

MAIN LINE TODAY



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Molly D. Shepard

President and CEO, Leader's Edge/Leaders By Design (the-leaders-edge.com)

At 27, Molly D. Shepard seemed to have it all—a happy marriage, a baby on the way and a great job. Problem was, her boss didn't take kindly to the notion of maternity leave. "What makes you think you can do something my wife couldn't do?" was the response Shepard got.

Concerned that she'd be fired if she pressed the issue, Shepard returned to work two weeks after her baby was born. By the time her third child came along, the policies at work had loosened, and she could stay home for three months. "But really," says Shepard, "I was working from home right away."

The good news is that her job as director of admissions at Philadelphia's Institute for Paralegal Training—and a master's degree in psychological services and counseling she pursued while raising her family—turned out to be essential stepping

stones in an impressive career that included stints at Diversified Search, The Hay Group and Manchester, Inc., the latter which Shepard co-founded in 1983.

"Looking back on those early years, I don't know how I managed," Shepard admits. "I will say that having a supportive spouse and a dedicated housekeeper makes a huge difference."

Shepard's latest career move comes as founder of The Leader's Edge, a company dedicated to the advancement of executive and high-potential women. Another arm of the Bala Cynwyd company, dubbed Leaders By Design and run by her husband, Peter Dean, provides leadership development and executive coaching to men.

"One of the most important things we do is teach companies how to help their top-tier women grow and feel appreciated so that they don't leave," says Shepard. "In many companies, the exodus rate can be twice that of men. Developing strong female executives makes sense."

Helping men understand and appreciate gender differences is also important to the company's mission. "We're made different—not just in biology but mindset," says Shepard. "Blending our and men's attributes can have a positive impact on companies' effectiveness."