

2006 Business Woman of the Year Finalist, Lou Solomon

Founder/President, Interact
By Catherine Pike Plough



It's a short trip from Lou Solomon's Dilworth home to her place of business on West Morehead Street. Both are locations she never expected to land and love. But she does.

Solomon grew up with a passion for words. The love affair began on an air force base in Greenville, SC and sustained her through moves to England, Washington, D.C., Florida and Mississippi, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and communications at Ole Miss.

Today, Solomon is the enterprising owner of InteractSkills LLC, a firm that teaches authentic communication skills to benefit individuals in business—and in life. Solomon says it's the best possible career fit for her, blending words with her passion for teaching.

Solomon's first job was at an advertising agency, a position that segued into broadcasting and public relations director WSM-AM, Home of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. After Solomon conducted an award-winning campaign to launch sister station WSM-FM, Cox persuade her to join the team at WSOC FM103 in Charlotte. The plan was to do a two-year stint at WSOC before moving to Cox Broadcasting's headquarters in Atlanta.

Over the next seven years, however, Solomon realized that her love for words went deeper than what radio had to offer. She launched her own public relations consulting firm, which provided media training for clients and taught platform speaking through Ty Boyd Enterprises. But there was yet another corner to turn.

Authentic Communication

"The 90's were all about technology," Solomon comments. "Since that time it has become very difficult for us to communicate in an authentic way." Solomon believes that the acceleration of impersonal communication styles – email, voice mail, PowerPoint presentations – has made it easy to become lazy with language skills. "It takes practice, and it takes understanding the magic of human conversation," she asserts. "No one ever rocked the world through an email." The void of meaningful language was at the foundation of the business evolution that birthed Interact in 2000.

At Interact, individuals and corporate teams meet for course work that phases out ineffective "business-eze" as it introduces "authentic" speaking that communicates "who I am and what I've learned in life." Solomon cites the results of a Chamber survey which suggests that employers, now more than ever, are interested in hiring leaders who have the ability to connect with others. Case in point: Interact was recently contracted to develop courses for the managers of Wendy's restaurants throughout the Carolinas.

Solomon says that once an atmosphere of trust and understanding is established, participants learn the value of authentic speaking in attaining their business goals, whether in promoting a product or service, or in creating a more effective team. "I've never seen a group not grow closer as a result of this experience."

Giving Back

Yet, for Solomon, connecting means more than improved relationships and a better bottom line. As the 2006-07 president of Leadership Charlotte, she says that giving back to the community is another business essential.

"I had no idea what I was getting into," Solomon says of her introduction to Leadership Charlotte, a community leadership development organization that exposes participants to community needs through a hands-on experience. As a result of her involvement in Leadership Charlotte, Solomon says she tapped into a place where she can give back. Throughout the year, she carves out time to teach authentic communication seminars to non-profits such as the Arts and Science Council, United Way of Central Carolinas and the African American Cultural Center. TCW

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