

## Facetime

# Leadership Growth Partners CEO teaches effective leadership

Leadership Growth Partners CEO Bethany Detrich teaches executive management teams effective leadership strategies

A client once described **Bethany Detrich**, 49, as doing what executive management teams don't have time to do. As founder and CEO of Leadership Growth Partners, Detrich is a self-described leadership growth specialist, "helping develop individuals in the direction they should go." Leadership Growth Partners started in 1997 as Online Sales Productions, an online learning portal to train sales staff and managers in sales techniques. As the company evolved, the training became more hands-on and Detrich narrowed her focus to training leaders at midsize companies, or companies that produce \$100 million to \$1 billion annually, because that's where she saw the greatest need. Last year, Detrich changed the company's name to Leadership Growth Partners and has worked with leadership teams at companies like Perot Systems, TXU Energy, Ericsson and EDS. Bethany Detrich was interviewed by staff writer Shashana Pearson-Hormillosa.

**DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY.** I live in Southlake with my husband Bob of 18 years and my two children, Jeff and Abby.

**WHERE WERE YOU BORN AND RAISED?** I was born in Arlington and grew up in Athens, in East Texas.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD MEMORY?** My favorite memories were at my grandparents' farm in Sanger, Texas. They had Army Jeeps and we would go down to the river bottom and look for fossils. It was always so fun to be outdoors. We could run and scream on 200 acres and no one told us to be quiet.

**WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?** I got a bachelor's of business administration from Texas Tech University.

**AS A CHILD, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?** I wanted to be a musical theater actress on Broadway.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB AFTER COLLEGE?** I started with a small telecommunications company in Austin, called Capital Telephone Co. I was in sales, but did a little bit of everything.

**HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS INDUSTRY?** I moved to Dallas with my husband for his job. I worked for Verizon, which was AT&T then. I began in sales and went into sales management. I then took a job in the corporate office managing the trainers in the sales-management function. I rolled back into the field after that and was a channel partner manager, working with 300 partners selling our products through them, but I missed the training function and the development piece. I was at Verizon for 11 years. After that, I started my own company.

**HOW DOES LEADERSHIP GROWTH PARTNERS WORK?** I meet with the executive team of a company and determine what their needs are and then do a needs analysis with the people they are trying to develop. From there, what I like to do is build a leadership-competency model and understand where the gaps are. Then I put together an all-encompassing goal, which includes training, projects and (professional) experiences they need to have (in order to reach that goal). It's individualized, depending on their needs, and can last from six months to a few years. At the end, we see if it worked. We measure their success.

**DESCRIBE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FROM EARLY IN YOUR CAREER.** When I started in telecommunications, I was one of the only women and was young and bubbly. I was actually coached to not smile so much.

**WHAT DO YOU TELL YOUR CLIENTS TO LEAD AND INSPIRE THEM?** I tell them that it is all under their power and they have to make the intentional choice to be a leader. I'm real big on accountability. I tell them to do the right thing. If they stick to their core values and do what's right, there'll be no questions.

**WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PET PEEVE?** People who talk on cell phones in restaurants or who don't return phone calls.

**WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT FEW PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOU?** I used to sing with the Rich-Tones Chorus.

**WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST, DUMBEST OR MOST FUN THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?** A hot air balloon ride in San Diego.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE?** Leaders, local and corporate, need to be more accountable. I think everything that has gone wrong over the last two years is because of a lack of accountability and a lack of values. The excesses, the corporate greed is beyond my comprehension.

**HOW DOES ACCOUNTABILITY PLAY INTO THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF A COMPANY?** If a leader isn't accountable to setting clear expectations and communicating that, then all the way down the line the story gets changed and the results aren't going to be what he or she is trying to get communicated. That's what gets missed in the hurry-up, run-around world when they are not spending time with their people. What I see is a lack of accountability to our people.

**HOW IS THIS EMPHASIZED IN A DOWN ECONOMY?** There was a study that just came out on companies that have downsized or had layoffs. It said that the people who are left are 70% less productive. You had better have leaders who know how to deal with that low morale. It's the time to make sure the people who are left are developed so that you're still in business next year. I believe leadership is even more important now. The people who are left have survivor guilt; they are worried about the next layoff and they aren't sure if this is where they should be. It's a snowball effect.

**THE ANSWER TO THAT IS DEVELOPMENT?** Yes. Development is not necessarily training, but it could be an investment in time and giving experiences. It tells employees you still like them and they are important. Intentional leadership development is the No. 1 thing to do to retain people.

**HOW DOES LEADERSHIP DIFFER IN AN ECONOMIC CRISIS FROM A STABLE ECONOMY?** You need to be more in tune with your people than ever before. There are more people getting mental help, more cardiovascular issues right now, more grinding of the teeth. Being completely focused on the individual and how this is affecting them is crucial. We're all in this together, whether we want to be or not. It's easy to lead in times of great economic positivity, but the true measure is when it's bad.

**WHAT CAN LEADERS DO TO BETTER NAVIGATE THIS TERRITORY?** Tactically, intentionally plan meetings with your people. Touch them twice as much as you regularly do. Reach out, have coffee, communicate what the plans are, communicate that things are OK or not. It takes courage and it takes accountability, but not doing that is not recognizing the elephant in the room.

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