

2012 WEST Leadership Awardee



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“Be 100%Present! Be Open To The Obscure Project!”

What achievement in your career are you most proud of?

Accomplishing my goals in a realistic time-frame. I set five-year goals that are realistic and strategic, and I work to accomplish them.

What advice do you have for young women in science and technology careers who want to expand their options?

It is important to network with individuals outside of your immediate area of expertise. Be open to the obscure project. Volunteer to take on projects in areas of the organization that need extra support. This will increase your visibility in a way that would otherwise go unrecognized. Show the initiative and the ability to go the extra mile.

What significant obstacles did you have to overcome?

Earlier on during my career as a younger woman, it was sometimes a challenge to be recognized and appreciated for what I could bring to the table. Later on, it was finding the time to invest in developing the appropriate advocates and sponsors who are supporters and advocates for my career.

What was one of your major accomplishments?

Early in my career, it was getting the position leading the health economics and outcomes research efforts for Merck. I had read and studied everything to show I was capable of getting and succeeding in the position. I had to show I had the confidence in myself and then live up to that expectation once given the opportunity. It was an incredibly rewarding experience! In my current position, I took responsibility for a business in 2007 which was losing money in the US and successfully turned it around by 2009 to a profitable entity.

I would also say keeping a work and life balance that works for me. I have been able to balance work, family, and outside activities including being an Olympic figure skating judge.

What mentor had the biggest effect on your career and why?

Early in my career, it was a friend named Tammy. She was a senior manager in the field of telecommunications, a completely unrelated field; however, she was an exceptional communicator in challenging situations. She was a great role model and an excellent sounding-board when I needed advice on a business or personnel issue. She would role-play and strategize with me on how to communicate and obtain what I wanted to accomplish. Later in my career, it would be David Meeker, the CEO for Genzyme. He has been great at leveraging communication styles and developing different ideas and concepts. He was also very supportive for me to take a position in Europe, knowing it would enhance my international experience and help me in my career.

Can you describe your career progression and what roles were significant in getting you to where you are today?

I am originally from Canada where I trained as a pharmacist. I started my MBA in Canada and finished it at Cornell. I worked as pharmacist for eight months after which I transitioned to industry. I worked in pharmaceutical sales, then regulatory affairs, which increased my knowledge of the organization and visibility within the company, providing an expanded network. I then achieved the position I was reaching for, managing health economics and outcomes research for Merck. From there, I was given my first international assignment to the United States as the regional director for hospital sales. Following this position, I moved into marketing and led all promotional efforts for the osteoporosis franchise at Merck. During this last position, we accomplished several firsts: I launching a new image tablet, launching once weekly dosing, and meaningfully defending our brand in face of consumer powerhouse Procter and Gamble. I left Merck in 2002 to follow one of my mentors who had previously joined Genzyme a year earlier. At Genzyme, I launched Aldurazyme, a drug that helps people suffering from MPS-I, a rare genetic and life threatening disease. The product was launched in the US and Europe within a year of me joining. I then took my second international assignment based in Europe where I was responsible for overseeing the commercial operations and European marketing for the Personalized Genetic Health business unit for Genzyme in Europe and the Middle East, a position I lead for two years. This was also a pivotal time in my development where, as a team, we accomplished many important business objectives. I then took my third international assignment which brought me back to Canada to become the Deputy General Manager, overseeing commercial operations, sales, and marketing for approximately 75% of the organization. This position was a newly created position, a sort of “breeding ground” for future general management positions. Presently, I am the Vice President and General Manager at Sanofi. It has been an incredible journey on a global level. I enjoy the challenge of strategic thinking, competitive planning and rallying teams, commercial development, and management.

How do you balance your work and life?

I try to live 100% in the moment. In those special times that I can spend with my family and friends, I try to ensure that my mind is completely present with them. I don't allow myself to feel guilty or distracted by other things. I also jog, practice yoga and Pilates, and stay involved in figure skating as a healthy outlet for stress. Whether I am at work, with family, or practicing any of the activities that I enjoy, I strive to be fully present and engaged in that moment.