

DARE Q & A with: Diana Einterz



President of Orange Americas, Diana Einterz draws on her global telecommunications industry experience and her passion for philanthropic initiatives to lead the Americas region for Orange Business Services, a half-billion-dollar enterprise. Prior to attaining her current position, Einterz was Head of Regional Operations and led a team of more than 2,100 technicians and support staff who delivered world-class installation and maintenance services to multinational corporations in over 220 countries and territories. Before joining Orange, she served in a variety of executive posts for AT&T during a successful twenty-year period in which she oversaw the maintenance and provisioning of the telecom provider's domestic and international networks.

Q: What is the most challenging thing you have ever had to do?

A: Taking a declining, unprofitable revenue stream and turning it around to have year-over-year profitable growth, while learning to accept and overcome a divorce in a twenty-seven-year marriage. Either would have been challenging enough. Both together were daunting! And yet, perhaps oddly, they somehow kept me balanced.

Q: Where did you get the courage and confidence to accomplish these things?

A: At the office, I had built a strong team of hard-working people who have a thirst for teamwork and winning. The business gave me something to really sink my teeth into so that I could find some satisfaction. Also, I knew a lot of people were depending on me and my leadership team to turn this business around. I could not let them down!

On the personal side, fortunately, I have a very strong, loving family comprised of people who are very direct and supportive but who also refuse to accept defeat or wallowing. From my parents to my siblings (twelve of them!) to my children, I have always felt that they have supported me and kicked me when I needed a swift kick. I am also a believer in getting my exercise, eating right, getting a little bit of fresh air and sunshine each day, and getting enough sleep (though I never seem to get enough sleep. I love to sleep). Someone once told me I should be like a swan: Beautiful and calm and graceful above water and paddling like hell underneath. It is an image I keep in my mind in times of struggle. I even have a crystal swan on my desk to remind me.

***“...be like a swan:
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and graceful above
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Q: What is the biggest mistake you have ever made? What did you learn and how did you recover?

A: I try not to make too many mistakes and have been fortunate in that area—and yet this in itself may be my greatest mistake. I had a boss early on in my career who once asked me: “How often do you try to be right?” and I said, “Well, usually 100% but surely never less than 90%.” And he said, “Then you are not taking enough risks!”

I think he was right.

I was so reluctant to fail, that I did not take enough risk in my career or in my projects. I played it safe. I think I could have achieved greater results if I’d stretched further outside my comfort zone.

Luckily I have not had anything I would consider a drastic catastrophe, at least not yet. What came close, perhaps, was the time I hired the wrong person to lead a part of my business and took too long to replace him. The damage he did took me years to repair. People resigned. The business declined. Morale suffered. It probably can’t all be attributed to him, but a lot of it can. I was not close enough to the business, and I did not want to inflict yet another management change on it. I also wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt. They were laudable motives, but, in the end, I allowed others to suffer.

I have learned to listen to that voice inside my head that tells me things that, maybe, I don’t always want to hear or to face. I have learned that, even when the decision is difficult or painful, it is my responsibility to take

action and be swift. It will always hurt, but it will hurt less if it is done sooner rather than later, and everyone will be better for it, even the individual being replaced.

“I have learned that, even when the decision is difficult or painful, it is my responsibility to take action and be swift.”

Q: If you had a young woman you cared deeply about entering the workforce today, what single piece of advice would you have for her?

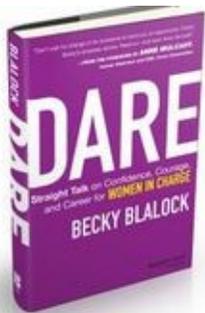
A: Work hard. Be true to yourself. Don’t ever compromise your values or your principles. Be kind but firm. Be humble but courageous. Have faith—in yourself, in others, in God, or in whomever you believe created this glorious universe and watches over us!

Q: What advice do you have for building self-confidence?

A: Surround yourself with people who care and who share your values and will give you honest, direct feedback. Take chances and believe in yourself. Allow yourself to fail. Learn from failure and grow (*cont.*)

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A: (cont.) stronger! I don't mean make a habit of it, but embrace each failure as an opportunity to get even better. Once you have picked yourself up and dusted yourself off, you will realize you can fail and survive and it gives you confidence to try again.



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