

Sonya McNair

Vice President Entertainment Publicity
FOX Broadcasting Network

At the time of this interview, Sonya served as Vice President of Entertainment Publicity and Corporate Communications for Fox Broadcasting Network. Ms. McNair oversees strategies for the network including public relations and media relations strategies as well as help the PR efforts on the East Coast on behalf of the network.

p r o f e s s i o n a l

How did you get involved in the career you are in?

Well, actually that is interesting as well. I did not start off in the media relations' environment. I actually started off working in news at ABC News and I worked there on the production side of things and worked producing, helping; I worked in the production area, editorial side of things. I worked on various programs such as "This Week With David Brinkley" and "Nightline". I have worked as a remote producer for those various shows. When the opportunity became available in the PR department someone approached me. During those times we did not have PR people travel with the programs. When I was on the remotes I would handle a lot of the PR efforts while I was doing the production side of things. As a result of that I gained the confidence of the press - they got to know me and I got to know them - and it seemed to be a seamless transition when the PR department had an opening. I moved over into the PR department. Throughout my career I worked on both sides of it because I continued to work as a PR specialist, but I also continued giving my editorial efforts and making editorial comments throughout the process as well. That helped me to gain, to be able to see both sides of the coin if you will. Then I could watch, I could talk to the executives or the anchors that we were dealing with, I could speak with them about issues and they would know that I understood their side of it as well as what the press side of it would be. All of that has helped me a great deal. In terms of my personal/family background my mother worked for the department of defense for most of her career. We were always very disciplined and in everything we did we had to make sure that we were able to finish what we started. We were able to maintain a discipline about whatever we were working on or had to accomplish. That made me very careful and diligent in taking on projects and seeing them through to the end.

What character qualities do you think are most important in business? In a person?

You have to have integrity, it is important to have integrity. It is important to have confidence in your abilities and others to have confidence in your understanding of issues. It is very important that you have people who respect you, who will listen and appreciate the way you position strategies.

How has your personal background contributed to your professional success?

I have always had an innate sense, I have always had an interest in how people perceive information and receive information that they are given. I am intrigued by the advertising areas of television because it is so important that the first few seconds of any advertisement or any promotional effort by any company frankly, basically sells the product or the entity. I have always had a personal interest in watching how those two marry - the efforts to sell and the way the information has been received. Why is it received this way? Why people like this or why people don't like that, I have always found that to be very interesting. I think as a result of that curiosity, interest etc. it has enhanced my personal efforts or professional effort to do my job.

p e r s o n a l

How do you define success? How has your definition evolved?

Success is having the peace that passes all understanding at the end of each day. In everything that you have set out to do, everything you wanted to accomplish, everything you accomplish, whatever

you did not accomplish, you have that peace that passes all understanding. If your inner self, your heart, mind, and spirit is at peace with what you did do, whatever your effort, whatever endeavor you set out to do, I believe you have to be comfortable with the effort you made as opposed to not just the result because there are so many factors that play a role in the outcome. I think that you need to be very comfortable in that peace with the effort you made. Successfully build strategies that reflect the companies or their entities position; successfully being able to communicate the personalities of clients and companies, the strategies themselves as well; also being able to effectively get the message out and to reach people on all levels not just in the industry but outside of the industry (people who are not even interested in the industry but understand it enough to appreciate the message). Television is a very - it is so broad - everyone knows about it, there are so many networks, there are so many there are so many cable station, there are so many reasons to watch other people. When you are able to get people to pay attention to your entity and your network, your show, whatever you are presenting to them at this time. That is success.

What does balance mean to you? How important is balance to success?

Balance is having your family, your home, and your work all in order without conflict. That there is enough time - an adequate amount of time - that you have spent at work, an adequate amount of time that you are comfortable and happy at home. More importantly is the personal time you have to take care of your own needs and meet your own personal needs. That is balance to me - is making sure that all of those areas are in order - that would represent balance.

s p i r i t u a l

How does your faith help you in your professional life?

In previous years I might have had a harshness of heart toward situations or people who disappointed or who proved not to live up to their expectations or even my expectations. Such as there are times when people will say enter a position, accept a position, not be qualified, and do things that are inappropriate. I feel that my approach to handling the situation is much more fair, more compassionate, more engaging in other things that may have contributed to the circumstance. I would be more apt to consider them now than before I might have just seen it from one perspective, only from my perspective rather than looking at the broader picture. I believe that my faith and my walk has shown me that God gives us such grace and understanding that if we apply it to one another we will help each other grow in every way. That is how I do. I am able to see where someone may need help in a certain area, I am able to help them grow professionally as I step back and look at the broader picture and not just that one aspect. My faith has also helped me in my own personal issues with people who I report to, I don't want to say who I report to, but people who I work with on my own level, not just people who I have to supervise...my peers. I have been, in the past when you have different issues to come up and your having to deal with certain issues I have, they have bubbled up. I have since learned that as I apply the grace that is given to me to others around me, I don't react to things that hurt my feelings or things that may not be in my best, people who do things that may not be in my best interest. I don't have the same reaction to it. I can forgive and I can help them see better using a softer tongue and applying warmth as opposed to continuing the conflict by apply the same temperament that they may have applied to me. That has really been a profound difference, made a profound difference in my work environment. It has [also] made a world of difference in that any situation that arises I first, as I mentioned earlier, I pray. I am able to pray for so many people around me whether or not they know it is irrelevant. I have watched God change so many lives around me through prayer and I have been able to approach problems very differently since I have had Christ in my life.

How has God /faith changed your perspective on fulfillment, significance and success

I am far more happier now as long as my heart is in the right place. I don't look to, I am not affirmed, I realize that I am not affirmed by any man, that I am affirmed by God. That has helped me to understand that all of the tangible things around me, all the things that I can see and touch, all the things that I am exposed to here have no significance when I think about what His need is or what I will ultimately gain by being in His will, in God's will. So I don't put the same significance on my



everyday dealings as I did before. I truly know the source of my strength; the source of everything that I am is through God. I honor God by being the best me I can be obviously but also by honoring Him. As long as I do that I am fulfilled. So if there is something I fall short, we all fall short, I don't take it as personal as I might have before because I understand it better.

What advice would you give other professionals as they contemplate the relevance of God to their lives?

I would suggest that or encourage them to ask God to reveal to them and to pray and ask God to reveal to them how they can be used by Him in their current work environment. I learned how, there are often times we look to change things and think, "well if I were in a different way or did something else I wouldn't have to deal with this conflict". But if you ask God to show you how you can be used by Him wherever you are then you will begin to appreciate even the struggles because you know that you are helping someone around you as opposed to looking at it from the pain that you are experiencing. I would encourage that because it has helped me tremendously, as I have to deal with moments of challenge. I always ask 'what did you want me to learn from this Father and how can I be of use to You in this situation'. He always answers our prayers and always guides me to be able to be a light in the midst of darkness.