



September 22, 2017

WIL Highlights for Kitty Chaney Reed

“What the World Needs Now: More Women in STEM”

As a little girl growing up in Georgia, Kitty Reed dreamed of the career and life she would have. Now she’s IBM’s Vice President Sales Transaction Support for North America and Latin America. In addition she was named 2013 Woman of the Year / Enterprise Category by the Atlanta Women in Technology chapter; honored in 2015 with a Most Powerful and Influential Woman Award by the GA Diversity Council; and, happily married with 3 sons, etc. Clearly, Kitty is living her dreams!

Speaking at Turknett’s 172nd WIL seminar, Kitty brought her authentic, powerful and “tell-it-like-it-is” self to the forum. Attendees were enthralled with her down to earth and witty style and eagerly listened as she shared her life and career journey – including many valuable lessons learned.

In her early years, Kitty attended school in the small town of Monroe as well as in Atlanta. With a scholarship in hand, she chose to attend Clark Atlanta University where she said, “The experience of learning about my heritage at a predominantly black institution helped shape my passion for diversity and inclusion.”

Her first position after graduating from college was in retail, specifically with Macy’s. At 21 Kitty really didn’t know what she didn’t know about managing people but she soon learned a very valuable lesson from “Miss Louise.” The lesson: “Never underestimate the contribution on any single person in your organization.” Kitty took time to rectify her mistake, by apologizing to Miss Louise for not listening or understanding her role. She earned even more points when she made banana bread for Miss Louise, not once but several times! (Now that’s how to say I’m sorry and take responsibility!)

Kitty’s next career move was in HR at RaceTrac - and after that, a major shift to Radiant Systems. “The move to Radiant Systems,” said Kitty, “changed my life, taking me into the fast-paced world of technology where I had many jobs including selling.”

Another valuable lesson learned: “Never leave a customer alone when they’re making a decision.” This happened to Kitty and the customer actually left the deal! Thinking her career was over at first, Kitty regrouped, using her relationship skills to go after the customer. Ultimately she won them back.

However, there was much more learning to be had at this stage of her career. For example, she said, “Learning that sometimes, enough is enough. Sometimes you need to just take your pocketbook and go home.” She actually took a lesser role, because the job sounded really exiting. This decision and the work - truly transformative work - turned out to be exactly right

for her, and it led to her career taking off. Lesson learned here: “Raise your hand for the really tough job.”

Radiant Systems was bought by NCR and the transition provided many new opportunities and challenges for Kitty. (More lessons learned) “I definitely know that I have a passion to develop people to their highest potential. I also know I needed to have the courage to speak up.”

While the transition took longer than expected, not unusual in the corporate world, Kitty said, “I was promoted to a global role, and given millions of dollars to save millions of dollars. One thing I can tell you, you have to deliver!”

In March, 2017, Kitty accepted a VP position with IBM even though she was not looking for a change. The change (job offer) came to her and the best thing of all, NCR said when she left, “You can always come back!”

More lessons learned and insights from Kitty:

- On mentors: Get them earlier rather than later.
- On courage: sometimes it’s innate but it can be developed. Be good at what you do, not emotional. I’ve seen times when I did it wrong. Need to understand the risk. Trust and courage go hand in hand.
- Career development: own your own career but consider some non-specific paths. Be comfortable marketing yourself. Build confidence.
- On generational differences: Not the issue – all ages and generations should be valued and want to be heard.
- Best advice: Bring your best self to everything. You do your best work when you are yourself. Show respect and be intentional.
- Outside work: WIT Board; various volunteer work and support of organizations like the Boys & Girls Club etc.
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