



December 15, 2017

WIL Highlights for Cathy Callaway Adams, EVP & COO – Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta

“A Multifaceted Life: Banking, Education, Music and Philanthropy”

There is absolutely no doubt that Cathy Callaway Adams leads a multifaceted life including banking, education, music and philanthropy. Across this spectrum of varied leadership roles, she has over three decades of significant contributions, accomplishments, honors and recognition. But perhaps what is most admirable is her personal authenticity, i.e., the way she

shares the ups and downs in her career journey and the lessons she’s learned and from which others can benefit.

Five Key Lessons:

#1. **“Failure is an opportunity to begin again.”** Cathy shared an early career experience which included a demotion at work. She said, “This was a life changing experience from which I gained much needed perspective. I also learned about the importance of relationship building and building credibility.”

#2. **“Say YES if self-doubt is your primary reason to say NO.”** The example Cathy shared came from an experience when she received an unexpected promotion. She was presenting a hiring recommendation to her boss. She’d done all the research and had a detailed plan of action for the new hire. But when her boss heard how thorough Cathy’s plans were, he decided to promote her into this position. Cathy said she was stunned! She struggled with a lack of confidence despite the fact that her boss clearly had confidence in her. (In the end, of course, she proved him right. It was a valuable lesson regarding overcoming self-doubt and not setting limitations on yourself.)

#3. **“Say NO to over commitment – follow through on your word!”** Cathy has served and been asked to serve on multiple nonprofit and community-based boards. Her message here is to be responsible, not irresponsible, re saying yes to everything, and not feeling guilty if you don’t accept. Be realistic and be careful that your professional and your personal life do not suffer from over scheduling. There may be stages in your life and career when less is more because when you say yes, you need to do what you say you’ll do.

#4. **“Seek feedback. Ask for help. Never burn bridges.”** Cathy suggested asking for feedback frequently from people around you, especially your co-workers and from formal and informal mentors. Question: Do you have a personal board of advisors? If not, it’s something to consider. It’s also not shameful to ask for help and in fact, people typically like to be asked.

#5. “Create a legacy of significance. Start now.” Cathy pointed out that we should all think about the impact we’re making in every role that we have. That includes our professional lives as well as how we give back and contribute to our communities. Cathy gives back in many ways – chairing the board for The Atlanta Opera and serving on the board of trustees for Mercer University among other commitments. She’s also a member of the International Women’s Forum, Downtown Atlanta Rotary Club, and Georgia State University’s Women in Philanthropy organization. Last but certainly not least, Cathy’s stature as a professional musician is indeed significant in Atlanta. Since 1995 she’s accompanied The Georgia Festival Chorus, a 100-voice performing group, with numerous recordings and international performances to their credit.

Additional advice from Cathy:

The value of discipline: She has played the piano since she was very young and credits the constant practice and focus with helping her later in life including in her career.

Preparation: It makes the difference in a poor performance and a great performance. She’s learned to say: “God, please bless the outcome of this according to how I’ve prepared.”

The value of reading and continued learning: Cathy reads a lot of articles and books and although they have been around a long time, two of her favorites are *In Search of Excellence* (Tom Peters) and *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey.