

FORUM

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Speaker Reveals Truth About Entrepreneurship

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On Saturday morning, Nov. 15, 2003, while the majority of business owners were leisurely reading the morning paper or catching up on the demanding workload of the past week, Betsy Helgager was taking time out of her busy schedule to help educate Florida A&M University PRSSA members on the fortunes and trials of owning a business.

Helgager, the president and CEO of BLH Consulting, designed and presented a workshop, titled The Myths and Realities of Starting Your Own Business, to enlighten students about entrepreneurship.

“Having just gone through building what I consider a successful business, it’s my responsibility to share my insights with all those who have the interest and enthusiasm to learn and evaluate owning a business as an option,” Helgager said to the group.

Helgager won accolades in the public relations world even before her entrepreneurial endeavors. As a former FAMU PRSSA president and creator of the Ketchum Boot Camp, Helgager left her lucrative position as the vice president of African American markets group at Ketchum Public Relations Worldwide to establish her own company. Helgager was the spearhead of the African American Markets Group, which Ketchum instituted as a diversity marketing initiative.

Since leaving Ketchum, she has made several financial contributions to the FAMU chapter of PRSSA, as well as devoted her valuable time to the students.

Kim Bradshaw, president of the FAMU PRSSA, praised Helgager for her dedication to FAMU and to the Society.

“A lot of professionals enjoy coming back and interacting with students. But Betsy goes beyond that because she gives financial support, and she wants to help you on a

personal level as well.”

In her presentation, Helgager highlighted key points crucial to starting and maintaining a profitable business.

“Keep your credit in good order. Be professional about your business and love what you do so much you would do it for free,” she said.

“Don’t go into owning your own business because you think it will be easy,” she added, “It’s a lot of hard work, but the rewards are great.”

In addition to Helgager’s personal advice about business ownership, she discussed the reasons for business failure, first year capital investments and the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur.

During the course of the workshop, members pitched business plans to each other and were called to vote on which three they deemed the most effective. The top three students received prizes.

Third place winner, Tilicia Johnson, said she learned some important lessons from attending the workshop.

“You have to be confident about yourself and your marketability and build as many relationships in the professional arena as possible,” she said.

Helgager said she has had several people serve as mentors and role models throughout her career whom she met through personal networking.

“The commonality with all the individuals who have impacted my life is that they are there when I need them and they listen without judgment and pull from their years of experience to give me the best advice when I need it.”

Because of that, becoming a mentor a part of good social responsibility, she concluded.

“We never get to where we are alone, and we should never forget that.”