

Alumna Honored...continued

She then formalized the ethical business standards that are incorporated into all aspects of Atlantic Webworks today. Those standards are:

- Act in the best interest of the client at all times
- Invest in training and continuing education so clients receive the best possible services
- Offer courteous, timely support and help clients understand how to use available technologies.

"Adrienne is one of the very few people that I can say has redefined the meaning of ethics," wrote Kathy Bowman Atkins in a letter of reference to the Piedmont ethics award committee. Atkins, also a UNCG alumna, is president of The Latitude Group.

"Ethical behavior...is evidenced in the value and quality of her firm's work, the value they place on people as human beings rather than objects of their business objectives, and the unfettered honesty of all the members of the business..."

Honesty, in fact, is the core of Atlantic Webworks' practices. "We will not build a site simply to make money for ourselves," Jandler said. "We must insure that the client can be successful if we are to be their

partner. Occasionally, this means turning down business if the concept is not viable."

"Our staff doesn't simply 'do the right thing' because it's expected," she adds. "They 'do the right thing' because they're personally committed to doing so."

It's company policy, for example, not to build Web sites for the direct competitors of their clients, nor will the company build Web sites that are pornographic in nature or are for organizations who promote discrimination, hatred or harmful intent to any group of people or animals.

"We measure our success not only by revenues, but by referrals," Jandler said.

Currently, 90 percent of Atlantic Webworks' business is directly a result of client and strategic partner referrals.

Jandler and Atlantic Webworks: two 'good names' that *will* last a lifetime.



Jandler, at work at Atlantic Webworks, receives the 2008 American Business Ethics Award in the small business category after receiving the 2007 Piedmont Business Ethics Award for high standards of ethical behavior.

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A Student of Servant Leadership

M. Lee McAllister's contributions to UNCG, the Bryan School and the greater Greensboro community are immense.

He has served as a member/director or chairman of more than 20 boards and offered invaluable insight to the Bryan School as a member of its Business Advisory Board, director for the UNCG Investment Fund Board of Directors, and chair of the Economic Development Committee, Strategic Planning Committee and Cornerstone Council. He is currently chair of the Greensboro Partnership Board.

In 2007, the *Triad Business Journal* recognized McAllister as one of the area's most influential people. And this year he was inducted as an honorary member to the Bryan School's chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma based on his leadership, success and character.

It's clear to see McAllister is secure in leadership roles. But when he became president and CEO of Weaver Investment Company in 1999, things changed. Weaver acquired diverse companies located throughout the region, making it difficult for McAllister to get to know all the employees as he would have preferred.

"I thought we needed to do something to drive all these people together," he recalls. "We want to create a single mindset as this relates to how we treat people and how we deal with customers, for example, and our employees are our customers."

The solution was servant leadership, an approach to ensuring that ethics is a core part of a business's daily operations.

McAllister believes companies need to do whatever it takes to meet their customers' needs and influence their employees to attain goals and objectives for the common good of their company.

"If you're *not* doing that, I don't know how you can be successful in the 21st century," he says.



BRYAN FORUM

FALL 2008

The Role of Ethics in Business Today

Contrary to what the public may believe, ethics do play a vital role in today's business world.

To spread the word, Beta Gamma Sigma's Ethical Business Leadership initiative is sparking a global discussion about the issue and its importance to the business community. Members of the BGS Board of Governors

have been meeting with corporate executives to learn what companies and businesses are currently doing to ensure ethics is a core part of their organizations.

One approach some businesses have taken is to develop corporate cultures built upon the notion of servant leadership. Under this model, company leaders challenge their employees to be of service to others professionally and personally, while staying focused on their organization's values and integrity. The Weaver Investment Company of Greensboro is one organization that has adopted this approach.

Bryan School Dean Jim Weeks, a member of the BGS Board of Governors and the society's secretary-treasurer, recently interviewed M. Lee McAllister, Weaver Group president and CEO, about his company's approach to servant leadership. The interview was published in Beta Gamma Sigma's Spring 2008 issue of *BGS International Exchange*. The following are excerpts from that conversation:

Q. Why servant leadership?

A. Instead of allowing our six operating companies to each take on their own culture,

we felt it made more sense for us to create a single culture. Quite simply, we're setting the standard for ethical behavior. We're putting ethical behavior at a level where we think it ought to be, and then we're trying to close the gap between that bar and where we are.

This process is really self-driven in that previous servant leadership participants work

with others who are new to the program. We're all involved in this together. This isn't something where I sit up here and pontificate all these things. We all lead sessions on topics like community building, ethics and business, motivation of employees, and other topics germane to our corporate culture and corporate guidance.

The first year is intensive; we meet once a month. After that, we meet two or three times a year. Ideally, we'll continue on until we go through our entire organization, which will

be 300 or 400 people.

