

DARE Q & A with: Penny McIntyre



Penny McIntyre has over 20 years of experience at premier consumer packaged goods companies including Newell Rubbermaid, The Coca-Cola Company, and S.C. Johnson. She has led businesses globally, leveraging her skills in general management, marketing, and talent development. At Newell Rubbermaid, she was responsible for a \$3.2 billion business unit with 10,000 people globally. She led the Rubbermaid, Sharpie, Calphalon, Levolor, Paper Mate, and Parker businesses, all leaders in their respective categories. Peggy is a graduate of the Ivey Business School at the University of Western Ontario, and has been honored with various awards related to her work as an advocate for women, including the YWCA Woman of Achievement award.

Q: What is the biggest risk you've ever taken?

A: The most challenging thing was to take the first "major" international move. I had moved from Canada to the U.S., which wasn't a huge step. My next move was to Japan, working in a predominantly Japanese speaking company, as one of three *gaijin* in the company. I was pregnant with my first child at the time so to actually press the button to move overseas into a completely different environment was scary, challenging, but ultimately the best thing for my career.

Q: Where did you get the courage and confidence to do this thing?

A: My parents had instilled in their three daughters that we could do whatever we set our minds to. But most importantly was the life lesson my mother taught me at an early age: that there is no such thing as a stupid question, and that NOT asking the question is what was stupid. By never being afraid to ask, challenge, and explore, the idea of going to a new culture was less intimidating. I knew that if I didn't understand something, I could simply ask.

Q: What is the biggest mistake you have ever made? What did you learn and how did you recover?

A: The biggest mistake I made was stepping back instead of stepping forward into a career opportunity. I felt that I wasn't ready and, in hindsight, I most certainly was! Now, as it turned out, it was a good thing to happen as I ultimately moved into general management and that positioned me for future career growth. Yet, I think back and see that I let myself down and let my team down. I should have stepped (*cont.*)

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A: (cont.) into the fray.

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: I would recommend pursuing diversity aggressively. By diversity, I mean taking international opportunities, taking roles outside of the traditional career path, even in totally different industries. Success in the future will be gained by people who are flexible, curious, and with multiple experiences. The world and business is changing so rapidly that the skill of adapting and learning quickly, and importantly enjoying that experience, will become the premium skill in the new economy.

Q: How did you make the leap from middle to senior management?

A: The single biggest change in my management style was to acknowledge to my team that I didn't have all the answers and that we needed to work together to succeed. This accomplished several things: it empowered the team to do its best work, leveraged the diversity of the team, and quite frankly role-modeled a leadership style that enables people to make mistakes, acknowledge and fix them, and then move on.

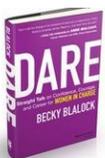
Q: What advice do you have for building self-confidence?

A: My mother told me that everyone puts their pants on one leg at a time—in other words, no one is intrinsically better or smarter or more talented. If they can do it, so can you.

Q: What is your greatest fear today?

A: That intolerance borne of fear of the unknown will stop progress in diversity and inclusion in our work environment.

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