

Heidi Shyu

Raytheon Company

Earlier in my career, I was asked to lead the development of the next-generation active array radar system on the most technologically-advanced jet fighter aircraft in the U.S. military. The task seemed insurmountable at the time, because we had a relatively short time to deliver this product at half the cost, half the existing weight, and with better reliability than the current system.

Most people thought I was crazy to take that assignment. However, I chose to approach the situation as an opportunity to do something important for my organization that would benefit the men and women in uniform who protect our nation. In the end, despite the early characterization of the project by my team as “outrageous, ridiculous and impossible,” we completed the assignment three months ahead of schedule and exceeded all the customer’s goals.

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The point is, do not be afraid of challenges. Consider seemingly overwhelming situations as opportunities to test your mettle and truly believe that you are going to exceed your own expectations in the end. Look at the bigger picture and figure out how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together before creating your action plan.

I would advise every professional woman to **seek out the assistance and counsel of a mentor**—someone who is at least two levels above you that has a very good grasp of what success looks like. What are the things this individual knows, but you don’t? What attributes do they have that you currently don’t have, but are willing to learn?

You might also find it helpful to **seek out an independent, 360-degree assessment of your strengths and weaknesses** by your managers, your peers, and your employees. Even if you feel that you have wonderful working relationships, in many cases, you’ll be very surprised about the feedback you receive from individuals who interact with you most often. Use this exercise as an important vector check for your professional progression.

Finally, **learn and understand the importance of building and utilizing diverse teams** of individuals to solve problems. The beauty of a team is that every individual has a different background, knowledge base, education, and set of experiences, which allows them to think differently and offer unique and valuable perspectives. Leverage that diversity of thought to your advantage.



TITLE: Vice President, Technology and Research

EDUCATION: BS, mathematics, University of New Brunswick; MS, mathematics, University of Toronto; MS, electrical engineering, UCLA; engineers degree, UCLA; UCLA Executive Management Course; University of Chicago Business Leadership Program

FIRST JOB: Engineer on the Phoenix Missile Program—Hughes Aircraft Company

WHAT I’M READING: *The Jasons: The Secret History of Science’s Postwar Elite*, by Ann Finkbeiner

MY PHILOSOPHY: Strive for the highest goal possible and push yourself beyond your limits.

FAMILY: None

INTERESTS: Hiking and traveling

FAVORITE CHARITY: Doctors Without Borders (www.DoctorsWithoutBorders.org)

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COMPANY: Raytheon Company

HEADQUARTERS: Waltham, Massachusetts

WEB SITE: www.raytheon.com

BUSINESS: Defense, homeland security, information security

ANNUAL REVENUES: \$21.3 billion

EMPLOYEES: 72,000