

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# 2022

**SLICE**  
COMMUNICATIONS



# INTRODUCTION

As a leading woman-owned agency, Slice Communications has been proud to host an annual interview series with women leaders in marketing and communications.

In this third iteration, we highlight 17 extraordinary leaders from diverse industries, ranging from nonprofit and culture to financial services and technology. These stories focus on their leadership, how it's evolved over the past year, and the impact they have on other women in the industry.

At our core, Slice Communications exists to get people to pay attention, and every March, we're proud to focus our attention on celebrating these thought leaders.

## *Women Leaders Our Interviewees Follow on Social Media*

**S A R A B L A K E L Y**  
**B R E N E B R O W N**  
**THASUNDA BROWN DUCKETT**  
**K A T C O L E**  
**T R A C Y D A V I D S O N**  
**T A R A J A Y E F R A N K**  
**M E L I N D A F R E N C H G A T E S**  
**W H I T N E Y W O L F E H E R D**  
**A R I A N N A H U F F I N G T O N**  
**A N T O I N E T T E M I N O R**  
**C O L L E E N M C C R E A R Y**  
**F A L G U N I N A Y A R**  
**M I C H E L L E O B A M A**  
**S E L E N A R E Z V A N I**  
**D R . L A U R I E S A N T O S**  
**R E S H M A S A U J A N I**  
**S I M O N S I N E K**  
**M E L I S S A U R B A N**

# STEPHANIE KOCH

CEO AT THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF ATLANTIC CITY



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

A dedicated, social service leader with a proven business acumen, I pride myself in being a systems-level thinker, using business strategy to drive social impact.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

When COVID struck our community, I knew this challenge would be one that impacted us organizationally, but also individually. Yet we pushed forward, keeping our mission at heart as the cornerstone for our drive to serve. When schools went virtual, we opened up our doors to house learning pods. When families were hungry, we orchestrated food distributions. And when residents questioned vaccination, we educated them to dispel the myths and later hosted vaccination clinics, recognizing that we needed to continue to stand as the scaffolding our community needs to climb for a brighter future ahead. As the leader, I remained steadfast and supportive, yet understanding and ALWAYS prepared to listen.

**ALL ACHIEVEMENTS MUST BE TEAM-ORIENTED, DRIVEN, AND CELEBRATED; THE SAME GOES FOR CHALLENGES WITH EVERY EMERGENCY.**

# SUSAN BUEHLER

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER AT PJM INTERCONNECTION



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

I believe it's important to set the example for the team. Support your staff and help them grow personally and professionally. Make sure they feel valued and that their contributions are important. Everyone should understand the mission and vision. Demonstrate where you are leading the team and why. Lastly, remember you were once just starting out. Help the next generation and lift up those that are less fortunate.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

More engagement and more touchpoints. Working remotely has advantages and disadvantages. It's challenging to manage and motivate people you don't see. On-camera meetings help but do not replace an in-person meeting. I am checking in more frequently with managers and staff and making sure we are connecting. Engagement is crucial.

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO  
ASK QUESTIONS, OR ASK  
FOR HELP AND SUPPORT  
WHETHER IT'S ON A PROJECT  
OR IN YOUR CAREER. IT'S NOT  
A SIGN OF WEAKNESS BUT  
RATHER INDICATES YOU CARE  
AND WANT TO WORK TO GET  
SOMETHING RIGHT.**

# MALINI DODDAMANI

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER AT PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

Online meetings have literally flattened perceived hierarchy, and I find collaboration happening simply because team members are willing to speak up with the added protective layer of a screen. I have been able to listen better.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

About 12 years ago, younger women in different departments would ask to have coffee with me, or lunch, or just go for a walk. They all asked the same theme of questions - “How did you say no like that?” “How did you get your point across?” “How did you negotiate that point?” “How did you get that budget?” And I realized they were asking me, as often the lone woman (and POC) in a meeting, how was my voice heard? I realized then, that I couldn’t take for granted the opportunity I had, in some small way, to help the next generation of women managers, executives, etc. learn how to have their voices heard. I was an example whether I wanted to be or not. I have never taken that privilege for granted since then, and am always aware of being an example of leadership to others in the room, and to those looking in.

