

The 10 Best Practices for Advancing Women in Business #8 - Pass Business Opportunities Along to Others

By Lynn Shapiro Snyder

One of the main purposes of my Women Business Leaders Foundation is to help senior executive women from the U.S. health care industry get the opportunity to be selected for board seats on for-profit company boards. After all, being a director gives one the chance to participate at the highest echelon of where business gets done. To that end, we have done outreach to various search firms that specialize in these unique types of director searches. The director search firm personnel let us know when they have a potential search, we announce it in an e-mail to our WBL list serve of over 1,200 senior executive women, the women self-select and only those interested reply with their resumes. We do not screen these resumes. We just collect the resumes and send them off to the person conducting the search. We find out later whether one of our candidates is chosen.

We went through this process recently and, to our surprise, we got a resume from a man requesting that his resume be included in the packet with the resumes of the other women. It made us pause for a moment. On the one hand, we are trying to increase the gender diversity of these boards by having women candidates because those boards are so male dominated at this time. Having a man respond seemed, at first, to be inconsistent with our diversity goals. However, upon further thought, we were excited about including a man's resume because it meant that one of our WBL women who had received this e-mail had followed one of our major tenets we had set forth as one of our 10 Best Practices for Business Advancement:

8. "Every opportunity that comes your way is an opportunity for someone, even if you are not interested. Make recommendations and pass the information along."

In order for a man to have replied to our e-mail, one of our women had to have forwarded it to him. In this particular circumstance, the expertise that the company was seeking was somewhat narrow and the man had the type of experience that was the subject of the search. It also means that the woman who did pass along this opportunity is

(Continued...)

From

EXECUTIVE WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE

Sponsored by



In This Issue

The 10 Best Practices for Advancing Women in Business Page 1

The Low-Down on the What-if Question Page 3

END PIECE: It's Not the Plan; It's the Execution Page 4

About Executive Briefing & Exchange

Executive Briefing & Exchange is e-mailed the second and fourth Monday of each month. It is offered to you free of charge. You are welcome to print copies of EB&E.

EB&E is a service of Executive Women in Healthcare, which produces educational materials and seminars to help women healthcare executives. Executive Women in Healthcare helps leaders differentiate between fads and trends; and helps make connections with other healthcare "Trend Leaders."

You are encouraged to react to anything that you read by e-mailing us at:

Sheila Keizer
Executive Director
ebe@WomenInHealth.com

Our address is:
20 B Shawnee Way
Bozeman, Montana 59715-7624

EB&E is sponsored by PHNS, an innovative hospital services company with a continuum of solutions dedicated specifically to the healthcare industry.

Executive Women in Healthcare
406-586-6400
www.WomenInHealth.com

The 10 Best Practices for Advancing Women in Business (Continued...)

now perceived as a "player" in the eyes of that man. She was able to do something that would advance his opportunities that would not have been the case if she had let the e-mail die in her e-mailbox. Even if the man does not get the director position, he is likely to consider this referral from the WBL woman to be of some value to him because it gave him visibility with the search firm for other director searches and there could be more in the future. It is not every day that someone finds out about a potential board position for the expertise that you have.

We did put the man's resume in with the others since we do not screen the resumes at all. At the time of this writing, the company had not yet selected its candidate.

In business, opportunities are presented to you from time to time. Whether it is a job search or a board search or information about a company that may be up for sale, it is usually the case that these opportunities are not necessarily attractive to you. However, that is only the beginning of the inquiry. Do not let them stop with you. These opportunities are a form of "business currency." That is why the next inquiry should be whether there is someone else that you know who could be interested in this opportunity.

Also, do not forget to get "credit" for passing the opportunity along to others. If the opportunity is passed along without the "credit," you lose some of the value that comes from this activity. That means that **you** should be the one who passes the e-mail with information to the other person and copy the person offering the opportunity. That way it is clear that you are the one making the introduction.

If you just ask the person offering the opportunity to "just mention my name," you take the chance that this "credit" will never happen.

Finally, the objective here is to pay attention to these opportunities in a more formal way so that you get the most from them - even if you, yourself, have no interest. Hopefully, if you use this "business currency" to help someone else, then someday someone else might use this "business currency" to help you.

Steps to Consider:

1. Identify a recent opportunity that you let "die" at your desk and see if there is still time to resurrect it so that it could be passed along. Then pass it along to someone else.
2. Be sure to call back everyone who calls you with an opportunity to see if there is any way you can help them even if you are not the right person for that opportunity.
3. If you have additional goals - like being on a for-profit board-or to expand your business with acquisitions-let it be known to your colleagues so that if they hear about such an opportunity, they immediately think of you.

Good Luck!!!!

© Lynn Shapiro Snyder 2006

Lynn Shapiro Snyder is a National Health Care Practice Leader at Epstein Becker & Green, P.C. in Washington, DC (www.ebglaw.com). She has been voted one of the 100 most powerful people in health care for her leadership as a top Medicare, Medicaid, and compliance attorney. In addition, Ms. Snyder is nationally known as the Founder and President of the Women Business Leaders of the U.S. Health Care Industry Foundation, an invitation only group of about 1,200 senior executive women and women board members (see womenleadinghealthcare.org).



The Low-Down on the What-if Question

By Lisa LeMaster

By far, the most common question asked by your myriad audiences is the "what if" query.

- What if we choose (or chose) a different procedure?
- If you had a different process or procedure in place, could the outcome have been different?
- If you implement these strategies, what do you think will happen?

