

# Quick connection sparks lasting friendship

## Sean Johnson

Sometimes people just connect — they immediately know the person they have just met is someone they will befriend and be influenced by for years to come.

Janice Stark and Kathy Fredrickson knew that almost the minute they met during a job interview, forging a collaboration that lasts to this day.

Ironically, they would only work together at that ad agency for a few months.

But they kept in touch and helped each other along the way. Stark would go on to found Rivers Edge Marketing while Fredrickson, who also has her own marketing consulting business, began working at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh as the director of marketing for the College of Business Administration.

Fredrickson would recruit Stark to fill a similar role at UW Oshkosh in the College of Education and Human Services.

Indeed, they have come full circle.



## **The two of you connected during a job interview. What was it you saw in the other person that fostered that connection?**

Stark: During my initial interview I was impressed with Kathy's marketing knowledge, her passion to make a difference and her business ethics. She was an individual who worked hard to establish herself in her career and she earned the position that she held. She was an energetic and knowledgeable person and I had a "gut feeling" that she was going to be a person that I could learn from and have fun working with.

Fredrickson: I knew Janice did not want to compromise her career and wanted to do something that "fueled her soul."

I was impressed Janice went back to college to pursue her degree. Janice has an open mind. Janice didn't let the fact that she's been in business longer than I have get in the way of learning.

## **How did the mentor-protégé relationship work?**

Stark: Initially Kathy showed me the ropes as to the advertising agency world. She pushed me to think outside the box and be creative with my ideas. She opened many doors for me and continues to do so by introducing me to individuals and associations that will help grow my business and help make me successful in everything I do.

Fredrickson: I've encouraged Janice to look at a career as a series of opportunities and have emphasized that when something doesn't quite fit perfectly, it never hurts to ask if it can be changed. I've also tried my best to open doors for her.

Janice has always wanted to own a business, and started a marketing consulting company while working full-time for a logistics company.

I had transitioned my career to part-time and suggested she talk to the university about a part-time position available in their College of Education and Human Services, giving her ample flexibility and an opportunity to make a difference. She pursued the position with focus and enthusiasm; it's been a joy to share in her success.

## **How has the relationship between the two of you changed over the years?**

Stark: Our relationship started out as a professional relationship and we quickly grew to become the best of friends. When I left the agency and considered starting my own marketing consulting firm, Kathy was the first person I called. Kathy was there to run ideas past and guide me in the right direction.

Fredrickson: The ups and downs in our professional lives have added depth to our friendship. We helped each other recover from layoffs, work-life balance struggles, and career growth frustrations. Janice likes to use me as a sounding board for marketing issues and strategy, but also comes to me about co-worker relationship challenges. I think my advice has helped; she hasn't thrown me to the curb yet!