Q. How does servant leadership work?

A. The cornerstone of the program is the 360-degree feedback that each participant gets from nine peers, subordinates and bosses. Those who give the feedback and each participant who receives feedback analyze what's said. The participant then shares the feedback with what we call his or her sphere of influence, which are people that person works with everyday. And some people share all this with their friends and family, which is fine, too.

Based on the feedback and analysis, each



McAllister believes that business approaches such as servant leadership must be embraced from the top down in a company for them to succeed.

Putting it into Practice

Bryan School students incorporate what they learn from the classroom into their daily lives. Just ask Gurmeet Singh and Derek Allman, vice presidents of UNCG's student chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma.



Singh and Allman

The pair recently spearheaded a student version of the professional society's Ethical Business Leadership Initiative, calling it Ethics in Action. Fellow students jumped on the bandwagon.

Both the student and professional societies' initiatives involve promoting information and ideas about the importance of ethics in business. Ethics in Action accomplishes this with tangible reminders of UNCG's five values, a speaker series and coursework experiences.

First, the Beta Gamma Sigma students helped publicize the Faculty-Student Guidelines, which include detailed lists of ethical expectations for students and faculty in classroom attendance, preparation, participation and conduct, assignments and exams, and professional values and integrity.

The students then embarked on a marketing campaign to spread the word about responsibility, honesty, respect, fairness and trust — values which are part of the UNCG Student Code of Conduct. They developed and distributed a poster (on the right) about the message and pens that also tout the five values.

The Ethics in Action speaker series kicked off with alumni Adrienne Cregar Jandler, president of Atlantic Webworks and recipient of the 2007 Piedmont Business Ethics Award. Carolyn Woo, dean of the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame, was the series' second speaker on Sept. 3.

Meanwhile, Bryan School students learn about ethics through courses such as Ethical Issues in Business and Ethics, Public Policy and Business, and the BB&T Program in Capitalism, Markets and Morality, which offers discussion and debate about capitalism and its moral implications.

Ethics is alive and well in the minds and lives of Bryan School students.



participant comes up with two action plans, what we call SMART action plans. SMART is an acronym for Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time Sensitive. Again, the participant shares those plans with his or her sphere of influence. The plans include actionable items designed to change the behaviors that were discussed in the feedback.

The feedback comes back to each participant in rank order with strengths at the top and weaknesses at the bottom. We typically go to work on the last two on the list; they're a person's biggest weaknesses. We feel like strengths are good to be aware of, but there's not much a person can do about his or her strengths. The things a person has to work on are the weaknesses. So that's where we really focus.

We then conduct a Continuous Improvement Panel (CIP) every six months to hold each participant accountable for his or her progress. The panel is made up of folks who have already been through the first year of servant leadership. Progress is basically feedback the person gets from others on the success of his or her SMART action plans.

Q. How does having coworkers identify each other's personal strengths and weaknesses help a company function more ethically?

A. In my mind it fits very closely with business ethics because it's about being honest with yourself and others and trusting that others are being honest with you. It also focuses on skills and how people perform their jobs. Do they have the skills necessary to perform at an acceptable level?

Q. Do employees readily buy into this plan?

A. Support of this plan starts with me, the CEO. And I participate just like they do. I have 360s done like the employees do. I stand up under a PowerPoint with a summary of my feedback and answer to the employees just like they do. I put together action plans just like they do. That's very, very powerful because what we have learned is if it doesn't start at the top, it's probably not going to be the outcome you're after. Folks don't realize that this is from the top down.

Q. How invested is your company in this concept?

A. In corporate America, cap-ex — capital expenditure — is a large line item in a lot of budgets. And you'll hear corporate people talk about their most valuable asset being people. Interestingly enough, however, when you ask others what they're doing for their employees, you'll hear, "Well...we pay them good wages and we give them health care, and we give them a retirement plan...."

Our philosophy is those are the rights of our people; you aren't really giving them anything. In our opinion, if people are your most valuable resource, then you should invest in them like you do with a plant and equipment.

So, we have a human-ex line item in our budget, which is where we budget expenditures for this culture development work. We actually talk about that line item and it's scrutinized just like any other line item is scrutinized on our financials. It's a very interesting notion because in order to put action behind your words, you have to show the importance of the human side of your business.

Q. What are some ways servant leadership culture is developed?

A. One of the outcomes from this so far is that our second group and first group through the program got together and decided to develop a code of conduct. Since then, we've had company meetings that have been solely for the purpose of discussing the code of conduct and we have new employee orientation that has a piece totally about the code of conduct. We now have that code of conduct on poster boards at all of our companies. So, people are very familiar with the code.

