



HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE GRADUATE?



"The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

Steven Spielberg

This past June 2017, I had the honor of teaching my second Boston based Summer Session for the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island. This one week, three credit course, offers students an opportunity to network and learn from over 40 business professionals from corporations and agencies. We had the privilege of learning from executives and emerging leaders from the corporate offices of Citizens Bank, CW Providence, Warner Brothers, HubSpot, Boston Red Sox/Fenway Affairs, Liberty Mutual, Harpoon Brewing Co, Harvard CEO Roundtable, Arnold Advertising, Smith Optics and Marriott Corporation, to name a few. The insight the students derived from the presentations enhanced their life personally and professionally.

How to be a successful college graduate? The main focus of the week is the leadership skills required to ensure success in the workplace. One leadership trait discussed by the majority of the speakers was the importance of communication. What are you communicating when you walk into a room? Are you a positive person or an energy vampire? Be conscious of your body language. Start by sitting up straight. Pay attention to crossed arms, eye rolls, twirling your hair and looking down at your cell phone. Your positive communication starts with a great handshake, eye contact, leaning in to listen and putting your mobile device away. Showing up on time, avoiding gossip and being present also contributes to a positive image.

Every day offers you the opportunity to improve. Self-awareness provides insight on how you impact the people around you. Similar to skipping stones, every interaction offers the opportunity to positively impact another life – whether you are in the workplace, your home, the grocery store or the gym. Positivity in business is crucial and starts with your own mindset. When you feel good about yourself and your choices, you will attract positive people and situations into your life.

Another topic during our week was the concept of "work/life balance." Novelist Anne Lamott professed, "Almost anything will work again if you unplug it for a while... including you." This is a lesson for all of us. The 2016 Expedia Vacation Deprivation Report comprised of research conducted by North Star, concluded that United States workers receive an average of 15 vacation days per year and take 12. This left 375 million unused paid vacation days in 2016. The same report revealed that the employees surveyed agree vacations are crucial to their health and wellbeing. Enough said!

Lessons learned? Take your vacation, "disconnect to connect" and make a difference with your own impact, passion and stones! Carpe Diem!

Gail Lowney Alofsin is a keynote speaker, author, adjunct professor and business executive. Her book, *Your Someday is NOW – What are you Waiting For*, focuses on becoming your best you. Since being published in April, 2016, it has raised over \$35,000 for non-profit organizations. 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 for positive peak performance and success. She can be reached at 401-640-4418 and gail@gailspeaks.com. Follow her on twitter: @gailalofsin and visit her website: gailspeaks.com.

The students appreciated the insight from the Summer Session guest speakers:

"Be your best self. Every opportunity is a chance to enhance your personal brand."

Kathy O'Donnell, SVP/Head of Public Affairs, Citizens Bank

"Passion, purpose, persistence, patience."

Tina Castano, Vice President/General Manager WLWC-TV, The CW Providence

"Embrace change, take risks, build networks, and stay very organized."

Tom Cerio, former Executive VP, Warner Brothers

"If you deliver value, the word will spread. Do something that makes an impact on people's lives."

Brian Halligan, CEO and Co-Founder, HubSpot

"Always find a way to say 'Yes.' There is no 'No' in business."

Larry Cancro, Sr. VP of Fenway Affairs, Boston Red Sox

"Everyone needs a 'why' for what they do."

Charlie Story, President, Harpoon Brewing Co