

# Pursuing Your Passion

With Botsford Client Diane Paddison

## Helping Working Women Realize Their Potential

A surprise career move turned into a timely opportunity for Diane Paddison to make a major change in her life. That change allowed her to combine the skills honed in corporate boardrooms with her passion to help working women realize their potential.

The change opened doors and exposed new possibilities that led to the founding of 4word, a ministry which Paddison said is the only national organization serving Christian women in the workplace. The nonprofit organization's goal is to narrow the gap in resources facing every woman who is serious about her career, relationships and faith.

Paddison was the chief operating officer of Denver-based Prologis Inc., when the economic collapse of 2008 hit. The company's stock dropped from the \$60 range to \$12 in five months. A new CEO was brought in, and he asked that Paddison relocate from her home in Dallas to corporate headquarters in Denver. Paddison was adamant that she needed to be with family in Dallas, and the two parties agreed to separate in February of 2009.

It was a time for Paddison to pause and evaluate the next stage of a career that had already put her in the "C" suite of two Fortune 500 companies and one Fortune 1000 company.

"I was really coached by a lot of people to take some time – listen, pray. Don't jump into anything and really have a sense of where I intended to go," Paddison said.

One step she took was to enroll in a program at the Half Time Institute, whose mission is to help leaders create a "second half" in life "defined by joy, impact and balance." Paddison was 50, right in the typical sweet spot age for professionals looking for a meaningful "second half" in life, according to Bob Buford, Half Time's founder. While her corporate career was sterling, Paddison faced some struggles along the way, including a divorce and a son "who made some bad decisions with drugs, alcohol and sex."

She remarried, and she and her current husband, Chris, have successfully melded their families. Each brought two children to the mix. Paddison's once-troubled son is now a youth pastor in Waco, using his former trials as a basis to work with inner city youth.

Paddison is quick to credit her faith with getting her through the trials. With a classic "achiever" personality, she said she considered the divorce a major failure.

"It was the most broken time in my life," she said. "God really worked with me in those trials. I've always gone to God for my strength."

While in Half Time, she decided to found the non-profit ministry that is now 4word. She also committed to writing her book, *Work, Love, Pray*, which was published by Zondervan in 2011. Paddison credits Half Time and some of the counsel she received there with convincing her to start the ministry and give back to the community of Christian women trying to make their way in the workforce while maintaining a healthy balance in life.

"It was just like God really had prepared me to be in a place where I could impact others through the life that he had given me so that I could help other women see that no matter where they were in their lives, God would use them."

Paddison can rattle off statistics that show the need for 4word. Among her favorites:

- 71 percent of women in the workforce who work at least 30 hours a week have children in the home under 18 years of age.
- 40 percent of women in the work force are the primary breadwinner in the home.
- Research by Barna Research Group showed that 84 percent of Christians aged 18-29 had no idea how the Bible applied to their field or professional interests.
- A Pew Research poll showed that 74 percent of families believed the increased presence of women in the work force has made it more difficult to raise children.

One final statistic she likes to reveal proved the real need for the ministry she created. Until the formation of 4word, there were zero ministries for women, led by women, and targeted to Christian women in the workplace.

To fulfill its mission, 4word uses extensive and constantly-updated content on its website, local groups for women to come together and share and a formal mentor program. By the year 2020, Paddison and her board of directors want 4word to have groups in 50 cities (five of them overseas), have more than 5 million women going to the website for content and have 500 women taking advantage of the mentor program.

Funding has come mostly from donations and grants, but other opportunities have surfaced because of the large audience the organization has garnered.

"We see that corporations are dying for our audience now," she said.

A job search portal has been created for 4word members and the organization is looking at opportunities to use the audience to market products as a source of income in hopes that 4word will become self-supporting.

From an early age, Paddison's background prepared her for leadership, and also for the ministry she founded. She was raised on a fruit farm in rural Oregon. Neither her father nor her mother put any gender limitations on her. She said she was in charge of work crews of 80 or more people at the age of 16.

She went to college at Oregon State, and then earned her MBA from Harvard. In all cases when she was in her "C" suite jobs, she was the only woman in the suite. When she attended Half Time, she was the only woman in her class. While she sought and found mentors in her career, she has learned that many women have not.

After the separation from Prologis, she worked in Dallas for Cassidy Turley, a commercial real estate firm, and was there for more than four years. It was during that time that she wrote her book and founded 4word.

She left Cassidy Turley in 2014 and confined her work to 4word plus service on two corporate boards and four nonprofit boards. It was a move that gave her more flexibility with time, and it has served her well with her latest challenge outside of work.

That challenge is with her daughter who has been dealing with frequent and severe pain. The pain source recently was diagnosed as piriformis syndrome, a neuromuscular disorder. It occurs when the sciatic nerve is irritated by the piriformis muscle causing pain, tingling and numbness in the buttocks and along the path of the sciatic nerve descending to the lower thigh and into the leg. Paddison's positions with 4word and the boards on which she serves have given her more flexibility to spend time supporting her daughter.

She offers several pieces of advice for people considering taking a sharply different career path or pursuing a passion in mid- or late-career. The key recommendation is to take the time and perform due diligence before completely abandoning a career or lifestyle.

Among her suggestions:

- Determine your passions and strengths. Use the strengths assessment tool, [Strengthsfinder 2.0](#) by Gallup, to get an accurate assessment of your strengths.
- Determine if anyone is already doing what you want to do. If you find someone doing it, the best option might be to partner with them.
- Think long and hard before quitting a job to pursue your passion. Consider doing it part-time on the side to see how it goes before giving up a career.

For more on 4word, go to the website [here](#). You can find Diane's book, *Work, Love, Pray*, [here](#). For more on the Half Time Institute, go [here](#).

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