**“I TRY TO LISTEN TO ALL IDEAS, FROM ALL PEOPLE. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU’LL LEARN OR WHAT WILL SPARK A NEW DIRECTION. DIVERSITY OF IDEAS LEADS TO MAXIMUM EDUCATION.”**

# RASAGNA HOLT

CEO AT KGTIGER CORPORATION



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

To be a leader is to perform at a level that inspires others to achieve the same goal. To understand individual strengths and weaknesses and build teams that can leverage these attributes. To build inclusive teams with people from diverse backgrounds.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

I believe in a collaborative environment where everyone gets to speak freely and express their opinion. I have worked towards fostering this culture in my organization where people from all levels can freely express their opinion and bring their ideas to the table.

**I BELIEVE IN A  
COLLABORATIVE  
ENVIRONMENT  
WHERE EVERYONE  
GETS TO SPEAK  
FREELY AND EXPRESS  
THEIR OPINION.**

# ANASTASIA BOTTOS

PRESIDENT & COO AT MY ALARM CENTER



## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

Very early in my career (early 20's), I sat in one leadership mode - pacesetter. It was great for the growing organization but onerous on my team. I'm very fortunate that almost all of them stuck with me for well over a decade, despite this... but I recall one project we were all working on and sitting in a conference room, and I was about to start pushing for the next steps so we could get to the finish line and looked around the room, and every one of them looked like they were on the brink of burnout. I'm glad I noticed it and solicited some feedback (that they were afraid to give because they didn't want to disappoint)... It really shifted my mindset to the importance of balancing team/organizational needs and how ultimately, you can get to the same level of results. This is certainly not to say pacesetter is a mode to avoid - It served us well when we had to shift our entire team at corporate headquarters to a work-from-home structure in 1 day, but it's all about balance.

**MY LEADERSHIP STYLE HAS EVOLVED, BUT IN THE LAST 10 YEARS, THE ONLY WORD THAT CAN CATEGORIZE IT IS ADAPTIVE—SHIFTING FROM LEADING BY EXAMPLE, TO VISIONARY, TO PACESETTER, TO TRANSFORMATIONAL, TO SERVANT LEADERSHIP DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF OUR TEAM AND THE NEED OF OUR ORGANIZATION.**

# ELIZABETH HEFNER

DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT AT SUNDAY BREAKFAST RESCUE MISSION



## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

I have become far more flexible. In the past year, I, like so many, have spent time re-evaluating my leadership framework. I have shifted my leadership from being highly structured with a dash of collaboration to focusing on fostering the best outcomes for my organization while personally supporting the best results for my team. I shifted away from leading with KPIs first. I found that demonstrating empathy and understanding, as we have all faced tremendous challenges, created a sense of safety in a world of chaos. Through this shift, I have seen my team flourish and innovate. Their work has been outstanding, and our organization is growing as a result.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

As a leader, challenging conversations about performance are never easy, but they are a part of honest leadership. For example, I led a team where a team member was underperforming and disconnected from their work. At first, I was driving home their missed KPIs in every conversation and creating an improvement plan for them. A few days later, I saw them leaning over their desk with their head buried in their hands. I asked if they wanted to take a few minutes and talk. Their honesty blessed me as they shared that they were struggling to care for an ill parent, something I know myself too well. At this moment, we were able to talk through adjusting their schedule to give them the flexibility they needed. Within a couple of weeks, their work improved, and ultimately they became one of the team's best members. Leading with trust and empathy can be transformative.

