

Women at business school – E. Layne Paddock

Compiled by Charlotte Clarke

January 5, 2014 10:32 pm



E Layne Paddock, for Business School Challenge / FT.com

E. Layne Paddock is an assistant professor of organisational behaviour and human resources at the Singapore Management University Lee Kong Chian School of Business, which she joined in 2008. Her research interests include organisational justice and fairness, negotiation and work-life balance.

Prof Paddock grew up in Virginia and has a masters from The College of William & Mary and a masters and PhD from the University of Arizona. She has also taught at the University of Florida and Columbia Business School. This is the first time she is working and living outside the US and she enjoys splitting her time between Singapore, Switzerland and the US. This diverse, multicultural experience has enriched her research and teaching.

1. What do you enjoy most about your job?

People intrigue me. The three core facets of academia, including research, teaching and service, allow me to interact with all kinds of people. For instance, with each new research project I learn how employees or management across various organisations and industries deal with daily and major events. Of course, results often focus on what people do in the aggregate, but some of the best conversations I've had are about individuals' unique experiences.

2. What is the best piece of advice given to you by a teacher?

"Think carefully about what you want to say, and then don't say it." Given the pace of business, it is easy to respond quickly without first taking time to listen and let the situation

unfold. The saying helps remind me that listening is often more important than talking. I am surprised at how often a situation changes substantially, or even resolves itself, when I practise this type of patience. Certainly being aware of this approach benefits my negotiation students; we discuss the real impact of using respectful silence, an overlooked communication tool, to give and receive information in negotiation contexts.

3. How do you deal with pressure?

Exercise helps me deal with pressure, as does regular sleep. Yoga has become a favourite addition to my routine and I am intrigued by related concepts like 'mindfulness,' especially as I see their use growing in organisational contexts.

4. Who are your business influences?

I look to companies like REI, a retail company organised as a consumers' co-operative. REI's sustained commitment to engagement of its employees and its focus on local corporate social responsibility really appeal to me. The employees I know there are a good fit for the jobs they hold. They are encouraged to separate work and life enough to allow recovery experiences which we describe in the work-life literature as really important to employee wellbeing and efficiency at work. The employees invest in community support projects in the local areas around their stores, like cleaning up public parks.

5. What academic achievement are you most proud of?

We read and discuss the globalisation of business daily. I am proud that as an academic I am living it. Taking my first tenure-track position in Singapore, when I had never lived outside the US before, was a challenge that truly broadened my worldview and helped me better understand aspects of businesses. I am able to explore and explain these topics in my research and teaching.

6. What is your biggest lesson learnt?

To take on first the tasks I like least. This requires discipline but it means I can approach them with a clearer head and complete them before they linger on my list long enough that I end up dreading them.

7. What is the worst job you have ever had?

One of the worst parts of a job I loved came from working summers through high school and college. It was hard to realise that while kids-can-be-kids and carefree for a week at camp, some kids had to return home to complex situations that were just tough. It is hard to see kids dealing with serious illnesses or difficult domestic situations and I learnt a lot about resilience from these kids.

8. What inspires you?

Hard-working, focused individuals who are committed to their own larger goals and yet do not forget the importance of people as individuals as they work towards those goals impress and inspire me. Of course, it helps if their goals align with my own values, but even

when that is not the case, I am inspired to reassess my own larger goals and progress toward them.

9. If you could do it all again, what would you do differently?

I would say “no” more often and earlier. This was great advice I received early on and only recently came to understand better. There are so many excellent, interesting opportunities that I have found inviting – ways to contribute whether it be by mentoring others or collaborating on interesting projects or leading programmes. But as Lemony Snicket in *The Wide Window* says, “You can’t invent things like time”. By recognising my own capacity, being selective and saying “I’m sorry, but all my ‘yes’ cards are out,” I have become a better contributor to the commitments I have chosen and, in turn, they have helped me address my own larger life goals.

10. What is your plan B?

I am focused on plan A and that entails constantly building up my own skillsets. Skills provide opportunities. I saw Soo-Jin Kim’s recent Financial Times interview, and I really liked her answers. I agree it is about pivoting and being flexible, while maintaining focus and determination. I strive to adapt and move forward, resting (but not stopping) as needed.