**14054, Linda Sisson**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to speak to you today on the subject of Career Planning, Development and Advancement in a Corporate Setting.” I believe I’ve had an exciting journey in my career and I’ve thrilled to share my experiences with you.

One of the biggest advantages that I experienced was to **“Take advantage of being geographically mobile”**. When you limit yourself to only one part of the country you limit your career development as well as your advancement. I originally lived in San Diego and got my first Sales Representative position in San Francisco with Searle. While there I worked on my MBA at SFSU. Then I was selected by my District Sales Manager to go to District Sales Manager Assessment and subsequently I was promoted.

With that promotion I moved to Chicago and became a National Sales Trainer. During that time I was promoted into Marketing and worked on Celebrex, which was a collaboration with Pfizer. While there I completed my MBA at DePaul. After I earned my MBA I made a Company change for a promotion in Marketing and moved back to San Diego working for Women First Healthcare. In that position I worked on several products that were collaborations with Ortho McNeil and with Feirring.

I made another company change in Marketing and moved to Novartis. I took a temporary title reduction which offered a pay increase, working on Zelnorm (a product which was high profile and meant to be a blockbuster). This was originally a partnership with BMS. I considered doing an I.A. in Basel, but that opportunity fell through as the drug that I was working on didn’t get approved. It was a chance worth taking but one that didn’t work out. Those things happen if you are truly developing your career. Chances not taken are opportunities lost. I still learned a lot in that position.

In the Marketing position that I took at Novartis, I later regretted having taking the demotion in title to come to Novartis. It took me a couple of years to get back to the level that I had been at previous to joining Novartis. While there I experienced some personality conflicts that hindered my career growth. That can happen when you are on a career path for growth. The important thing is to learn how to handle, or not handle such situations and move on. I received some advice from a colleague that I should leave the company but opted instead to move to another group within the company.

That turned out to be a good career move. I earned a promotion in Marketing /Commercial from Associate Director to Director in New Products and worked on collaboration with Sankyo and Sam Amer. Although it was a lateral move, it broadened my functional knowledge as well as my network within Novartis. While in that role, I was identified as someone who had good skill sets for a different roll in another department, that of Project Leader in Development. I started as a Project Leader in Ophthalmology. I loved the job but not the boss. I knew that the job was more important so I learned to work it out with that boss until there was a re-organization in 2008.

I was selected immediately by a GPH in Resp to work at GPTD for him, but then the Franchise decided to have me work on TOBI/TIP as it was further in development and no GPH was assigned yet. In that position I picked up more responsibility helping on Xolair because it was doing several more submissions and that GPTD had too much on his plate. When the Xolair GPTD left to go to Sandoz they asked me to take over Xolair as I had already established relationships with Genentech. Soon after I was promoted to Executive GPTD then I submitted and launched a new indication. Eventually I secured a new position at Executive GPTD working on FCRx in partnership with Regenerex, based to some degree on my experience with collaborations in the past. This project ended up moving to newly formed Cell and Gene Therapy Unit. I also became responsible for HSC835.

Each geographic move I made added another level of expertise to my experience and skills. It also showed management that I was flexible to work with and committed to the company goals. Each position was a learning experience both for the position and for learning to work with a variety of different personalities. Each of us will come across personalities that we find difficult to work with. Each of us will have to learn how to work with those personalities and whether to stick with the position or to move on when friction arises. Most of the time the experience and the position will offer opportunities that will make it work the time and effort.

Since we will always have to work with people another important thing to do in planning your career path is to **make sure to have a good network and work the network**. Developing a network has many benefits. The biggest one is in helping you to move into better positions. Sometimes it is just as important who you know as what you know. Networking is not a new career skill. But it is one that must be developed just like all your other skills. By developing a good network you will add several things to your career path. One you will learn about the variety of positions available from which you can choose rather than just looking at job boards. You can also get to know people in those various paths to learn how they moved into that position and the requirements for that work. A third benefit for networking is to see the whole picture, to know where each path leads and the benefits and challenges of each path. Lastly, if you find yourself in a position negatives outweigh the positives your network can help you move to a more positive position, hopefully without burning any bridges behind you.

One last piece of advice I’d like to offer is to **make sure that you really master your position when you are new at a position, before you spread yourself too thin working on special projects or volunteering.** If you begin volunteering too soon you will only exhaust yourself and ruin your efforts. First, perfect your skills in your new position and develop a good working relationship with your direct co-workers. Then you will learn the personality dynamics of that position and department.

**Once you have really mastered a role and have the time capacity, network effectively, so that you get benefit out of what you do.** The benefits you reap will be many. You will meet people that you wouldn’t have otherwise met. One example is that I volunteered for Executive Women’s Outreach subcommittee of the HBA. At that time, my title wasn’t high enough to be a member, so I volunteered for the group so I still had the opportunity to interact with the speakers, panel members etc, who were senior executives in the industry. Those interactions have proved invaluable as I have moved upward in my career. Next you will learn skills that are different from those that you learn in your day to day job. I was already working in Development, but I volunteered for the Marketing subcommittee of HBA, to keep myself in the Marketing loop and keep up with new trends in social media. I also volunteer on several Novartis Employee Resource Groups. This allows for interaction with people that I didn’t meet through my regular job.

In addition to things you can do on the job **I created and maintain an updated presence on the professional social media website Linked In.**  With this I keep in touch with people, congratulate them on anniversaries or job changes and major career moves. It also keeps me in touch with new career paths that may come available that interest me as well as learn about career paths that may be coming to an end. Staying in touch this way is a simple, friendly and professional way to keep track of colleagues, businesses and business trends as I actively plan and maintain my career path.

Your career is one of the most important aspects of your life and it requires each step of planning, development and advancement. When you are young you plan what you want your career to be, the field you wish to work in and the place you want to fulfill in that field. From day one you must actively plan the development of that career from your education to the ladder you will climb and the path you will follow. You will also decide how you wish to advance and what methods you will enlist to accomplish that advancement.

Along the way you may, and probably will, decide to make changes to that career path as you learn the details of the work you will do and what that work requires of you as an individual and what it will require of your family. Some of the sacrifices you will find completely worth the effort while others you may decide are more than you desire to give. That is completely your choice and there is no right or wrong as long as you are satisfied with your progress. No two people will make the same choices when faced with the same questions.

Regardless of the choices you make the career paths you choose, your network will prove invaluable to you, just as you can prove invaluable to those whose network you belong. Don’t ever think that your network is only for your benefit alone. Always remember that you can help others as much as they can help you. That will develop your network even more, knowing that people who network together help each other. You may begin as an inexperienced new hire but one day you will be the person in authority or the person with many years of experience and you can then pass along that experience and wisdom to others, whether they are new to the workforce or simply new to your department or your company.

Finally, remember, having each of these tools in your career path toolbox will help you as you move upward and onward in your career. Being geographically mobile can provide you with experience and opportunities you’d never find close to home. Building and developing a good network will help you at each stage of your career development for making decisions and finding the information you need for your career. Make sure you master the position you are in before you try to expand your experience and horizons. Once you have then take advantage of volunteer opportunities so you can expand your network and learn skills outside your normal job. They will prove invaluable as you move along on your career path. And, last but not least, create and maintain a professional presence on LinkedIn so you can stay in touch with your network and meet new people for your network.

All of these things helped me build my career path and guide me on my career journey. I believe these steps will help each of you as well. I encourage you to take these steps and add to them as you move along in your career path. I also encourage you to reach out and help others as they move along on their career path. For in helping others you will also help yourself to add yet another layer to your career path and skills.

Thank you,