**COLLABORATION, EMPATHY, AND MEASUREMENT ARE THREE WORDS THAT DEFINE MY LEADERSHIP. I BELIEVE THAT FIRMLY GROUNDING YOUR WORK AND YOUR TEAM IN THESE THREE VALUES ENSURES THAT EVERYONE IS VALUED, RESPECTED, AND HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AT THEIR BEST.**

# JODI DICKINSON

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER AT FRONTLINE EDUCATION



## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

I started working at age 10 with my first job being a paper route, evolving to managing 3 jobs by the age of 18 in addition to going to school, being in 3 variety sports, and holding a position in student government. I knew that even with all my hard work, I would still not have enough money. Yet, I was determined and positive to make it happen. When I ran out of money, I came home to work and finished my degree virtually. Nearly 30 years ago, virtual learning was not easy like it is today: watching lessons on VHS tapes and sending my work through US mail - not at all collaborative like virtual learning is today. I am proud to share that I became the first person in my immediate family to graduate college, hold a Master's Degree, and continue beyond. This part of my journey was foundational for me. To this day, I help others see the positive, help others get the support that they need to succeed. In my work life, I was lucky to have so many mentors both male and females who supported who believed in me. I would not be here if not for them. They pushed me to be better and do better. The best thing that I can do at this stage of my career is to be the best mentor, role model, and support structure to help our future leaders achieve their dreams.

**KEEP IN MIND THE WHOLE PERSON COMES TO WORK. I BELIEVE THIS IS A LESSON THAT COVID HAS TAUGHT US... HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS FOR OUR EMPLOYEES LIVES AND FOR OURSELVES AS LEADERS.**

# KRYSTAL EASON

VICE PRESIDENT OF PEOPLE AT HOUWZER



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

I'm a collaborative leader. I believe in the power of employee buy-in to achieve goals and as leaders, we can do this best for our employees by actively listening, requesting feedback, and providing regular opportunities to contribute. This doesn't mean that every idea or request is implemented, but it opens up a dialogue for what has potential or what else needs to happen before we can tackle each suggestion, which in turn motivates the team to all move in the same direction.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

I've embraced being more candid over the last year to an extent I didn't in the past. I used to be fearful of offending or hurting the feelings of others, something that as an overly empathic person I found terrifying. After reading Kim Scott's book, *Radical Candor*, I realized I was living out the characteristics of ruinous empathy and needed to not only care personally, but challenge my team directly. Doing so has opened up opportunities for my team to perform at a higher level, as well as contributed to organizational success with overcoming obstacles.

**INVEST IN YOURSELF, EVEN WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE TIME. INVESTING IN MYSELF WITH CONTINUING EDUCATION HAS ALLOWED ME TO CONFIDENTLY AND WISELY LEAD OUR COMPANY THROUGH PEOPLE CHALLENGES OVER THE YEARS, BUT HAS ALSO ALLOWED ME TO GROW AS A PERSON.**

# MELISA MARTINEZ

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY AT HUMANCARE



## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

I've had the privilege of working alongside some of the smartest, most inspiring, and resilient women who have played pivotal roles throughout my journey. This past year, another amazing woman took a chance on me and elevated my career once more. Since then, I have been able to extend my hand to pull someone else up, and that has been incredibly rewarding! It's so important to have a strong network and to be open to opportunity. In doing so, we can build competent teams that are able to flourish in these exceptional times.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

I believe that a communicative, responsive, caring, and respectful leader can make all the difference when coping with today's challenges. With the constant ebbs and flows of the pandemic, I choose to be understanding and supportive. Whenever such scenarios have played out, established lines of communication have allowed us to quickly pivot and minimize the ripple effects. With strong leadership, my team and I have been able to thrive in a remote world.

**IT'S MY GOAL TO SHOW UP FOR MY TEAM AND EMPOWER EVERYONE AROUND ME TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES IN ALL THAT THEY DO. I THINK THAT BY LEADING BY EXAMPLE, I CAN BE A SOURCE OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE, I CAN BETTER EQUIP MY TEAM IN UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE, ALL WHILE PROVIDING CROSS TRAINING FOR BETTER TEAM COVERAGE AND STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUAL DECISION MAKING. I TRULY AIM TO BE MY TEAM'S HYPE WOMAN.**

# NATASHA STROTHER LASSITER

CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER AT STROTHER ENTERPRISES INC.



## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

A few years ago, I accepted a job as Chief Operating Officer role with a startup company and stepped completely out of my comfort zone. I've since transitioned back to Strother Enterprises but that particular experience had a profound effect on my leadership journey.

Coming from Strother Enterprises, an established company with a respected brand, I was accustomed to concise process flows, a family-oriented culture, a pipeline of new business and well-defined roles. In my new position, the scope of my role was much broader and I was overseeing more departments and functions. It was my job to build out our operations from the ground up. I didn't have an HR team, payroll processes, or identified candidates but I was confident that my leadership skills were transferrable. I applied the leadership style that I cultivated at Strother Enterprises. I started with building an empowered team so they could run their division with confidence. I established policies to promote our corporate vision and processes for measuring results. I believed that our long-term success would ultimately be determined by our ability to get the basics right. So, I defined revenue goals. I got ahead of compliance and security, and put measures in place to mitigate risk. I trusted my team and gave them space to grow. Designing and implementing operations to support a successful launch with the capability to scale was a massive undertaking. However, I am grateful for the challenges that I encountered because the experience made me a stronger leader.

**I CONSIDER MYSELF AN ADAPTIVE LEADER. IN AN EVER-EVOLVING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT, IT'S THE BEST APPROACH FOR ME TO MANAGE CHANGE AND DEVELOP MY TEAM. IN MY OPINION, IT'S ESSENTIAL FOR TODAY'S EXECUTIVES TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO MOVE QUICKLY, PIVOT, AND ADAPT ON THE FLY IN ORDER TO NAVIGATE THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE PANDEMIC.**

# TOVI TAYLOR

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL AND MASS MEDIA AT BEST EGG



## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

Over the past year, a lot has changed in general, especially within the planning process and our remote work situations. I've adapted to be more flexible in the planning process. In this environment, things are always changing and we need to be comfortable to keep moving forward knowing we will pivot or re-prioritize. I've also moved to over communicating changes to cross-functional teams to ensure everyone is informed with the latest updates. Working remotely, it's not as easy as turning to a colleague and asking a question about a project, so there needs to be that shift in mindset of leveraging the tools you do have to keep collaboration levels high.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

I have always been an observer, meaning I enter a new situation, observe how people interact with each other and make sure to speak when there is an opening in the conversation to ensure that I do not interrupt someone or default to a leader in the room because I was not sure it was my place to provide an opinion. It was how I was brought up and the proper thing to do, but with a growing leadership role in a previous company, I knew and was told that I needed to solidify my voice as a leader. Shortly after, I had the opportunity to hear one of our executives speak, she is an Asian woman, who after listening to her story was very similar to mine when it comes to methods of communication. I had conflicting directions, whether to continue how I've been or evolve my approach to help align with goals of growing as a leader. This executive was an advocate for the fact that organizations need to evolve their thinking to be more inclusive and consider that not everyone communicates in the same manner within a team. This executive not only inspired me to find the right solutions for me to grow as a leader, but also made me think through how I can help my team find the right communication strategies for each individual.

**I THINK IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND EACH MEMBER OF YOUR TEAM FROM THEIR THOUGHT PROCESS WHEN LOOKING AT SOLUTIONS FOR A CHALLENGE TO THEIR CAREER GOALS AND THEIR STYLE OF COMMUNICATION. SHOWING THAT UNDERSTANDING, ENSURING THAT THE TEAM KNOWS THEY'RE BEING HEARD, AS WELL AS MAKING SURE TO APPRECIATE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR THE TEAM CULTURE.**

# ZEEANN MASON ■

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

Collaborative. Engaged. Supportive. I see my role as removing impediments and resolving conflicts while keeping my eye on the institutional big picture to ensure alignment across departments. I look for opportunities to recognize institutional and individual achievements; encourage, promote, and model excellence; and encourage and work to build an environment of trust and support.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

With seismic changes afoot in the workplace, we are operating in a new paradigm. For many, some degree of remote work has become the norm. Finding the right balance—and that balance changes as external factors change—is an ongoing assessment that requires more flexibility than was previously the norm. As a leader in a museum, our deft pivot to on-line programming in spring 2020 has been replaced this past year with hybrid programming. We are assessing the not insignificant additional impact this hybrid model has on our operation. Due to so many variables outside of our control, we have had to accept a new normal that is much more ambiguous and have honed our ability to adapt quickly to effectively navigate these uncharted waters.

