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Author

Jolna, Karon

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FINDING A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS



A WOMAN EXECUTIVE'S SEARCH FOR FULFILLMENT

by Karon Jolna

LIZ HELLER experimented successfully with corporate life for the greater part of her career, rising from assistant at Epic Records to the executive suite of Capital Records, whose iconic disc-shaped old Hollywood offices are at the crossroads of Sunset and Vine.

But Liz Heller wanted more. As much as she appreciated the big title and perks and the opportunity to innovate new media and marketing initiatives at Capital Records, she found herself mired in the old “politics of windows.” Heller recalls less-than-fondly the day-to-day administration of the company: “So Costello is coming and he is going to be VP so he needs four windows because VP is a four-window job. This is not really interesting or meaningful.”

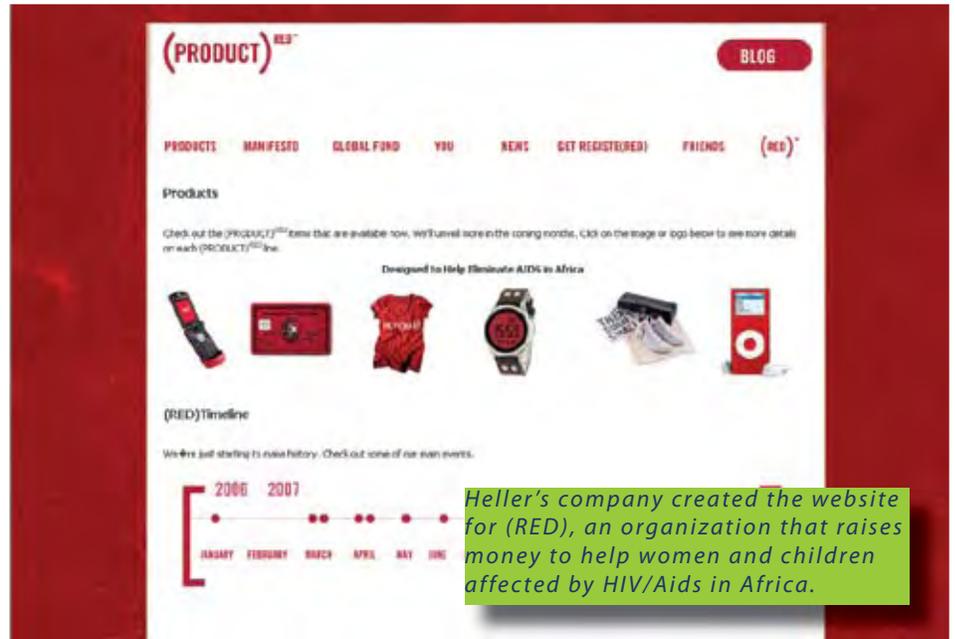
So Liz Heller left corporate America. In place of predictable, high flying corporate status came the unpredictable whirlwind of entrepreneurship... and the opportunity to make her own job, her own start-up company, her own story, her own future. The company would be called Buzztone, a pioneer of untraditional, viral, word of mouth, new media, new marketing “buzz” with its own software and services. She built a client roster that includes some of the top brands and companies in America: Coca Cola, Atlantic Records, Microsoft, AOL, Paramount Pictures, Discovery Networks, Warner Bros., Electronic Arts, and many more. But there were other clients she would reject—though they offered lots of money. And other clients she would embrace—though they may not have paid the bills as well. Clients that Liz Heller and her company could feel good about. Clients she could help because those companies were all about helping others across the planet.

Liz Heller had found a formula for success: professional accomplishment plus social responsibility equals personal fulfillment. She recently shared her “formula” at UCLA Extension’s “How Does She Do It? Top Executives Reveal Their Keys to Life and Work Success.” She is one of several accomplished women executives who are providing insight and inspiration for women students who are forging their own career path to success.

Heller began using her marketing acumen and her extensive experience in the music and film industry to focus on not just Fortune 500 firms but also “companies with a social conscious”. Liz Heller’s client roster now includes (Red), a company created to raise awareness and money for The Global Fund by teaming up with the world’s most recognizable brands to develop (Product)RED branded products. A percentage of each (Product)RED product sold is given to the Global Fund. The money helps women and children affected by HIV/Aids in Africa. Buzztone created the website for (RED) (www.joinred.com). It took off, receiving two million hits in one day when the buzz about the website landed on the front page of Google.

Buzztone also works with the Stop-GlobalWarming organization by encouraging people to join the virtual march at www.stopglobalwarming.org. Its mission is to use the strength in numbers to convince the U.S. government to join the rest of the world in addressing global warming and to persuade businesses to initiate a new “clean energy” industrial revolution that will reduce dependence on oil.

Liz Heller is an alumna of UCLA. More noteworthy is that Liz and her mother graduated the same year. Both are committed to advancing women’s and social causes. Interestingly, Liz’s mother, Billie Heller, who has been an activist for women’s rights since the beginning of the Women’s Movement, was a co-founder with poet Adrienne Rich, UCLA English Professor Karen Rowe, and other early feminist pioneers of UCLA’s own Center for the Study of Women in 1984. Billie Heller currently chairs the National Committee on The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of



Heller's company created the website for (RED), an organization that raises money to help women and children affected by HIV/Aids in Africa.

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Billie Heller notes that the CEDAW document has yet to be ratified by the United States.

Liz Heller’s activist mother was her influence and main mentor. Her father, an “old school” personal manager for artists such as Liberace, Lawrence Welk and Debbie Reynolds, was also a mentor. He loved his job and his clients, managing one act for 57 years. When he passed away five years ago, the Seymour Heller Awards were created in his honor by the Talent Managers Association. Liz Heller has made her biggest career decisions according to the personal value of loving your work.

Also shaping Liz Heller’s experience was her life and professional partner, husband and film producer John Manulis. Together they produced the feature film adaptation of Jim Carroll’s “The Basketball Diaries,” which starred Leonardo DiCaprio and Juliette Lewis in 1995.

Her extraordinary upbringing, her UCLA academic experience, her life and work partner, her many friends and mentors, and a phenomenal ca-

reer shaped this executive woman and her philosophy: Buzztone is translating the desire to do good work that is good for business into a business that does good. And that business formula is reaping fulfillment both professionally and personally.



Karon Jolna is a CSW Research Scholar. For more information about “How Does She Do It?” speakers and topics, email

karonjolna@yahoo.com or see the course webpage: www.uclaextension.edu/glassceiling