



HR News Magazine™

“Taking Human Relations to Greater Heights”

Interviews with Jessica Nickloy, CEO etica group, Inc. and Laura Sniadecki, President Titan Associates, Inc. dba A.G. Maas Company.

May 2015

Part II: How do these two savvy young women run their own business, while also being wives and mothers of young children?



Jessica Nickloy, CEO

Etica Group, Inc.

www.eticagroup.com

As the CEO of the etica group, inc., Ms. Nickloy is an industry leader. She managed daily business operations and has hands-on work with both architectural and engineering design and construction

observation/verification services. Her experience with architecture and engineering related projects began in 1996, with Capitol Engineering in Indianapolis, and continued in 2005, with the etica group, inc.

In addition to being CEO at etica, Ms. Nickloy has a home in Noblesville, IN with her husband Alex and 4 children, 3 girls; 11 year old twins Abigail and Ashley and 5 year old Meredith and their 1 year old son, Harmon. Her entrepreneurial pursuits are naturally part of her family life, where all of her daughters are already thinking ahead to their futures.

(Read about Jessica’s additional accomplishments and associations at the end of Part II interview)



Laura Sniadecki, President

Titan Associates, Inc. dba A.G. Maas Company

www.Agmaas.com

Laura Sniadecki received her Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University. In 2006 following a career in account management and business development for a healthcare communications company, she purchased the A.G. Maas Company, which specializes in the distribution of facility maintenance supplies. She is the third generation in her family, behind her mother and grandfather, to own this 100-year old Indianapolis fixture.

Laura and her husband, Mike, have a three-year old, a two-year old, and a newborn. When Laura's not catching up on laundry, making her daughter's baby food, or changing diapers, she enjoys cooking with Mike, dining out with friends, and practicing yoga.

(Read about Laura's additional accomplishments and associations at the end of Part II interview)

Let's learn more about these two amazing women and how they juggle their everyday lives!

HR: How do you convey the job responsibilities to your staff, so they have a clear understanding of the job i.e. a Job Description, word-of-mouth or during the interview?

JN: Everything is explained in the interview. I also lay out that I don't ask someone to do something that I wouldn't or haven't done myself.

LS: Each team member receives an offer letter when they are hired, which details their job description and expectations. Since we are a small business, we are often making changes and advancements in each position without documenting them, but the core responsibilities and expectations do not change. It is a clear requirement to embrace the "do-what-it-takes" mentality.

HR: What is the most difficult aspect of being a working CEO/President mother?

JN: Not feeling guilty when you have to put one over the other when something comes up.

LS: It has to be that I can never really disconnect from work. There is a minimum level of engagement that I must have at all times. I can remember getting a call the morning of my wedding from a customer who needed ice melt, emailing a customer proposal while I was in labor, and hiring a key employee while I was on maternity leave. I am constantly looking for

ways to move my business forward and staying engaged even when inconvenient has been a critical factor to my success.

HR: I know some companies handle HR in house and some contract it out. Have you done it both ways and if so which parts do you handle in house and which do you outsource?

JN: The only thing that is outsourced is when an issue arises and we need to involve an employment attorney. This has only happened once.

LS: I do a little of both. I have never wanted to be responsible for managing the deductions and payments related to payroll, so that is no-brainer outsource for me. You don't ever want to get someone's paycheck wrong.

Some of my best hires have come from referral, and I've also had some success using staffing agencies, but a couple of years ago, I needed a warehouse associate, and I thought it would be a great idea to put an ad on Craigslist. We received 75 responses in less than two weeks. Only half of them said they had warehouse experience and of those, only 15 responded to my request to complete a 5-question screen. Of those, I scheduled six phone interviews, and brought in two for face-to-face interviews, and hired one. He quit two months later. Lesson learned.

HR: In today's economy, companies must be very careful where they search for job applicants. Has outsourcing proved to be an effective way to handle some of the people-related issues, such as compliance with federal and state employment regulations?

JN: We really just don't outsource at this time. This is something that my operations manager is looking into. Her job is to make sure we are compliant.

LS: As my company continues to grow, this will become a more important issue for me to address and I will inevitably need to look outside to ensure I remain compliant

HR: Do you feel that being a mother has held you back professionally or that being a CEO/President has held you back personally?

JN: No I don't. I try not to make one a priority over the other when I am in that role. So if I am CEO at work being a mom doesn't control what is happening.

LS: Neither. I believe that being a mother has enriched my experience as a business owner. I am much more patient and relaxed. I also believe that being a business owner has made me a better mother and wife. Multi-tasking is second nature, and I'm much more organized. Both responsibilities challenge me daily and help me grow as a person.

HR: How involved with your business is your family?

JN: My kids and husband all know what is going on. The older two try to make suggestions or ask questions. They do sometimes come to work with me when school is out. They do some filing or help the guys with binders and things.

LS: Although no one in my family is directly involved with my business, I look to my mom and grandfather for advice. Their acumen is still very relevant today.

HR: What would we do without our families for support and guidance! How does your husband deal with you being a strong female leader?

JN: That's a loaded question. : I think he handles it fine. We have our differences but he is very supportive of what I do. I think he finds it fascinating that I am able to do what I do at work and then come home and take care of all that. Along with remembering everything or at least having it in my Outlook calendar. He does get annoyed with me when I am sending him meeting requests for kids functions or appointments. It is really just an informative type notice.

LS: We were dating when I wrote my business plan and bought A.G. Maas, so he has been through it all. He has experienced my very personal and private ownership roller coaster. He works for a Global Fortune 100 company, so our working worlds could not be more different, but he is amazingly supportive. He cooks dinner for the kids when I have an urgent email to address, he meets with the plumber when I'm attending a luncheon, and he knows when I need to vent and when we need to change the subject. He gives me high fives and hugs to get me through it all. He attends charity events, surprises me with lunch, and drives to the office with me on the weekend if I forget an important document.