**NEVER ASK SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING YOU WOULDN'T ALSO DO; BE HONEST; DON'T BE AFRAID TO STATE WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE OBVIOUS—IT OFTEN ISN'T; TAKE RISKS—A FAVORITE MAXIM OF A FORMER CHAIRMAN—THERE'S 0% CHANCE I HAVE IT 100% RIGHT; TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS; ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES; RECOGNIZE THAT LAUGHTER IS A GOOD THING AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE.**

# CHRISTAL MORRIS

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT PELOTON



## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

I have recognized that developing others is my super power and through building up the confidence in and appreciation for the varying differences on my team, I have unleashed the power of deep listening and empathy. I have been changed greatly over the past year, in that my resiliency is strengthened and my compassion for this work is reignited.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

One of the best lessons I have had in leadership is the idea of grace and being a servant leader. As a leader, service before self has been integral for me, and I will never forget when someone that used to work for me years ago reached out, and said, thanks for taking a chance on me. I had a resume that wasn't polished, and did not interview well, but you saw something in me, and since landing that role, my career has taken off. I attribute that to operating with grace in knowing the playing field isn't always level, and everyone starts from a different place. I appreciated that young man giving me my flowers, and that lesson in leadership is making space for grace.

**I AM A SERVANT LEADER WITH A DESIRE TO EMPOWER AND SUPPORT THOSE THAT I LEAD. I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO EMPOWER OTHERS TO DO THEIR BEST WORK.**

# ALEXANDRA JATZKE ■

DIRECTOR OF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT AT SIMPLEX HEALTH



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

I believe that as a leader I have a responsibility to serve my team, and I serve them best by setting clear expectations, providing opportunities for each individual to share and receive feedback, identifying and nurturing each of their unique strengths, and providing opportunities for growth. I feel I must also lead by example and strive to understand a “day in the life” and the challenges the team faces on a daily basis. When each person feels heard, respected, and understood, they develop the confidence to learn & grow into leaders themselves.

## HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR?

My team has become almost entirely remote, which presents a challenge to ensuring everyone feels included and part of a cohesive group with a common mission. As a company, we have had to get creative in how we stay connected throughout the day, and how we provide opportunities for collaboration within the distributed team. In a remote environment, work life balance and mental health have been challenged in ways that no one was prepared for a few years ago. I've become more attentive to the signs of burnout and strive to make sure each person feels supported.

**I WAS ONCE TOLD THAT IF YOU THINK YOU ARE READY FOR LEADERSHIP, THEN YOU ARE NOT READY FOR LEADERSHIP. THIS HELPED ME TO REALIZE THAT LEADERSHIP REQUIRES STEPPING OUTSIDE OF ONE'S COMFORT ZONE, MAKING SACRIFICES, LEARNING FROM THE FAILURES, AND CONTINUALLY WORKING ON SELF IMPROVEMENT & GROWTH.**

# AMY INJAIAN

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS AT DELTA DENTAL OF CALIFORNIA



## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

One of my top five strengths is empathy, but early on in my career I didn't view it as a strength. In a previous job, I was asked to take on an additional body of work beyond my normal role to manage and facilitate employee engagement events with our senior leadership team, including the CEO. The events utilized a new technology and a new way of engaging the workforce and it put a lot of leaders out of their comfort zone. When the ask first came in, I didn't fully grasp "why me," as we had four hundred people on our communications team, and there was a long list of competent team members that could have delivered on the ask. During a 1:1, my communications leader explained why the organization wanted me to do it. He said that I have a unique ability to relate to others—to really understand what makes them tick and see the world through their eyes. He explained that engagement with senior executives, particularly when placing them in a situation that may create discomfort, requires a blend of flexibility, consultative strength, understanding of the business, confidence, courage and—perhaps most of all—an ability to always make them feel heard and understood. I never thought about my ability to be highly attuned to the feelings and emotions of those around me—and my ability to relate to others—as a leadership strength. This was a big "aha" moment for me. Since then, I view my empathy as one of my strongest leadership qualities and has made me the leader that I am today.

