

# Mind over Matter

Kellogg values employees who have the hunger and humility to learn. This always reminds me of a childhood experience. I think I was in the sixth grade, taking swimming lessons with my siblings. At one point, I panicked and began flailing in the water. I was convinced that I would drown, and, probably, so were my siblings. The instructor calmly told me to stand up. I did and was embarrassed to find that I was in only three feet of water! I learned a valuable lesson that day about the power that our minds can sometimes have over our bodies and our abilities.

During her first job quest, Sherri Toney observed that job interviewers were inadequately assessing and matching her talents and experiences with available positions. “I realized then that I wanted to be on the other side of the desk and help fit the right people with the right job,” she explains. To that purpose, Toney has pursued a career in “matchmaking” that has led her to her current position as vice president of diversity and inclusion for the Kellogg Company.

“Sherri has been instrumental in driving our company’s strategy to develop an inclusive environment, where all people can contribute their best work,” says her Eagle Award nominator Celeste Clark, Ph.D., Kellogg’s senior vice president of global nutrition and corporate affairs and herself a past Eagle Award honoree. “Sherri’s decades of human-resources experience, coupled with her genuine desire to help people, has been invaluable to our organization.”

Toney’s dedication to employee engagement is integral to the fabric of Kellogg’s vision, direction, and strategy for diversity. One example is her initiative to launch a diversity-training course. “I was able to help one area of the organization understand why such a course was necessary,” she explains. “Helping them think through the impact that this training could have upon the business and then allowing them to experience it for themselves sparked feedback so positive that it led to full implementation of the course across our U.S. business.”



## Sherri Toney

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Regarding professional development and renewal, Toney's drive has been the catalyst for her success. She explains that she has not often had the opportunity to pursue external training, but learning on the job has led her to be proactive in seeking out development opportunities. Self-described as "very quiet by nature," Toney realized early on that she would have to overcome her apprehension to public speaking. "It took years of challenging myself to say, 'Yes, I'll do it,' when I wanted to say 'no,' to gradually get to a place where public speaking didn't terrify me," she recalls.

Toney also recalls being promoted to her first vice president position, which she describes as one of the most significant events in her career. "I felt that, in this position, I could effect real and lasting change," she says. "While the title is nice, what it really signifies for me is recognition for my years of hard work and the sacrifices I've made."

Sacrifice sometimes means taking a stand against popular opinion, which Toney has been known to do. Promoting fairness and ensuring diversity aren't about supporting popular opinion, she says. So, on one occasion, when she didn't agree with the reassignment of a particular employee, she spoke out. "I knew it wasn't the right course of action for either the employee or the company," Toney explains. By helping all concerned to view the situation objectively and rethink their opinions, she was ultimately able to influence the right decision.

Those who work with Toney are impressed by her approach to leadership, which is described as being both fair and decisive—traits that are likely attributable to her unwavering sense of self. Since childhood, she says that she has understood two things: One, the importance of valuing who she is, and, two, that who she is adds value.

With Kellogg's "K Values" guiding business strategy and culture, and Toney's leadership guiding diversity and inclusion, Kellogg will continue to build Great brands.

*CareerFOCUS Magazine*<sup>™</sup> and the National Eagle Leadership Institute<sup>®</sup> salute 2007 Eagle Award winner Sherri Toney.

#### **Nominating Company**

Kellogg Company

#### **Current Position**

Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion

#### **Professional Milestone**

YMCA Black Achievement Award recipient

#### **Community Leadership**

- Board of Directors, Housing Resources
- Board of Directors, Child Care Resources/Kalamazoo Regional 4C
- Board of Directors, YWCA

#### **Leadership Principle**

Be open, honest, and direct.

#### **Education/Training**

- Associate of Arts, Muskegon Community College
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Western Michigan University

#### **Birthplace**

Muskegon, MI

#### **Current Home**

Kalamazoo, MI

## **The Leadership Promise at Kellogg**

Kellogg Company considers leadership development an integral part of our business and human-resources strategies. We believe that to ensure our competitive advantage, success, and sustainable growth for our business, we must proactively guide the development of those who will lead Kellogg into the future.

Our Kellogg Business Leader Model (KBLM) outlines the knowledge and abilities necessary for successful Kellogg leaders and development targets for those who wish to advance in the organization. The leadership expectations outlined in this model are being integrated into many of our people-development and performance-management programs.

Our executive leadership-development strategy further develops key executives globally by providing specific and accelerated career-development opportunities. As part of this strategy, our top executives manage the development of these key leaders, with a focus on building their strengths and developing the success factors outlined in the KBLM.