



COMMUNICATION COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY

3 KEYS TO SUCCESS

BY BRIT MOTT

UNLOCK THE POWER OF POTENTIAL IN YOUR WORKPLACE with Communication, Collaboration and Community. Whether you are an entry-level employee or C-suite executive, every one of us is an influencer and can contribute to a healthy work environment.

At *Plano Profile's* 15th annual Women in Business event on Friday, September 30, four business leaders revealed insights on how Communication, Collaboration and Community can contribute to success in the workplace. Julia Wada, the keynote speaker, is Group Vice President, Human Resources and Business Technology Solutions for Toyota Financial Services. Joining her were panelists Connie Rogers, CIMA, Regional Manager of Investment & Fiduciary Services for Wells Fargo; Cheryl "Action" Jackson, Founder of Minnie's Food Pantry; and Stacey Sullivan, Senior Manager of External Communications for FedEx Office.

COMMUNICATION

Email, smartphones and social media have contributed to a drastic shift in the way we communicate in the workplace. Inboxes are constantly full, phones are incessantly vibrating, and Facebook is a swipe away. It can feel like we are

communicating more than ever but often times, an email, text or Facebook message is overlooked or lost in translation, even if it is accompanied by an emoji.

Strong communication—conveying your mission consistently, accurately and timely—is critical to everyone’s success in the workplace. Connie Rogers, Regional Manager of Investment & Fiduciary Services for Wells Fargo, says women have an innate advantage in communication and should leverage that to drive team success. “Women are more prolific communicators than men—our 10,000 words per day versus their 1,500,” she said. “Women sometimes fail to realize that how we get to success doesn’t necessarily have to be the way men get to success.”

Strong communication is also knowing what platform to use to receive the fastest response. As the saying goes, “time is money,” and immediacy is appreciated. Stacey Sullivan, Senior Manager of External Communications for FedEx Office, says, “One of the first things you learn in media relations is to ask reporters how they prefer you communicate with them (email, phone calls or texts) and ensure you adapt to their style. This also applies within any organization.” She adds, “Women should proactively check preferences with supervisors and peers; this keeps projects moving faster. The one exception: navigating difficult or highly emotional conversations. Always have those conversations face-to-face or via phone if possible.”

Cheryl “Action” Jackson with Minnie’s Food Pantry, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, knows firsthand the importance of communication with a staff of 10 and a volunteer bank of 8,000 members. “If our message isn’t communicated properly to our volunteers within the first 20 minutes when we begin our day, there would be hundreds of people that would not experience the incredible opportunity of what it means to serve and be served by someone that wants to make sure their dignity and integrity is left intact when they leave our facility,” she says.

Social media is a win for any type of business because it has sharing power. Cheryl agrees, “Communication through social media has landed us in the national and international spotlight where we have leveraged the playing field between being a grassroots organization to a nationally known charity.” Cheryl and Minnie’s Food Pantry appeared on *Good Morning America* where Rihanna,

Jim Parsons and Steve Martin, stars of the animated movie *Home*, presented her with a surprise donation from DreamWorks to feed 25,000 people. She has also appeared on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The Steve Harvey Show*, *The Talk* and *Entertainment Tonight*, all thanks to the power of social media.

Cheryl reveals how she caught the attention of Oprah Winfrey via social media. “When I saw Oprah walking through her garden on Facebook doing a live video, I said to her, ‘Oprah, people at Minnie’s Food Pantry cry when they receive vegetables from our charity.’ Oprah responded and said, ‘Cheryl, you are an example of love made visible.’ Interaction from major celebrities helps us to raise thousands of dollars for our organization and helps us expand our message to another group of people.”

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COLLABORATION

Julia Wada, Group Vice President, Human Resources and Business Technology Solutions for Toyota Financial Services agrees that strong communication is the foundation for success, but it doesn’t stop there. “[You have to] truly hear others’ perspectives in order to influence a situation and move things forward,” she says. “When collaboration works as it should, the whole is truly more than the sum of its parts. I’m a big believer in collaboration to achieve results.”

Julia explains that the most rewarding work she has been a part of has involved collaborative teamwork. “Right now, I’m responsible for a team working on our transition to Texas. We call it the Next Chapter team. It’s a very diverse group of individuals. Each is strong in their own

area of expertise and each has a great respect for what the others bring. There’s always great energy, and while it’s not always easy, it’s always worth it.”

Julia adds, “One of my favorite quotes comes from Vernā Myers who says, ‘Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.’ My personal addition is ‘true inclusion occurs when people feel so welcome and supported that they bring their best dance moves.’ Think about that. When you bring together a diverse group that shares a motivating purpose, and you can create a truly inclusive environment, what that team can do is amazing, and so much more than you could have done on your own.”

