

Women In Leadership Highlights

June 19, 2009



“Mission Possible: Leadership in Environmental Sustainability” – featuring Joyce LaValle, SVP Interface America. Joyce is responsible for engaging customers and employees in the firm’s *Mission Zero*[™]: to become sustainable and reduce or eliminate its environmental footprint by 2020. A veteran in the commercial interiors industry, her career with Interface began in 1982 and includes marketing, sales, and human resources. Joyce was educated in England and the U.S., is an active member of the International Interior Design Assoc., past Board member of FIDER and IFMA, and is the founding member of the Women’s Network for a Sustainable Future (WNSF). She received the 2008 WNSF Businesswomen’s Leadership Award in Atlanta and an inaugural LEEDer award in 2007 presented by the U.S. Green Building Council in New York.

Key points:

- Interface is committed to creating a culture with real purpose.
- What defines success and leadership in business is expanding.
- The world expects companies to act on what matters and help move us all toward a better day.
- Ray Anderson, Chairman and CEO of Interface, was changed forever after reading the book by Paul Hawken, *The Ecology of Commerce*. He made a personal and business commitment to take his company in a totally new direction, which is to date a 15 year journey towards Mission Zero: “promise to eliminate any negative impact Interface may have on the environment by 2020.”
- “The companies that are for real are the ones that talk about what is still to be done, not what they’ve already done.” – Paul Hawken
- “There is only one institution on earth large enough, powerful enough, pervasive enough, and influential enough to really lead humankind in a different direction. And that is the institution of business and industry.” – Ray Anderson
- “If you want to build a ship, don’t herd people together to collect wood...But rather teach them to long for the immensity of the sea.” – Antoine Saint-Exupery
- The mission of Interface is more than a job, and many employees say, “We wouldn’t work anyplace else.”
- Nine years ago the company implemented a “strengths-based” culture in which employees at all levels are to be coached in areas where they excel or are very strong rather than their weak areas
- Not an easy process, takes diligence, listening, change in performance system and evaluations. Annual survey with high response rate that measures engagement and impact.
- Warning: when people throw around the “green” word, be careful. Ask “how” are you green! It has become the “thing to say” and the “thing to be” but all companies and organizations have a very long way to go on this “sustainability” journey.

- LEED: there are positive steps being taken and progress made in certifying buildings and putting suppliers in the building industry on the right path. But companies and individuals need an incentive to move farther on this path.
- To join the Interface mission – and be part of the conversation about sustainability, check out <http://missionzero.org>. Not an advertisement but simply a place to connect with others on this critical subject.

Some info shared by WIL participants about some efforts / initiatives in their companies and organizations and / or as individuals:

Kroger: Some examples of their corporate sustainability and environmental initiatives include:

- Proactive standards for their fuel centers along with double walled tanks, Stage I Vapor Recovery etc.
- Recycling and reusable bags
- Perishable Donations Partnership
- LED lighting for energy conservation
- First LEED certified store open in 09
- New trucks in 09 will meet 2013 standards for emissions

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta:

- Produces 5 tons of currency shreds a week. Pursuing a partnership to investigate what can be done to reuse the shredded currency.

AT&T:

- Recently made largest commitment to compressed natural gas to date by any U.S. company; 10 year commitment of up to \$565M on alternative-fuel vehicles - more than 15,000 vehicles in all
- Appointed Chief Sustainability Officer in April

Individuals:

- Gardening, support of local farmers and their products
- Recycling and reusable bags
- Changing light bulbs
- Smaller, more fuel efficient cars, e.g., hybrids
- Reuse paper and go “paperless” as much as possible
- Water conservation for bathing, lawns, laundry, etc. More efficient appliances