

Weak in the Knees

My given name is Olabemidele, which means “God protects me.” I use the last four letters of my name (Dele), because it would have taken me forever to learn how to spell the whole thing. When my wife was expecting twins, I stated firmly and repeatedly that having two girls would not be a problem. When she delivered, my daughter came out first, and, at that moment, the thought of having two teenage daughters almost brought me to my knees. As it turned out, her twin brother rescued me from the thought. God protects me.

The Serenity Prayer—*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference*—quickly became Dele Oladapo’s personal and professional “key to success” after his promotion to vice president of information systems for Prudential Financial. “My mother-in-law gave me a plaque with those special words,” he says. He explains that his decision to relocate his family closer to his workplace was a monumental one of change—but one that provided motivation to contribute more effectively to his job responsibilities and spend substantially more time with his family.

The ability to change according to the environment and circumstances was not new to Odalapo. During a corporate transfer of business units from one department to another, he was responsible for reorganizing a team of 45 that he had built from scratch. The assignment required him to realign individuals whom he had hired into different parts of the new department for the mutual benefit of the staff as well as the company. “When faced with responsibility that requires extreme change and uncertainty, it is important to go beyond your usual assumptions and comfort level in favor of the greater good,” says Oladapo. He goes on to say that, although this was a harrowing experience, it served to reaffirm the importance of putting people first.

In addition to making key decisions, Oladapo says mentoring has been an important part of his success. “The insight that I have been able to gain through my mentor has been instrumental in teaching me about people management, executive communication, and leadership,” he explains.



Dele Oladapo

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Oladapo returns the favor each time he mentors via membership in the Black Leadership Forum, an internal business-resource group that enhances the professional development of Prudential employees and supports diversity efforts. Externally, he seeks to improve the care and treatment of individuals with mental illness through his relationship with the Mental Health Association of Essex County.

Oladapo's mentor is also his Eagle Award nominator, Barbara Koster, Prudential Financial's CIO and senior vice president. "Dele clearly demonstrates the qualities and characteristics of leadership, excellence, dignity, and integrity," she says. "These values are reflected in his principled leadership style."

In his current position, Oladapo leads a team that is the hub of all technology at Prudential Financial, comprised of Enterprise Systems Management, Middleware Engineering, System Services and the Security Engineering Group. In addition to leading the United States team, Oladapo has management accountability for employees in Ireland and the Philippines.

With such responsibility, he says, keeping up with industry trends in business-process monitoring, intelligence reporting and service-oriented architecture is a must.

Information technology, explains Oladapo, was a career choice that allowed him to leverage his education and to work more closely with people. His parents had hopes that he would become a doctor, based on his aptitude for math and science. "The sight of blood was not to my liking," he admits. With an electrical engineering degree under his belt, he entered the workplace as a software engineer. But the isolation did not suit him, and he soon changed the course of his career and has since found his stride.

CareerFOCUS Magazine[™] and the National Eagle Leadership Institute[®] salute 2007 Eagle Award winner Dele Oladapo.

Nominating Company

Prudential Financial

Current Position

Vice President, Information Systems

Professional Milestones

- Recipient, Prudential Business Value Award
- Corporate Advisory Council Board, Black Data Processing Association-New Jersey Chapter

Community Leadership

- Board of Directors, Greater Newark Conservancy
- Board of Directors, Mental Health Association of Essex County
- Stewardship & Reporting Chair, Next Generation Network
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Leadership Principle

Know when to compromise or to be agreeable and when to go against conventional wisdom to deliver extraordinary results.

Education/Training

- Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, Polytechnic University
- MBA, Columbia University

Birthplace

Manhattan, NY

Current Home

Montclair, NJ

The Leadership Promise at Prudential

Prudential encourages the development of leaders through high-impact customized leadership-training programs. We do this because we view the talent of our people as a competitive advantage. Leaders set the tone of an organization. Their actions create an organizational culture that fosters success or failure.

We also firmly believe that placing a high value on diversity is a critical factor in success. The diversity of our employees gives us unparalleled access to varied perspectives, creative approaches to work, and innovative solutions to business needs. That is why we make diversity a priority. Our business and human-resources strategies reflect a commitment to hiring and retaining employees with a multitude of differences, including race, gender, age, sexual orientation, life circumstances, religion, ability, and disability.

Our dedication to leadership development, coupled with our commitment to diversity, unleashes the power of people. And it is the power of our diverse people that helps us achieve our goals.