



Stacey Walthers Naffah

Stacey’s advice for alumni who are just starting their career paths:



My leadership training started at Minikani. The lessons I learned at camp are ones I still use today. They are just as relevant as the President of a company as they are as an LT or a person just starting out their career. Here are a few things I’ve learned:

- Be willing to work hard
- Respect all people and work to deserve others respect of you
- Don’t shy away from challenge, challenges help you to grow
- Do your own thing, don’t follow the pack
- Honor your team and your family
- Be a lifelong learner (you can always push yourself to be better and learn more)
- Practice gratitude - thank the people who help you succeed, be grateful for the wins and for the learnings from the losses/challenges
- Be present - in the beauty of a moment, in the beauty of

nature - find peace and calm to help center and rebalance (you have to take care of YOU to lead!)

- Ask for help (you don’t have to know everything! Surround yourself with a great team)
- Be a great listener

Don’t be afraid to lead. Or, when you are afraid, draw on courage to get you through, lean on your network - you can’t do it alone. Let your faith be bigger than your fear. And, when the path seems hard - in your career or in your life - just take one step forward. One step at a time, you can accomplish great things.

Treat everyone you meet with respect and be willing to help others along their path. Invest in your relationships - your career, the world is one big bridge (i.e. don’t burn any, work to create a strong one that can take you anywhere!). Always be learning - choose a path that excites you and let yourself wander off of it if your heart moves you. Don’t let someone else dictate your path for you, be brave, be bold and stay true to you and to your values. Seek purpose. And find joy and gratitude in even the most mundane of things - it truly is the little things that matter.



Stacey explains why we need Model Trains in a Digital Age

How do you make the hobby “Model Trains” current in our digital age?

I believe that our hobby provides a welcome respite in our increasingly disconnected world. We know that more and more issues are being caused by people turning to technology rather than to each other - depression, anxiety, lack of civil discourse, decreasing soft social skills...these are all some unwelcome byproducts of the ‘connected’/tech-driven world we live in.

So...I think we help to connect people — to others, to skills, to knowledge, to people like them and not like them - to create moving works of art. Our hobby can play a small part in helping to give tangible skills to kids who need to take a break from technology. We help people to build things that are real, lasting. Not only the models they create, but the sense of accomplishment when they work solo and the memories and connections created when they work together with a family member across the generations or a friend at a club.

Our hobby helps people disconnect from their troubles, from their big jobs or their worries. And, lest you fear that we are only living in a non-tech world...Our hobby has technology baked right into it and has since my Great Grandfather founded the company in the Depression. He was an electrical engineer - and teaching people how to use electricity to make their trains

move and their miniature worlds come to life was pretty forward thinking at the time. Now, trains are digitally controlled and the sky's the limit for creative kids of all ages (including kids at heart) to enjoy the hobby in an interactive way now and new ways moving forward integrating technology.

I think my first job as president is to serve the customers that have been loyal to us over many years, they truly have created amazing layouts. I have been working for the last 10 years to try to extend my family's proud legacy and to make model trains 'relevant' or 'cool' again.

I have a fantastic team that's been helping me and we have some fun ideas moving forward, I hope to have the chance to test them out on some of you. I admit, we've tried lots of things - some have worked, some haven't quite materialized yet — but that's where the learning is. It's not in all the successes, it's in the valiant efforts and the mistakes — and, we will keep on working at it, because we think what we do has purpose.

Some might say it's a 'dying hobby' and I say 'only if we let it'. I think we have the chance to make a difference with what we do - to build connections, one little world at a time. I invite you all to try it!



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