

Make Lemons Lemonade

In the early 1970s—the era of Shaft, Superfly, and The Mack—I had a '69 red Renault that I just knew I could turn into a Cadillac Eldorado. Naturally, the first order of business was the addition of a cassette tape deck, followed by faux leopard interior and a half white vinyl top. Porter walls—white rubber-like material that turned black-walled tires white—was the piece de resistance, until it began to fly off my tires during a concert caravan somewhere between Springfield and Dayton, Ohio. I had a lemon and needed lemonade.

John A. Taylor—known among friends and colleagues as J.T.—couldn't wait to go to college. He took extra classes over the summer during junior high and high school in hopes of entering early. By age 16, he had accumulated more than enough credits to apply, but his parents and counselors felt that he was too young for college life and encouraged him to continue high school. He compromised and continued to take high school math, science, and language, while also enrolling at Wright State University. That's not all. He maintained two part-time jobs. It wasn't long before Taylor realized that his super-charged schedule would soon have him running on empty. "I decided that two jobs and six classes in high school were enough and said good-bye to Wright State after the fall quarter," he says.

Today, the MBA who also holds a Bachelor's degree in Agri-Business, found his path while completing his undergraduate work at Ohio State University. He decided on agri-business as a career path when, "I looked at the opportunities for people of color and saw a big discrepancy in the business agricultural sector," Taylor explains. An advisor helped coordinate a commodity training internship with ADM, after which Taylor was offered a full-time position. The rest, as they say, is history. He now serves as the company's director of corporate and supplier diversity.

Taylor's journey has been one of trade-offs. During his initial climb up the ADM ladder, he commuted between his home in Kenton, Ohio, and ADM headquarters in Decatur, Illinois. "My supervisor later confided that he was surprised—at least for the first few months—that I actually arrived back to



John A. Taylor

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work each Monday,” Taylor says. It’s the extra measure of determination, persistence, and attention to detail that Taylor says defines his key to success.

Taylor carries dual responsibilities, which include building successful business relationships with minority- and women-owned suppliers, and developing recruitment and retention strategies that foster a culture of inclusion at ADM. “It is true that we process crops to make food ingredients, animal feed-ingredients, and renewable fuels,” explains Taylor, “but my role is to help establish an inclusive culture, so that, as the realization that our world is getting smaller becomes more apparent, we remain competitive.”

“J.T. has done a great job of promoting diversity in ADM. He has increased the awareness of the benefits of partnering with diverse suppliers and customers, leading to a significant increase in external diversity company-wide,” says Michael D’Ambrose, ADM’s senior vice president of human resources and Taylor’s nominator for the Eagle Award.

As a volunteer for Junior Achievement, Taylor elected to serve in a middle school with the highest percentage of African-American male students. “I enhanced lesson plans that included prominent people of color and led to discussions about adversity and champions,” Taylor explains. “I believe I made a difference by offering a twist and it helped a few students rethink their options.”

Taylor has learned much about options and he has utilized them to develop meaningful partnerships, mentor others, and foster a culture of inclusion. Among his greatest passions: his family and three basset hounds who keep him grounded.

CareerFOCUS Magazine™ and the National Eagle Leadership Institute® salute 2007 Eagle Award winner John A. “J.T.” Taylor.

Nominating Company

Archer Daniels Midland Company

Current Position

Director, Corporate and Supplier Diversity

Professional Milestones

- “100 Best Men in Supplier Diversity in the Nation” – Minority Businesses
- Chair, Working Group Consumer Products Organization – National Minority Supplier Development Council
- Board of Directors, Central Illinois Supplier Development Council

Community Leadership

- Board of Directors, Community Investment Corporation of Decatur
- Heritage Behavioral Health Center
- Illinois Raptor Center, Decatur Branch

Leadership Principle

Always be an advocate for change and believe in a sense of fairness.

Education/Training

- Bachelor of Science in Agri-Business, The Ohio State University
- MBA, Millikin University
- Certified Diversity Professional, Cornell University Institute

Birthplace

Boston, MA

Current Home

Decatur, IL

The Leadership Promise at ADM

As a Fortune 100 company, ADM is committed to providing opportunities, training and benefits that exceed expectations. Whether your chosen field is business, engineering, safety, research and development, logistics or accounting, ADM gives you the opportunity to make your mark—across the country and around the world.

We count on the ambition and creativity of our employees to help us enhance our position as a global leader in the development of food, feed and fuel products. That’s why we’re focused on giving a new generation of leaders expanded responsibilities and opportunities to develop their skills and capabilities.

At ADM, we seek a diverse workforce of dedicated, experienced applicants, as well as enthusiastic interns and graduates to help us meet the challenge of feeding and fueling a growing world. In return, we offer competitive salaries, a comprehensive employee benefits program and many valuable employee services.

At ADM, the opportunity is yours.