

# Donna Sturgess

*President and founding partner, Buyology Inc.*

Donna Sturgess is president and founding partner at Buyology Inc. She previously served as global head of innovation at GlaxoSmithKline.

## **What is your top business priority for 2012?**

My top priority is business growth, both for my clients' businesses and my company, Buyology Inc. These are tough economic times, but with that come exciting challenges to change and reinvent new ways of working to gain growth.

## **What is your greatest professional accomplishment to date?**

One of them was to be flown out to the USS Stennis aircraft carrier while they were doing practice maneuvers in the Pacific. The military was interested in having business leaders on board to interact with their senior officers, and it was a couple of days of immersion in a new world that surprisingly taught me a great deal that I could apply to business. My recent book, *Eyeballs Out*, is based on this story and it captures the power of an immersive experience to stimulate business and build new ideas.

## **What was your dream job as a kid, and why?**

From the age of 14, I taught five dance classes a week for elementary age children in Bethel Park and Upper St. Clair.

It was an entrepreneurial effort that I did for those townships until I went off to college. As I look back on it now, I realize while my friends were babysitting, I was running a small business that created value and made enough money annually that I had to file taxes! It was a dream job because it showed me that play and intense enjoyment can fuel hard work and collaboration. I have tried to hang on to that lesson throughout my business career.

## **How do you motivate yourself and stay motivated?**

I generally rage against the status-quo, since the growth you need tomorrow is not going to come from what you have done to get where you are today. I am excited by continuous learning and driven to both find and participate in the creation of products and services that are more remarkable. This defines why I stepped out of a long career in corporate life to start a new business.

The very essence of business lies in containing human energy and applying it with purpose. I work to elevate my own energy and inspire others to do the same to create situations where remarkable work and outcomes can be produced.

## **What are you reading right now?**

I am halfway through the book *Think Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman.



I am also reading a book I received for Christmas, *Hedy's Folly*, about the life of Hedy Lamarr. Hedy was not only a beautiful silver screen star but an inventor whose patents led to some of the wireless digital technology we have today.

## **What was the turning point of your career?**

Being the first female business head in my corporation. From that vantage point, I realized I could finally start to use my own leadership style to grow a business rather than following the company's cultural conventions of leadership.

## **What have you done to provide opportunities for other women in your field?**

I structured and launched the first

mentoring program at GlaxoSmithKline early in my career. Eventually, I was mentoring as many men as women in the organization. Without female role models inside the organization for myself, there were many men in senior positions who generously mentored me to help me make good decisions and helped me to advance in my career.

Today, I mentor women and men both formally and informally when I can add value to their experiences and help to think through their challenges.

## **What's your best networking strategy?**

My strategy is to be open to new connections and new relationships. It is harder and takes more time to put yourself out there where you feel vulnerable and things are less familiar, but those feelings are a natural part of stretching. If you want to forge new connections, start by trying to make two new connections a month. Look for opportunities that get you out of the office and into the world. You will have to push yourself to make the time and stick to the commitment if you are serious about networking.

## **What's sitting on your work desk right now?**

A bouquet of flowers that arrived unexpectedly from a client. Every week, I have had a vase of fresh flowers on my desk as a beautiful inspiration that everyone around me enjoys. It was a delightful surprise to receive a "thank-you" gift of yellow roses this week.