

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Women in Business Q&A:

Kim Eaton, Chief Executive Officer, Aptean, Inc.

05/27/2017 04:09 am ET

Laura Emily Dunn, Contributor

Digital Comms, Content and Social Media Practitioner | Political Style blogger | digital democracy advocate | world traveller



Kim Eaton is Chief Executive Officer of [Aptean](#), a global leader in mission critical enterprise software solutions. Widely recognized as a change agent, Kim specializes in steering both mature and early-stage companies through complex periods of growth and restructuring. Her ability to see the “big picture” and drive results stems from career experience that spans all aspects of a business, including sales and marketing, global business development, product development, customer relationships management, implementation and support.

At Aptean, Kim has led the successful M&A strategy execution of eight acquisitions, adding more than \$40 million revenue growth. She was lauded for her companywide transformational initiative that, over just eighteen months, resulted in tremendous revenue and profit growth

alongside significant strides in employee engagement and positive customer satisfaction scores.

Kim started with Aptean in August 2014 as Chief Operating Officer, with a primary focus on improving the customer experience, establishing better disciplines in product management, product development and professional services, and creating a culture of collaboration and accountability. She was promoted to CEO in January 2015.

Prior to joining Aptean, Kim was the President and General Manager of the \$700 million Hospitality & Travel business at NCR. She assumed this role after serving as head of Marketing, Strategy and Integration for the Radiant Systems business, which was acquired by NCR in August 2011. Kim has also served in senior management roles for BlueCube Software and RedPrairie. She began her career with Accenture.

Kim is an active mentor and is involved with several philanthropies, including the Pathbuilders Achieva program, and the Young Men's Service League. She mentors several young women professionals in the Atlanta technology community as well. In 2016 Kim was recognized as a Women of the Year finalist by Women in Technology. She received her B.S. at Iowa State University, where she played on the Women's Golf team. Kim and her husband reside in Alpharetta, Georgia. They have two sons, Carter and Chandler.

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today?

I have been very lucky to have a variety of very positive influences in my life – my parents are both well-respected teachers in their community and taught me the power of doing the right thing. I am married to a man who has been so supportive of my career and has never made me feel guilty for wanting to be successful and in some cases, having a higher level career than him. I have also had the luxury of working in several different types of environments as a consultant and as a technology leader, being able to see what works well and what doesn't in terms of enjoying your work and being motivated. All of these things, as well as many others of course, have helped me stay true to my values - do the right thing, be humble, over-communicate, and put the customer first - never compromising them and I do believe this has been the reason for the success I have experienced as a leader.

How has your previous employment experience aided your tenure at Aptean?

At Aptean, the execution of our strategy relies on two important things: 1) the focus on our customers, ensuring they see a return on their investment in us and in turn, growing our business by expanding our business with them and 2) our ability to successfully acquire

businesses and integrate them, all while preserving the good things about those companies. My previous work experience helped me understand the importance of the investment in your customers – the change that can be driven if you put a focus on customer satisfaction and communication – this company grew exponentially once that focus was there. My most recent job prior to Aptean really shaped my view of how to integrate acquisitions – how to balance the need to drive adherence to process with listening and learning from the acquired business.

What have the highlights and challenges been during your tenure at Aptean?

We have experienced a tremendous amount of change over the past two years – all driven from a change in our strategy and the focus on changing our culture. The main challenges have been in getting the right people in the right roles to help drive this change. The highlights have been the success we have seen in terms of meeting or exceeding our financial and operational goals, while at the same time changing our organization structure, the roles and responsibilities for most of our leadership team and our company goals.

What advice can you offer to women who want a career in your industry?

My advice is to really know what your strengths are and how those strengths can help your company achieve their goals. Don't be so focused on the things you aren't as good at – find others on the team to fill those gaps!

What is the most important lesson you've learned in your career to date?

The importance of having the right team around you – a balanced team with different strengths, to encourage the appropriate level of challenge and to move fast, once a decision is made.

How do you maintain a work/life balance?

I have learned over my career that work/life balance is a choice and has different meanings for different people. For me, making sure I prioritize time with my family and put 100% focus on them when I am with them is a big part of how I create balance. I also have learned that I am much better at my work when I have had a little space to think and reflect, so I make time for that even inside of my work day, which allows me to feel refreshed and more balanced. I also exercise at least 5 times per week, but I have to set goals for myself to keep me motivated – this is probably one of the most important elements of balance for me and it is something I can do with my family members!

What do you think is the biggest issue for women in the workplace?

Having the confidence in the power of typical female traits – multi-tasking, team-building, empathy, listening – if those are put to work well, women can be very successful

How has mentorship made a difference in your professional and personal life?

Being a mentor to several men and women has been an incredibly fulfilling experience for me and I have learned so much about myself through that process. I also have had many people in my life who may not have been formal mentors, but who have rooted for me, pushed me into new roles and reinforced in me that I should continue to be myself!

Which other female leaders do you admire and why?

Lynn Good is the CEO of Duke Energy and I had the privilege to hear her speak at a conference late last year and I was so impressed with how she has dealt with change in a very complex, regulated industry that has had to transform. She has incredible stamina, a clear vision and has clearly put people first in her organization.

What do you want Apteau to accomplish in the next year?

While we have gone through a significant change in strategy over the past few years, we are beginning a new stage of transformation, where we are putting more focus back on growth and I would like to see us be successful in tweaking our operational processes and the prioritization of our work to meet those goals.