

Judy Marks

Impatience Is a Virtue

People often say that patience is a virtue, but what about impatience? From the time she was a small child, Judy Marks loathed sitting still, challenged the status quo, and lived her hunger for the next thing. As a baby, she was constantly on the move. As a child and young woman, she dove into everything school had to offer—academics, athletics, and student government. Her drive led her to finish her college degree in three years and to attain a management position by the age of 23. Whether impatience was a fire licking at her heels or a sparkle in the distance compelling her to race toward it, she has been impatient for forward motion all her life. Now the President and CEO of Siemens Government Technologies, Inc. (SGT), impatience is the virtue that has earned her a sky-high vision and global impact that allows her to challenge the world just as much as it challenges her.

Siemens Corporation is a large German technology innovation conglomerate that was launched 165 years ago and remained a cohesive unit throughout the substantial turbulence that rocked the country during the World Wars. It has since emerged as a 400,000 person, \$100 billion, 190 country player dedicated to helping the world address the toughest industry, energy, infrastructure, and healthcare challenges of our time with an unwavering commitment to ethics and innovation. “Our role at SGT is quite simply to sell and deliver to the U.S. government any solutions they need from the Siemens portfolio,” she explains.

While its mission is simple, SGT’s task is actually quite sweeping. Its portfolio contains energy solutions and technology, including renewable energies, energy generation, transmission, and distribution. It also encompasses infrastructure, including technologies, control systems, and lighting in

buildings. It is also the largest water technology company in the world, as well as one of the largest builders of trains and locomotives, with their Sacramento manufacturing facility producing 70 electric locomotives for Amtrak’s northeast corridor. Along a different vein, they have a robust healthcare business that specializes in imaging and diagnostic technologies and other healthcare software. “My organization’s responsibility is to be the window to the government,” Judy confirms. “If any cleared employees are needed, they have to be US citizens, and they have to be part of this entity. If a federal contract is required to be held by a US company, we do that as well. So we have a full range of skills, offerings, and service deliveries, and my goal is to accelerate these capabilities and help serve our customers’ missions in the federal marketplace.”

SGT first originated as a small proxy company in 2002. After focusing on cost effectiveness and growth throughout the economic downturn that swept the globe, Siemens then switched gears in 2010 to identify their market opportunities for growth. They were interested not only in where markets were growing, but also the areas in which they were potentially underperforming their competitors. As they had never focused nationally on the federal marketplace, they earlier had decided to go to market locally. “Now we’re local everywhere,” Judy says. “Siemens has 60,000 employees in the U.S., located in every Congressional district in the country. We did well in the federal market in the past, but there was no coordinated approach across the different Siemens businesses in terms of market channels or buying contract vehicles. So the question was, if we focused, could we surpass our competitors, gain market share, and profitably grow our top line?”

Thus, SGT was formally launched in



October of 2011 with the goal of doubling, within five years, the roughly \$1 billion in federal business they were doing previously. Leading a team of 550, Judy's passion for entrepreneurship in large enterprises has led her to a role whose impact is as sweeping as her vision. "Healthcare, energy, infrastructure, and industrial solutions are national challenges," she points out. "They're not going to go away with sequestration, weapons reform, or scaling down the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's what got me excited—thinking about the next chapter and what problems I wanted to help our government solve. That's why I came to SGT."

Judy's career started with IBM Federal Systems, and having spent almost three decades working within the federal marketplace, she's taken on its mission as her own. "My background is in engineering, and I can't think of a more complex problem set to solve," she affirms. "When you think about the challenges facing our warriors or our citizens, there's nowhere else that has problems on this scale, or, conversely, solutions on this scale."

The IBM group she started with was acquired by Loral, which in turn was acquired by Lockheed Martin, so Judy stayed in the same enterprise for the first 27 years of her career, learning its ins and outs. "It's a class act company," she says. "I had the privilege of leading two divisions while I was there, which was phenomenal." With her evident passion for growing businesses inside large enterprises, she was a natural choice for Siemens when it began looking for someone to lead SGT. "Technically, SGT is only my second employer," she laughs. "I've only interviewed for jobs twice in the 28 years I've been in the workforce."

Among the driving forces in her decision to accept the position at SGT was the scope of the opportunity. Having spent 27 years in the same enterprise, she knew everyone and had an incredible network. She had over 4,000 people working for her in one of her division leadership roles, and she had already tried her hand at starting businesses. "What really compelled me to try something new at that stage of my career was the opportunity to experience a true global company," she explains. "At the end of the day, in a regulated business like defense, I was working for an American company that did business overseas. I now work for a global corporation, so

on any given day, I'm talking to people all over the world with diverse backgrounds, figuring out global strategies for product sets."

The other reason she made the switch was the personal challenge it promised. "Could I transition my leadership skills to an enterprise where I knew no one?" she asked herself. "Going in, meeting, aligning, collaborating, friend-raising, and being effective quickly—that's the ultimate test. That's what I wanted to do. I could have stayed where I was and been comfortable. But I was 47 at the time, and I knew I never wanted to look back and wonder if I should have done it. So I took that leap."

Judy grew up in Philadelphia as the youngest of three siblings, enjoying a positive childhood that was molded by her parents, who were both good role models and pressed upon her that she could do anything she put her mind to. With that advice, she decided to put her mind to everything, excelling in academics, athletics, and student government. "Things came easily to me, and I was always impatient to push forward," she says. "I wasn't necessarily an extrovert, but I've grown into it, and now I get energy from walking into a room full of strangers."

