



**September 2006**

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of the W.T. Beebe newsletter, written by the students of the W.T. Beebe Institute of Personnel and Employment Relations in the Department of Managerial Sciences at Georgia State University. Along with providing information on Beebe events, it provides interesting reading for HR professionals and students alike.

## Executive Spotlight



The third executive interviewed in our series is **Ms. Beth Johnston**, Senior Vice President, Human Resources at Delta Air Lines. Ms. Johnston received her Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Georgia and later completed her MBA at Georgia State University with a concentration in Industrial Relations. Ms. Johnston's career at Delta began as a flight attendant and has progressed through the company in several leadership roles in the areas of Information Technology, Flight Operations, Corporate Services, Finance and Corporate Planning. In 1999, Ms. Johnston began to lead the Human Resources function in Airport Customer Service, Technical Operations, and Marketing. Recently Ms. Johnston warmly accepted the opportunity to share with the Beebe Institute some of her insights and experiences that helped develop and sustain her career in Human Resource Management. The interview was conducted by Jabari Clark, a graduate student at Georgia State.

Delta has experienced rather tumultuous times amidst talks of strikes by its pilots and vast restructuring within the company. It has only been through the strong leadership and visionary management of leaders such as Ms. Johnston that Delta continues to remain competitive today.

Could you tell me about your transition from being a flight attendant to entering the corporate environment? What were some of your major challenges and tougher personal decisions you made?

Growing up in GA, I always wanted to be a flight attendant and travel extensively. But I also knew that I wanted to pursue a business career. Fortunately, Delta provided me those opportunities to learn and to grow. There were never any major challenges. I would apply for jobs that were located on the bid sheet. One of the attributes that set me apart from my peers is that I was very results focused, open to opportunities but really did nothing special. I assumed that I could contribute, so I did.

How often do you read magazines, articles, and books dealing with new developments within Human Resources? Are there any that you highly recommend?

I love to read; I love to learn. There is always great insight to be gained from books. I generally don't have enough time to read as I'd like. Some magazines that I scan are HRO Today, HR Magazine, and HR Executive. As far as books, I recommend "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team", David Ulrich's "Human Resource Champions", and Marcus Buckingham's "The One Thing You Need to Know: ... About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success."

Could you tell me about your role in the establishment of the Airport Customer Service Employee Forum? How were your expectations met concerning the forum?

The Airport Customer Service Employee Forum was a very interesting experience. The goal was to increase communication throughout the organization. The end result would be that the leaders would not make an operational change on how to do something without the input of the experts – the front line employees. It's the employees' capability to improve how to get work done. It was a group of twelve people at all levels of the organization. It was an opportunity for employees and managers to have an environment where they could openly discuss change.

Given Delta's current state, how was your planning and budgeting proposal received by both corporate and non-corporate employees?

I delivered a budget plan that would add value to us as a company. Making that change, which occurred back in 1995, was my introduction to change management. I went through the process of identifying the need for change, understanding how to influence people when you don't have direct power or control, and how to yield power across the firm. I also developed a strong mentor relationship through which I learned how to understand my audience and adapt my medium so that my message could be heard as opposed to repeatedly saying something again. Sometimes, that means having another person be the speaking voice.

Of course few employees desire to lose their positions. Given our individualistic culture to hold on to what is "ours", do you find many employees proactively operate with a teamwork mentality?

The environment is created by the leaders. It takes work to create a team. Many people have uncertainty (which can be a cancer to an organization) and become paralyzed by uncertainty. It's the leader's responsibility to see opportunities for building a team. Delta is very fortunate to have leaders and frontline employees who are dedicated to working as a team.

What negotiating techniques are employed when it seems as though two parties are at an impasse?

It's a matter of perspective and active listening is the foundation. It is often that the parties are in agreement but can't truly hear each other so they feel that they disagree, or they may "agree" with each other but don't realize that they actually do not agree. HR Professionals can offer the unique perspective by reestablishing the linkage between people.

