

Summer Highlights: Seven Lessons in Leadership

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GenHERation, a company started by Katlyn Grasso, a senior at The Wharton School in Philadelphia, inspires high school girls to become leaders by pairing them with national corporations and encouraging female empowerment.

GenHERation set out on a tour of the U.S. in recent weeks, hosting a Summer Leadership Series of workshops for high school girls in Philadelphia, Pa., New York City, Buffalo, N.Y., Atlanta, Ga. and Los Angeles, Calif. The events featured panels of women professionals, interactive activities and scholarships for high school attendees. More than 300 girls attended the workshops, which involved 20 panelists from 12 different industries.

Rachel Winicov, a junior at Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, Pa., and Sarah Shavin, a senior at Riverwood High School in Atlanta, attended the leadership series and came away with these highlights:

1. **Do what you love, and do it well.** Grasso told the group about a meeting she had with one of the panelists, Leslie Mitts, director of the Wharton Small Business Development Center's High Impact Growth Consulting program. Grasso asked Mitts why people perceive entrepreneurship as such a risky profession. Mitts told her to follow her passion: "Entrepreneurship is not about being risk-seeking, it is about creating value. If you are a prodigy piano player, why play the violin?" Today GenHERation has offered more than \$5,000 in scholarships, and Grasso is doing what she loves everyday.
2. **Relationships are important; building connections leads to success.** After graduating from art school with a major in design, Laura Zarrow, executive director of Lifelong Learning at Wharton and host of Women@Work on Sirius XM, could not see herself working as a designer. Throughout college she enjoyed student government, and becoming a designer seemed to breach her dedication to activism. She called the president of her university, with whom she had collaborated on many student government tasks, and relayed her problems. The president offered her a job in the admissions office, the first step on a journey that eventually led her to her current position at Wharton. Zarrow said that mentors have been instrumental in her success. She encouraged students to seek out people with more experience and absorb their knowledge.
3. **Share everything.** When Emily Finegold left her position as a toy designer for Crayola, she also left behind some of her fears about designing her own toys. Finegold, now CEO of Emkin, a toy design concept lab in Philadelphia, went on to create My First Socktopus, a line of plush toys that sells online and in retail stores. Her

Socktopus recently won the Intuit Small Business Local Buzz contest. Before that success, however, Finegold did not think other people would share her enthusiasm for her toy ideas. She even hesitated to show her friends her creation. Now she knows this was a mistake. Finegold's advice: "Don't keep [in] any of your ideas, share...just show anything."

4. **Try something new.** Laura Kelly owns The Handwork Studio, a needle arts and fashion studio for children in Narberth, Pa., that offers classes, parties, workshops and camp sessions. As a child, Kelly never attended camp. Now she spends the year running multiple winter, spring and summer camps for children ages 3 to 16. Kelly also did not craft. She didn't spend her elementary school years sewing huge pieces or stitching elaborate designs. However, after teaching a few of her neighbors about handwork, she fell in love and started her studio. "If I loved [handwork] this much," she said, "then I felt like there must be others that love it that much [too]."
5. **The importance of 1585.** Many of the speakers in Atlanta touched on personal authenticity. Successful businesswomen often get to where they are because of who they are, not because of who they try to be. Dr. Debbie Philips shared an anecdote about the importance of the 1585 ratio. The 15 represents her suggested percentage of how much you should be relying on basic knowledge and factual information on your path to success, while the 85 represents the percentage she believes you should attribute to personality traits that make up your character. Clearly, you should be focusing more on leveraging the latter. Jodi Fleisig, senior vice president of media strategy for Porter Novelli International, a public relations firm with offices in Atlanta, reminded us of the significance of making eye contact – and connecting. When doing anything that requires face-to-face interaction, it is crucial to show the interviewer or employer who you are. Who you are will take you much further in life than what you know.
6. **Learn to strike a balance.** Debbi Shapiro, founder of Henderson Shapiro Peck, a marketing firm in Atlanta, shared the story of losing her business partner to cancer. She stressed the importance of putting your mental and physical health first. Work can be very overwhelming, and it is imperative to take care of yourself when responsibilities multiply. The panelists, all driven women, agreed that they have had to find a balance between prioritizing work and maintaining their personal lives.
7. **Stay motivated!** Tierra Destiny Reid, founder of Design Your Destiny small business conferences in Atlanta, had some great advice about staying energized and avoiding distractions, especially during the college years. Success in the business world requires motivation, primarily because the competition is fierce. Another passionate, capable go-getter is always one step behind you. Don't just show up, urged Reid. Always show confidence in yourself and your ideas. If you express yourself with conviction, others will be sure to listen.

Questions

Which leadership lesson resonates most with you? Which one do you think is the most important? Why? What might that say about your own interests and priorities?

What does Jodi Fleisig mean when she says that who you are will take you much further in life than what you know?

Select one of the women featured in the summer leadership workshops and research more about her. Who is she? What new things have you learned about her and her role in the business world?

Related Links

- [GenHERation](#)
- [KWHS: Laying the Framework for a Successful Startup](#)

- [Wharton Magazine: The Not So Small Center](#)
- [Emkin Toys](#)
- [Laura Zarrow](#)
- [Women@Work](#)
- [The Handwork Studio](#)
- [Porter Novelli International](#)
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