



DREAMS

DO COME TRUE

BY PAMELA J. WILLITS

Among Jennifer (Melchior '88) Hansen's earliest memories is at age four, driving through a snowstorm with her family to see Snow White on the big screen. Today, a figurine of the seven dwarfs sits perched on the bookcase in her office at Radio Disney.

"You wouldn't say I was fanatical about Disney as a child, but I am now. I love what I do here," Hansen said.

And her career path is evidence of that, having been promoted this year from executive director of sales to vice president of ad sales.

A silver Mickey Mouse pin adorns her royal blue blouse lapel. "I wear a piece of Disney jewelry everyday, even on the weekends, to remind me of the brand I represent," said Hansen.



Behind her desk, a black and white poster of Walt Disney fills the wall. To paraphrase Hansen's favorite Walt Disney quote - You can dream...but first it requires people to make that dream a reality. And the pathway to her dream job has been paved with people and opportunities to guide her along.

LIFE AT PADUA

As a 1988 Padua graduate, Hansen was one of those students who loved school and embraced all it had to offer. She was a member of Key Club, the National Honor Society, and the French Club. She played guitar at Mass and sang in the choir.

Padua colors run in the family, as Hansen's father, Bill Melchior, was a member of the first graduating class, back in 1965. Hansen, herself, holds the distinction of being the first daughter of an alumnus to attend Padua. "I loved Padua. A lot of who I am and the work ethic I have comes from my parents and my years at Padua," Hansen said.

"My time at Padua challenged me to think and ask questions. I was never shy. My parents always encouraged me to speak my mind and put myself out there," Hansen said. And what better place to do so than the stage? After landing the lead in the high school theatre production of *Our Town*, Hansen went on to play in *Godspell* and *Camelot* at local theatres including the Greenbrier and The Royalton Players.

A MIND FOR BUSINESS

In 1991, Hansen graduated from Baldwin-Wallace College, with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and a minor in business. "I originally thought I wanted to be a psychologist, but after taking a business course, I became intrigued with the psychology behind business," Hansen said.

She obtained her degree in 2.5 years, while working full time as a counter manager for Estée Lauder, in Dillard's department store. Responsible for hiring and training sales staff and driving revenue, she created new sales events resulting in increased revenue for the make-up and skin care giant.

A MOVE SOUTH

Marrying soon after, she and her first husband moved to Montgomery, Alabama. Here Hansen had the opportunity to put her psychology education to use in the non-profit sector.

From 1993-1995, she held the position of associate director of development for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, helping



with fundraising efforts, developing revenue plans and budgets, and managing over 100 volunteers.

In 1995, at twenty-six years old, she became the executive director of the Montgomery Ballet. During that time, the Ballet Pensacola also retained Hansen to develop their annual fundraising strategy.

By 1996, Hansen came to understand the phrase 'there's not a lot of profit in nonprofit' and began to look for her next career move. "No one is going to give it to you, you have to make your own destiny," said Hansen.

DESTINY FOUND

The de-regulation of radio stations had brought great changes to the broadcast industry. "It opened up the market to buyers across the board," said Hansen, who saw her next move when a local Montgomery media company posted a position for sales account executive.

With her sales and fundraising background, Hansen reasoned if she could ask for a donation, and in return give a well-written thank you note and smile, she could probably sell radio. She learned quickly and soon moved on to a position as regional sales manager for another local broadcast company.

In 1997, with her career in radio sales in full swing, Hansen remarried. With experience in launching a new station, training sales staff and overseeing revenue budgets and forecasts, it was just a matter of time before opportunity came knocking again.

THE JOURNEY HOME

When a position as station manager for Radio Disney Cleveland opened up in 2000, Hansen knew it was time to go home. Not surprisingly, by 2004 her sales and management skills saw her promoted to regional director, overseeing operations for Radio Disney stations across the northeastern United States.

What's different about life at Radio Disney from her previous radio positions? While serving clients to the best of her ability has remained a constant, Hansen says the difference is in the market. "It's not so much about the medium, but the process. I'm providing them access to a unique audience," said Hansen.

