

## WHAT I LEARNED

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## LEADER



WISDOM AND ADVICE FROM QUEENS UNIVERSITY OF CHARLOTTE'S BUSINESSWOMEN OF THE YEAR

#### CHARLOTTE BUSINESSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

Queens University of Charlotte is proud to host the Charlotte BusinessWoman of the Year event, continuing a rich tradition which spans more than 30 years of honoring and fostering female leaders and talent within our community. Established in 1986, this cherished award honors the achievements of exceptional female executives and entrepreneurs who have made significant, sustained contributions to the business, civic and cultural communities in the Charlotte region.

Recognized for its longstanding history and prestige, the Charlotte BusinessWoman of the Year Award celebrates women and honors their noteworthy roles throughout many diverse industries and companies. Our past recipients are extraordinary and we look forward to what the future holds.



Joan Zimmerman

Southern Shows, Inc.



### SHARE.

Share your time, skills, wardrobe, food, sympathy, emotions, money, accolades, love, even your fears. And, more importantly, allow others to share with and help you.

Life really does work on the law of the boomerang. What you send out is what comes back, usually with a little more momentum.

Then, my practical self creeps in, and I have to add: Read, study, listen and learn – so you are confident and ready for life's opportunities.





Dale Halton
Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.

1988



#### DIGNITY.

Never having entertained the idea of running a business, I suddenly found myself the CEO of the business my grandparents had started in 1905. The business was on the edge of bankruptcy and staff was ready to walk out, but thankfully they all stayed. Within three to four months we had turned everything around and were making great improvements. With lots of common sense and volunteer work, I had learned to surround myself with the very best people and to establish an environment that was comfortable for all to work together. Outside firms to help us were chosen with great care to ensure they were compatible with us. We treated all employees with honor and dignity, providing as many benefits to everyone as we were financially able. To me this is what makes a company special, and we are all proud of what we created together.





Betty Trautwein

Barclays American Corporation

1989



### LISTEN.

Always listen intently and ask clarifying questions. Active listening allows us to respond rather than just react, and the difference can be powerful.

As my dad always said, we have two ears and one mouth and using them in that proportion is a good thing. Thanks, Dad!





Elaine Lyerly

Lyerly Agency

1989



### COMPASSION.

People don't often think of business and compassion in the same context.

However, kindness and compassion can reap rewards by transforming a company culture into more cooperation and team success.

This doesn't mean that you let people take advantage of you. Rather, you inspire and empower by your own example.





Patricia Rodgers Rodgers Builders, Inc.



### KINDNESS.

Never underestimate the impact of a stranger's kindness - giving or receiving.

Never expect more from someone else than you expect from yourself.





# Muriel Helms Sheubrooks

Greater Carolinas Real Estate Services, Inc.

1991



#### CONFIDENCE.

Confidence is one of the greatest attributes one can have while keeping a balance of humility. Each person gains this sense of confidence in different ways. When I reflect on my growing-up years, my parents always encouraged me to accept leadership roles. They believed in me but how could I believe in myself?

Somewhere along the way I began to look at people I admired and respected for their accomplishments and would ask myself this most important question. "If he or she can do it, why can't I"? This became my mantra.

Whether in business, community work or personal life, this instilled confidence in my ability to take on leadership roles. We all have it in us. The challenge is to find it.





Jill Flynn Flynn Health Holt Leadership



### COURAGE.

My wish for all smart, hard working career women is...

Less modesty and more confidence and courage.

Less asking for permission and more asking for what you need.

Less routine and predictability and more time out of your comfort zone.

Fewer networking events and more meaningful relationships.

Both mentors who support you and sponsors who advocate for you.

Less thinking small and more thinking big about yourself and your career.





Linda McFarland Farthing

The Cato Corporation



#### INTEGRITY.

Every woman leader can make a difference for women by serving actively as mentors. But that is not all. We must realize as women leaders we are constantly being watched by those who are emerging as future leaders. We need to project in our daily lives the values we hold most dear: integrity, courage, and hard work, as well as the importance of family and community.

Be the role model of all of these!





Katie Tyler
Tyler 2 Construction
1994



### CHOOSE WISELY.

Two things in life will bring 90% of your happiness or misery: your choice of a career and your choice of a life partner.

If you are in the wrong job or the wrong relationship, get out now. The price you pay to leave either or both will never equal the price you pay to stay.





Ruth Shaw
Duke Power Company
1995



#### CHARACTER.

You will need strong character; you will also need a healthy dose of humility. Remember this oxymoron when you are in a leadership position:

"It is not about you; it is all about you."

