

# TABLE of EXPERTS Series

## Insights into Women Breaking Barriers



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### THE EXPERTS



#### Betsy Bugg Holloway | Vice President for Marketing and Communication, Samford University

Betsy Bugg Holloway serves as Vice President for Marketing & Communication and Professor of Marketing for Samford University. In this role she has responsibility for all marketing and branding initiatives across the operations of Samford University. Prior to assuming this role, Dr. Holloway served as the Dwight Moody Beeson Chair of Business and Hackney Family Research Fellow in the Brock School of Business. She teaches courses in both the undergraduate and graduate programs, and was the founding academic director of the Brock Scholars Program, the undergraduate honors program in the school. Dr. Holloway earned her B.A. degree from Vanderbilt University, an M.B.A. degree from Samford University and her Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Alabama.



#### Jessica Kirk Drennan | Partner, Kirk Drennan Law

Jessica Kirk Drennan, family and matrimonial attorney since 1996 and founder of Kirk Drennan, P.C., attributes her great success to diligent preparation, creative solutions and passionate advocacy. Her firm began with only a Family Law Practice Group; however, recently expanded client services by adding a Probate Practice Group and a Criminal Defense Practice Group. Jessica leads the Family Law Practice Group which focuses on matrimonial and family law at the trial and appellate levels, and on the preparation of prenuptial and postnuptial agreements. With considerable experience in complex litigation, the Kirk Drennan Family Law Practice Group handles cases involving high asset marital estates, alimony and custody in controversy.



#### Alesia Jones | Chief Human Resources Officer, UAB

Alesia M. Jones is the chief human resources officer at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), a world renowned research university and health care center and the state of Alabama's largest employer with more than 23,000 academic, administrative, and medical faculty and staff. Ms. Jones leads a Human Resources division of some 160 staff who work in both consultative and transactional service capacities for the academic, research, service, and health care units throughout the institution. The group delivers all core HR services of employment, relations, benefits, compensation and organizational development, as well as training and development. The division also is responsible for special programs such as on-site childcare, employee assistance, and the institution's disability management program.



#### Samuella Nesbitt | Senior VP of Public Relations and Community Affairs, United Way of Central Alabama

Samuella Primus Nesbitt is Senior VP Public Relations / Government and Community Affairs for United Way of Central Alabama and has over 19 years nonprofit experience. In this position she creates, manages and implements PR campaigns and strategies with the goal of enhancing United Way's image and position in the community. She also maintains strong relationships with community media organizations and manages all media relations. In addition, she develops relationships and partnerships with local and regional governments in order to find areas of alignment, partnership and support for United Way's programs and its strategic community planning work.



#### Sara Robicheaux | Dean of Business Programs and Director of Entrepreneurship Program, Birmingham-Southern College

Dr. Sara Robicheaux is the Dean of Business Programs, Director of the BSC Stump Entrepreneurship Program, and B. A. Monaghan Professor of Business at Birmingham-Southern College. Recently she served as the interim Vice President of Advancement at BSC for eighteen months. Prior to joining the BSC faculty she was a member of the finance faculty at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. She is currently an associate member of the Board of Directors of America's First Federal Credit Union and serves on the Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church Foundation Board. She has served as chair and vice-chair of the board of trustees for the Vestavia Hills Library in the Forest. She also served as the Chair of the Conservatory of the Arts and Vestavia Dance Board of Director and is a former Cystic-Fibrosis Leadership Executive Committee Member.



#### L'Tryce Slade | Owner, Slade LLC General Contractor

L'Tryce M. Slade, Managing Director, of SLADE Land Use, Environmental, and Transportation Planning, LLC ("Slade"), a 8(a), HubZone, 8(m), EDWOSB, DBE, MBE, and 100% Minority Woman Owned General Contracting and Environmental Consulting Firm. She has a BA in Political Science, BA in Communication Studies, Masters in Regional Planning, and Juris Doctorate Degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ms. Slade has experience in development and construction projects. Her firm is a licensed general contractor specializing in environmental consulting, geotechnical services, construction material testing and urban planning. Ms. Slade's firm is the only female African American Construction Material Testing Lab in the Southeast.

