

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM MY FATHER

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My father, Ronald J. Bordui, gave me my first professional job at the age of 16 as an intern with the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). At the time, I had started my first entrepreneurial venture mowing neighborhood lawns and had worked as a bus boy at a local French restaurant and as "Potato Man" at Rax Roast Beef. In fact, it was the event of Rax burning to the ground (I was not working that day!) that prompted my father to ask if I was interested in doing work for the AOA in the summer. He was the Chief Financial Officer and he was willing take a risk on me in a role he lined up in the Mailroom.



My dad and I commuted each summer morning from our home in Crown Point, Indiana to downtown Chicago to 212 East Ohio Street. My first task in the Mailroom was stuffing envelopes. I became highly efficient at this task and eventually earned an invitation to work in the Accounting Department.

I was assigned to a wonderful mentor in Accounts Payable and was able to successfully take on an array of tasks. After my first summer, I was invited back for the next four years while at Crown Point High School and during my early years at Indiana University. I worked in virtually every area of the Accounting Department including writing department procedures, completing monthly reconciliations and assembling draft Subsidiary Financial Statements by the end of my tenure.

This professional experience at a young age taught me many things and it helped me secure an Internship with IBM Corporation as an Accounts Payable Specialist in Southbury, Connecticut in my Junior year at Indiana University Business School.



The summers working with my father in Chicago as teenager created wonderful memories and proved to be a tremendous experience in my professional journey. I wanted to share a few of the leadership lessons I gratefully learned from my dad:

A Memorable Signature – My dad signed a lot of documents and always had an impressive signature. It was a unique mark that unequivocally affirmed that he was signing off. This motivated me to practice creating my own signature modeled after his. I eventually refined my own after being impressed that every letter of President Ronald Reagan’s was legible. To this day, my signature is inspired by the combination of Ronald J. Bordui and Ronald W. Reagan.

To deserve it, you must earn it – My first professional opportunity started in the Mailroom stuffing thousands of envelopes on a daily basis. Working alongside another “envelope stuffer,” I enthusiastically embraced the task and devised a process using rubber finger tips that was considerably faster than my co-worker (who did not seem to share the same excitement as I did for this task). Because my mailroom production was strong and received positive reviews, it gave my dad the confidence that I could be trusted with an assignment in the Accounting Department.

Maximize Value for the Investment – My parents have always been frugal. Observing my father in his financial role and as a master of the 10 key calculator; I learned to appreciate thinking about both costs and benefits as an essential decision-making skill. It wasn’t always the lowest cost option that was selected, but the one that would deliver the greatest value for the investment. In fact, my father arranged the financing of the AOA’s move from 212 E. Ohio Street to its current headquarters at 142 E. Ontario Street during my tenure. For me, the fundamental premise of maximizing value with limited financial and human resources permeates my thinking and actions every single day.

Always Move Forward with Resiliency – There were ups and downs in my father’s career as it turns out association work is not always altruistic and can become quite political. He always seemed to take adversity in stride and move forward. I think the great work that we have had the privilege of doing for healthcare associations in the past 10 years such the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Venous Forum and others has been a tribute to the resiliency I observed in my father.

Family Matters the Most – A 5-day per week commute to and from Chicago from Indiana was grueling. This type of commute is a primary reason why so many people embrace working from home today. Despite the daily rigor, my dad arranged his work day so that we were home for dinner every night with the whole family. Family time around the dinner table on a daily basis was a very special part of growing up.



My dad’s greatest joy is being a proud grandfather to his four amazing grandkids – Savanna, Hayley, Conrad and Brinna. I am extremely grateful to my dad for giving me the opportunity to work with him when I was a teenager. It was truly an experience for a lifetime.

Dedicated to Ronald Joseph Bordui (May 15, 1938 to April 6, 2024) - “We love you Papa!”