

Are You Inspired at Work Everyday? Eva Is! See How Her Passion Inspires Everyone around her...

Eva Niewiadomski was an employee & co-worker that anyone would love to have. She is smart, creative and has lots of energy. She had a ton of experience in different job functions including accounting, financial analysis, brand management and new product development during her 15 year career at Quaker Oats. She is that person that always goes the extra mile and it shows when it comes to finding fresh and new ways of doing things.

IT STARTED OFF SMALL...

Eva's workspace at Quaker was very important to her. She found that dull corporate workspaces didn't provide the inspiration she needed to be most effective. So she started to funk up her space a bit, some artwork here, some trinkets there and the next thing you know her workspace was the talk of the department. In fact, she created such a buzz there were times when she would return from a meeting to find tours for new employees stopping by to check out her spot.

IT GOT BIGGER...

Eva felt the momentum her workspace was gaining and convinced senior management to allow her to create other inspirational areas. Long before creative workspaces were en-vogue, Eva created a couple of "Innovation Hallways" and a "Creativity Room." These new additions made it possible for all employees to share their thoughts and insights on how to make better products...not just the folks in marketing or new product development.

THINGS ARE AH-CHANGING...AND...THE LIGHTBULB WAS FLICKERING...

Through an acquisition, the culture at Quaker seemed to change. The acquisition prompted a series of downsizings and related challenges. During this time, parts of Eva's responsibilities were to facilitate several training and brainstorming meetings. She understood how stimulating, colorful spaces could add spice and creativity to her sessions. Eva also realized these places were very hard to find in Chicago, in fact, many times she had to rent lofts and carry her own materials to and from the meetings. She realized the need for creative meeting spots in Chicago.

THE DAY IT ALL CRYSTALIZED

As was the fate for many of her co-workers, Eva was given a 60-day notice that she would no longer have a job. While many people were wondering what was next, Eva was getting busy. She was going to open a place that catered to people and organizations that craved interesting meeting spaces. She started writing her business plan, doing qualitative research, looking at real estate and having her friends share their thoughts and builds. Within a week of her final day at Quaker, Eva signed a lease for the place she would start her business! She was a huge inspiration to her co-workers...she had a vision and was just going for it. She had five weeks to build out rooms within an old Herring factory and one week to move in before her first clients would arrive.

CATALYST RANCH, INSPIRING TO RANCH HANDS AND CLIENTS

In 2002, Catalyst Ranch opened, offering 3 large meeting rooms in historic downtown Chicago. Eva knew instinctively the type of inspiring atmosphere she wanted to create for her clients and Ranch Hands (employees). It all starts with the Ranch Hands. Eva made it a point to hire the creative types such as clay sculptors, electronic musicians, students, actors, documentarians, comedians, technology gurus, painters, athletes, clothing designers, comic book enthusiasts, writers and photographers...you get the idea. All you need to do is step into the Catalyst Ranch to see and feel the inspirational energy the Ranch Hands provide. When it came to the meeting rooms, Eva created spaces filled with natural light, colorful painted walls, vintage furniture, ethnic artwork, toys and magazines that provide inspiration to even the most conservative groups. The combination was so good, it prompted an expansion from 9,000 sq. feet and 3 meeting rooms to 15,000 sq. feet and 5 meeting rooms in 2005.

HELPING OTHERS IS WHAT EVA & HER COMPANY ARE REALLY ABOUT...

Danny is a young, energetic Ranch Hand who is amazing with clients and his co-workers. Along with countless others, Danny was moved by the earthquake and disaster that struck Japan in 2011. Danny felt compelled to do something to aid the victims of this horrible tragedy. He had the idea to put together an Asian Cabaret fundraiser and asked if Eva would donate a room for the event. Eva being Eva...said yes immediately. They gathered the support of other Ranch Hands and were able to put on an amazing show that attracted 200 attendees and raised thousands of dollars for the victims. This is the type of work environment Eva dreamed of creating during her days at Quaker. She is a model of inspiration for her Ranch Hands and her customers. It's no wonder that when I asked a Ranch Hand who inspired them...the immediate response was...EVA...

Takeaways from Eva's Story

- Eva realized the power of a creative environment. How can you change your environment to inspire yourself and others?
- Eva ACTED on her passion for inspiration and creativity. What passions do you have that you need to act upon?
- Eva understood what type of Ranch Hands she wanted to work with to achieve the desired result of having delighted clients. Do you have the right type of co-workers or employees in place to achieve your desired result?