For the media, patients' families or your employees, the "tense" of the question is often cast in the future. People ask, and they ask quicker, what will happen next? That's usually opposite of the question of what is happening now?

There are two different types of "what if" questions. They might ask you to look *forward*. For example, you could be quizzed about Medicaid or competition.

"What will happen if healthcare doesn't get adequate Medicaid reimbursement?"

"What would be the impact on your hospital if your physicians leave for a better deal at the cross-town or physician-owned facility?"

"If you are found guilty of negligence, what will the impact be on your hospital?"

Or, they may ask you to look *backward*.

"If you had known that the organs were from a drug addict, would you have proceeded with the transplant?"

"If you had examined his/her resume more closely, would you have hired her/him?"

"Are you sorry that you made that decision?"

In either case, the reporter or patient representative is asking you to guess a response if, *and only if*, you had certain information at the time

of the decision. No one should be expected to guess what will happen next, especially now. You could employ answers such as:

- I don't have a crystal ball.
- Or, like our Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, you could say, "I don't answer what-if questions."
- There's no way to answer that.

If they ask you to look backward and second-guess a decision, it's a little trickier. Here are some proven answers to the questions that ask you to predict what may or may not have happened if you had certain facts.

- That's not what happened.
- You described a scenario that doesn't fit the facts at that time.
- Sadly, we can't go back and guess the answer to that question.
- In this job, you can't guess what may or may not have been done if certain events had happened that lined up the process in a certain way.

The "what-if" question is both a trap and an opportunity. It's key to recognize if you are being asked to look forward or backward because they are both difficult questions. As a leader in the industry, you have some obligation to look forward, but you should never have to guess what you may or may not have done if certain events had also happened.

Lisa LeMaster is the president of The LeMaster Group, a Dallas-based company specializing in crisis communications, perception management and media coaching. For more information, you can visit: www.lemastergroup.com.



END PIECE: It's Not the Plan; It's the Execution

In 1984, AT&T was going through a major reorganization following the breakup of the company. Earlier the Supreme Court had removed its monopoly on the telephone products connected to the phone lines. Only a monopoly on the lines remained. For the first time in its long business history, AT&T had to become a marketing-driven company instead of a service driven company.

Lawrence G. Hrebiniak, a professor in the Department of Management at the University of Pennsylvania, has written about that period at AT&T in his recent book, *Making Strategy Work*. What he wrote has application to our healthcare industry.

At the start of the book, he tells about a conversation he had with Randy Tobias, then head of AT&T's new products division. Tobias later became chairman of AT&T and then a successful CEO at Eli Lilly.

"Here was a new business thrust headlong into the competitive arena. Competition was new to AT&T at the time. Competitive strategy for the business was nonexistent, and Tobias was laboring to create that elusive original plan. He focused on products, competitors, industry forces and how to position the new division in the marketplace. He created a strategic plan where previously there had been none."

Hrebiniak writes, "I recall asking Randy what was the biggest strategic challenge confronting the business. I expected that his answer would deal with the problem of strategy formulation or some competitive threat facing the division. His answer surprised me." "It was the execution of strategy that concerned him above all else. Making the plan work would be an even bigger challenge than creating the plan. Execution was the key to competitive success."

Tobias identified many of his execution challenges:

- The culture of the organization and how it was not appropriate for the challenge ahead.

- Incentives and how people have been rewarded for seniority or "getting older," not for performance or competitive achievement.
- The need to overcome problems with traditional functional "silos" in the organization's structure.
- The challenges inherent in managing change as the division adapted to new competitive conditions.

The author studied other business strategic plans and concluded that execution is where most of the failures occur. Hrebiniak writes: "Execution is a process. It is not the result of a single decision of action. It is the result of a series of integrated decisions or actions over time."

"This helps explain," he continues, "why sound execution confers competitive advantage. Firms will try to benchmark a successful execution of strategy. However, if execution involves a series of internally consistent, integrated activities, activity systems, or processes, imitation will be extremely difficult, if not impossible."

Later in his book, Hrebiniak writes, "Although execution is critical to strategic success, making strategy work presents a formidable challenge. A host of factors, including politics, inertia, and resistance to change, routinely can get in the way of execution success."

"Management literature has focused over the years primarily on parading new ideas on planning and strategy formulation in front of eager readers, but it has sorely neglected execution. Granted, planning is important. Granted, people are waking up to the challenge and are beginning to take execution seriously."

"Still, it is obvious," states Hrebiniak, "that the execution of strategy is not nearly as clear and understood as the formulation of strategy making than making strategy work."

A good place to begin understanding execution is Hrebiniak's book published last year by Wharton School Publishing.

About Our Sponsor



PHNS is a privately owned company that provides a suite of strategic solutions including information technology, health information management and business office services exclusively to hospitals and multi-facility healthcare systems. Serving more than 400 hospitals and healthcare entities, PHNS creates business-healthy hospitals by improving operations, enhancing technology, providing capital dollars and increasing cash-on-hand allowing hospitals to focus on their core competency - patient care. PHNS is unlike any other hospital services company – only PHNS can deliver proven, dedicated solutions to the entire continuum of non-core business functions at a hospital. From the time a patient walks into the hospital until the hospital gets reimbursed for services rendered, the PHNS HealthCaring Solution addresses the entire flow of healthcare clinical and financial information. PHNS employs more than 1,250 experienced professionals whose dedication has resulted in over \$36 million in cost savings for PHNS' hospital partners. PHNS was founded in 1999 and is headquartered in Dallas, Texas, with employees based across the country. For more information, please visit www.phns.com.