We also have little wallet cards that have the code on them and most of our employees carry these cards with them. The cards are an extremely powerful tool in managing behavior. When somebody sees a coworker or



McAllister: "We're driving a behavior home that is so opposite of unethical behavior that it's hard for people to be unethical, and that's the whole point of this program."

subordinate violating the code of conduct, he or she will simply hand the person a card without saying a word. Or if someone in the lunchroom or breakroom is engaging in backstabbing, for example, or if somebody is being dishonest, somebody will pull out a card, throw it down on the table and keep walking. It speaks volumes without anybody saying a word.

We also have what's called Five Minutes in a Barrel. That's where each individual sits in a chair in the middle of a circle of other people who fire away at the person about areas he or she needs to improve on. The person in the middle basically sits there and absorbs all of the input, which is also recorded. That's probably one of the most difficult things we do, but it's only done as the group matures. You need to be two or three years in the program before you go through this exercise because it's very difficult.

We also have a sharing session called Your Life where a person talks for seven minutes about his or her life, but can't talk for more than one minute about work. We have another session called Random Acts of Kindness where people go out and perform two random acts of kindness. Once, some employees saw someone behind them in line at a store who didn't look like they had much money. So, our employees paid for their groceries. This was extremely powerful to all of us.

Q. How do acts of kindness relate to business ethics?

A. It sends a huge message about doing the

right thing. To hear that folks are serving others like the example I just gave you means our servant leadership culture has made an impact. In my opinion, this now makes it very difficult for employees to turn around the next day and exhibit unethical behavior. We're driving a behavior home that is so opposite of unethical behavior that it's hard for people to be unethical, and that's the whole point of this program.

I believe that what folks are learning in the work place about serving others has to go home with them. There's a hard line connection between being at work and being at home. If you're changing behavior at work, you have to be changing it at home and vice versa. If you think about it, you spend about 60 to 70 hours at work. How can you go home for the other 30 percent or 40 percent of your day and act completely different?

Q. Is servant leadership successful at Weaver so far?

A. When we look at financial results, especially what our two larger companies are experiencing...I don't think there's any question that our servant leadership culture is influencing these positive financial results.

But to focus on numbers, I think is wrong. You have to focus on what it is that moved those numbers and the only thing that moves numbers is people. If you're not focusing on people, then I think you're going the wrong way. And when I say focus, I mean are you meeting their legitimate needs and are you influencing them to attain goals and objectives for the common good?

We're in the people business and if you don't believe that, then let all your employees go home and not come back and see what happens to your company. Companies don't run themselves.

I love to question everything that I do and that others do, and there are often times that I question if we're doing the right thing with the amount of time, energy, effort, and money that goes into servant leadership.

If I wake up three or four years from now and say, "You know, we went down the wrong road and this was just a huge waste of time, energy, effort, and money," then I will stop. But today, I don't have any evidence of that, and until I do, I'm open to it. I think we need to keep doing what we're doing.

Alumna Honored for Ethics

Atlantic Webworks in Greensboro, the company founded and headed by UNCG alumna Adrienne Cregar Jandler, will be presented a 2008 American Business Ethics Award on Nov. 1 in Las Vegas. The national award, earned in the small company category, is sponsored by the Society of Financial Service Professionals.

Webworks, which was recently awarded the 2007 Piedmont Business Ethics Award for high standards of ethics, is the first Piedmont winner to go on to win a national award. It joins General Mills and Daisy Brands as the society's winners in the large and mid-sized categories.

The annual Piedmont award is sponsored by the Greensboro Chapter of the Society of Financial Service Professionals and supported by the Bryan School. (Dean Jim Weeks has served as judge for the annual competition, but he recused himself from deliberating the merits of Jandler's nomination since she's an alumna.)

Adrienne Cregar Jandler attributes much of her commitment to ethical business practices to her upbringing.

"My parents have always encouraged me to do my best in all things and to treat people fairly and with respect," she said. "One of the strongest points my parents instilled in me is that happiness cannot be bought at any price."

Riches can be lost as quickly as they're made, she notes, but someone's good name (or bad name) stays with him or her a lifetime.

When Jandler began her Web site development company Atlantic Webworks in 1997, businesses were just beginning to look to the Internet as a tool for growth. As use of the Internet grew, the number of firms developing Web sites increased exponentially.

"Clients simply had to trust that the Web developer was honest and leading them in the right direction," she recalls. "While that was certainly our approach, this was not always true in the marketplace."

As she reflected on the state of the industry and continued to add employees to her team, Jandler remembered a lesson learned while a student at UNCG.

"I remember taking the Legal Environment of Business class and reading about companies who had started with strong ethical standards, but whose growth outpaced the company's training. The common element seemed to be that ethical standards were communicated verbally, but not documented." *continued on back*