On some weekends, Judy would work handling the cash register for her uncle, who had two stores on the Italian Market in Philadelphia. Her father also owned a small department store in a suburb nearby, and she worked there as a teenager behind the counter in sales or in gift-wrapping during the holiday season. "That was our livelihood," she says. "As the business went, our lives went. My father worked his way up and was a self-made businessman in retail, and he wanted to instill those values in us as well. To this day, it doesn't matter the size of the contract we have or what we agree to deliver—I still remember that people do business with people. It's still a personal business, and my main priority and focus is serving the customer."

Working with her father, Judy also had the opportunity to see how he led, coming to appreciate his approachable style and his skill at setting objectives. "He drove results, but he did it with people feeling that they were part of the team," she reflects. Her mother, on the other hand, was a substitute teacher and drove the pursuit-of-excellence aspect of her character.

Judy never felt that there were any preset conditions imposed on the path she would follow

through life. Several of her grandparents were immigrants, and her parents were both in the first generation of their families to attend college and greatly valued higher education “I never had constraints or expectations put on me, other than to excel and find something that mattered and made a difference.”

When she enrolled at Lehigh University, Judy knew she wanted to pursue an engineering degree but couldn't decide between the very established field of electrical engineering or the brand new area of computer engineering. She sought the advice of her father, who then directed her to the Dean of the engineering program. With his advice, she chose electrical engineering knowing that it would form a sound basis for the future and completed her degree in three years. “Yes, I definitely do have an impatience to me,” she laughs. “I won't deny it.” She started with IBM Federal at age 20 and was in management there by age 23. Having come out of school in 1984, it was a great time to be a female engineer, as there weren't many. “I never had specific CEO-level aspirations,” she continues. “I just aimed to be the best I could at what I was working on. I trusted the enterprise around me to take care of me, and I was blessed to be at IBM at a time in the 1980's when leadership development was valued. I continued to learn and grow and stretch, and I worked hard.”

The enterprise did take care of her. In 1989, at the age of 25, she was promoted to become the assistant to the President of a half-billion dollar division, where she had the opportunity to be the fly on the wall in meetings to see how decisions were made, how people reacted, and how people behaved. “It was an MBA-like education in real time,” she says. “As you watch how decisions are being made on a daily basis across a variety of subjects, you're learning general management, and it was a tremendous experience.” Her multiple assignments had her located in upstate New York, and then down in D.C. in 2005, and she worked in that capacity until she received the call for SGT in 2011.

Amongst her successes, Judy is quick to acknowledge the failures that have lent her the depth that makes her so successful today. “The earlier you fail, the better,” she says. “I think of failures as reset moments, because they can help to remind you what's really important after you've been caught up in other things.”

And what's really important? Aside from her family, which is the proudest accomplishment of her life, Judy recognizes the pattern of development of her own knowledge base and how each piece fits together to create the expertise she wields today. Prior to SGT, she spent 27 years learning every aspect of her business, using her engineering mindset to identify systems that she could decompose and understand. By the time she was leading projects, she knew how things worked from the inside out.

“I like being at 50,000 feet, but I can dive as deep as anyone if need be,” she affirms. “From the creation of an idea, to how you sell it to a customer--I've led business development and marketing for organizations. From how you propose an idea, to how you win business--I've won some of the big ones. From how you run a program, to how you deliver it as a portfolio with a whole business, motivating a team of thousands of people to get behind you—I've done that. I had a tremendous opportunity to learn every part of what we do, and that was a journey that began when I was very young. So value your experiences, even at the bottom of the ladder, because they can go a long way to inform your leadership style later on.”

As a result of this textured past, Judy's leadership style has always revolved around reaching out to employees, making sure to address questions like “What's the vision? What badge am I wearing? Do I believe in the company I work for? Do I believe in where this leader is taking me?” To win the hearts and minds of the people on her team, she facilitates a quarterly call to everybody in the field to make sure they're part of the conversation. “People need to keep hearing messages, and they need to see where their livelihood is coming from,” she says. “People make a decision everyday about what kind of work they're going to do and with what kind of spirit, and connecting with them in this manner raises that work ethic and that spirit while raising the overall effectiveness of the company. Ideas come from everyone, not just from the top of an organization. That's the strength of diversity. No one person has all the answers. Leadership is about creating an environment where you allow the people around you to do their best.”

In advising young entrepreneurs entering the business world today, Judy is often asked how she has managed to build an exceptionally

successful career while also building an exceptionally wonderful family. With a loving husband and wonderful daughter, it was the Marks' willingness to blaze their own path and commitment to making it work that eventually made it work. "Everyone has their own story with their own solutions—you just have to decide what's right for you," she explains. "You can have it all, just not at one time. There are sacrifices, and you have to understand that. No one says you have to make them. It's all your decision, but know that you're the person to make that decision. You need to make it, and you need to live with it. In making these life decisions, you create your own normalcy. I have a husband and daughter in my life, and we've created what's normal for us. No one else understands it, but you can't let others judge you. No one follows the same path, and no one's walking in the shoes you're walking in."

The most empowering aspect of this philosophy is that, as long as one remains committed to following certain legal, ethical, social, and moral principles, there is no wrong choice. "Create your own path," she says. "Think through things, but don't take too long making decisions. Information is a powerful thing, so use it to make the best decision you can and then move

forward. Work hard, because work ethic is still valued in American enterprise. And don't be afraid to be impatient, because change is a good, inherently positive thing." If change is as good as it is inevitable, then this frame of mind sees a future destined for greatness, so why shouldn't we be impatient to get there?

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President and founder of Bernhardt Wealth Management and author of Profiles in Success: Inspiration from Executive Leaders in the Washington D.C. Area, Gordon provides financial planning and wealth management services to affluent individuals, families and business-owners throughout the Washington, DC area. Since establishing his firm in 1994, he and his team have been focused on providing high-quality service and independent financial advice to help clients make informed decisions about their money. For more information, visit www.BernhardtWealth.com and [Gordon's Blog](#).

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