

## A Conversation With Ann-Marie McIntosh, General Manager, Small Business and Retail division, Purolator

Questions for LQ's Executive Interview Series have been prepared by members of LQ's Board and friends of LQ.



**LQ:** Have you taken any big risks in your career, such as going for a difficult assignment? (*Bruce Danielson, Executive Communications Manager, UPS*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** Before joining Purolator I spent 12 years working in the financial services industry. Leaving an industry in which I spent most of my career and joining the transportation and logistics industry, which I knew little about at the time, was both exciting and a bit risky. But I can honestly say that it was one of the best career decisions I've made, for a number of reasons. First, working for a large Canadian company is a real attraction. The work is fast-paced and challenging and provides ample opportunity to get involved at all levels in driving the company's business strategy forward.

**LQ:** What specific actions have you employed to ensure that the organization's vision is embraced throughout the employee base? (*Susan Oaks, Vice-President and Partner, A.T. Kearney*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** It might sound basic, but the first step is to communicate what the organization's purpose is. With the help of 50 employees who act as change ambassadors, we carry that message throughout the small business and retail division through peer-to-peer communications. Our management team and change ambassadors play a critical role in sharing this information with our 600-plus retail team members who are located across Canada.

**LQ:** As women strive to get ahead, do you have any tips in an era when training budgets are being curtailed? (*Tom Nightingale, VP and CMO, Con-way Inc.*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** I find establishing strong business networks really valuable, but often it comes in second place, especially while trying to have work-balance with two children. So, I've made a point to attend more business functions—whether it's attending a dinner with industry associates or attending a session on a topic that will help me in my role, and in turn, help move the business forward. The transportation and logistics industry is fast-paced and changes rapidly, so it's critical to have a line of sight on what's happening at all levels—local, domestic and international. I also find listening to my peers talk about their respective challenges and opportunities really provides insight into my own.

**LQ:** How do you ensure that your organization is open to innovation? (*Susan Oaks*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** Innovation is one of Purolator's strategic priorities, so it's well established within the culture of our business. Because of that, there's been great support in promoting the retail division as an important component of our company brand—emphasizing the personalized service, convenience and expertise we bring to customers. We have the largest retail network in Canada, and we needed to invest in it. We did this by introducing a new retail design and enhancing our technology tools. We also expanded our

retail offering, working in conjunction with PostNet and Staples. By providing small business customers with greater access to Purolator services to help meet their needs, we increased both brand exposure and revenue opportunities.

**LQ:** Within your organization, how are you preparing for supply chain operations in 2015 and beyond? (*Susan Oaks*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** Rather than tell customers what they need, we've created an environment in which we ask our customers what they need from us—and listen to their feedback and suggestions. By doing so we ensure that we have the resources, services and customized solutions to meet our customers' business needs. For example, we've expanded our distribution solutions offering. In addition to our core domestic courier service, we offer Purolator International. Also, we now have Purolator Freight, our less-than-truckload service offering, in response to customers letting us know that they wanted a one-stop-shop solution. Similarly, Global Supply Chain Services, which helps customers transporting goods from foreign countries and provides customized direct-to-store solutions from anywhere in Canada, was introduced based on customer requirements. By listening and responding to customer needs, we're preparing ourselves for the future.

**LQ:** What would you do to inspire other women to join the logistics industry? (*Melissa Gracey, President, DTA Services*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** More and more women are joining the transportation and logistics industry—which is quite exciting. There are numerous reasons to join. The industry offers the opportunity to drive change and play on the global stage. Plus, there's an extensive list of opportunities: marketing, engineering, human resources, finance, strategy and more. It takes a diverse team of professionals to make the operation work. When I first joined Purolator, my portfolio consisted of the retail division. Today, I'm on my second assignment in three years, taking on the small, medium business division. There are endless opportunities for growth.

**LQ:** In these tough economic times, what do you see are the most important things a company can do? (*Kate Vitasek, Founder, Supply Chain Visions*)

**Ann-Marie McIntosh:** Talk to your employees. It's as simple as it sounds. Communicate how the economy is affecting your business and share what needs to be done to get through what might be some difficult times. It's also critically important to listen to your customers. Make sure you understand the issues that they're experiencing in their own business, and be able to offer them solutions that will continue to support their needs. Just because something wasn't a customer need last year doesn't mean it isn't today. I spend a lot of time understanding why things are the way they are. We can't afford not to question. Also, focus on the things you have within your immediate control and be sure to manage your costs. Sounds basic, but if your company's foundation isn't strong, and you don't take the time to understand what your customers value and what your employees need, your growth will be compromised.