Because of your position alone, you will receive honors you did not earn and criticism you may not deserve. It is about your position, not about you — anyone in that position would be treated likewise. But it is all about you. You are building your character, your reputation and your talents. You are making your difference.

Just remember what is not about you, and what is all about you.





Phyllis Schultz
Ben and Jerry's
1996



### MOTIVATE.

My business relies on first-time workers, so I have had to learn what it takes to motivate teens. Teach the "why" of the work systems, not just the "how". Convince them that their smile is key to the customer's experience. Take an interest in their school life. Catch them doing something right and show appreciation. This is their introduction to the working world, and *you* can make a difference.





Gail Brinn Wilkins, Inc.

1998



### STRONG VALUES.

Develop God's personal and rich gifts to us.

Awaken with a quiet personal prayer of gratitude!

Enter each day, intentionally, to make a positive difference.

Show patience, gentleness, kindness and strong values.

Listen, respect and take time to show support.

As my father taught me, respond to clients' "less than positive thoughts." Resolve quickly and gain an "opportunity."

Be all you can be, personally, by taking care of yourself. Lead by example, giving others the same encouragement to all they can be.

Fulfill your mission through your business practices.

Love God first, in your own heart.

Be active in community to enrich your life as well as others.

Smile, laugh and brighten someone else's day.

Always find something to compliment. This can be a game changer in another's pride and confidence.





Mary Tribble
Tribble Creative Group
2000



### TAKE THE TURNS.

Life will bring you to unexpected intersections that will send you in directions you could have never dreamed up. Some will delight you, some will disappoint you, some will scare the hell out of you. All of them will guide you along your journey.

Consider these tiny miracles.

Take the turns.





# Vicki Wilson-McElreath

Price waterhouse Coopers



### HELP.

Go looking for trouble—as an ongoing practice, seek out a supervisor or colleague who is struggling, overworked or just having a bad day and volunteer to pitch in and help out with a project or task.

They will not forget you!





Krista Tillman
BellSouth Corporation

2002



## SERVE.

Our highest honor is to serve our community.

Live each day to make the world a little better.





Dana Rader Dana Rader Golf School



### PLAN.

My favorite saying is opportunity is rarely convenient. It seems to present itself at the busiest time where you have to change plans quickly and adjust. I believe you plan and wait, don't wait to plan, and when opportunity comes no matter how inconvenient, you will be ready.





Peyton Howell
AmerisourceBergen
2004



### AUTHENTIC.

Looking back, my greatest opportunities were initially periods of challenge and even setbacks. Our companies don't grow in a straight trajectory and nor should our careers as it's those tough times that ultimately create the potential for the most growth. Now I look for leaders that are authentic, have demonstrated perseverance and are not afraid to be vulnerable and passionate.





Christie Taylor

Hodges Taylor

2005



### BE CURIOUS.

Be curious.

Have big thoughts.

Go outside.

Play well with others.

Get a dog.

Oh - and wear comfortable shoes.





Dee Dixon
Pride Communications
2006



### BE GENUINE.

My life's watchwords:

"To be rather than to seem."





MaryLaurel Eberhart

Speedway Benefits
2007



## HONESTY.

Work Hard;
Be Honest;
Be Curious;
Strive for Perfection;
Take Chances; and
Call your mom.





Jennifer Appleby
Wray Ward
2008



#### PASSION.

Follow your passion. Only you can identify the passion that makes your intellectual pulse race and draws you to the edge of your conference table seat. Whatever it is, find it. Then stick to it, depend on it, cultivate it, love it, embrace it and most importantly, own it.

With your passion close at hand, it will be much easier to reach amazing heights and achieve great things in business. But it shouldn't stop there. Use that passion for good and share your talents with others in Charlotte to make your community a great place for everyone to live, work, play, grow, learn and create.

Following your passion isn't always easy...but, I promise, it will be rewarding.





Cathy Bessant

Bank of America
2009



### DRIVE CHANGE.

"What ought to be, can be, with the will to make it so."

—James W. Rouse

There is rarely a situation where what "ought to be" can't "be." We have a chance, every day, to align the two. The "will" part is personal. It takes courage and hard work and sheer will to drive change. Who owns the "will" to change the world? We do!





