

Utahns Focus on Good in Post-Enron Era

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The autumn workday two years ago in most respects was like any other for Lori Giovannoni. The Bountiful business consultant and professional speaker spent it hurrying from one appointment to the next, living the mantra: "If you don't show up, it doesn't happen."

Then a telephone call changed everything.

Giovannoni, the Salt Lake Chamber's 2002 Athena Businesswoman of the Year, learned from the caller that what she thought had been routine tests revealed that she had breast cancer. Her diagnosis was serious enough to warrant next-day surgery.

The shock, fear and worry that overcame her only intensified when she thought about how an extended illness would affect her small business.

She faced an unrelenting schedule of speaking engagements and dreaded having to tell clients she had to cancel as the keynote speaker for their long-planned events.

Giovannoni found help from an unexpected source.

Before she even had time to act, two competitors on the speaking circuit with whom she had cultivated business relationships stepped in to fulfill her obligations for her.

Salt Lake City business owners Kathleen Gage and Lynda Jeppesen for the next two months gave speeches on Giovannoni's behalf.

When they were finished, they gave her the fees they had earned.

"It was such an incredible relief. I felt so fortunate," Giovannoni said. "Whenever I hear someone speak poorly of their competition, I always tell them of my miracle."

As it turns out, her experience is not as unusual as one might think in a time distinguished by corporate scandal and mistrust. Giovannoni said her recounting of the story of her rescue never fails to elicit countless other tales of subtle



Utahns Kathleen Gage, left, and Lori Giovannoni are authors of the book, "Workplace Miracles." (Steve Griffin/The Salt Lake Tribune)

workplace miracles that occur everywhere, every day.

She and Gage recognized the value of the stories and have compiled them in a book they now use in their consulting practices and make available to anyone seeking a little workplace inspiration.

They say *Workplace Miracles*, published by Maxwell Publishing, a Salt Lake City company Gage owns, is striking a nerve with readers who nowadays sometimes find it difficult to see anything positive about the workplace in the post-Enron era.

Some of the stories in the 140-page book were as life-changing for their authors as Giovannoni's.

One contributor recalls having suffered a massive heart attack while working at a club he owned and having been saved by a customer who did cardiopulmonary resuscitation until medical help arrived.

Other tales are less dramatic, but still profoundly meaningful to those who share them.

A female business executive tells of how she developed a lasting personal relationship with a co-worker and became a sometimes caretaker for her young daughter.

Another executive recounts the satisfaction she felt at having been able to start a program at her workplace that made it easier for new mothers to transition back to work by allowing them to bring infants to the office until they were 6 months old.

Rebecca Guevara of Salt Lake City's Art House Graphic Studio recalls a client's reaction to a mistake that appeared in a costly ad she had placed for him in a nationally circulated newspaper.

When a horrified Guevara called to alert him to the error, he calmly told her, "I know you. I know you'll make it right."

"Whenever I want to froth and fume over business mistakes, I remember my client's grace and honest expectation of righting a wrong without making it worse," Guevara said.

Stories such as Guevara's demonstrate the power of simple acts of kindness, said Gage, founder of Salt Lake City-based Turning Point Inc., a personal and professional development company.

"Miracles, however subtle, occur every day when we are open to them," she said.

Giovannoni said she and Gage hope the book in some small way will help readers recognize that "work need not be trauma-driven."

"If we're all working to get to the end of the road and when we get there we realize we didn't enjoy it and find something worthwhile there, it's a really sad state to be in."

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