

What You Need to Succeed in Your Job

Diane Paddison is the author of *Work, Love, Pray: Practical Wisdom for Young Professional Christian Women* (Zondervan). She has held the chief operating officer role in two Fortune 500 commercial real-estate companies—an industry dominated by men. She holds an MBA from Harvard. She is also married and a mom and wishes to share about her journey to success that was laced with unexpected brokenness and deep joy.

SpiritLed Woman's editor Leilani Haywood had a chance to talk with Diane about the mentoring program she started for professional Christian women, 4word, based in Dallas, Texas.

SpiritLed Woman: Why did you decide to start a mentoring program?

Diane Paddison: According to research by Catalyst, Center for Work-Life Balance and *Harvard Business Review*, the one factor that separates a woman's career progression versus a man's, when all other factors are held constant, is sponsorship—i.e., when someone puts themselves “on the line” for you. Having a mentor is a first phase to having sponsors. Since 4word can affect mentors versus sponsors, we started with a mentoring program.

SLW: Who would be an ideal mentor?

DP: Someone who has experience with relationship (family) and a career. That person sees her faith as her foundation, her relationships as her priority and her work as her calling.

SLW: What do you look for in matching mentees and mentors?

DP: We look for the goals of the mentee to match the experiences of the mentor spiritually, with relationships and

professionally. It is great if they also share experience in the same industry; however, that is not critical. The experiences mentioned in the first sentence are the key.

SLW: How have you benefitted from mentors during your career?

DP: Throughout my career, I had mentors such as Don Williams, former CEO and chairman of Trammell Crow Company, and Bob Sulentic, former CEO of Trammell Crow Company and CEO of CBRE. Since I have been in the not-for-profit world, Bob Buford, founder of Halftime and Leadership Network, and Frances Hesselbein, CEO of Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute, have been key mentors. I have had many peers as mentors—John Stirek and Dan Boyden, fellow OSU, HBS and Trammell Crow Company friends. All of these mentors have provided me with valuable advice and counsel through my life.

SLW: What's the best mentoring relationship that you've had?

DP: The best mentoring relationship is one where each person is fully engaged, has a deep level of trust and communication is totally transparent. I have mentored many, and I have been blessed to be mentored. If the relationship works well, you have a natural connection with that person, and you both gain from the relationship with each of you contributing.

SLW: What's the worst mentoring experience you've ever had?

DP: One that the mentee was not proactive in setting up times to meet. She didn't put effort into preparation for our meetings. Thus, it was hard to develop a strong trusting relationship, and communication was not transparent.

SLW: Is your program just targeted towards Gen Y-ers? What about midlife career-changers?

DP: Our program is focused on seasoned women (45+ years old) being mentors and women in the first 20 years of their careers being mentees (25-45 years old). The age is not critical;

however, it is an easy measurement. Women go through many chapters or changes, especially as we are living longer, so there is not just one change that happens—i.e., midlife change. Our program is open to all chapters and seasons.

With every program you begin, you have to have focus. This is the focus of our program.

SLW: What's your advice to businesses that want to start a mentoring program to groom emerging leaders?

DP: The mentoring program must be transparent, expected and strategic.

Transparent—Demystifying the mentoring/sponsorship process and openly acknowledging its valuable organizational role improves accountability and promotes equity. It also helps women and minorities to view mentoring/sponsorship relationships as legitimate and desirable, rather than manipulative or unfair.

Expected—Act to create a culture of mentorship/sponsorship where leaders are expected and encouraged to thoughtfully invest in talent management. Engagement of your top company leaders is critical here. By placing a high value on effective mentorship/sponsorship, you encourage executives to proactively seek out protégés, putting them in touch with the younger talent pool in ways that they wouldn't be otherwise.

Strategic—Give your mentorship/sponsorship program meaning by tying it to your organization's vision and assigning it measurable, opportunity-based goals. Provide training and guidance for mentors/sponsors

I wrote an article, "Guided Sponsorship: The Ultimate Tool for Internal Talent Sourcing," for the December edition of *Leader to Leader* magazine that covers your question in detail.

SLW: What are some of the major challenges Christian women are facing in the workplace?

DP: The workplace is actually ahead of the church; however, the workplace continues to have the glass ceiling, as the percentage of women in the C suite and on boards continues to remain around 16 percent for the last 10 years, whereas the percentage of women in the workforce is 47 percent today.

In addition, as Pew research released its findings, that of families, 40 percent of the time, the woman is the primary breadwinner. *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, and *The New York Times* responded to this research, and in most cases one big challenge remains: As women hope to prioritize their families, the workplace has a long way to go to be “family friendly.” A more flexible workplace will enable companies to attract this growing talent pool of educated women bringing the gifts. *Inc.* magazine discussed last month as being the key skills that will be required by companies’ leadership going forward.

In addition, women themselves can be their own worst enemy. Looking at your work as your mission field versus placing guilt on yourself can be freeing. Please look at , Monday Blog with Diane, this week. We cover this topic.

SLW: If you were to speak at a commencement, what would be your advice to the new college graduate?

DP: First, know your priorities; then match that to the company or organization’s culture. Second, know your strengths; then match that with the requirements of the role you are considering.

Leilani Haywood is the editor of *SpiritLed Woman*. She is a Kansas City, award-winning writer and columnist. Her work has been published in the *Kansas City Star*, *Metro Voice* and other publications. Follow *SpiritLed Woman* on Twitter @spiritledmag or on Facebook.