

PART of the JOURNEY

Leaders Needed to Share Their Career Roads

By Charlee Beasor

Kris Altice is one of the business leaders who has outlined her journey as part of Roadtrip Indiana's Share Your Road web site to show young Hoosiers the variety of careers available in the state.



You can barely see the windowsill of Kris Altice's office at Shiel Sexton.

It's covered with mementos, photos and reminders that you should say "yes" to opportunities.

There are also toys. She works in an office with people who like to fidget when they come talk to her. Altice also keeps a putter and a few golf balls in one corner of the room; there have been contests to see who can flip a golf ball up onto a ledge.

As general counsel for the Indianapolis-based construction manager and general contracting company, Altice also keeps a bowl of M&M's on her desk.

"My very first job out of law school, a woman lawyer had M&M's on her desk and everybody went in to chit chat because they wanted M&M's. So, here I came into a male-dominated industry and they didn't have any lawyers; they're scared of you. They don't think you fit in. What do you know about construction?" she recalls.

"I've been here almost 20 years and I still have M&M's on my desk. People come in and they talk to you and that's the icebreaker and you just find out how they're doing, ask about their family and their kids. ... I've invested a lot in M&M's."

Altice was the first lawyer for Shiel Sexton, a company with about 400 employees, and the first woman at the executive table. She shared the story of her career on the Share Your Road web site, a project of the career exploration organization Roadtrip Nation and various Indiana partners. Her goal: Encouraging other young professionals – and young women, in particular – to step out of their comfort zones.

"It's to have young women and young men have role models and know people can take different paths and end up in a different place. People don't know those stories and don't know how I got someplace

and if they think it's not attainable, they may not try," she offers.

Altice's background, as shown on her Share Your Road profile, includes undergraduate degrees in chemistry and zoology. She had a love for math and science, which she says help in her legal career. But she was initially thinking about medical school.

"I had a biology teacher that was the wildest, quirkiest guy you could ever imagine. Bald-headed guy at North Central (High School in Indianapolis) that wore a lab coat and made it all fun and interesting and sparked my interest in sciences," she recalls.

"If you study what you have a passion for, you'll likely succeed and do well."

Back to that putter in the corner. Altice plays golf and lists that on her Share Your Road career profile as a skill.

"It's a lifelong skill, especially for a woman to be able to go out and play golf and compete with men. I think that is still one of the glass ceilings that still exists: men do business on the golf course and women may not have an opportunity to participate in those conversations. But if you can get out and play, guess what? You get invited," she exclaims.

'A virtual tour of a job'

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education is encouraging business leaders across the state to go to the Share Your Road web site (indiana.shareyourroad.com) and fill out the short profile, which takes about 15 minutes.

"It is our hope that students – making decisions about their education plans and career choices – that they will have a better sense of the wide range of career opportunities that are available in Indiana and a better sense of what those jobs entail," says Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education.

Sharing career experiences could help students take a closer look at jobs they might never know about, particularly as Indiana's



Altice keeps a bowl of M&M's on her desk to help facilitate conversations among her peers. It's a tip she picked up from another lawyer early in her career.

economy and job markets are shifting.

"This is a very tangible way to have, in some cases, a virtual tour of a job," Lubbers adds.

Teachers will also utilize the web site as a classroom resource. A documentary profiling Roadtrip Indiana, which followed three postsecondary students around the state

in the summer of 2017, will air on PBS later this year.

Several partners have assisted in the program, including the Indiana Chamber Foundation and Indiana INTERNnet (managed by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce). More is needed, however. There are about 34 profiles

on the web site currently, a number that is far too low, Lubbers notes.

"This provides a clear opportunity to help people and explain what their life's journey was. You can focus on how did you overcome hardships or challenges in your career," she explains.

Lasting lessons

If there's one thing that Altice would offer to young people, it's this: Don't be afraid to try and don't be afraid to fail.

"I have failed a lot. You learn from every one of those, and if you view them as opportunities you will always grow. And don't ever stop learning. I'm still learning."

She also says a good takeaway from the Share Your Road experience: Others want to help younger generations succeed.

"I think people are afraid to ask. They think they're bothering. They're intimidated, or they're scared and there is no reason to (feel that way). They are no different and no better. People need to know that. I'm Kris. That's all I am," she concludes.

RESOURCES: Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, at www.in.gov/che | Kris Altice, Shiel Sexton, at www.shiels Sexton.com | Share Your Road at indiana.shareyourroad.com

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