

Bold career choices hone Rochester consultant's skills

Early on, Sandy Sloane succeeded by taking chances with unfamiliar jobs

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Sandy Sloane

A self-proclaimed Jill of all trades, Sandy Sloane's career has been far from a linear progression.

Hailing from Long Island, Sloane obtained her undergraduate degree in occupational therapy from Tufts University. After briefly practicing in the field, Sloane decided that occupational therapy was not her calling. She then moved to Los Angeles where she was hired to work in the events and public relations sector of the Multiple Sclerosis Society's Beverly Hills chapter. Other than coordinating events for her sorority in college, Sloane had no previous experience in event planning, but the Multiple Sclerosis Society was keen on her driven personality and her experience working with people with disabilities.

Sloane soon realized that L.A. was not for her, so she transferred to the Denver chapter. Despite all of Sloane's efforts and the money she raised, the chapter ended up folding when the executive director was caught embezzling. Panicked and jobless, Sloane was desperate for work.

After seeing a Stroh's Beer television commercial for the Stroh's Run for Liberty—a nationwide race dedicated to repairing the Statue of Liberty—Sloane decided to see if she could help coordinate Denver's race.

"I saw ... they were looking for local volunteers so I went to volunteer. There were 122 cities doing the race; Denver was one of them," says Sloane. "They didn't have anybody coordinating the effort in Denver; they said it was a national commercial and they hadn't really done much. So they asked me if I wanted to be the director, and I agreed."

Sloane had no previous experience planning a citywide race, so she steeled her nerves and refused to fail. As a result of her tenacity, the race was a success: Denver placed eighth out of 122 cities.

Since organizing that race, Sloane has been recruited by companies around the country, consistently being recognized for her hard work and talent in the public relations and event planning field. After working as promotion director for various radio stations around the country, as well as dabbling in retail, television and nonprofits, Sloane found her calling in special events and training.

Before establishing her current consulting business, Solutions by Sloane, she owned SWS Marketing & Special Events while living in Florida. She had an extensive client list, and big names like Walt Disney World, Maxwell House and Burger King turned to her for consulting expertise. But when her husband, Bob Barnett, got a job in Rochester, she relocated here in 2013 and she founded Solutions by Sloane.

“What’s bizarre about me is that I have experience in so many different areas, and I think that people get nervous because they job hop, but by going into so many different areas, I’ve become a Jill of all trades and a master of many,” she says. “I think there’s something to be said by saying ‘yes’ to opportunities, and I think that as women we shortchange ourselves and say, ‘Oh I can’t do that, I have no experience with that.’”

Sloane, 57, never let lack of experience weigh her down. Numerous times throughout her career she has been recruited for positions that she had no previous experience in. But she taught herself on the job and networked extensively along the way.

“When I teach seminars, especially Networking 101, I tell people that the #1 secret to effective networking and building your business is that everyone is a contact and you never know who someone else is going to know. As my father used to say, ‘Be kind to everyone on your way up the ladder, because you may meet them on your way back down.’”

Sloane passes along her networking knowledge through her work at Solutions by Sloane. Her business offers workforce development and team building, business training, event planning including both private and corporate events, strategic audits and public relations.

Sloane hopes to continue using her business to help small-to-medium-sized businesses thrive, as well as to support future generations in developing strong communication skills.

“I love doing workforce development and I see such a need for it with people coming out of college. A lot of kids can’t make eye contact, or can’t hold a conversation with strangers. So I would really love the opportunity to help build the future and help young adults grow professionally by showing them how to build their relationship skills.”

When Sloane moved to Rochester from Florida, she was initially unenthusiastic about moving to a region with four distinct seasons, one of them seemingly longer and colder than the others. One way she dealt with her displeasure was through writing children’s books. Sloane published one of her four children’s books titled “Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall: Which Do You Like Best of All?” about finding something positive in every season. An avid rhymer and storyteller, Sloane dealt with her apprehension about Rochester’s winters through writing this playful children’s book. All of her books focus on various life lessons for children.

But her business is what has grounded Sloane in Rochester. Getting to work with so many people and companies in the community, Sloane enjoys doing something fresh every day and meeting people from all walks of life.

“I love being out in the community; it’s really given me the impetus to get to know this wonderful city,” she says.

Sloane refuses to chalk all of her rich experiences and vibrant occupations up to luck. She is proud of her work ethic and many accomplishments, and as her business card reads, “He who has a thing to sell and goes and whispers in a not as apt to make the dollars as he who stands on a hill and hollers!”

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