### THE DISCUSSION

**Q: What has been your most memorable moment rising through the ranks in your company or industry?**

**Sara Robicheaux:** Last year, I was given the opportunity to serve as senior staff to Birmingham-Southern's first female president, Linda Flaherty-Goldsmith. The President and I worked closely throughout her first year to engage BSC's alumni, students, faculty, staff and the Birmingham community as a whole. Together we raised more than \$13 million dollars toward

a 3-year, \$30-million fundraising initiative that will allow BSC to not only grow, but to excel as we navigate a fast-changing, higher-education landscape. It was a remarkable accomplishment for the college, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to step outside the traditional faculty career path to serve as Vice President of Advancement.

**L'Tryce Slade:** I was at an awards program being honored for my business, and a news reporter was talking to my dad and asked him when he started

our construction company. My dad smiled and said, "I do not know anything about construction. You will have to talk to my daughter." At that moment I knew I was breaking stereotypes about how women end up owning construction and environmental services companies. I started my business on unemployment, with really no one except my parents believing that I could create this firm. Although my parents would have preferred I used the four degrees from the University of

North Carolina to get a great-paying job, they continued to stand by my side. It's important for a woman in business to have a strong support system: church, family, mentors and friends.

**Jessica Kirk Drennan:** One of the most memorable moments I had rising through the ranks was my first day of work as a litigator. I was sent to court to represent a client I had never met who was charged with a felony, and if convicted he would be a repeat offender. This basically means this gentleman was facing

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the prospect of serious time in prison. When I arrived in court I had to call out my client's name, having never met him, only to have him raise his hand from the jury box where he was handcuffed wearing an orange jumpsuit along with every other defendant who had been unable to make bail. I calmed my mind by assuring myself that there were so many cases on the docket, surely my case would not be called for trial. However, when the judge took to the bench and called the docket, he announced that my case would be called out first to trial, and it was. I suppose this would be a moment to be forgotten for most. However, I learned that day – on my first day – that when required to sink or swim, I would find a way to swim.

**Betsy Bugg Holloway:** I have many wonderful memories throughout my 25-year career, which included 7 years with a start-up healthcare company

and 15 years as a professor and administrator in higher education. The memories that stand out involved successful projects or initiatives that had a significant impact on the trajectory of the company/organization I served. In all these memories, I'd say the common element was teamwork and collaboration with great colleagues that resulted in the achievement of a big, hairy audacious goal.

**Samuella Nesbitt:** There's not a single moment. I continue to have those aha moments every year.

Overall, after 20 years working in the nonprofit community, I still enjoy discovering the deep philanthropic roots in Central

Alabama. I will never forget the retirees and minimum-wage

*"I believe in surrounding myself with great people who possess expertise and technical skills I lack, and empowering them with flexibility and resources they need to achieve success."*

-Betsy Bugg Holloway

workers who give a significant portion of their income and time to charities, and they do it because they feel they are called to always give back. I've also met individuals who are members of families who practice generational giving. Giving is a family value that is passed down with each new generation, and they honor those before them with generous support to this community. After the tornado outbreak in 2011,

United Way provided assistance to many individuals and families. One afternoon I received a call from the receptionist that there

was a couple in the lobby with a donation. When I met them, they said they wanted to repay United Way for the money they'd been given to rebuild. They said they'd received enough money from other sources to meet their needs, and they wanted to pass it on. When you can experience that kind of humanity in your job, it's a memorable moment.

**Q: What are some lessons you have learned as a woman in a leadership role?**

**Alesia Jones:** As leaders, we must solve problems and speak up with suggestions and possible solutions. When you don't speak up, you run the risk of being marginalized. It is important that you have the confidence to add value where needed. One of the most important lessons I learned is that finding your voice as a leader can be hard, but without it your ability to be most effective is challenged.

