

Profile of a Leader Report

By Mr. Lynn Pearcey

Leader Profiled: Rose Short of the IBM Corporation

Overview

I conducted my study over the course of 6 weeks beginning on April 2 and culminating on May 7. I selected Ms. Rose Short, IT Architect and e-business Consultant for the IBM Corporation. She is a person whom I admire for her leadership style, optimism, and professionalism. Her positive attitude is contagious and she is known throughout the company as a problem solver with excellent people and leadership skills that have proven to be of great value as she has served as the coordinator for several large scale projects over the course of her tenure at IBM.

So impressed was I with her that I approached her and asked that she become my mentor, acting as a confidant on professional as well as personal matters. Over the course of our relationship she has offered helpful insights and shared some of her personal experiences as they relate to being a leader in corporate America. Our time spent together has truly been a blessing as I have been able to observe all of the different qualities that have allowed Ms. Short to ascend to the top of her profession.

Introduction

IBM is the world's largest manufacturer of software and hardware and recognized the world over as one of the premiere organizations to work for. Undisputed technology leadership is a bold claim but it is one that the IBM Corporation can back up. Innovative data storage mechanisms, the ability to meet and beat their closest competition as well as the willingness to adapt and change with the needs of their customers has allowed the company affectionately referred to as "Big Blue" to continue to flourish while others flounder.

IBM strives to be the leader in the creation, development and manufacture of the information technology industry's most advanced innovations. Computer systems, software, networking systems, storage devices and microelectronics are all areas that IBM has established a market presence in. As the internet becomes more and more a part of our lives, it should come as no surprise that IBM has taken the lead in new internet technologies that have made conducting business much more efficient than in years past.

The whole e-business/e-commerce explosion has replaced the way many of us conduct both our personal and professional business. No longer are we forced to fly across the world to close a business deal. That can be done through the magic of e-business and the internet. No longer do we have to call to place orders, spending weeks waiting for confirmation that our order has been received and shipped. The internet has allowed us to start and finish these types of transactions within a matter of minutes. E-business and the internet. Both here to stay. Both powered by IBM.

Introducing....Ms. Rose Short

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Rose Short is a very dynamic leader with an infectious attitude and charming demeanor that comes through the first time you meet her. No problem is too large or small for her. Ms. Short takes pride in the fact that she empowers her men and women, giving them the opportunity to employ their creativity when dealing with customers while at the same time, always being present to mentor and guide an employee through any difficult situation that may arise.

Ms. Short received her formal education at the City College of New York located in Harlem, New York. She has been employed at IBM for 12 years and in that time she has held a number of different positions throughout IBM before being promoted to her current position as an IT Architect and e-business Consultant. Acting as team leader on such accounts as AT&T, The Ohio State University, Texas Instruments and a host of other highly visible and critical business deals has allowed Ms. Short to garner respect and admiration throughout the organization.

Findings and Observations

I met Ms. Short for the first time in November of 1999. She was introduced to a group of new hires at an African-American in IBM Diversity meeting. I was a member of that group and was intrigued by her area of expertise but also, the level of enthusiasm she displayed. It was easy to see that she really enjoyed her work. So many times a person will act as if they are really satisfied with the career path that they have chosen. But a closer look will show a miserable, dissatisfied soul with a job as opposed to a career. This was not the case with Ms. Short. Her confident demeanor, ability to articulate her feelings and her willingness to listen all attracted me to her. I was very interested in finding out whether my initial impressions were true. As time progressed and we began to speak on a more frequent basis, I was delighted to find out that they were.

Ms. Short is recognized as one of the most brilliant minds in IBM well-schooled in various technical methodologies and concepts. Many times a person with this type of skill level lacks the people skills to truly excel as a leader choosing instead to be a role player who stands in the background waiting to be called into action. This is not true of Ms. Short. She initiates the action, takes the lead and makes things happen.

Leadership Skills

Ms. Short displayed exceptional leadership skills with the ability to communicate effectively as well as giving her subordinates the freedom needed to do their jobs effectively confirming the answers that she offered during our interview sessions. While always open and easy to talk to, Ms. Short also has a great deal of professionalism and demands the same from all of those who report to her.

Respect, attention to detail, honesty and dedication are all qualities that she expects from her subordinates. In return she offers freedom to be creative, an environment where open communication is not only encouraged but expected and the opportunity to learn from one of the most brilliant technical minds IBM has to offer.

The fact that Ms. Short is not only a leader, but an expert in information technology especially as it relates to IBM products and e-business is truly one of her strong points. This is a valuable asset for Ms. Short but especially to her subordinates as she counsels them on the many projects that each are involved in. Ms. Short has a calming effect on all around her and exudes confidence that is passed on to her employees.

Initially, my thoughts were that Ms. Short would have a lot of resistance in her department as she is a black female working in one of the world's largest corporations. With that in mind, I prepared myself for what I believed would be tales of disrespect, confrontation and outright discrimination. I was correct. Though her skills are unquestioned, Ms. Short must still prove that she is capable not only to her peers but to those who report to her. There is no doubt this is due to the fact that she is not only a woman but a black woman. Yes, she acknowledged that she has indeed felt the stings of racism and sexism but she has risen above and continues to thrive refusing to succumb to the sometimes less than favorable treatment that she is forced to endure.

Ms. Short has the all of the qualities that are traditionally associated with a leader. She is a visionary whose charisma inspires all who have the opportunity to work with and for her. She is creative and forward thinking and this fosters an environment that allows her subordinates to be that way as well. Always willing to share her skills and experiences with others in an effort to not only make IBM more successful but to ultimately impact the lives of others.

Conclusion

Ms. Short is a remarkable woman. To understand the depth of her achievements one need only glance at the society in which we live. Contrary to what some would have us believe, there are still barriers in place for women and minorities. The fact that Ms. Short is a member of both of the aforementioned groups and has continued to excel is truly exceptional.

Although I had some knowledge of Ms. Short and her skills as a consultant and information technology expert, I walked away from our meetings thoroughly impressed with her leadership skills. The respect she commands from her peers and subordinates is truly impressive. I thought I knew Ms. Short before our meetings but left with a much deeper appreciation for her as a professional but more importantly, as a person.

Many are called to manage but few are called to lead. There is no question in my mind that Ms. Short has definitely been called to lead. Armed with expertise that is surpassed only by her passion for her work, Ms. Short is an asset both to the company that employs her but also to the information technology industry as a whole.