

Leadership Program Leads Alum to Pursue Book, Harvard

“This program changed everything for me because it gave me self confidence in my skills and abilities,” says Otis, who now oversees leadership development programs for a major organization.

So confident that Otis this year applied and was accepted to the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. So confident that she was inspired to write a book – *101 Ways to Lose a Great Employee: A Manager’s Guide to Saying and Doing the Right Thing* – that is getting five-star reviews on Amazon.com this holiday season.

“I knew the program was going to change my career trajectory somehow and it did,” Otis says.

Otis graduated from Dominican in 1994 with a BA in Business Management she earned through the adult degree completion program. That put her on a path to bigger and better things.

After Otis earned her Master’s degree in Organizational Development from the University of San Francisco, she realized she had something else in her – a book. Working for nearly 20 years in the field of training and organizational development for several large organizations, she observed poor leadership and management skills around her and she decided to create a list that she kept on her computer. The folder was entitled “Bad Leadership Examples.”

“The problematic interactions happened so frequently that even I was astonished,” she says.

However, it wasn’t until she was in a book store with her husband, Peter, looking unsuccessfully for a book to buy and give to a peer who was fretting about losing employees that she realized she needed to write the book for herself.

The inspiration to finish it happened after she enrolled in Dominican's "The Making of Leaders" Leadership Certificate Program. It is a rigorous and flexible 10-session course designed for mid-to senior-level managers seeking to take charge and use new strategies to lead tough economic times, and tangibly contribute to the achievement of the organization’s goals. The U.S. Marine Corps scheduled “*The Making of Leaders*” as a training course for its civilian managers at its 29 Palms base in California.

With the help, encouragement and support from her cohorts and her mentors, including Dr. Franco Vicino, director of Dominican’s Executive and Counseling Services. Otis was motivated to write the book because, in Vicino’s words, “trying isn’t doing.”

“What made her stand out was her enthusiasm. She seemed to have a positive charge in her that transfers to others,” Vicino says. “She provides her own unique contributions, a mix of keen observation, and a compassion that makes people want to tell her their ‘story.’”

Upon receiving her leadership certificate from Dominican, Otis set her sights on attaining another one 3,000 miles away. She will enter Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in May 2014.

“After completing “*The Making of Leaders*” program, I didn’t want it to end. The experience was that powerful,” Otis says. “As I am responsible for overseeing the leadership development programs for a large organization, I wanted to continue to build upon the practical leadership

concepts I was exposed to during the program at Dominican and continue to develop my skills and gain further insights into what makes an excellent leader.”

In the meantime, Otis has published her first book. In *101 Ways to Lose a Great Employee*, she centers on the fact that people are first and foremost human, yet in work environments they tend to focus on the technical aspects of people’s skills and abilities. Through her examples, Otis shows that an important part of corporate culture is how feelings and behaviors impact everyone. Her goal is to both help managers begin to understand the concept of emotional intelligence and how the ripple effect of managerial missteps can affect employees, teams and organizations -- and to encourage managers to begin purposefully making better choices during their encounters with colleagues and employees so they experience more positive results, achieve real progress and enjoy greater success in their organizations. Otis delivers her message in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

“I wrote it in a humorous way about a serious topic,” Otis says.

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The book was a collaborative team effort, from her husband to her cohorts in “*The Making of Leaders*.” One of them, Tiburon Fire Department captain Sloane Valentino, wrote the foreword for *101 Ways to Lose a Great Employee*.

“This book is changing my life,” Otis says, “If you really want to shine, you bring the people on board who can help you make that happen. People who want to see you succeed. They believe in your dream.” When everyone who supports you believes in your dream, there’s nothing you can’t accomplish and I had great people supporting me all the way.”

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