**Slade:** I have learned to find my own powerful voice. You can be gentle and kind, but still powerful. It is not always the person with the loudest bark who has the biggest bite. Finding my powerful voice is still something that I am evolving. It is a challenge to remain authoritative yet still stay true to your true personality. You have to know how to talk to people. You have to know how to deal with all types of people. Every organization cannot be made of the same personality types. I have also learned that what works for one employee does not work for another. It is important to understand the personalities of the people who work for you. I am a big believer in books like Strength Finder. This will teach you what motivates people.

**Drennan:** Like every person in a leadership role, regardless of age or gender, you will be talked about at some point in a negative way. This was a hard lesson to learn, but to properly do your job, it's almost impossible to be liked at all times by all people. It can be difficult to deal with the negative fallout from a business decision. But if you have forged good relationships with your staff and your decision was not arbitrary or based upon emotion, the fallout will be temporary.

**Holloway:** I've found there are far more similarities than differences between men and women in the workplace. The lessons I've learned are not all that different from those of male leaders: have a plan, listen more and talk less, learn from mistakes, lead by example, and strive to maintain positivity in all things. I've also learned the value of embracing failures as opportunities for learning and improvement. While no one wants to fail, great leaders learn to turn such times into opportunities for self-reflection and growth. Failures happen to everyone – so don't fear them. There is great value in dissecting failure, internalizing lessons

learned, and leveraging that learning going forward. Finally, I've learned not to worry too much about making "popular" decisions. Improvement that pushes people to do new things is not always welcome. The leader's job is not to manage the status quo, but rather to change the order of things for the better. One of my favorite quotes comes from a wonderful female leader, Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom:

*"I developed compassion for other people by going through unemployment and growing a business."*

-L'Tryce Slade

"If you just set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing."

**Nesbitt:** I'm an African American female with children who is now in a senior-level position. I've learned many lessons as I move through my seasons. What I would tell someone just starting their career is to diversify your strengths and skills and observe before you shoot for the bullseye. You actually have choices on how to build your career, so take advantage of it. Don't try to do it all in five years and feel like a failure if you're not a senior vice president. The second point is to use that time to set your priorities and discover who you really are. Put faith, family and good friends first and you'll find the right fit for you. Finally, a personal failure has a purpose. You don't quite get it at first, but you will.

**Robicheaux:** There is no way to characterize managers or employees by their gender.

**Q: What is your philosophy on management?**

**Slade:** I have always said I do not have to terminate people, they terminate themselves. I believe in providing training to equip people to soar to the

highest height that they dream. That is my job. People are promoted in Slade by being a self-starter who is committed to excellence. We send people

to training so we can improve our services. I've always believed it is important to have people sitting in the right seats on the bus. The right seat can be defined by whether their talent can blossom; where they feel comfortable; assigning tasks they enjoy; and opportunities to play musical chairs to

explore untapped talent. This will allow organizations to work more effectively.

**Drennan:** I utilize a teamwork mentality because it actually takes a team to operate a successful business. You cannot and will not make anything

happen alone. I look for the strengths and weaknesses in my employees, and then pair employees who complement one another, thus maximizing the efficiency of the whole team. I also demand that not only I, but all employees, treat the lowest-skilled position with the same respect as the highest-skilled position. Everyone has their role to play, and their roles are critical to the success of the company.

**Holloway:** I believe in surrounding myself with great people who possess expertise and technical skills I lack, and empowering them with flexibility and resources they need to achieve success. I also believe in leading by example. I have high expectations of those with whom I serve, but they're never as high as the expectations I have of myself.

**Nesbitt:** I have three that I put above the rest. One is to be the type of employee you want

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working for you. The second is to communicate and share the big picture with your staff so they can see their role. The third I learned from a former boss who always said, "Inspect what you expect." It was our reminder to follow up on the tasks you delegate. Not micromanage, but ensure they are being executed the way you intended.

**Robicheaux:** Empowering. Employees must be given a sense of ownership in their daily work, where successes are shared with the whole team and each person benefits from the overall accomplishment. Trust is important as well. If you cannot trust your staff then you need a new staff. Employees are most productive when they know their opinion and work are valued and appreciated by management. If you work hard and are positive, your employees want to work hard and help the organization succeed.

