

Women In Leadership Highlights Feb. 20, 2009



Marianne Johnson

“Leading in Technology and in Life” – featuring Marianne Johnson, SVP of Global Technology New Product Innovation at Equifax. Marianne was selected as the 2008 Woman of the Year (Enterprise Div.) by Women in Technology (WIT). Her many achievements have been highlighted in The NY Times, CNNMoney.com, TechLinks, etc. Prior to Equifax, her career path included various positions in the healthcare industry. Currently, she is very active in WIT, TAG, HFMA, & GlobalEXECWomen. Also known for her community service, she’s been a United Way Ambassador, sponsor for Food for the Poor, and a Big Brother Big Sister volunteer. Recently, Marianne received a special honor from the United States Marine Corps for her patriotism and support for troops in Iraq.

Key life and career milestones and lessons learned:

- At 8 months old, her family’s life was turned literally upside down by an F5 tornado that destroyed everything, seriously injured her mother and almost killed her as an infant. Set the course for her life.
- Difficult upbringing due to the traumatic impact of what happened to her family; sometimes chaotic but always had her grandmother as her support system, her “rock.”
- Also has a deep and abiding faith; “God had a purpose for my life.”
- At 18, earned a soccer scholarship but was not able to fulfill her plans because of a severe knee injury
- LIFE LESSON: You can choose how to react to circumstances, even though you can’t control them.
- Got a job full time processing medical claims and continued school at night. Beginning of her career journey in healthcare.
- LIFE LESSON: Work hard, learn everything you can learn not only about your job but about the organization. Seek knowledge to grow your value.
- LIFE LESSON: When a door opened, she went through it, thereby working her way up in her field. Resilience and willingness to take a risk paid off as her career progressed.

- After a divorce, she and her daughter were given the opportunity to move to Nashville for a completely new job and new environment. Took a leap of faith and went for it.
- New environment provided learning opportunity; from big company with structure and processes to small company that needed her to help develop some of those things and help grow the business. She worked her way up in the company.
- Later, Equifax called and she took a job back in ATL.
- LEADERSHIP LESSONS:
 1. Be prepared to do the job and gain knowledge beyond your own position
 2. Love of people / respect them as you want them to respect you.
 3. Maintain your humility and don't let ego get in the way
 4. Define success through others success
 5. If you sew negative seeds you'll get negative results; but if you sew positive seeds, positive things will result.
 6. Intentional and deliberate: two of her mantras for leadership. Know who you are and who you want to be. That means know the kind of mother, spouse, coworker and leader you want to be and adjust daily, hourly and even my the minute
 7. Actions speak louder than words and the small things DO make a difference, e.g., speaking to people in the hall and knowing their names.
 8. Leadership is NOT about titles and position. Definition: anytime you attempt to influence someone else's actions and behavior
 9. "Intense moment of fellowship": her words for what she needs to do at times to resolve differences, conflict, etc.
 10. Tough decisions involving people must always be handled respectfully and with dignity and that's how you as a leader show your character. Recently had to layoff some "A" list players and it was tough but the right thing to do.
 11. As a leader it's not just WHAT you accomplish, but HOW that makes the difference
 12. To have sustainable results, you need respect + responsibility always with integrity (The Turknett Leadership Character Model) = optimum results
 13. Leaders must cast a vision of where they want the team and organization to go
 14. Five questions for potential hires: what's your skill level; what's your bias for action; do you know how to lead people and to follow; do you give credit to others; and can you cast a vision.
 15. How leaders handle their own mistakes / bad decisions says a lot about them, e.g., acknowledge it and apologize and try and make it right OR ignore and play like "I don't make mistakes"
 16. Know your own gifts and talents and know yourself from multiple angles, e.g., 360 feedback is extremely valuable throughout your career.
 17. Her attributes: tries to be authentic; a good listener; consistent; accomplish goals in spite of circumstances; believes in servant leadership.
 18. When managing UP, have a healthy respect for your boss and ask "How can I lift your load?"

19. Build relationships up, across and down in the organization – ALL are important.
20. When things are tough and the goals seem impossible, it's best to be upfront with your superior/ boss. Don't complain but instead, provide progress reports on what's we're getting done, and what the consequences are for what is not getting done.