

A Day in the Life of...

by: Janelle Haas



Who:

Betty-Ann Heggie,
Motivator, Mentor, Author, and
Professional Speaker

Where:

Time is split between
Saskatoon and Arizona

When:

March 19, 2012

Betty-Ann Heggie, former senior vice president with PotashCorp., turned motivator, mentor, author, and professional speaker, has experienced more in her lifetime than seems possible. After having risen to the top of a man's world, Heggie has reinvented herself and is now determined to use her own experience to help other women advance and reach their highest potential. A member of the Hall of Fame of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women, Heggie has become well known for showing members of her audience how to find personal fulfillment while achieving their professional goals.

Standing on top of her career and using her position to give others a hand-up, this thought-leader and women's advocate takes PINK through a day in her unique and rewarding life.

Betty-Ann Heggie is fascinated by the nature and nurture of gender. After working in a male-dominated environment for 26 years, she became very interested in the differences men and women bring to the decision-making table. From this experience, and by studying outside experts, she has developed a new kind of 'science' she calls Gender Physics. In it, she considers the physiology and socialization that form gender identity, which she calls Gender Pull. To reach their goals, women sometimes need to break free of the influence of the media, friends, family, and schools. She calls this realization a Catalytic Moment and believes that it happens most easily with the help of a mentor. Thus, she devotes her days to thinking, writing, and speaking about topics specific to gender and mentorship, firmly believing that is the best way to help advance the cause of women.

"To be successful, I believe that we need to have both qualities: femininity (nurture, listen, collaborate, and empathize) and masculinity (stand up for ourselves, strive to get ahead, promote our attributes, take risks and gain courage). I dedicate my time to helping women find that balance in life."

Before she begins her workday, Heggie likes to fuel herself by keeping healthy and energized. She starts most mornings by meditating and finding inner tranquility. This is followed by a healthy dose of the good stuff – probiotics, water, and a pot of herbal tea. These items help her get into a good frame of mind for the day ahead. After breakfast she retreats to her desk to begin reading, contemplating, and jotting down thoughts pertaining to women, their advancement, and their place in the world.

"After I do some reading, I try to take a walk every morning. Exercise is important to get your creative juices flowing.

"It sounds kind of boring," she laughs, "but honestly, the best way to start your day is to take care of yourself and focus on what drives you. By taking the time to make sure your personal life is balanced, it makes it that much easier to find balance in your professional life as well."

Heggie splits her time between Arizona and Saskatchewan, but calls Saskatoon home. To be able to motivate and help women make positive lifestyle choices, Heggie spends a great portion of her day communicating with others, in person or by Skype, telephone, and email.

"My day revolves around doing things I believe will help women – so that could involve writing, researching, speaking, or working with my foundation. It's a lot of

computer work – blogging, articles, newsletters – a lot of time reading about things that are relevant to women and their situation in the world. I think about these issues relative to my own experience and I write about them. When I write I organize and categorize ideas that really integrates them into my material.

“For example, I just finished reading an article about Egypt. I travelled there and loved it, and as a result, I feel a kinship with the women in that country. When this particular group of people were attempting to overthrow their government, the women were an important part of the process and helped immensely. But when it was over, the women weren't a part of the system. Thus, even though they had been so crucial to the cause, when all was said and done, they weren't included in the decisions and plans for the new government. In my opinion, the women lose, but so does the country in not having their valuable attributes and perspectives at the table.

“That made me think about how important it is to keep women in the system in North America as well. The system isn't very hospitable for women so many drop out when they have children; others start businesses and become entrepreneurs. Neither of these choices is wrong and in both situations I support the women's decisions.

“However, as long as we don't have women moving up the ladder in established organizations, we are missing their input in powerful and influential positions. I have seen personally the wonderful dynamic that women bring to a boardroom full of men and want to see every organization enjoy those benefits.

“I firmly believe that more women would stay in the system if they were encouraged to do so and mentorship is an important part of that process. So is a good understanding of 'Gender Physics' as it gives women the awareness they need to cross-over and use their masculine energy when a situation demands it.”

By studying women and social behaviors from varying cultures, Heggie incorporates these outside notions into her own work at the University of Saskatchewan's Edward School of Business (ESB) where she founded a formal, structured mentorship program. Heggie is dedicated to the school, personally funding the mentorship program to ensure that it is continuously 'womentoring,' and helping women discover their potential.

At some point in the day, Heggie will be preparing for one of her motivational speaking events, ensuring that she is delivering the best possible message to her ESB protégés. She uses three pillars in her program: networking, professional development, and a formal match with a female mentor. She focuses heavily on the field of professional development using the commonalities of successful women, which the global consulting company McKinsey has determined to be presence, belonging,



and resilience. The program helps women discover their personal gifts and talents through the help of a mentor, but it also teaches women how to overcome obstacles to find a good inner core, all on their own.

“My world seems to revolve around womentorship – either through the program at the Edward School of Business or my own foundation. When I go out and speak, I agree on a price with the organizers, but instead of them paying me, I ask that they make a donation to my foundation. With that, I can finance other programs. For example, last year I was able to bring in women from Afghanistan to mentor them. I was in Italy giving a speech, and shared the podium with an amazing woman named Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, who started 80 secret schools for girls in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. When we were finished speaking she made a bee-line to me and said 'I want you to bring some of my women from Afghanistan to be mentored by you. I need them to see how women become leaders in the Western world.'”

Most of Heggie's speaking is done in North America, but she has also gone out of the country on various occasions and is a regular speaker at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona.

“My main passions are the advancement of women and mentorship, quite frankly. Paradoxically, it is interesting that I can most help women by teaching them to use their masculine energy in addition to their feminine energy. But it is so fulfilling to see women standing taller and feeling better about themselves when they go out into the world that all the effort everyday is worth it.”

Aside from her public speaking, mentorship, and teaching, Heggie also serves on the Pro-Trans Ventures board. She has been awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the Alumni Mentorship Award from the University of Saskatchewan, and has had several other acknowledgements throughout her career.

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