



LORI DANIELSON

Meeting the Workforce Challenge

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

“Experience. Experience. Experience.”

That could be Lori Danielson’s unofficial mantra when it comes to bolstering workforce talent. The approach is a powerful one – from employers’ and students’ perspectives.

Danielson is chair of the governing and advisory boards for the Institute for Workforce Excellence (IWE), a subsidiary of the Indiana Chamber dedicated to helping Indiana attract, develop and retain highly skilled Hoosier talent.

Todd Hurst, IWE executive director, calls her “such a champion” in the pivotal workforce development space.

“She has this passion about how to get more students connected earlier in their career to work-based learning and career exploration so they can figure out what they like to do,” he stresses. “A key part of that is building social capital and connections. She’s committed to ensuring that more students have access to opportunities to help train a better skilled workforce.”

Since 2018, Danielson has partnered with Work and Learn Indiana (WLI) – a free work-based learning matching marketplace

connecting Hoosier employers, experience seekers and education institutions.

“I had done a lot (of community engagement in the education realm) locally and regionally. ... It (partnering with WLI) was a new place for me to think about volunteering at a broader statewide level. That was a place for me to really think about, how could my volunteerism be expanded? What would that be like?”

“I really appreciate the Chamber for working to bring individuals from outside of Indianapolis from different backgrounds to have a diverse perspective on this particular work, which is so important,” Danielson explains.

“We need more individuals to come to the table and bring their local and regional experience to our state. I would challenge and support leaders – from all corners of our state – to think about and to find ways they can get involved. It will be rewarding for them personally and impactful for their communities and for their state.”

It’s ‘GoTime’

Danielson chuckles when asked to characterize herself growing up.

“I was very competitive and sports oriented,” she observes of her childhood in Fairfield, Iowa. “I was a girl in a sea of boys in our neighborhood, so I had to fight hard to have my voice heard.”

Today, she assists others in finding their voice – and passions – through education and workforce development partnerships.

“I’ve always seen and believed that education opens doors. And what I strive to do most is help individuals – and (businesses) – become the best versions of themselves.”

In 2015, Danielson established her consulting company GoTime Coaching LLC with that mission in mind.

“I think we (often) sell ourselves short – and sometimes we get in the way of ourselves,” she assesses. “So, if I personally, or as my business or as a leader in our community, can help individuals achieve more, either through coaching or prodding a little bit, I’m there.”

“I’m really passionate about people being able to achieve all that they’re meant to achieve. And when somebody’s ready to get clear and focused and really be more impactful, GoTime’s (a great) resource.”

Forging a path

Danielson attended the University of Iowa, graduating in 1987 with a bachelor’s of science degree in marketing and finance. During her early career, she followed in her father’s footsteps and pursued a banking career.

In 1992, she moved to Terre Haute, where she spent 15 years working at Old National Bank. She exited that industry in 2008, next spending seven years at Clabber Girl, a world-class manufacturer of baking ingredients, where she oversaw operations as vice president prior to founding GoTime.

Through the years, she’s advocated for education and workforce development with various volunteer roles in west central Indiana such as Ivy Tech Community College in Terre Haute (board of trustees), Vigo County Education Foundation (board member) and Evans Scholar Foundation (state director).

One source of pride associated with her statewide work at the IWE is helping to develop the Talent Resource Navigator, a free, web-based tool that offers one-stop shopping for education and job training opportunities.

“As we were thinking about rebranding Work and Learn (in 2021) and then as the Institute was developing (launching in 2018), it really became apparent from business survey information and research, the incredible need to streamline access and awareness of programs that help support workforce development,” Danielson remarks. “Helping businesses have access to that in an easier, convenient fashion.”

The Navigator intentionally guides and connects individuals and employers with a



Lori Danielson is passionate about connecting students with careers via educational institutions such as Ivy Tech Community College Terre Haute. “We still, as a state and as communities, need to embrace, support and foster more students going first to that community college route.”



Danielson addresses the audience at the 2019 Impact Awards honoring excellence in internships and mentoring.

tailored set of talent development resources based on each user’s identified needs.

“I’ve been very involved from the start of that – from helping build architecture and thinking through what that looks like,” Danielson affirms. “What I bring to the table is the small business side of that, as well as my bigger business side. It’s an understanding that when you’re in business, you’re very busy taking care of what needs to happen today and next week and the following years.”

She calls the Navigator, which assists in facilitating paths to allow leaders to concentrate on all the above items, “just an incredible resource and it’s getting some great traction.”

Making an ‘Impact’

One of WLI’s longtime programs is the Impact Awards every February, which celebrates excellence in work-based learning and mentoring (both employer and supervisor).

“(That event) is instrumental in putting a spotlight on the great work that interns are doing and how businesses are stepping up to the plate to really embrace internships as a way to build their workforce,” Danielson

asserts. “It’s so critical that businesses take a leadership role in having internship programs and building relationships with students at that level of their career so that we can retain workforce, build workforce and continue to grow the workforce.”

Reflecting on the need for collaboration around work-based learning, she notes the progress in moving away from the silos of the past.

“The way we’re bringing businesses to the table (today) and the development of that curriculum and those experiences – now (including) at the high school level – the more we can expand that, the better prepared we’re making our workforce. . . . The more business can come along to help mentor and expose youth to career paths, the better off we’re all going to be.”

For Danielson, it all comes back to what she learned at a young age from the example her parents set around volunteering.

“It’s a value that I hold very dear. Whatever gifts and talents we have, let’s bring them to the table and let’s give back and make everything and everybody around us the best that we can be.” ■