

Open up to Change

One day, walking on our farm property, I came across what I thought was a beautiful flower. I smelled it and proceeded to rub it up and down my arm, which began to itch until an awful rash broke out. It turned out that the beautiful flower was a form of poison ivy, and I learned that ignorance is dangerous. You must be adept and learn about things that surround you—not take everything at face value.



Allison G. Cole

The one thing that has been a constant during Allison G. Cole's career has been change. "In order to be an enabler of success, I have had to be open to change, anticipate change, and be a driver of change," says the Director of Network Field Operations for Verizon Communications.

Holding a director-level position for almost four years now, with only three months in her current position, Cole has acquired new skills and proficiencies that have kept her competitive in the telecommunications industry. "Though my prior educational exposure had been primarily technical in nature, my MBA has provided me with an even greater toolkit, equipping me to move business forward," she explained.

In her new role, Cole acts as the interface for Field Dispatch, Network Testing and Switch translations across six states. Her organization is responsible for the coordination of customer-service requests, including installation and repair. In her previous role, she managed Verizon's FTTP network.

She attributes her career choice to exposure to the field during an internship in undergraduate school. "That Co-Op program exposed me to planned changes that were being tested and validated—the environment was challenging, and every day was fraught with validations of things that would work for our customers' benefit." Since that time, Cole admits that she has grown from an individual contributor to a manager of teams and, now, a director of change.

"I have observed Allison's keen ability to effectively interact with other leaders and drive decision making—in a very challenging business environment—for a critical element of our portfolio," says Connia Nelson, Senior Vice President of Verizon Telecon Human Resources and a 2007 *CareerFOCUS* Eagle Award winner.

One standout change agent was the challenge of becoming an engineering-team manager where overall results had been sub-par. While the task seemed daunting, Cole employed her educational background, utilized prior experiences, and focused on building a team that understood the metrics that had to be met for customer satisfaction.

"With great partnership and support from my peers and commitment from my leadership and individual teams, in approximately nine months, we exceeded our targets," Cole explains. "It was one of the most satisfying and fulfilling roles that I have ever had in my career."

While change has affected her professionally, it has also done so personally. While in Jamaica in 2000, Cole was involved in a serious automobile accident that proved life changing. She lost a lot of blood and suffered a head injury but felt lucky to be alive after seeing the extent of the damage. "I felt very blessed to be able to

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walk away. That event has given me a greater appreciation for those I love and ensured that I focus on living life to the fullest,” Cole recalls.

Change is also a watchword for Cole in company endeavors. She is actively involved with the Women’s Association of Verizon Employees (WAVE) and the Consortium of Information and Telecommunications Executives (CITE). She has participated on panel discussions, development sessions, and community-outreach efforts. Acting as a mentor—both formally and informally—to other company managers, Cole serves as a change agent for catapulting others within the organization.

“I believe that one should hold themselves and others accountable to the highest standard—never settling for second best,” Cole says. “Maintaining a positive attitude, a solid sense of accountability, strong ethics, and high standards enables you to focus on making the best choices in business. It also enables you to build a strong team and create a shadow that someone would be proud to follow.”

Cole continues to forge change, developing strong partnering relationships with high-impact teams and working diligently to address customer needs while remaining on task and getting all teams on board to support the needs of the business.

CareerFOCUS Magazine[™] and the National Eagle Leadership Institute[®] salute 2009 Eagle Award winner Allison G. Cole.

Nominating Company

Verizon Communications

Current Position

Director, Network Field Operations

Professional Milestones

- Member, Consortium of Information and Telecommunications Executives (CITE)

Community Leadership

- Verizon/Rutgers University Food Drive
- George Washington University Alumni Association

Leadership Principle

Maintain a positive attitude, a solid sense of accountability, strong ethics, and high standards.

Education/Training

- Bachelor of Science, Engineering, George Washington University Washington DC
- Master of Science, Telecommunications & Computers, George Washington University Washington DC
- Executive MBA, Georgetown University Washington DC

Birthplace

Kingston, Jamaica

Current Home

Greenbrook, New Jersey

The Leadership Promise at Verizon

At Verizon, mirroring the markets we are privileged to serve is a key priority.

We work with a number of diversity partners, HBCUs, HSIs, and community organizations to ensure we are cultivating a richly diverse candidate pool.

Our key relationships include: National Society of Black Engineers, Society of Professional Hispanic Engineers, the Society of Women Engineers, American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), and the National Association of Asian Professionals.

In addition, we invest in the development of the workforce pipeline through the Verizon Foundation Scholarship program. To date, this year, the Foundation has awarded \$4.6 million in scholarships.

Verizon offers a number of different Leadership Development initiative programs, including: Verizon's Diversity Leadership Institute (DLI), Insights for Success, and Growth and Opportunities through Leadership Development (GOLD).

Employees can also take advantage of mentoring programs offered through our Leadership and Diversity Councils or Employee Resource Groups.