Ann Caulkins
The Charlotte Observer



#### DREAM.

If I knew back then what I know now...I would not be here today. My first 14 years in the newspaper world were fulfilling, but also stressful and challenging. When I started at the Fort Worth Star Telegram, the odds of moving up in the organization were stacked against women and people of color. I became so frustrated that I almost left the industry, but I was good at my job and I loved it.

But the rejection I experienced and the barriers I faced motivated me to work through the reality I was dealt. I could not change that reality, but I believed I could work successfully in it. I thought I could break through and I did. In 2005, I became The Charlotte Observer's first female publisher, and today our regional publisher and the Observer's editor are also women. And more than a quarter of our parent company's publishers are women. Every day I use the lessons I learned by working through those years. I would not change a thing about those arduous years. They made me who I am today.

Your dreams are worth fighting for and what you experience as you traverse the very rocky path helps you become an enlightened person.





Laura Schulte
Wells Fargo
2012



### CARE.

There is great power in being a servant leader. Care more about how you can help others be successful than how they can help you succeed. Celebrate your team's accomplishments rather than your own. Commit to developing and supporting others rather than competing with them. True success happens when everyone contributes to the organizations' vision and mission. Be a value creator rather than a self promoter.





Lynn Good

Duke Energy
2013



### RESILIENT.

We will face detours in our lives and careers—some planned, others unexpected. How we respond determines how far we will go. Be flexible, adapt and above all, be resilient. Make this one of your defining characteristics, and you'll be ready for whatever life offers.





# Susan DeVore

Premier, Inc.

2014



#### BALANCE.

How I balance life and leadership at a public company: I decided not to pit my work and my home life against one another...no more false "either/or" choices. It would be "both/and" from now on. I began to live one, blended life, made up of choices, compromises and non-negotiables.

And lastly, somewhere along the way I proactively decided that in relating to men in the workplace, I wanted to create a relationship in which I was perceived as "the smarter, big sister"...one to be respected, admired, and sought after for advice and counsel. This was intentional in my mind...I didn't want to be perceived as the mother, wife, girlfriend, daughter, brother, or little sister...and the connotations that those carried.





# Debra Plousha Moore

Carolinas HealthCare System
2015



### UNDERSTAND.

Strive to be inspiring, relevant, accessible, authentic, transparent, generous and direct. Be intentional about valuing the contributions of others, respecting differences, creating a sense of belonging and providing meaningful work. Always be a servant leader. Play chess, not checkers. And never, ever, ever give up.





Andrea B. Smith

Bank of America



### RELATIONSHIPS.

Leadership is about relationships – not the deeds you accomplish – but the relationships you build and nurture – the genuine investments you make in people.





Theresa Drew
Deloitte, LLP



### TAKE RISKS.

Take risks. My most significant career opportunities involved taking strategic risks, which was a learned skill for me. My greatest personal and professional growth occurred when I was out of my comfort zone. For example, relocating to a new city, chairing a committee of leaders all senior to me, accepting a client in a new industry and being the only woman in the room. These challenges provided great learning experiences and exponential career growth. My only regret is that I didn't take more risks earlier in my career.





Carol Lovin
Atrium Health



### INFLUENCE.

Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of leading and working in enterprise services such as integration, strategy and business development. They all have one thing in common – small, focused teams. As a leader of small teams that work across the entire organization to shape, grow and unify functions, I learned early on that leadership is not about hierarchy. It's about influence.

Influence is far-reaching and nearly limitless. In fact, it's only limited by each of us. It's about connecting with someone – whether you know them or not. I love the challenge and rewards of "influence" and it continues to be a guiding word in my leadership journey.





Peggy Brookhouse
Luquire George Andrews



### EMPATHY.

Make empathy your superpower.

We all have unique values, backgrounds, perspectives and feelings. Without empathy they can isolate and divide us. Hone your ability to put yourself in another person's shoes. Seek diverse perspectives, ask questions, and actively listen to understand.

Use your superpower to build trust with and among your colleagues to create a team of enlightened collaborators, innovators and risk-takers.

Imagine if everyone did the same.





Dena R. Diorio

Mecklenburg County

2020



### AUTHENTICITY.

I have learned in my many years of service in local government that authenticity is the foundation to forming strong relationships. According to Psychology Today, individuals considered authentic are those who strive to align their actions with their core values and beliefs with the hope of discovering, and then acting in sync with, their true selves. This concept is very important to me. Because an extensive part of my role is external, the public needs to believe that I can be trusted with resources, make sound decisions, and lead the County in times of crisis. Being authentic also means being transparent. I am here to serve the residents of Mecklenburg County and I believe in being inclusive, empathetic and using my influence and social capital to help as many people as possible.

