



Vonya B. McCann

“Fortunately, I have been blessed with wonderful mentors—both male and female of various races—who have guided, encouraged, and given me opportunities to prove myself and, ultimately, to succeed.”

Foreign Exchange Lesson

While in high school, I participated in an exchange study program that took me to live with a family in a part of Norway where Black people had rarely, if ever, been seen. I had to learn the language and negotiate my relationships. That experience made me self-reliant and boosted my self-confidence. It taught me that, through personal interactions, prejudices and stereotypes can be dismantled and an understanding reached among people.

Regulatory policy and advocacy for one of the leading global telecommunications companies keeps Vonya B. McCann and her staff of 14 in high gear on both the national and international fronts. As Sprint’s vice president of government affairs for the past seven years, McCann has “successfully advocated for and obtained federal approval for the Sprint and Nextel merger,” explains Robert S. Fossner, chief regulatory officer and senior vice president, government affairs, for the Sprint Nextel Corporation.

Fossner, McCann’s Eagle Award nominator, adds, “She is continually called upon to respond to regulatory crises that face the company, and she unfailingly addresses both her business customers’ as well as the regulator’s needs.”

In the high-powered and high-charged regulatory arena, McCann remains one of a few females and even fewer African Americans on the scene. “I have had to prove myself time and time again,” she says. “Fortunately, I have been blessed with wonderful mentors—both male and female of various races—who have guided, encouraged, and given me opportunities to prove myself and, ultimately, to succeed.”

Growing up in the 1960s, McCann took notice of how communications affected the Civil Rights Movement, and she showed an interest in broadcasting. However, as she learned more about the industry, she gravitated toward telecommunications. It was in the late 1970s, when she interned with former Federal Communications Commissioner Tyrone

Brown, that proved to be a turning point. “He was a brilliant African-American lawyer who encouraged my interest in telecommunications law,” McCann explains.

McCann pays it forward by being a role model and serving as a mentor to women and people of color. She is part of an extensive network in the Washington, DC, area and doesn’t mind tapping her resources to provide guidance and support to other women and professionals of color. “I have an informal mentoring style,” she says. Her style is represented by her approachable demeanor and genuine concern for others. “My door is always open—and not just to women and minorities,” McCann adds.

McCann is so well suited to help others traverse a career path because of her own experiences. Under the Clinton administration, she served as a United States Ambassador in the area of international communications and information policy. She is currently a member of the Board of Directors for the Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, which supports the exchange of non-partisan research, education, and information to increase public awareness of information and telecommunications policy.

Despite all of her professional successes, she says that her most significant personal event was the day she learned to read. “From that day forward, the world has been open to me,” she says. “I have tried to instill this love of reading in my children. Reading develops and engages the mind and is a steadfast companion, one with whom I hope to have a lifelong relationship.”

Her greatest passion, however, is her family. She credits them and her faith for keeping her grounded and providing comfort and hope for the future of mankind.

CareerFOCUS Magazine™ and the National Eagle Leadership Institute® salute 2007 Eagle Award winner Vonya B. McCann.

Nominating Company

Sprint Nextel Corporation

Current Position

Vice President, Government Affairs

Professional Milestones

- Recipient, Sprint Leadership Excellence Award
- Recipient, Women in Technology Corporate Leadership Award
- Member, Federal Communications Commission Advisory Committee on Diversity for Communications in a Digital Age

Community Leadership

- Chapter Vice President, Jack and Jill of America – Washington, DC
- Booster, New School of Dance and Arts
- Member, Georgetown Day School Parent Service Association

Leadership Principle

Earn the trust of others who will enable you to succeed professionally and personally.

Education/Training

- Bachelor of Arts, University of Los Angeles
- Master of Science in Public Policy, University of Los Angeles
- Juris Doctorate, University of California-Berkeley

Birthplace

Oakland, CA

Current Home

Washington, DC

The Leadership Promise at Sprint Nextel

Sprint is committed to recognizing, developing, and promoting the best and brightest talent among our employee ranks, and, as a diverse and inclusive employer, we realize that employees of African-American and Hispanic descent are critical to this mission. From our CEO-led Inclusion Council to our associate-driven Employee Resource Groups (ERG), Sprint has made diversity an integral part of our business culture and one which employees have come to value and respect.

At Sprint, our employees are our greatest assets. It is our role as an employer to see that our employees are able to achieve the greatest heights possible in their careers. Through our leadership-development programs, our ERG development programs, and our All-Inclusive Workplace training, we are able to see that our employees are getting the development and encouragement they need to succeed.