta, more specifically, a gas station. Even then, she knew she wasn't ready for college, but she was ready for bigger opportunities. She soon got a job at a small high tech start up, and she was the person who would help get everything done as needs surfaced. Moira said that she got to learn the benefits of working in a small company – understanding the functions and interrelations across departments in an organization. She also learned the value of a good manager and mentor. She worked for a man who had confidence in her and was willing to let her try anything she put her mind to.

After this experience, she went to work in marketing at a well-respected Atlanta technology agency. Moira worked mostly in developing brand awareness and growth, and she focused on growing her knowledge base in the field. She calls this job the “beginning of her ascent,” and she attributes this in part to the great boss she had who went on to become the first female president of the Technology Association of Georgia. Moira said that she learned most in this job the importance of having a manager who is willing to let you take risks if you work hard enough and push them hard enough to let you try.

## **Third Decade**

In the early years of her third decade, the marketing company was sold, and Moira's function was gone. She decided to begin her first venture into entrepreneurship and started her own company. Unfortunately, the timing was not ideal. Moira created a business marketing company for IT in a time when IT was not marketing. After three years, the company went out of business, but Moira said she learned so much and it was such a valuable experience – she would have done it all over again.

Moira then got a job at Merge Agency, a marketing agency in Atlanta. One week after Moira started, North Highland Consulting took a minority interest in the company. Her responsibility at Merge became to make the relationship with North Highland work and create a third revenue stream. She got incredible amounts of experience to learn about big business marketing as she was now working with large organizations versus small business. Moira said her biggest take-away was learning the language of consultants and the intricacies of big businesses.

## **Fourth Decade**

When Moira was approaching 40, she made the brave decision to read every performance review ever written about her to shed light on what she was doing right over the years and what she could work on moving forward. She honestly stated, “When you're an entrepreneur, all of your employees and clients are the boss.” Moira founded Modo Modo Agency eight years ago. She borrowed on her first “dry run” experience of entrepreneurship to govern what to do and what not to do. Her other big accomplishment in her fourth decade was finishing her Bachelor's degree. She joked, “It only took me 21 years, but I got

it!” Completing her degree taught Moira that learning and educating yourself in the fields you don’t have experience in is very valuable and a great use of your time to be a well-rounded individual.

Moira now has a great family, a successful company, and a life that she loves. In addition to working on the former list, her current focus is on bettering the community around her. She takes the chances she can to speak to groups, mentor others, and wrote a book called [AdVenture: An Outsider's Inside View of Getting an Entrepreneur to Market](#).

**Moira left us with this final thought: If “Doing It All” is the topic – you can’t do it all, all the time, but you can focus on what you’re working on in that moment. You can never do it ALL – all is an ever-increasing, growing thing. However, you can know who you are and what you’re committed to doing to be the best person you can be.**

### **Question & Answer:**

If you could go back and do it all over again, what would you do different?

- I would have been smarter about my money in my late twenties. I started contributing to a 401k at 21 and bought my first house at 24. I bought a new house I couldn’t afford at 27, and I learned the real estate and economics lesson of “what goes up, must come down.” I think everyone should learn sophistication with their money, learn how to use it well and effectively. Using capital and credit versus being paranoid about being debt free. I would have learned how to manage risk and use capital.

Since Atlanta has so many volunteer opportunities, how do you pick and choose which organizations to be involved in?

- My rule for myself is to pick three and **really** pick one. Work with one organization at a time to fully contribute to and a couple others to quickly help with and leave. Be on a committee that figures out a plan and how to get it done, not all the extra parts of what needs to be done behind the scenes. This way, you can contribute without giving up all of your time. Depending on your life and career, you need to figure out your goal and what to do. For me, the American Marketing Association was great to be a big part of because I was growing and the AMA was growing too. My annual plan is split into quarters. Every quarter, I look at my personal, professional, and business goals to make sure no tracks are missed.

What entrepreneurship trends are you looking forward to?

- Mostly youth entrepreneurship. The problem I have with the way the educational system is set up is that less people are excited and willing to take risks like entrepreneurship. From an entrepreneurial standpoint, I want to see the youth community willing to take risks and move forward without being too worried about those risks.

What is an opportunity that you’ve given to others that they wouldn’t have gotten?

- I came across a smart, young person at the American Marketing Association. She was volunteering for the AMY Awards, and we all noticed her hard work. She kept pressing me for an internship – she got all the papers together and permissions submitted – and she made it happen. We got the internship formed, and she ended up getting a lot of opportunities that most interns wouldn't get. She solely got them because she kept pushing for it and letting me know that she was capable of handling it. There's nothing you can't get done if you push for it and prove yourself worthy of it, and she did just that and more.