

# LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

With Gail Lowney Alofsin

*"Marketing is 1,000 gestures a day by people who represent your brand."*

Larry Gulko



Gail Alofsin, Newport Harbor Corporation  
with Michael McGrath of Newman's Own.

*"Product quality trumps profit."*

customer feedback they gain through rallies, social media and every step of service is discussed as a team.

Donna Noce, Brand President, White House/Black Market (WHBM) engaged the audience with her focus on *"delivering the unexpected."* WHBM is a 30-year-old business based on relationships with women. Their clients want to feel welcomed, confident and beautiful. She discussed ensuring your product is packaged attractively and professionally whether sold in store or on line. Take pride in your product: *"Do you want to be there when she opens the box?"* Noce also professed that you must *"move with your customer."* Whether you are rebuilding or rebranding, it is important to have the utmost respect for the DNA of the business and the history of the company.

Michael McGrath, CEO, Newman's Own, was an impactful speaker, opening with *"Product quality is the most important thing that we do."* With the core value of *"Quality trumps profit,"* the culture at Newman's Own is creating a better product for the customer while donating 100% of the profits to charities.

McGrath, a friend of Paul Newman, served as a consultant for the company prior to assuming the role of CEO a few years ago. When Newman started the company over two decades ago, he

Continued on page 95

One of the educational highlights of the spring is the Harvard Business School Association of Boston CEO Roundtable. This event, produced by branding expert, Larry Gulko, is a three hour think tank. The evening features a panel of three to four corporate CEO's sharing their wisdom and experience. Following this motivating panel is a session titled, *"Up close and personal."* The attendees choose the CEO that they would like to learn more from and move to a classroom where they can ask individual questions.

The CEO's featured this past March were Matthew Levatich, CEO, Harley-Davidson; Donna Noce, Brand President, White House/Black Market and Michael McGrath, CEO, Newman's Own. The overarching theme of the event was *"authenticity"* as the key leadership factor. The panelists concurred that today's customers are very smart and can see right through a brand. With the proliferation of social media and internet access, information is everywhere; brands are transparent.

Matthew Levatich, CEO, Harley-Davidson, expressed *"everything we do has to reinforce customer loyalty."* There is

a common bond with Harley-Davidson riders, mirroring their brand statement: *"We fulfill dreams and personal freedom."* Freedom, independence and strength are at the heart of the Harley-Davidson brand. Levatich discussed that it is very liberating when you understand what your business means to your customer. At Harley-Davidson, the



Gail Alofsin with  
Donna Noce,  
President, White-  
House/BlackMarket

*"Do you want to be there when she opens the box? Take pride in your product."*

wanted to ensure that all the profits went to charity. To date, over \$460 million has been donated both nationally and internationally. This impressive fact will continue to be an integral part of the brand message. During the "up close and personal" segment, McGrath mentioned millennials are a focus for Newman's Own. This generation is very involved with and interested in corporate responsibility. During the discussion, I suggested they may want to write a book focused on the importance of creating a quality product. We discussed how the same elements that go into creating a great product can be applied to building our own personal brand. The book would offer advice based on the action steps that assisted Newman's Own in becoming a beloved product and market leader in the realm of quality and philanthropy. We all agreed a quick, "airplane flight" read would be a great success and a business school staple.

In the three hours of going "back to school" (and at Harvard Business School you are impressed just walking in the door!), I offer four key take-aways:

1. Authenticity and clarity of purpose are at the heart of a strong brand.
2. Great brands don't stay where they are, they develop in areas that your customer deems important.
3. The ability to slow down and be thoughtful is critical.
4. Brands are constantly evolving. Think about this in your own life. *Your* brand is in consistent development. Often the lessons we learn in our formative years assist us in understanding and accepting circumstances as we grow older and indeed, wiser.

So as you approach your days, weeks, months and years, keep evolving, commit to life- long learning and be proud of the product that is YOU!

**Gail Lowney Alofsin** is an author, speaker, adjunct professor and business executive. Her new book, *Your Someday is NOW – What are you Waiting For?* has raised over \$25,000 for non-profit organizations since it was launched in April 2014.

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. She can be reached at 401-640-4418, [gail@gailspeaks.com](mailto:gail@gailspeaks.com), twitter: @gailalofsin and [gailspeaks.com](http://gailspeaks.com).