

Leaders to Learn From

Shantel Butler

Project Engineer
United Parcel Service (UPS)

“At the age of 12, while I was a care giver to my three-year-old sister, I believed that I would be a drill sergeant/lawyer in the armed forces and married with two kids and a dog all by the age of 27. Today I do not have kids, I am not married, I am not a drill sergeant, I am not a lawyer... but I am changing lives. I am a STEM advocate for young minorities, especially those who grew up similar to me, I am a servant for my community, and I am successful in my own way as an engineer. I am EVERYTHING that I’m supposed to be. Sometimes our plan isn’t God’s will, but his will is always better than our plans. I do not regret a thing about who or where I am today. I genuinely hope that within the next 10 years, I am able to give back to the community by becoming a full-time consultant for minorities pursuing STEM degrees and careers. **It’s a passion, which means it’s my purpose.**”



Her Pathway to a Fulfilling Career

Shantel grew up in a single parent home in a low-income neighborhood. “My mother was a college graduate but she was a young mother. My grandmother basically raised me until she passed when I was 8. Those were my foundation years. My grandmother/aunts/cousins didn’t go to school beyond middle school or high school. So, I was taught common sense in the household, but no one could teach me anything academically. I was terrible at math in elementary school and our school didn’t have the resources for a tutor so I would give up recess or even stay up late at home to try and understand the content. I worked hard to make sure my name was on the ‘All A’s List’ (for the first three of the four nine school weeks) every single year so that I could receive the ‘All A’s Trophy’ during the end-of-the-year Academic Ceremony. For me at that time, that’s what ‘success’ looked like. Also, to be as young as I was, I knew too well the feeling of having very little; being able to earn a trophy that was all mine meant a lot to me. It also showed me I could do any and everything I put my mind to. I figured out early in life that we (I), and no one else, set the bar for where we (I) wanted to go in life. I am so glad that my mother and grandmother cultivated that mentality

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in me. My unfavorable circumstances while growing up were my fuel. My life has never been easy, but I was raised to internalize and embody hard work, mental, spiritual, and emotional strength.”

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Today, Shantel is a Project Engineer for United Parcel Service (UPS). “I organize and execute projects after reviewing corporate issued specifications and operational needs for our internal customers (small package handling facilities across the southeast). It is my job to understand the scope of work, review and initiate design criteria, hire contractors to perform tasks based on the scope of work and specified design, execute contracts with these contractors, manage and implement a budget, verify all scope of work is being performed per UPS standards, and deliver a finished product to the internal customer by a set completion date. It has been a tremendously difficult yet rewarding journey. I really enjoy my job. It pushes me out of my comfort zone and forces me to expand my breadth of perspective.”

How Do You Know When it is Time to Make a Change?

“When doing, being a part of, engaging in, or involving yourself in anything and anywhere because a ‘have to do’ instead of a ‘like to do’, it may be time to make a transition to a place, time, or situation where you are experiencing the latter of the two. The idea is to get uncomfortable with being comfortable; when there is no room or no way to challenge yourself with what you are doing, you must realize that “YOUR ROOTS HAVE OUTGROWN THAT POT AND IT IS TIME TO BE REPLANTED ELSEWHERE.” This logic applies to jobs, relationships, clothes, etc. If it hurts to continue what you are doing, it is time to stop doing that thing. That’s how I knew it was time for me to leave my last job. It was more of a chore than anything. Rain produces growth; so when storms come, you must know that they too have an end and will always benefit you in the end.”

What Aspects of a Being Leader Appeal to You?

“I like being able to positively impact people. I like the ability to be a resource for people who think they’re the first person in their shoes. I am able to share with them my experiences in hopes that they are able to find a common and relatable ground with me by knowing their shoes were once worn by someone else. And if they (I) could pull through it, they will be able to also. There’s a quote by Oscar Wilde that says, “Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.” I live by this; I’ve made many mistakes, but they’ve given me priceless experiences. I’ve had a lot of rainy days growing up, thinking I was alone, but the thing that made me keep my head up was the testimony of others similar to me. As a leader, I am able to share these truths in hopes that they will save others from the feeling of isolation, solitude, and aloneness. In return, they are able to trust me, and we are able to create an efficient and trustworthy partnership.”

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Advice for Future Leaders

“Never stop trying STUFF. No matter what it is you’re trying, never give up on it. Always see it through. I have found the paths that have the most resistance, those that are the most challenging, are those that yield the most growth. Most times it’s not about getting through your problems, it’s about growing through them; learning what you can about yourself in the process. That’s what sets people apart; the mentality of seeing your glass half empty or half full. It is not the fact of whether someone did or did not have problems and hard times getting to where they are, it’s more about how they handled those problems and hard times when they arose. *‘The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves’* -Ray Kroc. You must be the example, believe in yourself and allow everyone else to believe in you. Everything will work out in due time IF you stay true to yourself and keep pursuing your purpose. The pain you feel in the pursuit of your purpose will lead you to your passion!”