



**Arlene Santangelo**  
President, Strategic Acquisitions Division  
Atwood Richards, Inc.

Arlene Santangelo has been a leader in the industry for over 30 years. Formerly the Vice President at Atwoods, Arlene soon rose to President of Strategic Acquisitions Division where she has been productive in leading the company to continued success for the past 5 years. Arlene has held many senior management positions during her career including President of Consult Limited. She is involved in community service specifically mentoring programs where she offers guidance to young leaders by sharing her knowledge and values. Outside of work, Arlene enjoys a variety of sports along with photography and opera.

professional

### **What character qualities do you look for when hiring?**

If someone doesn't know about something, that's okay. There are a lot of areas that I've gotten involved in over my last 20 years in sales, where I never knew anything. I bought 14 hundred Jaguars from the Ford organization. I've purchased lots of things from General Electric. I did merger and acquisition types of transactions and I never knew about all of that. But I had a passion to learn. I worked with people that understood that and I always had the ability. I would train people with the ability to open doors, get in those doors, stay in there when the door was closed, making sure you were on the inside of the door and not leaving until the deal was signed. Even though I never had a lot of technical ability in any of those areas, I always would be with people that had the technical ability, that may not have had the skills to get in the doors as I did. And it always was a wonderful, complimentary relationship. So I look for people that have the passion for life, the joie de vie and also people that appreciated the team effort. Because that's really when you can thrive and grow, to work in a team and meld your talents and understand what gives you anxiety may not give someone else that anxiety and you work together for both of your best interests to succeed.

### **What makes a great leader?**

I've learned that people in the business world and the social world appreciate integrity. That's really all you have at the end of the day. It's what the guy upstairs ... and I think the guy upstairs is a guy ... it's what the guy upstairs tells you, to live with passion, to live with integrity. I don't shave in the morning by looking in the mirror, but you hear the old adage about guys looking in the mirror and if you can look in the mirror the next day, then you've done the right thing. Well, I may look in the mirror and I'm not shaving but I look at the day before and what I've done that morning and what I'm going to do that day to make sure that I'm going to do the right thing. There's a story that I heard, that General Schwartzkopf told. He said that when he was about to do Desert Storm and a former commander said, "Well, okay, Norman. You're in charge now." And Norman said, "Well, wait a second. Don't go." Like, what am I supposed to do? And the other commander said, "Well, that's rule number 13." And Schwartzkopf said, "What's 13?" And he said, "Well, that's easy. 13 is when in command, take charge." And Schwartzkopf said, "Oh, well, what if I don't know what to do when I take charge?" And the other guy was ... he was out the door ... said, "Oh, that's rule number 14." And Schwartzkopf said, "Well, what's 14?" And he said, "Do the right thing." So when in command, take charge and do the right thing. And we all know what the right thing is. We may all be concerned about being in charge. Everyone's concerned about being in charge, but just do the right thing and you'll be fine.

### **What are the 2-3 most valuable lessons you learned in your career?**

This is a very simple principle. Don't be afraid of looking stupid. I've never been afraid of looking stupid, at the risk of looking stupid. I've taken a lot of risks and I was fortunate in that the organization that I was with had the foresight to allow me to take many risks and encourage me. And it's what I consider the 80/20 rule. You need to spend 100 percent of your time looking at various aspects of success and doing things, but you need to concentrate 20 percent of your time on the problem and 80 percent of your time on the solution or the challenges. Just throwing lots of things up there and



hoping and seeing what sticks. Now, there's a lot more to crafting a business plan that goes behind that. I'm sharing this with you from a sales perspective. Because in sales you need to try lots of different things because you don't know what's going to work. It depends upon the economy. I've worked in many cyclical economies and success depends upon what is needed out there in the market place. So in essence, if you're 24 or 44 or 84, you need to hear and listen to what your audience wants. That could go in a sales arena, it could go in a financial arena, doing merger and acquisition work, which is some of the things I've done more recently. It all depends upon the economy.

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

I'm a senior sales professional and basically worked my way up. I started with an organization 20 years ago as a very junior sales professional. Not really knowing what my talent was, but I worked with a gentleman that felt that I had some star qualities and he helped me develop those. So for the last 20 years, I've worked with the same organization, which actually just closed about three months ago. So now I have to absorb many of the dividends that I learned and earned over the last two decades, out in the business world. That has absolutely been a challenge. My most recent position at the company was President of one of their largest divisions, which is considered to be the strategic sales division. There I purchase fleets of cars, aircrafts, a Gulf Stream aircraft, and PT boat without the guns. I was on it and went 35 knots around the Gulf of Mexico, testing out the motors and all. Great fun. That took me a long time to remarket, which was part of the business, too. My mainstay was purchasing large assets at multi-million dollar levels and then remarketing them to other countries and companies around the world.

p e r s o n a l

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

Success is certainly way beyond money. I must say that it's easy to say that when you've made the money. It's not as easy to say that when you haven't yet attained that level of success. So I speak from experience in saying that success is having fun and enjoying what you're doing. But also in working with Priority and many of the people that I know there over the years, it's been giving back to the community, and sharing some of the lessons that I've learned. I've had wonderful friends. I had dinner with one of the gentleman that I met 12 years ago who introduced to an organization that really renewed my faith in human kind and many other aspects of life.

### **How do you prioritize your time/values? What are your priorities?**

Time management is extremely important. I touch a piece of paper just once. If I don't do something with it, it will get thrown away or I decide what I'm going to do with that. It's a little easier when you have a staff of people. If you have to do it yourself, you can still do the same thing. You need to either put it in a folder and then you know you need to do something in that folder. I've listened to Tony Robbins, a motivational speaker. I've gone to some courses, any motivational or time management course that I could take, I've taken. I probably could teach a bit at this point, although I'd rather use the practices. I don't procrastinate. I know that making a bad decision is better than making no decision. So I've made some bad decisions, but that's okay because my feeling also is that having a lust for life and a passion for living, I could make a bad decision work. And lots of people when they have great decisions, but don't put the time and effort into them, they're not going to work. So it's a matter of what you put your time into and what you feel is the right thing to do when you're in charge and you take command.