

Thank you, Steve. Good afternoon, my name is Mary Kay Kaufmann, and I'm really excited to be here today. I would like to start off by wishing a very happy Mother's Day to all of the Mothers, grandmothers, step mothers and substitute Moms here in the audience today. It has to be one of your greatest Mother's Day presents from your child to sit here today and witness a major milestone in your daughter's or son's life and that's graduating from college. So, Congratulations and Happy Mother's day- savor the moment. For the graduates, I'm not saying that you don't have to get your Mom a present- but when we are done, give your mom a big hug. She is your biggest cheerleader. If she isn't here, where ever she is – know that she is proud. So, congratulations and Happy Mother's Day to all.

I would like to thank the University of Illinois and, in particular, Steve Zimmerman, for the invitation to speak today. It is an honor and privilege to be here with you. As Steve mentioned, I would have never believed 28 years ago that I would be back speaking on the other side of the podium. And I would like to point out that I was a child prodigy graduating from U of I at 1 yrs old- making me currently 29 years old. I don't know what I'm going to say next year- I guess I'll be graduating from the womb.

Anyway, 28 years ago, June 1st, I joined, at the time Nalco Chemical Company, which is now Nalco Company. For those of you unfamiliar with Nalco, it's a \$4 Billion global, publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange company, that delivers solutions associated with water related problems to the industrial market place (wastewater, water clarification, etc). I started in 1980 in technical sales in Texas. I have say that when I accepted that role, I think many of my professors here at U of I at the time were surprised that I would waste my degree on a sales job! I was in sales then moved into corporate- in Naperville and into marketing, sales management, general management, corp strategy, even worked on an Information Technology or IT project as Business Lead, and then most recently, as Division President for the Industrial & Institutional Services Division which is about \$2 Billion in sales globally. I am currently an Officer at Nalco.

The point though is that a degree in chemistry can open up all kinds of opportunities. What your degree in Chemistry from a prestigious University says about you today is that you are smart, have great critical thinking skills, very good analytical and deductive skills, that you've got logical problem solving skills, that you're goal oriented and you've got to be organized to have made it this far. These skills can apply to any number of career paths. Your future is unlimited.

So you've got the education and the skills, what do you do now? Any keynote address has to have some advice so here we go with the Mary Kay's top advice of where to go from here and things to remember. I was going to do a top 10, but I figured you wouldn't remember the top 10 (even though I just said how smart you are) so I'm going to focus on the top 6. I tried to get it to the top 5 but couldn't decide on the last one to cut!

My first piece of advice is to be passionate. No matter what path you take, studies have shown that people who love what they do, perform better. Better performing people become fulfilled with their work, the more fulfillment, the better performance and it becomes a circle. The important point here, is that you're going to spend 8 plus hours a day, 40 plus hours a week in a work environment and you've got to be passionate about what you do, and if you are, then performance will follow. Performance without fulfillment is just a person that has just lost that passion and it's not a sustainable situation- eventually performance fades. Finding something you can be passionate about is the key.

Once you find something you're passionate about, my second piece of advice is work hard, play harder. Some students think this means study for 4 hours and then hit the bars for 8 hours. It does mean that you have to find balance in your life. Despite popular belief, companies and managers don't want workaholics working for them. I think many new employees think that is what they have to do to succeed, but the reality is, workaholics burn themselves out. Once you burn out, you lose your passion and go back to advice No. 1. which is to be passionate about what you do. So, be passionate- then work hard and play hard.

Advice No. 3, if it doesn't smell good, it isn't going to taste any better. Although this advice could be used for culinary experiences, my real point here is that you have to trust your instincts. Whether it's your instincts on a person, on a problem or on a decision. As you gain more experiences in life, your instincts will improve. This one is hard for us chemistry majors- we want to analyze all sorts of data and we want a definite conclusion- but sometimes you have to just trust your gut.

Advice No. 4: Don't be afraid to think big. You have to aim high and make the effort. In the words of hockey great, Wayne Gretski, "you miss 100% of the shots you never take". At some point, you have to take risks and think big. Don't exchange what you want most for what you want at the moment.

Advice No. 5: Try to make a difference every day. This can apply to anything, to yourself, to your family, to your coworkers, to society, to what you do with the resources of the earth. This could be making a difference in what you say or it could be making a difference in what you do. My point is, if you try to make a difference, even small things done every day can create really big accomplishments.

This brings me to my last piece of advice. This one is my favorite- Choose a positive attitude every day. Every day when you wake up you have a choice and that's to choose your attitude. You can't change the past and you may not be able to control the circumstances around you. You can choose to be a victim to that which you may or may not control, you can choose a "woes is me" attitude

and complain about your circumstances or you can choose to be positive. Take the lead with that you can control- your attitude. One of my favorite quotes on attitude is by Charles Swindoll. To para phrase he says attitude is more important than education, money or appearances and that it can make or break a company, a church or a home. And he ends with “ I am convinced life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...We are in charge of our attitude.” Another quote by James Truslow Adams, “man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude.” Just like in poker, you have to play the hand your dealt, whether you win depends on how you play it. Whatever your circumstances, choose to start the day with a positive attitude, you will get through it.

So, in summary, the 6 things to remember is always be passionate about whatever path it is that you choose; work hard, play harder; if it doesn't smell good, it won't taste any better – trust your instincts; don't be afraid to think big; you have choice every day, choose a positive attitude and use that attitude to try to make a difference every day of your life.

With that, I wish you all the best of success in whatever path that you take. Enjoy this day. I'll close with the words of Theodor Geisel- Dr. Seuss, “Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened.” Thank you.