

## PREFACE

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### MENTORING YOURSELF, BEING BODACIOUS

**W**hen I started as an \$8-an-hour customer service representative at America Online fresh out of college, I had no idea that within 10 years I'd rise through the ranks, influence and impact thousand of employees, and then be able to retire at the age of 33. The only thing I knew for sure was that I didn't want to use my newly acquired industrial engineering bachelor's degree to be an engineer and that I had bills to pay. My plan was to stay with this small company's low-paying job until I could hitch a ride on a larger company with more opportunities offering better pay.

After working at America Online for several months I realized I'd found a place that was exciting and made me want to get up every morning to go to work. I believed the customer service I was delivering was important and offered some challenge. But, it wasn't where I wanted to be for long. I wanted to move up, to take on more responsibility, and to increase my paycheck. No one was there to be a personal mentor to guide me; I had to figure it out myself.

When I started my career I'd never heard of a mentor or personal coach. Now mentoring programs, personal coaches, and career counselors are everywhere. And, no wonder. There is no "work here for life" plan with today's corporations. Our economy is undergoing tremendous pressure and isn't predictable. We are all experiencing constant change in all areas of our lives: financial, personal, social, and otherwise. There's more to

figure out, and to keep figuring out, to create a fulfilling career and life. Though professional, third-party help can be useful, it never replaces the need for the individual work we must all do for ourselves. One of my biggest take-aways from my America Online career was learning to be bold, gutsy, and in charge of my life. I call it being bodacious! This book is such a gem because it lays a map of the key career areas for you to help yourself. It helps you be bodacious!

As I look back on the behaviors that helped me advance, I find many of them included in this book. For example, communicating effectively and dressing professionally caused others to assume I held more responsibility than my entry-level customer service position. When new positions opened up, I was on the top of the list for consideration. Developing relationships across many departments as a trainer enabled me to not only produce better training, but also allowed me to get to know lots of people. By nurturing these relationships I had access to many folks who quickly rose to very influential positions. This helped increase my influence and effectiveness as I was promoted as well.

Still, I wish I'd had this book 15 years ago so I could have shortened my learning curve. It took me longer than I'd like to admit to fully reckon with my internal "good girl" who held me back at times by not fully standing up for herself and her ideas. If I'd had this book I would have dealt with my resistance to office politics earlier in my career and used the powerful relationships I created to steer myself clear of the glass ceiling. Mentoring myself without a road map like the one you'll find here prolonged my overcoming the hurdles.

No matter where you are in your career, I encourage you to become your best resource and advocate for developing yourself. Take an honest look at all the areas presented in this book and ask yourself how well you've addressed each area, what's working, and how you can improve. Even small changes can

make a big difference. No doubt, you'll be far ahead of most working people. Better yet, you'll be making your career—and life—what you want it to be.

—Mary Foley  
Author of *Bodacious! An AOL Insider Cracks the  
Code to Outrageous Success for Women*