**I WOULD SAY I HAVE TWO DEFINING LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS: A SHARP FOCUS ON TAKING AN ENTERPRISE VIEW AND A STRONG EMPHASIS ON EMPATHY, RESPECT AND EMPOWERMENT. I PUT A HIGH PREMIUM WITHIN MY TEAM ON UNDERSTANDING THE COMPANY PRIORITIES AND BEING RELENTLESS IN ENSURING THAT OUR EFFORT REMAINS SQUARELY FOCUSED ON OUTCOMES THAT BENEFIT OUR ENTERPRISE-WIDE GOALS. DOING THIS ENABLES THE TEAM TO HAVE THE RIGHT CONVERSATION AT THE RIGHT ALTITUDE AND PRESSURE TEST AND MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR WORK.**

# NICOLE HEVERLY ■

SVP & DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AT UNIVEST FINANCIAL CORPORATION



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

My leadership is defined by being an advocate for my team. That means I not only champion career growth, serve as a mentor and provide the resources we need for success, but I also roll up my sleeves to help prioritize day-to-day tasks and get the work done. I want to empower my team with the knowledge they need to run with a project while being a readily available resource. Collaboration is key! I strive to be a leader who inspires my team to embrace change and encourages a growth mindset.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

When my former boss decided to move on to a new opportunity, she was purposeful about setting me up for success and using her departure as an opportunity for career growth. She had always been an advocate for me and taught me so much with her hands-on, collaborative approach. Before she left, she made sure executives knew I was a great candidate to fill her role. She also coached me to ensure I maximized the opportunity. Her guidance has been invaluable and her leadership style is one I try to emulate. She recognized my capabilities and ambition and continually provided opportunities to expand my responsibilities. I am grateful for the impact she has had on my both professionally and personally. Hopefully I can pay it forward with my team.

**BE PURPOSEFUL ABOUT CHECKING IN WITH TEAM MEMBERS AND MAINTAINING OUR CULTURE. I MADE IT A PRIORITY TO CREATE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND NOT JUST FOCUS ON THE WORK. AS I GAIN MORE EXPERIENCE AS A LEADER, I CONTINUE TO IMPROVE MY ABILITY TO DELEGATE - OUT OF NECESSITY AND TO CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR MY TEAM MEMBERS TO GROW AND EVOLVE.**

# DINA OTERO

DIRECTOR, DEMAND GENERATION & GROWTH AT APRIMO



## HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

Complacency is the enemy and that is how I would define my leadership. I evaluate how things can be improved and openly communicate my vision, and rally people towards that better vision. I lead by example, communicate often and am aware of my own weaknesses and try to ask for help (but I'm human and it doesn't always happen). Constructively accepting feedback is also critical in how I improve, ensuring I am empathetic and actively listen to others to be a better leader.

## CAN YOU SHARE A STORY THAT DEMONSTRATES A KEY LEARNING FOR YOU IN YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

As someone who likes to get right to the point, I assumed others were like that too. I learned that my communication was very direct (I thought it was efficient). Through a team-building workshop, I found my communication style needed to be adjusted while remaining effective. This required self-reflection and self-examination but also realized that this was constructive feedback to make me a better, stronger and positive leader. It was an eye-opening experience and made me significantly more empathetic. I would recommend all teams to run team building or communication workshops once a year. You'll be amazed what you learn from each other.

**I'VE LEARNED A LOT IN MY 15 YEAR CAREER AND THE LAST YEAR HAS TAUGHT ME THE MOST; YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING AND EMBRACE MESSINESS.**