

WIL Highlights for April 27, 2018

Dr. Beatriz (Bea) Rodriguez, Director and Chief Diversity Officer, The Home Depot, is a wonderful example of resilience in her career and in her personal life as well.

By her own admission, she's a bit uncomfortable talking about herself, but she realizes that when leaders share their own story, in addition to their leadership and career insights, others can learn and are often inspired. You might also say that her story has a theme: "against all odds."

"Dr. Bea" as we'll call her, grew up in Puerto Rico the oldest of 5 children. Among her many family memories and experiences growing up, Dr. Bea said she learned a lot from her mother, especially about helping others and responding to needs in the community.

When she grew up, resilience became a major factor in Dr. Bea's life. She married young, started a family of her own, began a graduate degree in human resources while in Puerto Rico, and then moved to Florida for her husband's career as a chef. Despite college credits not transferring as she had thought, she was determined to finish her master's degree – and she did. Later, she went on to earn a Doctorate in Business Administration! The power of determination and resilience!

In 2000, she began her career with The Home Depot as an hourly associate in Orlando – a decision that would turn out to be a very smart one. She was pregnant at the time and proud to be able to demonstrate her ability to meet any challenge – which by the way – has become Dr. Bea's "brand."

The following are some of the many insights and lessons learned during her career:

- Having a supportive partner / spouse is important. Sometimes she moved to support her husband, and other times, he did the same.
- Compromise makes for a healthy and balanced relationship at home.
- Solving problems is her approach to work. Do the most with the least amount of effort. Have a scorecard and move the numbers.
- Having experience in the field can make you a better corporate person. But the transition is often difficult.

- Do not enable incompetence. Leverage the strengths that others have to benefit the job and even at home.
- Perfection is not required to be successful. Sometimes women work too hard to be perfect which can delay decisions and hold them back from taking risks.
- Work smarter not harder. Look for solutions to multiple issues, 2 birds with 1 stone. Better use of time.
- Have a mentor / be a mentor. Most important, develop your own Board of Advisors.
- Don't underestimate your own impact as a leader. People see what you do, your behavior, and pay more attention than your words.

On the topic of Diversity & Inclusion (D & I):

- She and her organization do not OWN D & I. "It's what we do, but every leader and every department is accountable for making it happen."
- Three objectives: Educate and engage; build strategic relationships; integrate inclusion across all aspects of the business.
- Communication – awareness is key. 60% of The Home Depot employees at the corporate headquarters is engaged in one or more of 7 resource groups. She'd like to move to just one ultimately – which would mean ALL are working together.
- Try different things. Some will stick, some won't.
- Development of people is highly important.
- Critical not to exclude men in inclusive leadership when trying to empower women. To move the needle you need them.
- Embed inclusion in ALL training.
- For nonprofit / community service, impact the most and align with your mission.
- Suppliers and vendors also are a critical part of the D & I mission. Work to champion them, especially small businesses.
- Must measure to accomplish. She developed a Diversity Dashboard (doesn't set goals but compares previous year to current year.) Plans to develop a similar Inclusion Dashboard.
- Talent planning should start with Diversity Dashboard. Not all assignments are equal in terms of preparing someone for advancement.

- Work closely with Talent Acquisition. Look externally with intention.
- Always start with the business case. Bring stats to the table to get attention and to change direction.
- To make diversity succeed, you should survey; review the pipeline and turnover rate; analyze performance reviews and ratings; look at who's getting the "BIG" assignments

Q & A:

- Most important lesson?
ANS: Learned it's not about ME. Focus on best practice, not specific goal. Build relationships and collaborate. Progress takes time.
- Why not have a Young Professional resource group?
ANS: Could have dozens more resource groups, but she tries instead to focus on what this group needs or is interested in, e.g., flexibility, modern space, benefits, etc.
- Do you have implicit bias training?
ANS: Re unconscious bias, she developed something that when her colleagues asked or indicated they were ready for it, she could respond. Did not just roll it out when the time wasn't right. Now it's available for all leaders and they can learn and apply.
- What to do when you get pushback re D & I initiatives?
ANS: Remind them of the business case. Have conversation. Ask "how should we look in 2020?"
- How to build your own BD of Advisors?
ANS: Determined by what/who you need. Ask for feedback. It's a gift.