



## Vallerie Parrish-Porter

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# Fight or Flight

Having grown up with six siblings, I'm full of humorous experiences. Once, while visiting our grandparents on their farm in Georgia, my grandmother warned us to stay away from the wasp hives on the back porch. My siblings and I decided that it would be better to knock the hives down than to leave them alone. With sticks in hand, we began to bang away at the hives. At the end of day, we learned to do what grandmother said—and that wasps fight back!

Her biggest champion is her husband—and, while they live in two different cities, they decided long ago that her rise to chief information officer was worth the sacrifice. Vallerie Parrish-Porter of Embarq Corporation is a rock star in her world of information technology for the largest independent local exchange carrier in the United States. As senior vice president and CIO, she leads the strategic and tactical deployment and operations of information development and infrastructure resources for the \$6 billion company.

“I believe that you have to take personal responsibility for your career plan,” she says. “No one cares more about your career than you do!” However, as Parrish-Porter can attest, career planning does create personal challenges. “My husband and I agreed on my career goals together, and we decided to do what was necessary to achieve that goal. We decided that, with the right attitude, we could maintain a strong bond and achieve my career aspirations.”

Remaining focused on goals and rising to meet challenges has been a pattern of consistent behavior with Parrish-Porter. Over the past year, she has managed the technological infrastructure divestiture of Embarq's technology from Sprint/Nextel. “Vallerie performed a central role in separating the complicated, intertwined set of information systems crucial to our separation from Sprint,” says Daniel R. Hesse, Embarq

chairman and CEO and Parrish-Porter's Eagle Award nominator. "She has been perhaps our most effective agent of change." Hesse also points to Parrish-Porter's exceptional career at Sprint, Hewlett-Packard, and Compaq prior to joining the top management team at Embarq.

Parrish-Porter began her career in the oil industry in the 1980s, which positioned her as one of the few women and African Americans in the field. "It was a huge challenge," she says. "I realized that I own the responsibility of allowing people to get to know me and understand what I could contribute."

Parrish-Porter and her team play a critical role at Embarq, so her contributions rarely go unnoticed. "We enable employees to do their work as efficiently as possible," she says. That effort provides new-product capability in the marketplace and helps define the company's customer experience.

To complement her professional contributions, Parrish-Porter recently turned to her new home community to help close the digital divide. She has focused her energy on the Black Family Technology Awareness Association of Kansas City. "This is a start-up organization in the Kansas City area that seeks to close the technological literacy gap in the African-American community," she explains. "I personally finance support for this event as well as sit on panels or take on other duties as assigned." She says that addressing the digital divide for the next generation is a true passion.

Parrish-Porter is living her life's purpose: To always do the right thing and have a positive impact on the people you touch in life.

*CareerFOCUS Magazine*<sup>™</sup> and the National Eagle Leadership Institute<sup>®</sup> salute 2007 Eagle Award winner Vallerie Parrish-Porter.

#### **Nominating Company**

Embarq Corporation

#### **Current Position**

Senior Vice President &  
Chief Information Officer

#### **Professional Milestones**

- Award Recipient, National Woman of Color Technologist of the Year
- Acknowledgement, "50 Most Important Blacks in Technology"—*US Black Engineer & Information Technology* magazine
- Acknowledgement, "Top 20 Women in Technology"—Houston, TX
- Membership, Executive Leadership Council

#### **Community Leadership**

- Financial Supporter and Volunteer, United Way
- Financial Supporter and Volunteer, Junior Achievement
- Member and Executive Sponsor, Embrace

#### **Leadership Principle**

Be willing to step up to the challenge.  
Do what it takes to deliver.

#### **Education/Training**

- Bachelor of Science, Southern University
- MBA, University of Miami

#### **Birthplace**

Baxley, GA

#### **Current Home**

Leawood, KS

## **The Leadership Promise at EMBARQ**

At EMBARQ, we believe all employees perform a leadership role. Whether it is being a role model in performing day-to-day duties, effectively managing resources, or setting strategic direction, each employee has an opportunity to make a profound impact on the company. We demonstrate leadership through contributions we make and, equally as important, through the behaviors we exhibit in our daily interactions with one another and our customers.

EMBARQ is serious about leadership and, as a foundation, has defined expectations of leadership at every level in the organization. EMBARQ uses best practices in leadership-development methodology to attract and grow leaders. This is done through a variety of online resources and assessments, in addition to cutting-edge performance-management and talent-review programs.

The success of EMBARQ depends on committed leaders who demonstrate leadership-quality behaviors by effectively managing themselves, their teams and our business.