Driven by the 5,000 countrywide events they host annually, Radio Disney creates a consumer reach that extends beyond the airwaves. Events range from appearances at baseball games and local fairs, to events staged at area malls and zoos.

Advertisers are all about reaching that family audience. “Our true claim is our ability to work hand in hand with our partners,” Hansen said. “Here in Cleveland, we have great partnerships with the Cleveland Indians and the Cleveland Zoo.”

It’s no surprise that Radio Disney has a family based audience. Their sweet spot is the 9 to 11 year olds or tweens, whose majority of listening time is had within the confines of the family vehicle, with Mom (or Dad) at the wheel.

And with such a young audience comes great responsibility. “There’s always a balance between what the sponsor may want and maintaining the integrity of the Disney brand,” said Hansen. Sponsors range from mass retail giants to wireless providers, and from auto dealerships to healthcare institutions. When working with a client, Hansen said she looks for the mutual win – helping the client achieve their objectives, while making sure it feels right for the Disney brand.

With concerns over today’s lifestyle choices, Radio Disney implements fun health and fitness programs that inspire healthier lifestyles in support of Disney’s Magic of Healthy Living, an initiative designed to partner with parents to inspire kids to lead healthier lifestyles. By providing engaging content and useful tools, their healthy living initiative makes nutritious eating and physical activity more appealing and fun.

YOUR MUSIC, YOUR WAY

Located at 1260 on the AM dial in Cleveland (frequency of former WIXY radio of the 60s and 70s), Radio Disney offers listeners much more than music. And while Great Lakes Mall may be an unlikely venue for a beach party, that’s exactly the type of entertainment that keeps bringing the kids back for more. A chance to hang out with the Radio Disney Road Crew, participate in games and activities, and have their pictures taken against a beach backdrop, draws an audience for an evening of good, clean fun. Crossing mediums, this event also helped create buzz for the premiere of Teen Beach Movie, which aired exclusively on the Disney Channel.

Launched in 1996, Radio Disney is the #1, 24-hour radio network devoted to kids, tweens and families, and can be found in markets across the country from Boston to Atlanta, Sacramento to Indianapolis, and Detroit to Houston. Kids help pick the music that is played and are encouraged to interact. With a toll-free call in request line, a Top-30 Countdown posted on their website, and a Friday Night Talent Show, which allows callers to phone in and sing tunes karaoke style, the Radio Disney tagline - Your Music, Your Way – says it all.

“Appealing to kids and moms alike, Radio Disney is a part of pop culture,” said Hansen. From today’s pop icons Taylor Swift and Selena Gomez to the Mom’s Throw Back! Sweepstakes featuring music sensation Boyz II Men, it’s a brand that product sponsors want to engage.

LEANING IN - HER CAREER, HER WAY

Facebook’s COO Sheryl Sandberg’s recent release of *Lean In*, a manifesto on women and the workplace, has drawn attention to the work-life balance issues that keep many women from realizing their full career potential.

Hansen, whose workday starts with checking email at 6:30 a.m. and may end at 10:00 p.m. with a phone call from anywhere in the country, is no stranger to the challenges of finding balance, as her work takes her across four time zones.

Following her promotion earlier this year, her new duties as vice president of ad sales for the Radio Disney Station Group include the management of 300+ people, leading sales strategy and driving advertising revenue for all of their stations across the country. And with new duties, comes more travel. Monthly trips to New York, meetings in Burbank, California, every other month, and visits to all the markets in between make for a fulfilling, yet demanding job.

Whether she’s speaking to new staff, overseeing client initiatives or providing sales training, Hansen’s sales philosophy can be seen throughout her daily dealings. “It’s not about the project, but about the person I’m speaking with – how can I help them reach their goal or potential?”

As Sandberg offers a blueprint for women striving to reach their potential as industry leaders in the corporate world, Hansen enjoys imparting her sales knowledge to help others grow their careers. “Women do exceptionally well in radio, from sales to management,” said Hansen. Instilling in others the ability to follow their gut instinct when working with potential sponsorship clients, as well as developing a feeling for whether the consumer will understand the client’s message, are areas where Hansen excels.

