



## LEADERCAST

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### **SPEAKER Q&A: SUZY WELCH**

#### **Who has influenced you the most in your life? Why? Describe the relationship.**

Without a doubt, the person who has most influenced me the most in my life is my husband, Jack. I know that answer can surprise people; after all, I was forty years old when I met him, already quite established as a journalist and the (seemingly!) capable single mother of four children. And, indeed, there were several influential forces in my life until that point – a close friend who gave me the courage to take risks, a teacher who pushed me to push myself, and a pastor who helped me live into my faith. But Jack has superseded all previous influences on my life, and I suppose the reason is that I have never loved, trusted, or admired anyone else as much. Nor has anyone else ever believed in me with the same intensity. When you put those dynamics together – you get our relationship. Over the past decade, every single day has been a learning and growing experience as he has expanded my sense of who I am, what I can achieve, and how much joy there is in life.

#### **What has been a defining moment in your role as a leader?**

I used to be a wimpy leader! Really, I mean it. I was one of those “soft” leaders who wanted to make everyone happy, who couldn’t deliver tough messages about performance for fear of hurt feelings, and who had a hard time pushing back on bosses who were less than candid. I just wanted everyone to get along! (In my own minor defense, I was pretty good at my job in other ways.)

Over the past decade, I have come to understand that being a leader is about growing your people through a clear vision, well-defined values, honest performance appraisals, authentic encouragement, and love. Yes, love. If you love your company and your team – and I believe leaders must do that to be effective – then you know what you believe, you say what you mean, and you do what you say.

I’ve had many defining moments as a leader, but they all come down to the times I have acted on those three imperatives.

#### **What are you most passionate about?**

Most passionate? That’s a hard one. I am wildly passionate about my marriage and my family. I am deeply passionate about my faith in God. I am hyper-passionate about my work. For me, work is life. I am also passionate about a slew of personal stuff, like the music of Mary J Blige, hot yoga, running, contemporary art, and Cheez-its.

#### **How did you get to where you are today? What advice would you give to other leaders who are working towards their goals?**

Well, I worked very hard, for one thing. For many years, especially as I was growing my career, I simply did not know what a weekend was. I worked every day. I worked nights after the kids went to bed. I did it because I have always believed that hard work pays off, and because I passionately loved what I was doing (there’s that word again!)

And ultimately, I think therein lies my advice to anyone wanting to achieve their goals. First of all, accept that it won’t be easy. It will, very likely, be insanely hard. Along the way, it will all seem too much. There

will be too many balls in the air at the same time. There will be too many pressures; there will be too many jerks aligned against the good guys. There will be days when you feel as if you have done everything wrong. You will have setbacks. You will be fired. You will lose a good client or customer and the whole world will stink. And through it all, you will have to work harder than you can possibly muster for longer than you can possibly stand.

Which is why the second thing you need to do is love, adore, and honor your work. In other words, you need to find work that has true meaning to you. It doesn't make any difference if your work seems noble to the outside world. Often times the outside world doesn't understand your work. No, your work just has to seem noble to you. It has to feel as if it has a higher purpose. You don't go to work each day to work, you go to work each day to somehow (and you will know how if you are in the right job) make the world a better place, even in a small way.

**What are some ways for Chick-fil-A Leadercast attendees to apply your talk to their professional life?**

I hope my talk will help attendees gain a deeper understanding of their own authentic values and begin to make decisions in a way that enables them to live by them.