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Wife of Dr Pepper Snapple CEO Launches Company to Provide Coaching, Mentoring and Support Services to Executive Spouses

Helping executive spouses acclimate to their new roles can make business leaders more effective in their jobs – and boost a company's bottom line

DALLAS (May 2009) — Colette Young may have what seems like a storybook life – with three homes, a high-profile social calendar and a successful marriage to one of the top executives in the country. But she'll be the first to tell you that the life she and her husband have built hasn't come easily – it's the product of years of hard work, patience, motivation, understanding and attitude.



As the wife of Dr Pepper Snapple Group, Inc. president and CEO Larry Young for more than two decades, Colette knows the value of being a supportive executive spouse, and all the challenges and opportunities that come with the role. Now she's launched a company designed to give other executive spouses – particularly those who have recently found themselves in the role – the benefit of what she's learned over the past 20 years. ExecuMate (www.ExecuMate.net) provides executive coaching, seminars and mentoring to executive spouses in order to improve relationships, make executives more effective in their jobs, and boost a company's bottom line.

“So many spouses lose their identity when their partners work at a high level in a corporation,” Young says. “Your husband or wife just got the key to the executive washroom -- but, now what? Making sure that the executive and his

or her spouse are on the same page can do wonders for a relationship and help ensure that the company thrives, as well.” Especially in these trying economic times, corporations looking to improve results are turning to ExecuMate to counsel and coach executive spouses, both one-on-one and in larger group settings. “It's a small investment that can pay tremendous dividends,” Young says.

FINDING BALANCE

Balancing any career with a satisfying home life is no small task. Factor in the high stress, long hours and public scrutiny that go hand in hand with a high-profile executive position, and achieving balance between work and personal lives becomes all the more challenging. Aggressive goals, tight schedules, demanding clients and stressful travel can test the most talented individual and strain even the most committed relationships.

ExecuMate is a natural extension of the first-hand knowledge Colette has accumulated about the vital importance a spouse can play in business and leadership success. The role the executive spouse plays can be one of restorative support or one of undermining resentment. During her entertaining seminars and coaching sessions, Young draws on her broad experience as an educator, performer, business owner, golfer and, most importantly, partner in her husband's journey to CEO.

Pete Perez, Executive Vice President, Human Resources, ConAgra Foods, Inc., says the perspective that ExecuMate can offer a company and its employees is invaluable. “Having worked as an executive for a number of Fortune 500 companies, I have seen and experienced, personally, the power of having a capable corporate spouse, one that goes beyond being supportive and becomes an asset, a part of the team,” Perez says. “I have known and worked with Larry and Colette for many years, and believe me, she has these skills in spades. She is not only a support, but also a clear partner in Larry’s success, which he would quickly tell you,” he says.

EARLY LESSONS

Colette began to understand just how welcome a support system could be early on in Larry’s career, while she was dealing with an issue increasingly common among executive spouses: moving to a new community. Relocations are challenging, not only for the executive, but for the spouse and family – especially international moves. According to Young, only one out of every four international corporate assignments is successful. “The unsuccessful relocations, whether abroad or domestic, are usually due to family struggles,” she says.

When the Youngs moved to Minnesota for a job opportunity, Colette struggled to acclimate to the state’s subzero temperatures and unfamiliar customs while Larry worked 16-hour days or traveled. “I quickly found out that you don’t have to move to another country to experience a different culture,” she says. “I didn’t have any resources available to help me adjust.”

She eventually realized that she needed to commit to making an effort to get to know people, and integrate her own passions into her life. Over time, she was able to find common threads with people she met at church, at the grocery store or at social functions; built a thriving existence for herself outside of the “corporate shadow”; and created a strong support network of friends she still leans on today. “You have to know yourself and make connections wherever you are living,” she says.

Today, through ExecuMate, Colette is offering executive spouses the support and advice she wishes she’d had access to along the way. “So many spouses simply endure their life with a high-powered executive rather than embracing it for the positive and often life-changing benefits it can provide,” she says. “It may be human nature to retreat into your own little bubble because you’re feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed. But it doesn’t have to be that way. I’m living proof.”

ABOUT EXECUMATE

ExecuMate believes a supportive, engaged spouse can contribute greatly to an executive’s success, and ultimately to the overall success of the company. Through keynote speeches, seminars, and coaching and mentoring sessions, ExecuMate’s Colette Young offers a message of balance in life and work. She has successfully taught executives and their spouses to share a journey of unending opportunities, fearless decisions and win-by-choice outcomes through attitude, adaptability and accountability. For more information, visit www.ExecuMate.net.