**Jones:** I love the Peter Drucker quote that says, "Leadership is doing the right things, and management is doing things right." My philosophy is to have the right balance of both. I often call it "the what and the how" conversation. Many times, we focus so much on "how" we are going to get something done that we lose sight of "what" we are trying to accomplish. That philosophy has helped me be a more effective leader and manager.

**Q: How does your company support inclusion and diversity in management?**

**Holloway:** I've always been drawn to serve with companies and organizations that are committed to advancing diverse views and inclusiveness. Were that not the case, I suspect I would not have had so many opportunities to lead. With respect to my current position at Samford University, I am grateful to be part of a team that works daily to advance diversity throughout our organization.

Two of our central university values include a commitment to freedom of inquiry, and appreciation for diverse cultures and convictions. Over the past decade, under the leadership of Samford president Andrew Westmoreland, diversity and inclusion have been advanced in profound ways. From the leadership and membership of our governing Board of Trustees, to the establishment of new campus organizations, to the makeup of the student body. Today we see and feel the benefits these changes are bringing to our campus community.

**Nesbitt:** Our brand says it all: Live United. It's in our beginnings. More than 125 years ago, a group of diverse community leaders who founded United Way crossed cultural, religious and economic boundaries to make a difference through collective action.

Today, diversity and inclusion remain vital to achieving our mission, living our values and advancing the common good. We also engage the power of diverse partnerships to address complex community issues.

**Robicheaux:** In management, it is important for all voices to be heard in a nonjudgmental environment.

**Jones:** UAB is one of the most diverse universities in the nation, bringing invaluable culture, perspective and intellectual capital to our community. Diversity and inclusion are core values at UAB, not just words. They are evident in our daily actions and expectations from all levels of the organization.

**Slade:** My hiring practices reflect diversity. I started my company when I was on unemployment, which led me to be able to no longer need

unemployment. I learned that sometimes being overqualified could cause you to be overlooked for opportunities, just like being underqualified. I developed compassion for other people by going through unemployment and growing a business. I have learned that the people or organizations who you think would help you may not. I have promised myself not to be one of those people or companies. I can now look at some of my interns who are women who have started their own firms or are

working for major corporations. The pride I feel in having the opportunity to have worked with them is one of the things I treasure.

**Q: Did you have a mentor who influenced your career? What did you learn from them?**

**Drennan:** Tom Radney was the one person who most influenced my career.

He had a passion for the law that I admired, and he instilled that passion in me. He was passionate about reading the law and using it to help ordinary people with ordinary problems. He thought outside the box and understood that the law is fluid. How exciting to gain that understanding so early in my career. To this day, I find the law exciting. There is nothing like finding that perfect case to help your client.

**Holloway:** I've always been intentional about developing mentoring relationships with women and men whose lives and careers I respect and in some way seek to emulate. I've learned so much from these friendships, not just about navigating professional decisions in the workplace, but especially with respect to work-life balance. While I've benefited in various ways from these mentors, for me the most

meaningful learning has come from understanding their failures, and how they've managed to learn, grow and improve from the inevitable setbacks we all face.

**Nesbitt:** There's not just one person. I've maintained a healthy reserve of many individuals I can call on. Some of them don't know they are, but I'm watching them and taking notes. One thing they all have in common is a passion and desire to enrich the lives of others and improve their communities. I also love to interact with people who have accomplished something in spite of insurmountable odds. They didn't just accept what life gave them. They moved on and up.

**Robicheaux:** My greatest mentor was my father, Dr. Billy Helms, who was in university administration for more than 30 years. Through observing his relationship with his colleagues, I learned two important qualities. The first is, listening without offering suggestions is underrated. Honestly, I struggle the most with that and still need to work on following his example. The second one is, everyone has the ability to make a contribution to every organization or team, and the manager's job is to figure out how to utilize their abilities to make the individual be an invaluable asset to the organization.

**Jones:** I had mentors before I realized that I should ask for them. As I look back on my career, I am well aware of the many people who helped and mentored me. Most were informal mentorships. Those were the most impactful. One of the greatest lessons I learned from my mentors was to have confidence in my abilities and take risks. I have learned more from my stumbles than from my successes.

