

FEARLESS LEADER

CEO Beverly Chasse on taking risks, creating corporate core values, paying it forward and leading by example.

BY KELLY E. LINDNER

Beverly Chasse, CEO of Chasse Consulting: Sales Strategies Inc., has a lot more than business savvy. She has street savvy, she has sales savvy and, above all else, she has a mission.

DRIVEN

While many in Austin work to live, Chasse works to help fund mission work. And she asks the same of everyone who works with her at Chasse Consulting, the company she founded in 2002, which donates a portion of its profits to charities that help children.

"I get everyone involved. I figure, if you're going to work at Chasse Consulting, our drive is mission," Chasse says. "It's just part of our culture."

Chasse has personally helped the underprivileged in Africa, Kazakhstan and Haiti, while Chasse Consulting has funded the digging of water wells in Ethiopia.

But why is it so important for Chasse to help underprivileged children? Because she's been there.

SELF-SUFFICIENT

Chasse grew up in Goldsboro, N.C., as the youngest of seven children (four boys and three girls). At age 11, her mother died and she and her siblings were separated and passed to different relatives until someone helped Chasse to move into her own apartment at 15. From there, while attending Goldsboro High School, she supported herself by working at McDonald's. She managed to stay in school while working past midnight most nights and was even a cheerleader, but kept her living situation mostly to herself, with only close friends in the know.

"I struggled," Chasse says. "I had to support, feed and clothe myself."

After high school, she continued her career in sales and found herself advancing every few years, and often asked to lead others. She credits this to her drive to be self-sufficient and do her best at any task or job put before her. It wasn't until her 30s that she realized how passionate she was about leading people. That's when, a year and a half after moving to Austin from Charleston, S.C., she started her own company. But she wishes she

had started her company even sooner.

"Someone advised me to start my company and because of fear, I waited," Chasse says. "The worst thing we can do is let fear stop us. Be fearless. Take the risk."

PROFESSIONAL

This venture started with just one employee, herself, and quickly grew to three, including her sister Debbie Chasse, Chasse Consulting's current chief financial officer. Today, Chasse Consulting has almost 30 employees and has been named a Best Place to Work by the *Austin Business Journal* three years running. When not helping dig wells in Ethiopia, Chasse Consulting helps leading IT organizations (some Fortune 500 companies)

increase revenue by improving their sales strategies and reaching audiences globally.

Chasse describes her customers as "the kindest people that drive us to excellence," but to Chasse Consulting, excellence is more than revenue. This is clear from the core values that hang on the wall in the office, which boil down to serving their customers, serving each other and serving the community while maintaining quality, integrity and professionalism.

"That is the big push for the company, ensuring that we are true to our core values and true to our mission. If you look at our core values, every one of them meet exactly that," Chasse says, referring to her fellow employees and their dedication.

She describes her employees as

"authentic," "eclectic" and "like family." One of her favorite things to do at company parties is to have everyone say one positive word to describe each employee.

"I make everyone do it in my personal life too," Chasse laughs. "We sit around at Thanksgiving and everybody has to say a nice thing about you. We're so fast just to think about the bad things in life, so isn't it nice just to hear nothing but good?"

PHILANTHROPIC

One of the charities Chasse Consulting routinely donates profits to is Manos de Cristo. Founded in 1988, this nonprofit is committed to empowering low-income individuals through adult-education classes, food and clothing programs, a low-cost dental center and a back-to-school program. It was the back-to-school program that drew Chasse to the nonprofit in 2006. When she heard that Manos gave backpacks, school supplies, books and clothing to underprivileged children, she and a small group of friends showed up to volunteer.

"It just really touched my heart because I was one of those kids growing up," Chasse says. "I knew the struggle that these children go through."

Chasse recalls every detail of the moment she saw the girl she was going to help that day.

"I bent down to her and said, 'OK, are you ready to go shopping?'" Chasse says, noting that the girl was so happy and excited, she started shaking. That was the moment Chasse found her mission.

Chasse has been involved with Manos for nine years, serving on the board for six



Photo by Carlos Galindo.

“Longer than I was supposed to,” Chasse says. “They asked me to stay.”

During her time as board chair, Chasse helped raise more than \$1.5 million for the nonprofit’s mission and spearheaded the construction of a new dental center that enabled Manos to increase the number of people it provides dental care to each year from 4,000 to 11,000.

The nonprofit’s annual gala also saw a huge evolution. What started in a high-school gym was hosted at ACL Live at The Moody Theater this year, when Chasse co-chaired the event. It also raised a lot more money.

“Years ago, we were lucky if we got \$7,000,” Chasse says. “This year, I think it was \$145,000.”

That money will go toward all the good that Manos is doing for the community, and many have taken notice of Chasse’s personal dedication to helping the impoverished. In 2014, the *Austin American-Statesman* named Chasse a Jefferson Award honoree for her service to the community.

“Mission serves me as much as it serves somebody else,” Chasse says. “I would love to know that I’m leaving the earth having done something...of significance in somebody’s life. And I’d like to be joyful in the process.”

LEADERS DON’T COMPROMISE

Beverly Chasse’s Pointers for Leading Effectively

- 1. Be present.** Each person on your team is critical to overall success. Do you know them professionally *and* personally? You should.
- 2. Not all days are good, and that’s OK.** Selling is fun but not always easy. Be the pillar of strength, motivation and guidance. Sometimes just saying, “I get it and we will figure this out” is all a person needs to hear.
- 3. Celebrate successes.** Celebrate every win. Celebrate loud. Revel in it. Success is contagious, so be sure to fan the flame.
- 4. Lead by example and get your hands dirty.** There is no greater motivator than getting deeply involved in the work alongside your team. Everyone grows, including you.
- 5. Be consistent in your expectations.** Always follow a sales process, expect criteria to be met and expect the best.
- 6. Dust off those skills.** No person is perfect. Help your team embrace learning, mentoring and sharing. Sharing one person’s strength may be all another needs to change the game.
- 7. Speak their language.** Do you know if a person is motivated by words, gifts or time? Understand their language and speak to it. 5lovelanguages.com/profile
- 8. Reinforce the goal.** Does each team member have a professional *and* personal goal that can be achieved through their success at work? Help them set the plan and check in on the progress during your one-on-ones.
- 9. Core values are not optional.** Never waiver from your value system and beliefs. Your team is watching how you handle not only the successes, but also adversity. Show them how to handle everything with grace.
- 10. Sell with integrity.** Success can only be measured by your customer. Do what is right. Always.



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