

November 14, 2007 100 Wise Women Breakfast Forum

Lynn Pendergrass, President and Chief Executive Officer of GE Consumer and Industrial, Americas addressed gathering of over 150 women at the 100 Wise Women breakfast forum held at the Frazier International History Museum.

Lynn Pendergrass shared an insightful perspective of the most significant changes in today's global marketplace and explained how these changes impact the ever-changing roles of women. She offered advice to the gathering of over 150 women based on what she's learned both professionally and personally. The following is an excerpt from her speech:

"I would like to share some advice with you in preparing and working in this new world.

- Embrace learning - you can never quit learning. To succeed in this changing world you need to be fresh and aware.
- Open your mind and experiences to different cultures. Do this on both a personal and professional level. There is no substitute for having a true immersion in another country/ culture - - - While I have never had the experience of a full time international assignment, some of my greatest learnings were derived from several short term assignments in India and Southeast Asia. These were a huge learning experience for me. I learned a lot about the countries and our markets there, but I learned even more about me – and I was able to leverage these learnings just this year in China where I am in the process of closing a large joint venture agreement to provide growth for our compact fluorescent lighting business.
- Get to know your customers whether you are in a support role or a commercial role. Figure out who is “buying” your product or service and find ways to delight this individual or group. Find out what makes your customer’s tick and how you can help them grow.
- When I say think big, think small . . . it sounds like a contradiction . . . but many of the trends I talked about today will require big swings, big risks and this is exhilarating. But, be careful not to be so high level that you are not engaged and involved in the details. Operating in some countries can be complicated – with different compliance, employment, and tax and environmental requirements – as just a few examples. You have to have the capability and resourcefulness to cover the bases.
- Finally, there are organizations within your community that are hungry for your energy and brainpower. A sure way to expand your learning and cultural contacts in to get

involved in something that captures your passion. You have to be selective and make sure it fits within your life. For me, my interest in arts has driven my community involvement and more recently my passion for helping to develop and execute programs to develop young women is something that has captured my attention and passion – Women 4 women. You need to find a cause – one that captures your heart.

Now, I want to share with you a bit more personal side of my own story, some of my own realities. Life has not always been a well thought out path without any detours, but if you have done the right preparations and have the right attitude, you can overcome adversities and can be a better person as a result.

Here is what I learned:

- I was technically trained, but I quickly learned that I preferred being in a more commercially focused role. You must follow your heart as well as your mind. You need to find work that is personally satisfying and work that challenges you to grow and to learn.
- When I became a mother, as many of you know, life became more of a challenge. I had to learn how to balance, manage and most importantly, I had to learn what tasks I could outsource to others to handle. I also had to make some serious tradeoffs – if I pursued my career, what parts of my children’s lives would I be able to accept missing? The other reality I learned, the needs/ demands of my children change over time - - sometimes they are huge, other times more manageable, but they are not consistent – but regardless, whether I am in Louisville or China, I must be accessible – and technology and not setting hard boundaries for myself around what I define as work time and family time have helped me a great deal in being able to do this.
- Then, in 2000, I got divorced . . . while this was personally disappointing, more importantly I was now primarily responsible for my children’s welfare. I had to adjust to the current realities and build a solid infrastructure to keep my children’s lives stable and happy. It also meant more thoughtful time management ... and it meant an even deeper commitment to success in my career, as I had to provide and plan for my children now and in the future.
- Then, in 2002, I developed health issues. I am not going into the gory details for you today, but I had breast cancer. This was a big blow to me – but also a new reality – that I was not invincible. I had to address this like a new work project – accept the reality, collect the data, develop the solution and execute the plan. The other key learning here is surrounding yourself with a great team. The support of my family, friends, colleagues and customers was no less than amazing and I learned to need and accept their support.

Then, my life seemed too calm and under control. So, after meeting my current husband on a blind date about 3.5 years ago, I began a whole new relationship . . . we married and blended

his four children with my two children. This blended dual career busy family has clearly changed the dynamics of my life. I am happy with my personal life today. I am happy with my career but it has not gone as I expected or would have predicted twenty years ago when I started working for GE.

I would say, anticipating, embracing and adapting to change is the critical factor to succeeding in all areas of life. You saw some of the major milestones in my life - - - just about none of them were planned. Being flexible will determine how you handle what life throws your way. I believe that opportunities emerge in times of change . . . both good and bad. . . And to succeed you need to be opportunistic and aware of your options. The science of this is learning to solve problems, making tradeoffs and building a structure of resources around you to successfully execute. But the art of this, whether it's managing your career decisions, taking what comes in your personal life, or navigating emerging global demographic trends, you must create the future while managing the present."