Millennials, especially, thrive in a collaborative work environment. Because they live and breathe social media, they are used to their voices being heard and therefore, they expect their opinions to be considered. But because millennials value everyone’s opinion, they are great listeners.

“Women are natural collaborators as well,” says Connie. “We refer to Wells Fargo employees as ‘team members’ and in my area of the bank, the most successful client managers are those that build internal teams around their clients and maintain a high level of communication both internally and externally. We are natural collaborators and with collaboration and a high level of communication, you build a village, which can be used to build a platform for success.”

Furthermore, good managers understand that team members’ contributions complement their weaknesses and are not a threat to their authority. A give-and-take relationship among team members in the workplace is healthy and productive. “Opinion-gathering and seeking to see an issue from all sides serves you well as you seek corporate success and upward mobility,” says Stacey. “Leaders respect a healthy balance of thoughtful deliberation and decisiveness on strategic initiatives.”

Collaboration is also important outside of the workplace. Says Cheryl, “Collaboration has been the key to our success. We have partnered with TGI Fridays, Walmart, Toyota, KFC/Pizza Hut, Dr Pepper/Snapple, JCPenney, Market Street...and more. Without collaboration with these numerous companies, our budget would increase by at least 50 percent and our mission would not be accomplished.” She adds, “We are thankful to churches, especially Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, who have partnered with us since the first year of our existence.”

COMMUNITY

Sharing a common interest, mission or vision with your community is twofold: It unifies team members within your organization, giving each individual a sense of purpose, and it aligns your organization with potential donors, volunteers, clients, influencers, etc., who can further your mission. Says Julia, “When collaboration is combined with community, such as a community of shared purpose, it’s very powerful.”

Connie creates a sense of community and intra-team support at Wells Fargo by organizing social gatherings and volunteer events. “Last year, a number of us volunteered at the Feed Me pet food bank in Fort Worth, which helped create increased connections among team members and supported a great cause,” she says.

Stacey pointed out that strong corporate social responsibility programs were once a hallmark of only great corporate cultures, but in today’s society, they have become a necessity to driving corporate reputation, employee engagement and recruiting new talent to the organization. “Community giving has become more than just cutting a check to a charity,” she says. “At its best, it’s identifying causes aligned with the organization’s purpose and finding multiple channels to allow your employees to give back.”

She continues, “When I was with Chili’s, our team implemented a program that allowed local restaurants to host ‘give back nights’

for charities. When DFW-area DJ Kidd Kraddick passed away unexpectedly in 2013, what started as a local Dallas-based give back for his charity, Kidd’s Kids, extended to more than 150 restaurants across the region.” The ‘give back night’ generated \$75,000 for the Kidd’s Kids program, in addition to brand awareness, sales and traffic for Chili’s. Says Stacey, “When charitable events are driven by passion for a cause, everyone wins.”

Cheryl agrees. To date, Minnie’s Food Pantry has provided over 4.2 million meals to families in need. Volunteers and businesses have embraced their mission and given their time, talent and resources to roll out the red carpet for hungry individuals and families. “You’ve heard the saying that ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ We have learned that it takes a community to feed an entire family,” says Cheryl. “We appreciate every person that embraces our mission and our motto: If you can’t feed 100 people then feed just one. It is because of our amazing community that we are proud to be a leading food pantry. Without the community’s support, we would not be successful, period.”

To sum it up, a business that fosters Communication, Collaboration and Community is on the right track to success. Clients, volunteers, donors, employees—anyone who comes in contact with your brand or service—will thrive from the positive energy that your business exudes. 📍

MEET THE PANELISTS

For more on keynote speaker **JULIA WADA**, see page 22.

CONNIE ROGERS

Connie Rogers is the Regional Investment/Fiduciary Services Manager for the DFW markets of Wells Fargo Private Bank.

She is responsible for overseeing the comprehensive financial products and services that The Private Bank offers to high-net-worth clients, including access to customized lending, investment management, fiduciary services and financial planning through Wells Fargo Private Bank and brokerage services through Wells Fargo Advisors. Previously, Connie worked at BBVA Compass for 16 years, where she held a number of positions in the Wealth Management Group.



CHERYL “ACTION” JACKSON

Cheryl “Action” Jackson is an award-winning philanthropist and the founder of Minnie’s Food Pantry, a nationally acclaimed food pantry in Plano that feeds over 300 people any given day. She has inspired people around the country, raised awareness about hunger in Plano and created a wide network of donors, delivery systems and training programs to equip those she feeds, setting a new standard for food pantries nationwide.

STACEY SULLIVAN

Stacey Sullivan serves as Senior Manager of External Communications for FedEx Office. She develops communications programs designed to create positive recognition of the company’s vision, values and business strategies. She oversees public relations, social media, crisis communications and corporate social responsibility. Previously, Stacey led communications at every touchpoint during At Home’s recent IPO and throughout their 2014 nationwide rebrand from Garden Ridge to At Home.