Hansen believes that directing sales teams is like steering a ship - a slight shift in course will set you moving in a whole new direction. “With our sales teams dispersed across the country, it’s important to feel a connection to the company. My interaction with our teams bridges that distance – nothing replaces eye to eye interaction,” Hansen said.

While her copy of *Lean In* sits on her nightstand at home, awaiting time to be read, Hansen has already embraced many of Sandberg’s ideals. Take your rightful place at the table, take risks that stretch your abilities, and make your life partner your career partner as well.



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“ANYONE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN THEY PUT THEIR MIND TO IT.”

Sandberg holds the belief that for women to be more empowered at work, men must become more engaged at home. Hansen would agree. “My husband is my sounding board. He’s very supportive - I couldn’t do what I do without him.”

THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

While radio sales can be a cutthroat industry, Hansen says that’s not so at Radio Disney. She attributes the success most find at Disney to the company’s culture. While the sales team as a whole is spread out across the country, there’s a sense of team spirit. “It’s a viral community – there’s lots of help available to any sales member who asks,” Hansen said.

Hansen says she’s started to see generational differences in how her sales team looks for prospects. While seasoned professionals might still look to the newspaper, for the younger set it’s all about social media. “LinkedIn has changed their world,” said Hansen.

What’s the one common thread for success at Radio Disney? “They have to come in the door with the want to,” said Hansen. “Anyone can be successful when they put their mind to it.” In today’s business world, where there seems to be a growing sense of entitlement, Hansen is quick to point out that the business world is still a two-way street. “You have to bring something to the party.”

Hansen certainly practices what she preaches. Starting this September, she’ll be enrolled in the MBA program at MIT in Boston. Course work will require her to be on campus every three weeks for Friday and Saturday classes and once every six months for a whole week of classes. “I realized I missed learning,” said Hansen. “I think it’s important to seize the opportunity to continue to learn and grow.” And it’s no surprise that Disney is supportive of her ambition, for Walt Disney himself embodied the spirit of wonder and curiosity.

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EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

From the first drawings, penned in 1928, of the iconic Disney symbol Mickey Mouse, technology has moved us forward at a speed that even Walt Disney could not have imagined. From streaming music online at RadioDisney.com to the Radio Disney iPhone and Android apps, the company quickly adopted emerging technology, as its growing audience became more tech savvy.

With Radio Disney’s web presence, listeners can log in online to request songs, or phone in their requests toll free. They can then choose to continue listening online or over the AM radio dial. Radio Disney is also available on the iTunes radio tuner, as well as on Sirius XM satellite radio — Channel 79, both in the United States and Canada.

Regardless of which medium they choose, the goal is to draw listeners with quality content. “Our focus is on the content, not where or how our listeners engage with that content,” said Hansen.

From websites to social media, Disney would have been enchanted by the possibilities.

Or perhaps he would have seen a need to balance the new with the old. As is true with most things in life, finding balance can be the true key to success.

FINDING BALANCE

Life within the wonderful world of Disney may be a long way from the make-up counter at Dillard’s department store, but the drive to be the best she can be, at work or play, is at the core of all Hansen’s successes.

When she’s not at the office or traveling for work purposes, Hansen is home with her Newfoundland dogs, or on the road headed to a dog show. Fully supportive of her career and canine companions alike, sales of her husband’s photographs of the dogs help support canine cancer research.



Hansen and her husband first encountered Newfoundlands at a Disney event.

Originally bred as working dogs for fishermen in the Dominion of Newfoundland, now part of Canada, this large canine breed is known for its water rescue and draft skills.

After numerous visits to a top breeder, conveniently located in Cleveland, the Hansens had a serious case of puppy love.

That was eight years ago. Today, they own three show-quality dogs. In the world of design and architecture, it’s said that balance is best achieved in sets of three. Perhaps the same can be said when looking for balance in life. “They’re my kids,” said Hansen, as she glanced towards a photograph of the threesome displayed on her desk.