In the spirit of National Women’s History month, I’d like to thank the Women’s Business Center and all Brevard organizations passionate about supporting women. As president of CareerSource Brevard, I enjoy rallying smart people around workforce issues, communicating employer needs and facilitating conversations that support Brevard’s workforce. I’m fortunate that I get to work each day with interesting and intelligent men and women and have noticed they, like me, share the practice of strengths-based leadership.

Whether used intentionally or not, your strengths are tied to your performance so identifying and leveraging them to work smarter, not harder just makes sense. For example, I know that — according to the Gallup StrengthsFinder Assessment Tool, my top leadership strengths are: Communicator, Maximizer, Achiever, Activator and Woo. Recently, I found myself in Washington D.C. for two important meetings and in retrospect, I believe my Woo, Communication and Activator strengths got me there. Let me explain.
Those strong in “Woo” love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. Those who lead with Communication generally find it easy to put their feelings into words. And those who use their “Activator” strength can make things happen by turning their thoughts into actions. Like many professionals, I belong to business and industry organizations both locally and nationally. My level of participation varies but in every case, I take each opportunity to “break the ice” and make a connection with another person. And I do. I have built a network of amazing individuals that support the mission of CareerSource Brevard and support my career goals.

Making connections is important, but simply attending committee and board meetings wasn’t worth anyone’s time, let alone mine, unless I was willing to really communicate with others. You could say I break my own ice. I speak up; I join discussions and share my thoughts and ideas because as singer-songwriter Sara Bareilles says — ‘say what you want to say, just let the words fall out.’ I’m brave enough to believe my words are relevant. This has resulted in some really interesting and valuable conversations.

As I attend these meetings, I take time to understand the issues, ferret out the needs and think about what I am capable of providing. I don’t just gather business cards, I really think about what I can do to affect change and then, my activator strength kicks in and I get things done.

As I mentioned, I believe engaging these strengths was noticed. It opened a lot of doors which led me to representing Florida at the National Association of Workforce Boards’ Workforce Policy Roundtable in D.C. where I joined 34 other workforce leaders from across the nation to discuss workforce development policies, experiences and best practices. A month later, I was back in D.C. participating in a workshop on workforce development and local job creation hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to ensure the voices of local stakeholders were well represented. On both occasions, I was able to activate conversations with others surrounding entrepreneurialism—a industry emerging in Brevard and one important to me as it is heavily dominated by women.

I encourage women to identify your strengths through the Strengths-Based Leadership Model and employ what you learn!

I hope to see many of you on March 19th for the Women’s History Month Awards Luncheon sponsored by the WBC at the Florida Institute of Technology where I am excited and honored to receive an Excellence in Leadership award for my own strengths-based leadership!

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