

LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

With Gail Lowney Alofsin

Where are YOU in Your Race?

"These are men of hulk and keel and deck and steel, we want them to communicate in heart and feel and share and tell."

– Jim Morris, Schouten Global
Sponsor of Team Brunel (Volvo Ocean Race)

In early May, Newport welcomed the North American stopover of the Volvo Ocean Race, an event touted as the world's toughest ocean race. It was one of the most professionally produced events to grace our city by the sea, attracting more than 125,000 attendees to historic Fort Adams. The event included impressive sponsor displays inclusive of education for families, the Heineken Beer Garden and the Volvo compound complete with self-parking car.

Schouten Global, an international leadership development company, was a premier sponsor of Team Brunel, one of six racing yachts competing in the event. Their sponsorship activation was unique, impactful and impressive. The organization invited area business leaders to attend a three hour leadership seminar followed by a networking lunch overlooking the Pro-Am Race taking place in the Newport Harbor.

The leadership seminar opened with Schouten Global's Jim Morris sharing insight regarding the Volvo Ocean Race. *"Each racing yacht is built to the same exact specification, which means the deciding factor in who wins is the human factor."* Schouten Global describes the Volvo Ocean Race as the "Everest" of sailing, a race that you win as a team, versus on your own.

Schouten Global co-founder, Anne Schouten-Van Hoof, as the host of the group and one of the speakers, discussed the importance of soft skill development. Her questions included *"What is your business reality? Where are you in your race?"* She asked the attendees if it was time to put on a different pair of running shoes.

Schouten Global sponsors the Dutch team, Team Brunel, whose crew is led by Bouwe Bekking. I had the privilege of a once in a life time opportunity, racing in the Volvo Ocean Race Pro-Am, where I experienced Bouwe's leadership and focus. During the seminar he stated that the

team had one goal – "Winning the race." The team certainly lives that goal.

On board, one of the crew members, Pablo Arrarte, would repeatedly say "thank you" every time he gave instructions to me and the other amateur crew members (comprised of press and corporate sponsors). I found it very interesting that during a Pro-Am race, in which the safety briefing offered advice on *"how not to lose a finger,"* that a crew member would take time for gratitude. I asked Pablo if the crew thanked each other during the "real race" versus the Pro-Am. Pablo assured me that they did, especially after a crew member did something exceptional. In my short experience on the racing yacht, I was starting to wonder if they did anything that was not exceptional!

Schouten Global's energetic and endearing trainer, Anje-Marijke van Boxtel, has had the privilege of being the leadership coach for Team Brunel, contributing to their high performance. During the seminar she discussed that part of her work with the team was aligning the personal values of the individual team members with the team values as a whole.

Corporate sponsorship is comprised of many elements – branding, marketing, advertising, social media, community relations and hospitality, to name a few. The Volvo Ocean Race, led by CEO Knut Frostad, illustrated that this event is among the "best of the best" in achieving the above. What makes Schouten Global's sponsorship unique is the focus on leadership – for both the crew and the corporate leaders that they meet during their seminars at each of the stopover cities. The networking lunch that follows the seminars offers an opportunity for camaraderie and discussion. Gonnie Swanenberg, Global Client Manager for Schouten Global, is an integral member of the team that organizes the sponsor-

ship activation for the Volvo Ocean Race. Her passion and drive is reflected in her personal mission and goal to keep learning every day. She is an organic networker, believing in making "connections" versus "quick wins." While this may take longer, her belief is that in the long run these relationships will be more valuable.

We grow as leaders every day, through both success and challenges. As we "check in" with both our teams and ourselves, we have the opportunity to reflect on the questions posed by Schouten Global: *"What drives you? Where does your passion come from? Where are you in YOUR race?"*

This is not your practice life. Be aware of how you live your life, as you live your life. What impact do you have on the people that you work with, live with and meet along the way? Find ways to challenge YOUR comfort zone. Here's to smooth sailing and fair skies, with a bit of ProAm racing tossed in!

Gail Lowney Alofsin is a speaker, adjunct professor and business executive. She is the author of *Your Someday is NOW – What are you Waiting For?*

A lifelong student and humanitarian, Gail believes that we all have the capability to be a leader in our own lives, influencing the lives of others to positive peak performance and success. An active volunteer since the age of 7, Gail is certain that leadership commences when we look beyond ourselves to enhance the lives of others – personally and professionally. She can be reached at 401-640-4418, gail@gailspeaks.com, twitter: [@gailalofsin](https://twitter.com/gailalofsin) and gailspeaks.com.