

SALES STAR



April Callis: Providing the “Springboard” for Success

[By Akbar Ali]

As a self-described “organizational development consultant,” April Callis has a job title that may sound very technical and formal, but the woman behind the title is as direct and lucid as they come. As Senior Change Management Consultant with Navigator Management Partners and president of Gossip Stoppers, she’s in the business of training others to be their best and helping companies produce optimum results which leave executives, employees, and customers grinning from ear to ear. If it’s success you want, look no further than Callis, whose ability to change struggling individuals and mediocre corporations into business leaders has earned her a number of high-profile industry accolades.

Callis’s career as a consultant and professional trainer seems an unlikely fit for a woman who majored in theater at Eastern Michigan University, but looking back, it was an ideal segue into her present line of work. She spent the summer after graduation touring with a professional company, which, while creatively rewarding, left her with the distinct conviction that a life on the road was not one she could happily abide.

She made the decision to move on to graduate school at a time when the consulting business was booming.

“The field of training and development was hot and really seemed to be a great fit for me. I love to communicate, entertain, and teach,” she says.

While working her way through graduate school, she spent time as an independent video contractor for the Ford Motor Company. It was around this time that she met Renee Merchant, an established consultant and trainer in the Michigan area, who gave Callis her first opportunity to teach part of her workshop to clients.

After graduation, she joined a small consulting firm where her primary duty was to teach supervisory skills. She also accepted a position as an adjunct professor teaching public speaking and communication skills; she would ultimately serve on the faculty at Wright College, Triton College, Roosevelt

University, and Lansing Community College. During this early stage of her career, she began to realize where her real strengths lay.

“I had the highest evaluations in the department and started to see that my strength was my ability to impart complicated information in a clear, creative, and entertaining way,” she reveals.

She was further able to hone her people and communication skills while working with Nordstrom over a period of five years, a time which provided her an indispensable

education in customer service and building strong business-client relationships.

Though she has had a variety of major accomplishments over the course of her career, Callis highlights one skill as having been particularly useful:

“I’ve been able to make ideas ‘stick.’ As a change management expert at the University of Michigan, I was working on how to communicate a very complex set of PeopleSoft panels to a group of users that needed the panels for purchase orders. The lack of a clear and easy path through the panels was a real struggle. I developed a job aid that looked like Arthur Murray dance footprints and called the process the ‘P.O. Dance’ because you took two steps forward and three back — that was 10 years ago, and they still use the ‘P.O. Dance’ terminology even though the process has been simplified and streamlined.”

To date, Callis has taught more than 5,000 people how to achieve their career potential by focusing on their skills, credibility, and visibility in her sought-after speaking and training engagements.

She also tasted big-time success with the publishing of her book, *Springboard to Success: Strategies to Keep Business Casual from Making Business...Casual*, in 2005. Her workshop, *Gossip Stoppers: Managing Negativity in the Workplace*, was

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Jazz, euchre, and darts.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. Hannah Montana — what can I say? I have three young daughters!

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *The New Yorker*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *Desperate Housewives*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. Diana Booher, Hillary Clinton, and my mom.

Q. What makes you laugh?

A. Everything!

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also featured in *Time* magazine last fall in an article on building morale in the workplace called "Meet the Nicheperts."

Her client list over the years has included some very big national corporations and institutions, including the University of Michigan, Foote Health Systems, the Ford Motor Company, and the State of Michigan. Callis teaches a variety of workshops covering a comprehensive array of job-related subjects, among them Presenting a Professional Image; Prepare, Practice, Present; Act Well Your Part; and Get That Job!

Callis is a member of the National Speakers Association and the American Society for Training and Development. She was

also invited to be a presenter at the 2005 Society for Human Resource Management Conference in San Diego.

The individual who has influenced her success the most has been her colleague Brenda Sprite, a change management specialist at Navigator Management Partners: "[She] has been extremely influential — I'd follow her anywhere, and have!"

Her advice to those just heading out of school and into the workforce is as practical as it is inspirational:

"Realize that nothing is beneath you. You must try and do everything to discover what you love *and* what loves you back. When you

find that thing that you do best and others appreciate it and pay you for it, keep doing it and *never* take it for granted."

ON THE NET

Springboard Consulting
www.springboard-consult.com/index.html

Gossip Stoppers
www.gossipstoppers.com

Navigation Management Partners, LLC
navmp.com/partners.htm

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