Being authentic is also important to me as I lead an organization of almost 6,000 employees. I believe a culture of authenticity and trust is what drives the success of Mecklenburg County. I want every employee to align their actions with their core beliefs. I want to give every employee the support to serve this community with passion. There are several ways to describe an authentic leader — they're passionate about their work, they have a commitment to the organization, and they focus on the future ahead. Authentic leaders are those who are true to themselves and the principles that guide them. I can't imagine leading any other way.





Tanya S. Blackmon
Novant Health



#### VALUE PEOPLE.

My life's mission is to add value to the lives of others by believing they can become their best selves and then providing the sponsorship to assist them. It starts with truly caring and seeing each person without bias, understanding their life experiences and perspectives. It is also important to then equip them with the tools and resources to unlock their strengths and gain access to opportunities where they can realize their full potential.

I try to live the truth in Maya Angelou's quote, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." I'm grateful that people saw me, cared about me, gave me access, paved a pathway and believed in who I was and who I could become. That is a gift I'm committed to paying forward.





Diane (Di) Morais

Ally Bank



### RELENTLESS.

When you find something that you're passionate about, bring your energy, work ethic and enthusiasm to it – relentlessly – every day. Remain stubborn on the vision, but be flexible on the details. This combination of relentless energy channeled in one direction, with an openness to adapt and grow, will yield incredible results.





Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer Central Piedmont Community College



### GRACE.

Grace. A beautiful word with so much importance.

For me, learning where the ultimate grace extends from has given my life's calling richer purpose and deeper meaning. I pray daily that grace will be apparent in how I support others, strive to serve well, and make an impact.

Along the way, I have learned two important aspects to grace. First, give yourself more grace than you believe you deserve. This is the most difficult one—especially for those of us who are driven and focused on serving others. But extending myself more grace has fueled my ability to be a better wife, mother, friend, and leader. I promise it is more beneficial than, 'putting your own oxygen mask on first.'

The other lesson is to extend more grace to others in all aspects of our lives. Often, people need a depth of kindness and understanding that is far beyond their ability to convey. Discerning their greater need is a skill which I encourage everyone to develop. Pouring grace into lives of others and meeting their true needs will be both a blessing to them and you.

It is the extension of grace that brings hope, faith, love, and kindness. I encourage you to extend more grace to yourself, increase it more often toward others, and be ready to receive it yourself as it rebounds back to you.



#### CHARLOTTE BUSINESSWOMEN OF THE YEAR

1986	Joan Zimmerman	1995	Ruth Shaw
1987	Bonnie Widenhouse	1996	Phyllis Schultz
1988	Dale Halton	1997	Carol Pontis
1989	Betty Trautwein	1998	Gail Brinn Wilkins
	Elaine Lyerly	1999	Jeannie Falknor
1990	Patricia Rodgers	2000	Mary Tribble
1991	Muriel Helms Sheubrooks	2001	Vicki Wilson-McElreath
1992	Jill Flynn	2002	Krista Tillman
1993	Linda McFarland Farthing	2003	Dana Rader
1994	Katie Tyler	2004	Peyton Howell

#### CHARLOTTE BUSINESSWOMEN OF THE YEAR

2005	Christie Taylor	2015	Debra Plousha Moore
2006	Dee Dixon	2016	Andrea B. Smith
2007	MaryLaurel Eberhart	2017	Theresa Drew
2008	Jennifer Appleby	2018	Carol Lovin
2009	Cathy Bessant	2019	Peggy Brookhouse
2010	Carol Hevey	2020	Dena R. Diorio
2011	Ann Caulkins	2021	Tanya S. Blackmon
2012	Laura Schulte	2022	Diane (Di) Morais
2013	Lynn Good	2023	Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer
2014	Susan DeVore		



Pamela Davies
President Emerita, Queens University of Charlotte



Having served as the President of Queens University of Charlotte from 2002 – 2019, I have had the privilege of knowing all of the Charlotte BusinessWomen of the Year. These women have indeed shone their light brightly – in their organizations, their industries and their communities. Their generosity of spirit and commitment to mentoring other young leaders along the way have magnified their impact, causing a ripple effect that can be felt far and wide throughout our community.

I am proud to be part of an institution that places a high value on leadership, in all its many forms. We believe that better leaders make for a better world, and we honor the women highlighted here for doing just that. And just as they have done, may we all go forward and shine a light that brightens the world in which we live.