**Slade:** Most of my mentors have been men, with a few women. There are not many women in influential positions who control contract opportunities. There are no black



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Kirk Drennan Law founded by Jessica Kirk Drennan in February of 2011, is now dedicated to serving clients with three different practice groups: Divorce and Family Law Group; Probate Group, and Criminal Defense Group.

The Divorce and Family Law Group has over 30 years of combined experience. Jessica Kirk Drennan, Jessie Keating Hardy and Amanda Duncan serve as advocates for families in the areas of family and matrimonial law. Jessica is AV Rated by Martindale Hubbell and Certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. Jessie is licensed to practice in both Alabama and Florida.

The Probate Group headed up by Megan Elder focuses on Estate Planning, Probate and Adoption. Megan has a Master of Laws in Taxation.

Derek Drennan brought with him 20 years of considerable experience in criminal law and white collar crime when he joined in August of 2015, starting The Criminal Defense Group.

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female CEOs at major Fortune 500 companies. The number of women CEOs in general is on the decline at major companies as well. My goal is to be a woman CEO who opens doors for all. I learned from my mentors to help people based on their character, and not what you see on the exterior.

**Q: What is some advice for women who are looking to go into a field that is traditionally dominated by men?**

**Nesbitt:** Those fields may be dominated but not prohibitive. We're not at war with each other. Yes, you see disparities, but just keep giving it your best and keep going. A few doors may be slammed in your face, but that's why the door knob is there. Turn it, open the door and don't stop until you've reached your goal.

**Robicheaux:** I tell my college students, pick a career that maximizes your strengths while

minimizing your weaknesses. It is even better if you find something that differentiates you from the norm. Women represent less than a quarter of holders of PhD in finance. However, I do not ever think about it as an issue. It only is an issue if you let it be an issue.

**Jones:** Many times, some women tend to not speak up for themselves, whereas male colleagues often do. Having confidence in your abilities and what you bring to the table is important in any field, male-dominated or not. When I talk with people about a career choice, I listen to hear why they chose the field they did. If it was something they just fell into or because it was a good job,

then typically there will be more challenges breaking through or advancing in the field. If it was a conscious choice that was guided by alignment with their natural skills and abilities, then breaking through and advancing is typically much easier. I was fortunate to learn early that if you do what you love, then success will follow.

And it will not feel like work, at least most of the time.

**Slade:** The wisdom I have learned is that relationships make a big difference. Opportunities often result from the right person wanting to see you in the right place. This person may help you learn how to work on your business versus working in your business. This person may know the professional associations you should join to network in the right environments. Finally, this person may help polish you and your business to be the right fit for companies looking for you.

**Drennan:** Don't try to be one of the boys, because you aren't one. Be true to yourself and find ways to connect interpersonally with the boys on your own terms. Make sure that connection isn't based upon sexual innuendo or appeal, as once that door is opened you will have a hard time closing it. Be prepared to handle a situation in which a co-worker is sexually inappropriate, such that your actions will withstand scrutiny from others. Dress and act professionally, period.

**Q: What was the most pivotal moment in your career and how did you respond?**

**Robicheaux:** When I was 36, the Provost and President at Birmingham-Southern asked me to serve as Dean of the Business Programs. I had never aspired to be in higher-education

administration and was perfectly content as a tenured member of the faculty, however, I said yes. A few years later I was asked to serve as the Interim VP of Advancement, a job I once again had never aspired towards. However, both these jobs provided me with opportunities to work and get to know amazing people and have an impact on BSC during a transformational time.

**Jones:** My first management position. I was 30 years old with a very young child, so I was trying to navigate being a new mother while juggling a big new managerial responsibility. I had been successful in my previous individual contributor roles and did not fully understand the challenges of leadership. I stumbled more than a few times, both in my first leadership role and as a new mother. But I was committed to learning from each mistake and dedicated to succeeding in both roles.

