

Define success to achieve it, speaker tells health field

By RYAN GILLIS, Journal Staff Writer

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YOUNGSTOWN - Success in any pursuit depends on the pursuer's definition of success. That was the message of Dr. Carolyn A. Martin, who delivered the keynote speech at Tuesday's Mahoning Valley Regional Workforce Summit.

At the summit, health care leaders from Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull counties met to develop strategies to overcome anticipated employee shortages in the industry. The summit's theme was "The Challenge of Change: Building a Blueprint for a 21st Century Workforce," and Martin elaborated on that theme.

Martin reminded her listeners to be flexible when designing their blueprint. She related the story of her experiences building her own home and how the plans for the building were constantly changing, even as the building was under construction.

"What I realized is, when you're dealing with a blueprint, you better write it in erasable ink," she said.

With globalization and technology playing vital roles in every major industry in today's economy, Martin said our society is living through "the most profound changes in the economy since the industrial revolution." She said these changes have created the need for knowledgeable workers capable of "entrepreneurial" thinking.

Even if the Mahoning Valley could return to those industries that made the area great in the past, those industries would require different equipment and different skills of workers in order to be successful.

Martin, a master trainer and dean of faculty for Rainmaker Thinking Inc., is an expert on generational differences in the workplace and has co-authored two books with Bruce Tulgan, "Managing Generation Y" and "Managing the Generation Mix." She said today's successful companies are those which are willing to capitalize on the strengths of each generation.

There have always been generational differences, Martin said, but the difference today is that the work force is now comprised of four different generations. The older generations are retiring later in life, and "young people are thrown in with the older people at a faster, more intense pace," she said.

The result is conflict. Older established ways of thinking clash with the new innovative ways of thinking brought in by the younger generations. These on-the-job disagreements can be seen in everything from dress codes to scheduling.

The greatest differences, however, can be seen in management styles. While employees of the past may have responded to "management by fear" or constant supervision, Martin said, today's work force does not respond to heavy-handed tactics.

"The old ways of management are no longer working with the younger people," she said. Where baby boomers may have sat by and complained about their boss, members of the younger generation look for a new job, she said.

According to Martin, the oldest generation active in today's work force is known as the "silent generation." These are the people born between 1925 and 1942 although some individuals born

between 1943 and 1945 also share characteristics with this generation.

They are known as "silents" because they are constantly overshadowed by the generation before them, the GIs of World War II, and the generation behind them, the baby boomers. However, this is the generation which helped rebuild the nation's economy after the second world war. These are also many of the revolutionary leaders who pushed for social change in the 1960s.

While some are conservative, commanding leaders, Martin said, others are strongly involved with pushing for social change.

The baby boom generation is made up of those people born between 1942 and 1963. These are the idealists who made a name for themselves in the 1960s by pushing for social change and learned "how to do more with less" during the corporate downsizing of the 1980s.

Unfortunately, according to Martin, many of these people have become mired in "prehistoric thinking" and must learn to readopt the mindset of change. Many have become resentful of all the attention focused on younger generations, but Martin said boomers must learn to negotiate deals as generations X and Y do.

Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1977, are the 13th generation to be born in the United States and have earned the reputation of being job hoppers. However, Martin said the oldest members of this generation were entering the work force during the 1980s and corporate downsizing.

From this, they learned companies were no longer accepting responsibility for their employees and saw many of their baby boomer predecessors struggling to keep jobs. They learned job security was a myth, and they were responsible for their own security.

Generations X and Y are loyal, she said, but that loyalty lasts only as long as "a better deal" does not come along.

Those born after 1977, are considered members of generation Y. This is the most technologically savvy of all the generations, since these individuals have been raised on technology, however, members of generation Y do not see technology as the answer to all the world's problems.

Although they have gained the reputation of "violent derelicts" and spoiled "brats," Martin said these individuals are the most socially conscious generation since the baby boomers in the 1960s. She also said generation Y believes the key to success is education.

Martin challenged her audience to think about their definition of success as they worked to recruit new job seekers to the health care industry and retain the knowledge of those who have already established medical careers.

"If you can create environments in which people feel listened to, they feel heard, they feel treated as an individual, that you care about how they're succeeding in life - they'll be a success, and, no doubt, your organization will be a success," Martin said.

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