



Driving Success

You're in charge of your career, so you need to be ready for any bumps and curves in the road. Try to enjoy the smooth stretches, too.

Last month I had the pleasure of attending the IMA® 15th Annual Student Leadership Conference, held this year in Indianapolis, Ind. The three-day Conference attracted more than 570 registrants from 100 colleges and universities in 35 states. Many students raised their own travel funds, and their enthusiasm was evident throughout the event. The Conference included three optional industry tours, which offered students the opportunity to ask questions of the financial staff; numerous sessions and speakers; and student workshops and career roundtables conducted by IMA staff and volunteer leaders. Based on the feedback we've heard, this year's SLC was another resounding success.

Among the excellent keynote speakers was Sarah Fischer, who grew up driving go-karts and midget race cars and competed in her first Indianapolis 500 at age 19. Sarah set a number of records during her career, many of which still stand, including the track-qualifying speed record of 221.39 mph at Kentucky Speed-

way. Sarah formed her own racing team in 2008. Two years later, after competing in her ninth and final Indy 500, she retired as a driver after 25 years of competitive racing so she could raise a family. For the 2015 racing season, she's merging her racing team with the team of Ed Carpenter, the winner of the pole position for the last two Indy

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500 races. Though no longer in the driver's seat, Sarah is still a hard charger, determined to be a successful team owner.

Sarah's journey reminded me that setting goals and building a foundation for your career starts at a young age. You need a vision of the direction you want to pursue—and then plenty of planning and preparation. That planning and preparation might include formal education, self-education, on-the-job training, internships, certifications, or any combination of these. The fact is, you need to want to be

the best, and then you must work hard and follow through on your game plan.

It's never too late to review where you are in your career and make the necessary adjustments to get you where you want to be. This may require refining your vision and figuring out how to achieve it from where you stand now. Things can change along the way, so you must be flexible enough to recognize when they do and then be willing to revamp your plan or create a new one. Sarah Fisher recognized when it was time to retire as a driver and focus entirely on owning a team. At age 30, she wanted to start a family as well. While work/life balance is certainly a huge challenge for many of us, Sarah believed it was one she was ready to conquer.

So much goes into building a successful career, including some things you can control and others that result from being in the right place at the right time. Luck sometimes plays a role in the direction of your career, but, to some degree, we make our own luck by being prepared and building a strong foundation for the future. It's a never-ending process, albeit one that goes by far too fast.

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As I told the students at the Conference, the key to a successful career is following the three E's. First, you need to get a solid Education and seek to expand your personal body of knowledge throughout your career. Second, you need to continue to build on your Experience base, learning as much as you can about the overall business as well as your own job. Third, and perhaps most important, you need to Enjoy the ride!

I welcome your comments at jvincent@imanet.org. **SF**