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The ABC's of Work & Life

P is for People



Katie Mehnert finds plenty to say about P.

This week, we tackle P. Last year, I had the honour of being the keynote speaker for the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). I'm usually in a room filled with male engineers, so seeing a sea of female engineers was awesome (Yes, ladies. We are moving the needle!).

And you see, I'm not an engineer. I'm the daughter of a talented one, though. Although I'd like to think I've become a people engineer, instead. But my dad has been a real engineer for almost 50 years. He turned 70 last year and is *still* working because he loves what he does, and because baby boomers just don't know when to quit.

We actually spoke about this topic during my SWE keynote. My talk was titled "**Knowing When to Stick and Knowing When to Quit**".

My career and life has been a marathon with a series of sprints, tough miles, and a wall (or two).

I gave the audience a little bit of background on the early days. I was

young, naive, and full of energy. I explained the disappointment of losing my first job out of college and the series of boxes that followed: four layoffs and my "Donald Trump" moment.

Yes, I got F-I-R-E-D! Have you ever been fired? It was a little humiliating for me, but I look back now and am thankful for the experience. I spent the first eight years trying to figure it out, all the while trying to figure myself out, too. From dot-coms and Enron to Shell and BP, I've worked for many companies. I've dealt with several leaders in turn-around, crisis management and global transformation situations.

I didn't know it then, but I was finding my stride.

The very things I endured are the experiences that have shaped me into the leader and marathon runner I am today.

So how do I know when to stick, quit, or try something new and unknown? I

broke it down into a model that I now use for most of my decision-making.

• People

Whom are you spending your time with? Who are you learning from? It's one thing for people to have a different style from yours. I wholeheartedly embrace such differences in my supervisors and employees. It's a completely different thing when you have mismatched values though. If I'm going to spend 12- to 16-hour days with anyone outside of my family, I better like you, you better like me, and we need to have an appreciation for what we both bring to the work we do. So my advice is to be terribly picky with who you choose to put in the village.

• Purpose

Is this opportunity putting you on the path to where you want to go? For me, meaning is important. I don't need to take a J-O-B. While I'm hanging out with good co-workers, we better be kicking tail, taking names, changing the world,

and doing fun things. If I don't see the purpose, I pass on the opportunity, and sometimes I punt completely.

• Prize

When we are young, we are taught to follow the money and to put stock in having stuff. For your information, money and titles mean nothing to me. One of my mentors says it best. "Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me," Steve Jobs said. "Going to bed at night saying we've done something wonderful... that's what matters to me." When people chase the prize, it's usually a sign of some deeper unresolved issues. I chase the prize for the chance to work with amazing people and learn from them.

Let. It. Go. People and Purpose are the Prize.

I have to hand it to them. That smart Dad and Mom of mine sure taught me right. Maybe I should have gone into engineering or medicine?

Nah. I'm doing just what I am supposed to be doing. I love my work and the people I've put in my world.

Thanks for being a part of that world. Very soon, we'll be talking about another favourite P of mine: Pink Petro and its global debut to the world. Stay tuned.

Katie Mehnert is a global talent development and change executive with 17 years of helping people and companies get curious, connect, share, grow and perform better. She has recently been appointed CEO of Pink Petro; www.pinkpetro.com, a platform to connect women and men in the energy industry and advance females in her industry. Prior to her latest venture, Katie was a Director with BP, joining after the Deepwater Horizon incident and worked in various leadership roles worldwide with Shell. She's a dynamic speaker and author having been featured in LinkedIn, CEO.com, Business Insider, and Yahoo. As a work-in-progress marathon runner, wife and working mom, you can follow her musings on balancing it all on her blog at www.katiemehnert.com, or email her at katie@katiemehnert.com

