



WIL Highlights September 20, 2019

“Purpose-Driven Leadership in Business, Non Profit, the Arts, & More”

featuring Doug Shipman – President & CEO of the Woodruff Arts Center

Summary: It’s hard to put into words the impact that Doug Shipman made on the WIL audience. Someone said, “I’ve never been so moved by any speaker.” Doug’s not only an accomplished, respected and successful leader across several sectors, he’s also a powerful storyteller - and his story inspired everyone! Who knew that a young white man from Arkansas who grew up in a highly segregated and discriminatory era would emerge as a strong and authentic advocate for civil and human rights and would be embraced by some of the Atlanta’s best known leaders in the black community.

Like Aristotle who said, “Make the needs of the world your passion,” Doug inspires us to not only find our passion, but to live it (“Wear it on your sleeve”) and use it to make the world and your community a better place.

While his career has taken him to other major U.S. cities as well as other countries, Atlanta is where Doug has made / is making a lasting impact. This is especially true in his work with former Mayor Shirley Franklin and others on the original “concept” of a National Center for Civil and Human Rights. In 2007 Doug became the Founding CEO of the Center. From the ground up, he developed the Center’s business strategy, its fundraising strategy and its public engagement plan that led the \$100 million museum to become a reality.

In 2015 Doug left the Center after 8 years and re-engaged in the management consulting world in yet another major leadership role. But he never forgot Atlanta or the influence and friendship of people here like the legendary and fearless Reverend C.T. Vivian. So when the Woodruff Arts Center came looking for their next CEO, Doug answered the call and in July 2017, he accepted the challenge and the great opportunity to oversee The Alliance Theater, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the High Museum.

Over the past two years, Doug has more than proven he was the right person for the job, doing amazing things and showing everyone the power of the arts to impact our community! During his tenure, diversity and inclusion have expanded throughout the organization in ways not really seen before, making ATL a new model in the arts. Under Doug’s leadership, significant changes have been made in programming, content, audiences and docents. In fact there are

now 44 people of color working as docents, which has brought national recognition to Atlanta! Doug's goal: to continue to make the arts accessible to everyone.

There is so much more to Doug's story, past and present – all of which make him a fantastic speaker and as well as a truly inspiring individual. We can only imagine what the future will bring and what new horizons lie ahead for the arts in Atlanta with a leader and influencer like Doug at the helm.

BACKGROUND – Personal & Professional plus Expert Insights

- Grew up in the “metropolis” of Bull Shoals, Arkansas, in a family where his father was a Pentecostal minister and at a time when diversity was non-existent.
- Life changed sharply when he came to ATL to attend Emory University & later graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. degree in Economics and Political Science. He went on to receive a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School AND a Master of Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government both in 2001.
- Early influences in his GA-based life included attending a James Brown concert, meeting Robert (Bob) Franklin, attending Ebenezer Baptist Church and meeting many more people NOT like him, having deep conversations to learn more about social movements, injustice, etc.
- Early business career in banking, but wasn't a good match so he turned to management consulting. Doug became a principle with the prestigious Boston Consulting Group at its offices in NY, ATL & Mumbai.
- Along the way he also met the love of his life who was attending medical school and is now an ER doctor at Grady. While they delayed starting a family in their early marriage and even lived in different cities for a while, today they have a very full and rewarding life with two children as well as two careers that fulfill each one's purpose of making a difference in the lives of others. (Note: Doug also shared how he and his wife work together given their busy schedules to co-parent their kids operating almost as single yet very consistent parents. Theirs is a “no negotiation” household.)
- As mentioned in the summary, Doug left BCG to help former Mayor Shirley Franklin develop the plans for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights which opened successfully in 2014.
- Taking another career turn in 2015, Doug served for the next 2 years as CEO and Managing Director of BrightHouse, a stand-alone, purpose-driven business unit of BCG. He left that “gig” to assume the helm of The Woodruff Arts Center.
- To date, he's already received many honors including his 2018 Stuart Lewengrub Torch of Liberty Award presented by the Southeast Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League. He also provides his voluntary leadership services to the Board of Trustees of the Carter Center; the BD of Directors of the Metro ATL Chamber of Commerce; the Midtown Alliance; the ATL Convention and Visitors Bureau, etc. Doug's also active with the Harvard Alumni Assoc. and the Emory Alumni Assoc. where he's a past president.

- Other insights: RE women leaders, thinks they may be willing to have more difficult conversations and deeper insights. Best advice: From former Mayor Shirley Franklin – “Pick out things to work on every week that will be important 50 years from now. Let that be your legacy.”

Key Comments & Take-aways from Attendees:

- Three key questions to ask yourself that Doug shared: “Why you? Why this? Why now?”
- Find and share your passion; find where it intersects with needs of the organization and/or the world
- Listen, observe and share
- Work on something every day / every week that will matter 50 years from now
- Find a leader / be a leader who wants to have deep conversations
- Participate in authentic conversation
- Work to not be uncomfortable in room filled with people not like you
- Be intentional to seek out people unlike you
- Ask yourself: “What are my super powers?” Apply those powers to your passion.
- Put yourself in positions to better understand the perspectives of others
- You will always be putting out fires – work on the ones that matter
- Leadership hypocrisy is toxic.
- Set things up to survive without you; it will be better that way
- Consistency is key. Think short & long term.