**Slade:** The most pivotal moment in my career was being told no. A tremendous amount of my success can be attributed to the word "no." It encourages me to work harder, smarter, and go to the next level. Often times, people think they are getting rid of you or holding you back. In actuality it can catapult you to the next level. I thrive on "no." Does it hurt? Sure it does. Do I cry? Sure I cry. But when it is all said and done, I grow from it. I have also learned that the saying, "When people walk away, let them walk," is true. You do not have to beg people to believe in you. At the end of the day, you must remain optimistic and believe in yourself. At the end of the day, I know I will survive. Being in business is not for the faint of heart. One of my male mentors told me you have to be like a lion. I learned that the female lion is one of the most respected animals. In business it is about being respected.

**Drennan:** The business of

practicing law is very different than the practice of law. I was very traditional in my approach to achieving success in the business of practicing law. My first and foremost goal was to excel in the practice of law. I set out and continue to strive to be the best legal mind and advocate for my clients. Providing quality representation led to an established clientele based upon reputation, and to a steady stream of revenue benefitting the firm. I also participated in firm functions and raised awareness of the firm in the community using various methods such as leadership roles in organizations and community service. These factors taken together were instrumental in supporting my role in the firm, changing from associate to partner.

Becoming a partner was the most pivotal moment for me because it was a reward for my efforts to that point, but also marked the beginning of the road that I am currently traveling. From partner I eventually became a shareholder, which meant I was not only a leader in the firm but also an owner, albeit of a minority interest. From there I went on to become an outright business owner when I established Kirk Drennan Law in 2011.

**Holloway:** Over the past 25 years, I've experienced several key pivot points that resulted in important decisions with far-reaching consequences. Way back in 1993 I accepted a position in Chicago with Scandipharm, Inc., which over time led to several promotions and what I thought at the time was my dream job. A similar pivot point occurred when I joined the faculty of Samford's business school 10 years later, in 2002, as an Assistant Professor of Marketing, a decision that led me to the position I happily hold today of Vice President for Marketing and Communication. Reflecting back on these pivot points, the

common factor in all was my willingness to lean in and assume new challenges and responsibilities, even when I did not necessarily feel prepared to do so. As a result, I've learned to think twice before turning down opportunities that will allow me to learn and grow in new ways.

**Nesbitt:** Not everyone has had a made-for-television event in their careers. But 21 years ago I met my former boss in Leadership Birmingham and he asked me to apply for a position with United Way. That's when I transitioned to a career with a mission to serve others that's yielded many rewards through the years.

**Q: What advice would you give to a women who is looking to break barriers in her company?**

**Slade:** Ask yourself if it is worth breaking barriers? You have to do things that make you happy. It's not worth breaking a barrier if you are not happy. I did not start my business to break a barrier. I started my business because I could not find a job. I believe that when you are being your authentic self, breaking barriers will naturally occur. I would encourage women to not be unbalanced. I do believe in my heart of hearts that women can have it all. I won't give up on that belief and dream. So my goal every day is to believe that I can have a balanced work and personal life. That is my personal barrier that I am trying to break. Don't put your life's focus just on your company. Make sure you find happiness along the way that can't be defined by someone else. Keep looking for having it all and striving for it. Eventually, I believe it will all come together.

**Drennan:** Work smarter, work harder. Be a team player, but be sure you get credit for the work

you do. Also, ask for that raise or that promotion and be willing to negotiate. If you don't ask, you may never get it. My experience is that business owners will pay for talent but they don't want to pay more than necessary. So do not expect to be "given" what you "deserve."

**Holloway:** What a great question. First, believe in yourself. Remember that throughout time, we've seen examples of great leaders whose journey started with nothing but a conviction to achieve. In fact, I suspect most leadership journeys start this way, with a simple motivation and choice to achieve something. Second, do your homework and develop a plan for what you aim to do and how you aim to do it. What

are the key issues that are relevant to success in your industry and organization? Third, seek advice and mentoring from others who've gone before you. How did they achieve success in that company or industry, and what are the pitfalls you should avoid along the way? Don't underestimate how much you can learn from their successes and failures. Fourth, there is no substitute for perseverance and hard work, what I often refer to as grit. I have found that hard work and attitude trump brains and competence more often than not.