With the continued restructuring, could you expound on the vision of the "velvet rope tour"? This is an ongoing series of two-day sessions to boost morale and explain Delta's restructuring plans.

This is part of Delta's business and cultural transformation that we are going through. We began with an investment for approximately 11,500 flight attendants. In our business transformation, we are resetting our network and entering new international markets. Our network is a solid platform. We are focusing on quality: Safe, Clean and On Time. We are delivering a clear vision to our Delta people. This is also an opportunity for our employees to meet our senior leaders and connect with them on a personal basis; everyone is more likely to trust someone they know.

You were recently on a diversity panel with other Fortune 500 Human Resource executives to discuss areas within Human Resources in your respective industries. Would you mind sharing something you may have learned from a panel member, someone in the audience, or the entire event itself?

At those panels, there was a lot to learn and a lot of commonality. There is a business value to diversity. The foundation for that is creating a work environment where people are open to ideas. It's the ability to hear different perspectives that adds the value.

It is often said that getting into Human Resources is a difficult task. Aside from simply getting a degree in HR, what is one key suggestion you would give to someone who is interested in making a career change from an unrelated field?

It's an interesting career. The more you can broaden your base early in your career the better. One of the best ways to expand yourself is being open to opportunities and to deliver results. My passion is having Human Resources theories come alive and practiced in business strategies. The magic happens when you're able to implement them and make them a reality. Taking the theoretical and applying it in a meaningful way so that the business gets results is the successful measure for any HR team.

Finally, with the expansion of the global economy and as companies continue to closely monitor their costs, what are some changes you would like to see happen within Human Resource Management – not just within Delta but as HRM affects the world?

HRM's connection with business management is vital to enable change in various organizations that deliver greatness to the business. It's one of the best opportunities to have so that one is not "siloed" but that you are delivering to the organization in a way that enables business success.

The reality of the world is that change is constant. HR has an important role to play in enabling change with the business they serve. As HR leaders, we must continue to focus on how we can take the best ideas from our profession and use those ideas in enabling business results. It's not the theory that matters; it's the results that matter.



## FOCUS ON FACULTY AND STUDENTS

In this section of the newsletter we recognize accomplishments made by both students and alumni.

### Recent Beebe Graduates

We want to congratulate our recent Beebe summer graduates for successfully completing their master's degrees. The graduates are Alicia Zellweger, Renise Francis, Lisa Johnson and Purva Shah.

"It is with mixed emotions we bid farewell to Renise Francis, Beebe graduate student. Renise has been the editor of the Beebe newsletter for the past two years and is largely responsible for the quality. We are sorry to see Renise leave the graduate program but congratulate her on her accomplishments (winner of the NAAHR scholarship) and wish her well!"

***Congratulations graduates!***

### Academy of Management Activities

The Academy of Management met in Atlanta this summer and several Beebe faculty members participated. The Academy is the premier association of management scholars, practitioners, and students with about 20,000 members worldwide. The annual meeting was held in Atlanta August 11<sup>th</sup> through August 16<sup>th</sup>.

Professor Kay Bunch was involved in several activities at the conference this year. Her involvement ranged from being a presenter to an awards committee member.

1. Presenter, Gender and Diversity in Organizations Division, Paper Title: "Female Stigma and the Marginalization of Human Resource Management"
2. Discussant, Organizational Behavior Division, Session Title: Member-Team Relationships
3. Session Chair, Human Resources Division, Session Title: HRM Practices and Organizational Outcomes: Alternative Mechanisms
4. Member: HR Student Paper Awards Committee
5. Reviewed six papers for three divisions: Human Resources, Organizational Behavior, Gender and Diversity in Organizations

Professor Deborah Butler conducted a Professional Development Workshop in the pre-conference in the Entrepreneurship division. The workshop used a panel of experts who focused on how to address exit strategies in business ventures.

