

PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

MOST ADMIRABLE LEADERS

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How many years have you worked in Phoenix and how many years total in your industry? It's hard to believe, but my career in executive recruiting spans nearly four decades. I graduated in 1981 as a proud Arizona State University Sun Devil and then jumped full force into the executive recruiting industry. I spent eight years learning the ropes at a boutique executive search firm before founding Duffy Group. All these years later, I still get tremendous satisfaction in helping people find joy in their work.

What's the most important trait of a good leader? The ability to ask Socratic questions and the patience to listen carefully to the answers.

What are you like to work for? I strive to be the type of person everyone would want as a boss. I lead in a kinder, gentler way, listening instead of raising my voice, solving problems vs. letting issues fester, and providing constant, constructive feedback that builds confidence and trust. I am collaborative, open-minded and intuitive, and I go to great lengths to take care of our team and their families.

What accomplishment has meant the most to you in your career? Being named the 2018 Athena Business Woman of the Year in the private sector. When I think of the values of Athena – a woman at the pinnacle of success in her industry, who mentors other women and who gives back to the community – I am humbled and honored. I feel fortunate to be in the company of so many other Athenas before me and look forward to meeting the many Athenas to come.

What's the best professional advice you've received, and who was it from? My father told me to trust my instincts. Sometimes the best decisions are made not in your head but rather in your gut.

What's a business book you would recommend? "Getting Naked," by Patrick Lencioni. It's a business fable that serves as a good reminder of the things we already know, including how to inspire customer and client loyalty and why being vulnerable is so important in business.

What business lesson did you have to learn the hard way? Never make strategic business decisions as a lone ranger. Having never worked in a corporate environment prior to starting Duffy Group, I wasn't accustomed



to seeking input from others. I started my business, grew the firm organically and added to my team, making decisions unilaterally along the way. I will never forget the time I returned from a women's presidents' retreat and announced the company's mission, vision and values to my team. Instead of nods of affirmation, the response was, "You did this without our input?" I now ask for feedback to ideas and will change direction on projects, as needed.

What's the one piece of advice you would offer to the next generation of business leaders? Know who you are and be confident in portraying that person to others.

If you could sit down with any business leader for coffee, who would it be, and why? My dream would be to have a conversation with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. She did not let obstacles in her childhood or career define her but instead used them as a springboard for growth and success. She has opened my mind and challenged my perspective on affirmative action, and she taught me that it's not about favoring members of minority groups but giving individuals with promise an opportunity to succeed.