

Always Hit "Reply All"

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I was first intrigued by one of the tag lines for the sorority: "be your best self." I have always been happy with who I am and what I have accomplished. I believe I have always been true to myself and have had genuine relationships with my family, friends and colleagues. But what was meant by your *best self*?

The email subject line read "Hello friend." Knowing I had just moved closer to home, a former colleague and old friend of mine, Kristin Morgan, had reached out to connect me with some of her colleagues in the field. She had been serving on the NPC delegation for Delta Phi Epsilon, which was headquartered in Philadelphia. She was hoping I could provide my expertise in some way. I had never worked with a chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon in my career, but I was willing to be of service. I was no stranger to volunteer work and it would be refreshing to focus my work with one group rather than a community of chapters as I had for the previous 15 years.

Receiving this email was interesting timing. I had stepped away from the fraternity/sorority advising world to move closer to family. My father was ill, and the opportunities in higher education were not fitting in to my new lifestyle at home. I needed to take on a new career path to be present for my dad. I started to reflect on who I was meant to be. Was I becoming the best version of myself? What fulfills me, inspires me, and makes me happy?

Turning back to that email from Kristin Morgan, I quickly responded and said I would love to learn more about the organization, and admittedly I was unfamiliar with the mission and founding principles of Delta Phi Epsilon. I had no idea the organization's executive director was copied on the original email until after I hit "reply all" and "send." Much to my surprise, I received a call from a headquarters staff member the next day asking me to volunteer.

And so it began. Reflecting on my career, I realize I had always been guided by personal values instilled in me through my parents and childhood upbringing. My father was a police sergeant working around the clock, attending night school, and starting a photography business on the side. He taught my sisters and I to be fair, just, honest, and above all, care for one another, whatever it takes. My mother stayed at home and cared for three kids with unconditional love. She showed unwavering support for her husband, and dedication to our successes in life as if they were her own.

So there it was staring me in the face. *Become the best version of myself. Be just. Care for one another. Love unconditionally.* All words familiar to me. Delta Phi Epsilon's founding principles are justice, sisterhood and love. If this was not values alignment personified (or at least a strange coincidence), I do not know what is. The answer was clear to me.

I began volunteering with a local chapter, and then was asked to participate in leading focus groups for advisors, as well as consult on projects. I quickly began to realize the innovative,

pioneering spirit of the staff, alumnae and undergraduate women in the organization by experiencing their drive to empower women to be something in society.

The founders of Delta Phi Epsilon were aspiring lawyers who were involved in the women's suffrage movement and fought for human rights at a time when it was risky and unpopular to do so. How inspiring to see this same fire and energy embodied in the women almost 100 years later! I wanted to be part of this movement in a more permanent way. Three years and a few coffee talks later, I was invited to join the team as the assistant executive director and the first male employee. This was yet another nod to the "out of the box" mentality of the organization.

Not an eyelash batted when I walked into the office. To my chagrin, my reputation and passion for the sorority preceded me. This was evidence to me that gender was a nonissue, and more importantly, that my values were aligned with the mission and vision of the organization.

When asked what I do for a living by those unfamiliar with the industry, I explain I work with the most innovative women's collegiate leadership organization in North America. I oversee the organization's "beginning to forever" – managing organizational growth in collegiate and alumnae membership. I have been entrusted with securing the future of the organization by empowering women to be their best selves. In two short years on staff, I have seen the membership grow by 25% and the staff support and development increase in quality and quantity.

As an added benefit to working for Delta Phi Epsilon, I was inspired me to become more involved with my own fraternity and now serve on the national council. I have seen what tools are necessary to lead a fraternal organization to greatness, and have begun developing resources for program operations and member engagement. Thanks to the forward-thinking women of Delta Phi Epsilon, I have come to know the best version of myself.

Everything I need to know I learned from my parents and my childhood. Everything I did not know I needed to know, I learned from Delta Phi Epsilon. I guess hitting "reply all" is a good thing sometimes.