

WIL PROFILE: TCHICAYA B. ELLIS, Ph.D.

Tchicaya Ellis earned her Ph.D. in psychology at the young age of 27. Her specialization was Industrial/Organizational psychology.

Now as the director of research at the Maryland Lottery, she has the opportunity to utilize her applied research, measurement and evaluation skills to assist a state entity reach business goals by helping to develop strategic action plans and by measuring progress toward those goals.

Indeed, Ellis describes her selection as director of research at the lottery as a defining moment. Maryland Lottery director Buddy Roogow's charge was to develop a research division. Ellis was given a clean slate plus the resources, autonomy and support to accomplish the task.

"I'm glad that I was given the opportunity as the youngest candidate up for the position," said Ellis. "I feel that we are on our way to developing information that will lead to higher sales and revenue and to actively supporting the agency's initiatives."

BUILDING RESEARCH DIVISION

In the last 18 months, the Maryland Lottery's research division has gone from an advertising tracking program to a comprehensive measurement program that tracks not only advertising awareness but changes in the lottery's corporate and brand image, customer and retailer satisfaction, drawing perceptions, player loyalty, shifts in playership and threats to market size.

"The program is efficient because we have data that addresses agency performance as outlined in the agency's overall strategic plan," said Ellis. "On a more ongoing basis, we can be proactive in ad spending based on customer feedback."

Ellis also follows the philosophy that "if we're not going to use the data, why collect it. I do find it extremely difficult to use every piece of data we collect. I am learning to provide timely and actionable research results which I think

helps the division to grow and be perceived as a critical piece of the lottery's business."

GROWING UP

Ellis is the youngest of four siblings. She has two sisters (ages 33 and 37) and a brother (ages 39). The family grew up in Illinois. As a young girl, Ellis believes that her mother gave her the wings to figuratively fly. "I believed, with my mother's consistent encouragement, that I could do anything I wanted to do, professionally . . . personally . . . physically," explained Ellis. "My mother always encouraged me to think out of the box and to apply myself toward the things that were most important to me."

Unlike other youngsters who might dream of dozens of careers, Ellis can't remember wanting to be anything but a psychologist. "I was turned on to the idea by my sister who was majoring in psychology at the time," said Ellis. "I must admit my dream wasn't always to be a measurement and research person;

learned about my field and the kind of work an I/O psychologist does, I knew that was where my heart was."

Ellis believes the support of her mother (as her "full-time mentor") was critical in meeting her academic goal: earning her doctorate by age 27. "I remember thinking I would never complete my graduate program, and must have turned in the towel a hundred times," recalled Ellis. "My mother was always there to keep me focused and to talk me through the hard times. Not once in all my 'I'm quitting' tirades did she disagree. Amazingly she said 'Well, if that's what you want to do then I support you.' It was unbelievable. I think she was practicing some of her own 'psychology' on me."

CAREER TRACK

Ellis graduated in 1994 from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale with a B.A. in psychology. This was followed by earning her M.A. in Applied-Experimental Psychology (Measurement and Evaluation Track) in 1996 and her Ph.D. in Applied-Experimental Psychology (Industrial/Organizational Track) in 2000.

Ellis' dissertation was titled "The Development, Psychometric Evaluation and Validation of a Customer Loyalty Scale."

She has earned numerous honors and awards including Golden Key National Honor Society, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the Graduate Dean's Fellowship and Wrophas & Meeks Academic Excellence Scholarship.

Early in her career, Ellis had the opportunity to work as a consultant for Maytag Corporation. She was part of a team hired to conduct organizational research to assess the progress of continuous quality improvement initiatives. Next she spent two years as an associate and senior associate at Applied Research Consultants. In these positions, Ellis conducted various evaluation and satisfaction studies designed

Women In Leadership

I wanted to have people sitting on my 'couch' so to speak. But the more I



Above: Tchicaya Ellis (childhood photograph)

to determine the effectiveness of various programs including an alternative dispute resolution practicum in the law school and peer mediation in schools in the Southern Illinois region.

Prior to her appointment as the director of research at the Maryland Lottery in September 1999, Ellis served as the manager of organizational analysis at Nucleus, LLC. Among her duties, she developed an Internet-based application that served as the primary workflow management/client tracking system.

During her academic years, Ellis' major advisor, Margaret Stockdale, played a key part in Ellis' development as a professional. "She always included me in significant consulting experiences that would foster my professional development outside of the classroom," said Ellis. "Much of what I do today is a direct result of her mentorship throughout my graduate career. She was

TCHICAYA ELLIS

Position: Director of Research, Maryland State Lottery

Years at Lottery: Since September '99

Birthday: October 13, 1972

Age: 28

Horoscope Sign: Libra

Spouse: N/A

Children: N/A

College Education: B.A. & M.A., Psychology, Ph.D.—Applied-Experimental Psychology, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Favorite Cuisine: Avid food lover

Favorite Music: R&B and jazz

Favorite Author: Too many to name

Favorite Book: Depends on the day of the week

Woman most admired: Mother

Political Orientation: Democrat

Quote: "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

Greatest personal achievement: Earning my doctorate at age 27

Greatest professional achievement: Having the opportunity to develop my own division, at the grass roots level, so early in my career

very ambitious and very dedicated to her career. Many times I drew my strength from her tenacity. We are still working together on research that we initiated several years ago."

As a young woman beginning her career, Ellis believes she is still on the "receiving end" of mentorship from women in the workplace. "As a mentee, however, I would like to learn effective strategies for getting the resources needed, such as personnel and information, to facilitate the completion of successful work products," said Ellis.

MANAGEMENT STYLE

Ellis describes her management style as inclusive and empowering. Her goal is to share with her employees not only what needs to be done but why. This gives her employees the freedom to provide input where needed to produce a better product.

"I believe that productivity is the direct result of employee empowerment, not a dictatorship," stressed Ellis. "Consulting with a major appliance manufacturer on assessing barriers to organizational change, I learned first hand, through applied-research, the importance of the softer side of business. Employees who felt they were a 'part of the organization' or felt free to talk to management and believed that their ideas/concerns were being heard, tended to have more positive attitudes and generally had a healthier sense of well-being and less stress at the job. They also tended to have more positive attitudes toward change and had higher job satisfaction. These are the things that I want from my employees."

Are there differences in management style/leadership between men and women? "Speaking very generally, I think men and women differ slightly in their management styles," said Ellis. "The difference seems to be in how each gender gets to where they want to be. Men seem to focus on 'what' the bottom line is while women seem to be concerned with 'how' they get to the bottom line."

As for how women's position in society will change in this new millen-



Above: Tchicaya Ellis' graduation

nium, Ellis predicts women will continue to succeed in nontraditional occupations and serve in nontraditional roles at work and at home.

"I see women in more meaningful positions, with more responsibilities, and more power to make significant business decisions. I think women's roles are changing, inevitably, as the demographics of the workplace change. Hopefully women will begin to own a larger piece of the professional pie...I hope it's peach," she added, laughing.

Are there still challenges in the workplace for women in terms of the glass ceiling? "Yes," said Ellis. "Although women are starting to crack the glass ceiling, I feel that without groups organized for the purpose of women's advancement—like Network 2000, a Baltimore-based women's group that seeks opportunities for women's inclusion on boards, women wouldn't be where we are today."

To further progress, Ellis believes women need to have equal opportunities for work assignments that will give them the skills they need to succeed at high levels. "I believe that women don't climb the ladder as swiftly as men because we're generally not given the work assignments that prepare us for the high-level roles and positions that we share disproportionately than men," said Ellis.