HR: Consistency is very important as you raise children. I know HR issues such as inconsistency within a company can be a real problem. Having managed a HR Department myself and dealing with all the day-to-day issues that arose, it was necessary for me to develop P/P to handle those issues. What processes or procedures have you developed for maintaining consistency?

JN: We have a policy and procedure manual, which we will update by year end 2015. All employees have a copy or can access it off the server.

LS: In all honesty, my HR procedures are a work-in-progress. I am the first to admit that I need to make more time to pause and develop them. The templates I have developed have proven to be very effective and time-saving like my interview questions, offer letter, and orientation checklist.

HR: Well Laura, it is a good start and having the hiring process documented helps eliminate potential discrimination charges. Is it difficult to be a female leader in your industry?

JN: Not difficult but challenging/interesting. There are not many women in the engineering/construction field so I think men tend to think we are delicate wall flowers and then are surprised by our capabilities.

LS: I try not to look at my gender as a barrier to success in my industry. I never knew a life without women in leadership roles. My mom started selling for A.G. Maas in the mid-1970s when she was pregnant with me and was given odd looks. She spent time in offices with mostly men. She was expected to wear a skirt suit every day. She even had to have my dad co-sign on loans since banks wouldn't loan money to women alone. She had to bring us to work at night and on the weekends to get caught up on paperwork. Although there is still more progress to be made, the working environment for women has never been better, and I'm proud to be a woman business owner.

HR: How has having a family changed your work and management perspective?

JN: It just makes time management and decision making extremely important. Give me the facts so I can make a decision. I can't dwell on things. I also think the "Mom intuition" kicks in both at home and at work. I get "gut" feelings about work that tend to be right.

LS: All of my employees have children. Now I have a new level of understanding and support when one of their children has an earache or a band performance. When one of my employees told me that she was planning to miss her son's Mother's Day tea party at school because she had some important purchase orders to place, tears came to my eyes and I encouraged her to go. I thought, "How could those purchase orders be more important than tea with her little boy?" They shouldn't be, so I placed the orders that day and A.G. Maas survived.

HR: Do you feel that being a CEO/President as opposed to someone else in the company has influenced your parenting methods (especially on young girls)?

JN: Very much. My older two see that they can do what you typically see a man doing. They are very interested and have ideas of their own. They love the fact that both mom and dad own their own businesses. Give them a sense of pride.

LS: I'm sure to some degree being a business owner influences my parenting methods, but I would like to think that no matter what position I hold, my children will be influenced by my positive attitude, my hard work ethic and altruistic spirit.

HR: Where do you find energy and motivation at work and at home?

JN: I am always running on empty but wouldn't change it. Love the challenge even if it means not a lot of sleep.

LS: Coffee ... Lots of coffee! That and finding the joy in small things. Whether it is one sale or a huge contract, I celebrate wins at work as if they were taking us worldwide. Laughing has been a stress-reliever and a rejuvenator. I laugh constantly with my team; the kind of laughter with tears. When I have time, I like to practice yoga. It clears my head, gets my blood flowing and energizes me. I also like to listen to music. It can be *Wheels on the Bus* or Taylor Swift's latest release. It all motivates me. We call it a "dance party" at my house.

HR: I know that I'm exhausted already, just hearing about your personal and business life!! What is one piece of advice for a young woman thinking of starting her own business? I know our readers would greatly appreciate being able to learn and benefit from your experience.

JN: If you want to have your own business do it but surround yourself with other strong women either in your industry or women's groups like NAWBO (National Association of Women Business Owners). You will be surprised how it propels you.

LS: Surround yourself with smart, successful people. Plan time in your schedule to be a part of organizations where these people network. You will eat lunch with them, volunteer with them and ultimately learn from them. They will teach you about business ownership, being a working mother, and how to give back to your community. Do not ask them for this information directly. Be patient. Befriend them.

HR: Thank you both for sharing such fantastic information.

Jessica Nickloy – Ms. Nickloy obtained her formal education from Purdue University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree. She completed engineering, surveying, and computer-aided design (CAD) related coursework while at Purdue University. Her engineering experience includes fieldwork on a number of projects including storm water permit support, construction easement acquisition, sewer separation, curb & sidewalk construction observation, and resurfacing and water main construction observation projects. With well-established business relationships, she works closely with clients, architects, and engineers as well as sub and prime contractors to ensure the timely and economical delivery of projects.

Ms. Nickloy is highly involved with industry and professional organizations. She is a member of the Indiana Water Environment Association (IWEA) and is a certified Water and Sewer Construction Inspector. She holds Board positions with both the National Association

of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and Indiana Construction Roundtable, and is a proud member of the Purdue University Supplier Diversity Advocacy Council and the ACEC Diversity Committee.

Laura Sniadecki – Laura was selected as the 2011 winner of Indy's Best and Brightest in the Manufacturing, Retail and Services category by Junior Achievement of Central Indiana and received the Avatar (Young Entrepreneur) of the Year award in 2010 from the Indianapolis chapter of the National Association of Woman Business Owners.

Laura has a great passion for the Indianapolis community and currently serves as a board member for the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works, as a board member for the Indianapolis Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, a member and past board member of the Rotary Club of Indianapolis, a member of Downtown Indianapolis, a member of the Indiana Historical Society, a past member of the Super Bowl Host Committee Business and Resident Communication Subcommittee, and a 2008 graduate of the FBI Citizens Academy. She also served as a panelist for the 2012 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards Leadership Conference and for the 2012 U.S. Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneurs Seminar, and a guest presenter in the organizational leadership and supervision degree program in the Purdue University School of Engineering and Technology.