

This newspaper article was written in March 2006 to profile a Comcast executive.

Shanda Bradley:
Focus on Skills Development & Networking Bring Success

Some professionals have their eyes trained on a particular position in a particular organization. For them, landing that role will signify they've "made it." But for Comcast's Shanda Bradley, a focus on developing business skills has proven to be a successful career philosophy.

Bradley is Manager of Strategic Staffing & Development for Comcast. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Comcast is the largest provider of cable services in the U.S. It serves more than 21.5 million cable subscribers, over 7 million high-speed Internet customers, and 1.2 million cable telephone customers.

Based in Manchester, NH, but supporting the company's entire northern division, Bradley has broad responsibilities. She's in charge of developing Comcast's diversity recruitment strategy, and she also partners with the corporate staffing units to keep recruiting the brightest, most dynamic professionals. This is her third year at Comcast in this position.

Prior to Comcast, Bradley was a Program Director at Cigna, a leading provider of health care and related benefits. Her career there was unusually progressive. She started out in training and development and quickly moved into a leadership position in staffing. Bradley designed her last role at Cigna herself – she grew undergraduate management talent for the organization from the ground up.

Did she set her sights early on the telecommunications field? Not exactly. Bradley's bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University is in Business and Communications. While in college, she considered a career in the media industry and even minored in TV broadcasting. But when she recognized that it wasn't the right direction for her, she returned to school and earned a master's degree in Educational Policy Research and Administration at UMass, Amherst.

One thing became clear to Bradley - the importance of focusing on skills development. This became her career strategy. The skills she had developed around TV broadcasting as well as during her master's program were all transferable in HR roles and across all industries. It's a business philosophy that serves her even today.

Networking was another big piece of her professional growth. Developing, managing, and fostering partnerships with professional, community-based organizations is critical, she says. "Every position that I've had has been a direct result of networking. It's helped me in every way imaginable – personally, professionally, and developmentally."

She's heavily involved in organizations to this day. Bradley sits on the board of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. She's also a member of the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC), Women in Cable Telecommunications (WICT), the Latino Professional Network (LPN), the National Black MBA Association, the Northeast Human Resources Association (NEHRA), and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Bradley's accomplishments at Comcast are significant. Since she's worked there, the company has seen a dramatic increase in external hires who are diverse. In fact, Comcast has more than **doubled** the number of diverse employees since she began. They now have core metrics in place that measure recruitment and retention of professionals who are women and people of color.

What specific goals does Bradley have for herself? "They constantly evolve," she admits. "I'm more focused on my current position. I want to be sure it's always a 'stretch' assignment that lets me develop new skills."

So it's no surprise that her advice to up-and-coming professionals echoes her own philosophy. "Focus in on skill development and how you transfer those skills," she says. Additionally, she thinks that young professionals need to understand their own brand and learn how to promote it effectively.

Bradley also encourages people to network, knowing that the partnerships they build and nurture in community-based organizations will enrich their lives in multiple ways – as they have hers.