**Nesbitt:** There is no one advice nugget I pass along. It depends on the person asking. I would recommend that she listen, observe, develop her skills and be ready to go when an opportunity presents itself. But I think the words effort, motivation and dedication are good starts.

**Robicheaux:** Work hard, be kind to people, listen, and say yes to new opportunities.

*"I am often asked how I can do it all. Well, the truth is, I don't. There are many people who I depend on every day to make it all possible."*

-Sara Robicheaux

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**Q: What are some things companies can do to help women advance their careers?**

**Drennan:** Promote and compensate based upon talent, skill and dedication. Be flexible, not punitive, to women who have children or other family responsibilities by determining what they need to continue their same level of success. Develop a company culture that has zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

**Nesbitt:** I hope most organizations recognize that women, especially women with children, already have a very important job that comes with demands. They should look at their policies and procedures to see if they are helping these women become better employees, or whether they are roadblocks to these women contributing their best to the organization.

**Robicheaux:** Be flexible. We all

have non-work issues that arise. Companies should recognize that in order to have a productive work life, employees need to have the flexibility to attend to life issues when necessary. These companies will retain and motivate great employees.

**Slade:** Providing women with the training opportunities, memberships to professional organizations, mentors, access to resources, and access to capital can propel women to the next level in their career.

**Q: What is the biggest lesson you have learned in your career?**

**Jones:** As women, we often think everything has to be perfect. I

believe things have to be correct, but perfection is a journey, not a state. I always strive for perfection, and I am learning not to beat myself up when not everything is perfect.

**Holloway:** I've learned so many lessons over the past 25 years in management that it's hard to identify just one. Overall, I've learned not to allow myself to sweat the small stuff. I've learned to keep my eyes on the

long-term goals and big-picture priorities. If those are advancing, I try not to get too distracted or worried about inevitable setbacks along the way. I've also learned the importance of investing in me, both in terms of personal and professional development. I seek opportunities to learn and grow, through professional conferences, community involvement, and reading. And I carve out time almost every morning for prayer and reflection on the day ahead.

**Robicheaux:** I am often asked how I can do it all. Well, the truth is, I don't. There are many people who I depend on every day to make it all possible. At work, I have wonderful colleagues who always pitch in and do whatever the College needs. At home, my husband is an equal partner and very helpful with household needs and the kids. Also, I have a mother and mother-in-law who help with managing my three girls and their afternoon activities schedules. A great lesson to learn early in a women's career is that you do not have to do it all. Instead, surround yourself with people you can depend on at work and at home.

**Slade:** I have learned that success is failure turned inside out. Running from failure is one of the driving forces of my success in business. Trouble can make you

doubt yourself. That is when you have to dig deep and remember where you come from. Where I come from is, I am a country girl from eastern North Carolina who strives to be flawless. One of my favorite lyrics is in the song "Flawless." It discusses how we encourage girls to shrink themselves. We teach girls to have ambition, but not too much. You can aim to be successful, but not too successful. We teach girls not to intimidate men. We teach girls we are expected to aspire to marriage. You should always keep in mind that marriage is the most important. We teach girls to see other girls as competitors. We teach girls that beauty is the most important, and not what is in their heads. These are the images that I feel make it difficult and challenging for women to get to the next level. I have learned in my career to be the woman who diminishes these images and replaces them with women being fierce, flawless, humble, loving, kind and comfortable in their own skin.

**Drennan:** All's fair in love and business, at least to some people. I have learned those are not the type of people with whom I want to be associated. At moments when you realize your employer or partners do not share your core beliefs, it can feel intimidating, but in the end you have to develop a plan for personal success and implement it without fear or regret. That may mean working around issues that are impediments to your personal success when a direct approach isn't working, or it may mean developing an exit plan. Whatever it takes, never give up. Instead, always look up.

**Nesbitt:** Not everyone can, but enjoy what you do. I love to meet women and men who have a sense of being the best at what they do. Especially those in minimum-wage service jobs. They take pride in their organization and have decided to perform at the highest levels.

*"I hope most organizations recognize that women, especially women with children, already have a very important job that comes with demands."*

-Samuella Nesbitt



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