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Leaders Define Themselves

By Kim Larson



One of the world's most influential business leaders is a respected chief executive because, as she says, she "does not aspire to a title, but aspires to be a leader." Cathy Engelbert leads more than 220,000 professionals as Chief Executive Officer for Deloitte LLP, and inspired hundreds of attendees at the recent Partners in Business Accounting conference at Utah State University. Engelbert's leadership path started as captain of her collegiate basketball team. Attending Lehigh University on a lacrosse scholarship, she walked onto the women's basketball team and later found herself leading her team on the court. As she maneuvered through her career, Engelbert attributed several principles to her success.

Be ready and prepared. Engelbert referenced USU Football Head Coach Matt Wells' comments after a signature win against Boise State. He was proud of the win, but it wasn't the championship. He reinforced that the team is in the driver's seat to control their own destiny. Engelbert emphasized that it is essential to be ready and prepared: you are in the driver's seat. Whether it's the next board meeting or the next promotion. You will never go wrong if you are ready and prepared.

Say 'No' with a purpose. Opportunities will come your way, but they may not all be the right opportunity for you at that time. Engelbert was offered a promotion within Deloitte which included moving her young family to St. Louis. She declined but offered a solution in which she could fulfill a need for Deloitte at an office closer to her home. "If you are going to say no, then have a yes right behind it."

Find a work-life balance. Life is a juggling act with work, family, health and personal integrity. Work is a rubber ball and will bounce back if dropped. The other three, however, are made of glass and can be shattered if dropped. Engelbert

stressed that you need to have pride and integrity in your work, but you need to find the work-life balance that is right for you.

Cathy Engelbert aspired to be a leader and now leads the world's largest professional services firm. She also inspires future leaders.