Also, Professor Lucy McClurg was on the Local Arrangements Committee and wrote many of the promotional materials for the conference as well as assisted in planning hotel usage, program details, and volunteer coordination.

### Beebe Faculty Member Featured in Dow Jones Article Contributions

**Dr. Ben Tepper**, Beebe faculty member, was featured in a July 18 [Dow Jones Business News](#) article about his research concerning bad bosses. For several years Dr. Tepper has been studying the frequency and severity of bullying of subordinates by their supervisors. According to Dr. Tepper's findings, between 10% and 16% of workers say they experience regular bullying by their bosses, while 50% say they have experienced an abusive boss at some time in their working careers. Dr. Tepper is expanding his research on this topic.

## FOCUS ON RESEARCH

This research summary on emotional intelligence and its role in team performance was written by Renise Francis.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Team Performance**

Emotional (EI) is an awareness of and the ability to manage emotions and create motivation.<sup>i</sup> It can also be described as an ability, capacity or skill to perceive, assess and manage the emotions of one's self others and groups.<sup>ii</sup> Mayer and Salovey define EI as the "ability to perceive, appraise and express emotion; to access and/or generate feeling when they facilitate thought; to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth".<sup>iii</sup>

In this research paper, Feyherm and Rice<sup>iv</sup> investigated the relationship between a team's EI, the team leader's EI and the resulting team performance. Their premise was based on increasing the team leader's and team member's EI to see the effect on team performance. This was done with twelve customer service teams and used Salovey and Mayer's<sup>v</sup> concept of EI. These concepts are understanding emotion, managing emotion and identifying emotion.

Of the three only understanding emotion and managing emotion had a positive correlation to team performance. Within those they only correlated with customer service and no correlation at all to productivity or continuous improvement performance measures. They also found that there is a negative relationship between team leader EI and team performance as rated by managers. The explanation for the ranking by managers of team leaders is that team leaders with higher EI scores tend to spend more time on relationships with team members than the work requires, thereby causing less productivity and team performance.

This result is in line with Katzenbach and Smith<sup>vi</sup> who proposed that the most important determinant of team performance is not the team leader but having a performance challenge that is clear and compelling to all team members. An extension to their proposition is that teams with higher EI scores tend to be rated higher by managers for team performance.

This research suggests that in addition to all other team performance findings, EI can be an important element in overall performance and productivity. It is another factor that should be considered when selecting teams and team leaders. A decision needs to be made between the level of team performance desired and the right level of EI for both the team members and the team leader.

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<sup>i</sup> Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=emotional+intelligence>. Access Monday, 28 August, 2006.

<sup>ii</sup> Wikipedia.com, Emotional Intelligence, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional\\_intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_intelligence). Accessed Monday, 28 August, 2006.

<sup>iii</sup> Mayer, J. & Salovey, P (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds), Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Implications for educators. New York: Basic, pp. 3-31.

<sup>iv</sup> Feyherm, A. E. & Rice, C. L. (2002) Emotional Intelligence and Team Performance: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. International Journal of Organizational Analysis, Vol. 10, no. 4, pp343-362.

<sup>v</sup> Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. Imagination, Cognition and Personality, Vol. 9, ppg 185-211.

<sup>vi</sup> Katzenbach, J. & Smith, D. (1993) The wisdom of teams. New York: HarperCollins.

## **WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Current and previous editions of the Beebe Newsletter are available online at [www.robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/newsletter](http://www.robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/newsletter). If you have any comments, suggestions, submissions, or for more information about our programs, please email the Faculty Advisor at [mgtlnm@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:mgtlnm@langate.gsu.edu), visit the Beebe Institute website at [robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/index.html](http://robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/index.html), or write to:

W. T. Beebe Institute of Personnel and Employment Relations  
Robinson College of Business  
Georgia State University  
35 Broad Street (10<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
MSC 4A-1049  
Atlanta, GA 30303

To add or remove yourself from our mailing list, please reply to [beebenewsletter@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:beebenewsletter@langate.gsu.edu).