

PROFILE

Carol Bellamy **President and CEO, World Learning**

Career Trajectory

President and CEO, World Learning, Brattleboro, Vermont, 2005–present
Executive Director, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 1995–2005
Director, U.S. Peace Corps, 1993–95 (*Carol is the first person to have been both a volunteer for the Peace Corps and its director.*)
Managing Director, Bear Stearns & Co., 1990–93
Principal, Morgan Stanley, 1986–90
President, New York City Council, 1978–85
Senator, New York State, 1973–77
Associate, Cravath, Swaine & Moore, 1968–71
Peace Corps Volunteer, Guatemala, 1963–65

Academic Background

JD, New York University School of Law, 1968
AB, Psychology, Gettysburg College, 1963

I think too many people get too strict in their majors in college today. They think that if they want to be a lawyer, then they *have* to take political science. . . . No, you don’t *have* to take political science; you don’t have to take anything. Maybe history would be good; maybe English lit would be good. I think undergraduates in particular ought to get a broad experience in college, including an international experience.

What awards and honors have meant the most to you?

In 2006 I received the highest Japanese government award given to non-Japanese citizens, the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. It was actually presented to me by the emperor. I received the award because of my work at UNICEF, but it was really because of the work of ALL of the people at UNICEF, not just me. But I was very honored, and my Japanese friends tell me this is a very important honor. I appreciate it, as the Japanese are thoughtful people around the issue of sustainable development.

Another acknowledgment that meant a lot to me was being named by *Forbes* magazine in 2004 as one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in the World. I appreciated that because, quite often, *Forbes* lists (and other lists like them) identify people—and these are good people—largely in the private sector or perhaps because of government titles. I am involved in humanitarian work and development work, which are sometimes seen (in my view totally

incorrectly) as “soft issues.” Sometimes they don’t receive the recognition they should. I thought that including somebody representing a humanitarian and development organization on this list of globally powerful women was important.

Are you involved in community service?

American Bar Association, Rule of Law Committee
 Advisory board member, Acumen Fund
 Board member, Child Rights International

How do you define your cause?

I don’t have a single cause or a single mission. Prior to my fifteen years of international work, I largely divided my adult career in the public and private sectors. I was a corporate lawyer and an investment banker, in both roles deeply involved in business transactions. I didn’t go to law school thinking I was going to work in the private sector, but lo and behold, my favorite courses were on contracts and corporations. So I spent twelve years in business, but I also spent thirteen years as an elected public official in the city and state of New York.

So I haven’t had a single, definable mission, but I’m motivated by several things. I think quality of work is a critical component. One needs to engage in ethical behavior. I think one can have a variety of vocations, but at the same time maintain a balance in life through one’s *avocations*. I’m shaped from head to toe by the most important experience in my life, which was being a Peace Corps volunteer. I believe that however one engages in it, some form of community service is the most important thing one can do in one’s life. In the long run, it allows you to make a small contribution to better the world out there, and you benefit as much as you contribute.

What drew you to this cause and your field?

When you lose an election, you have to go out and find a job, so that was a motivator [*laughs*]. [Carol ran for mayor of New York City in 1985.] Other than that, I’ve made choices because they seemed like the right thing to do. One of the things I learned in the Peace Corps is that you hope you can have an impact in whatever you do in some small way, but you also learn that you *can* fail in some things. Yet failure should never be an obstacle. If you take failure to be a learning experience, you can use it to become stronger in what you do going ahead. I say that because it allows a much broader range of choices. You’re not motivated by fear and you’re willing to try different things . . . I’ve been willing to try different things, some of which I’ve done well, some of which I’ve done less well.

Do you have a mentor? How has he or she affected your life and career?

There weren't a lot of women out there to be my mentors when I was starting my career. There have been several people throughout who have affected me, though no one person in particular. One of my first bosses was something of a mentor to me. When I got elected to office, there was another woman in public office—it was the first time they had women in the state senate—so we had to be supportive of each other.

Also, my mother was a mentor to me, though not as much when I was young. She really became something of a mentor to me later in my life.

Do you consider yourself a mentor to others?

Have I mentored? A little bit. In part in the early days, when there were so few women in politics, you'd make the rounds, encouraging more women to get involved. Actually, one of the contributions I've made is having the opportunity to encourage some of the people who were younger. I've helped support what I've always called "the greenhouse"—an opportunity to help younger women find their wings and soar and do even greater things. I suppose I've given them at least a small foundation to stand on, but then they've risen to greater heights on their own.

I always say that if others aren't trying to hire away the people you have in the institution you're running, then you have the wrong people. And I want to give young people experience and opportunities too! Some of my early bosses did this for me, and then they knew, when I was about to crash and burn, how to grab me back. I think that's a good thing to do: give young people opportunities.

What is your best advice for developing effective networking skills?

Sometimes people go at networking too intensely. They always ask, "How many networks do I have?" To me, networking can be at all different levels. It's not about how many business cards you have, but rather the impact that interacting with others has on you and where you think you can contribute. I believe networks that are two-way streets—ones in which you're contributing as well as taking—are the best kind. Informal networks are generally better than formal networks. It isn't quantity as much as quality . . . I know that sounds pretty trite, but I actually do believe it!

Never burn bridges. This doesn't mean that the relationships you've maintained with people in your life have to be maintained at their most robust level, but even dotted-line connections aren't bad things. Staying in touch isn't a bad thing to do.

What lessons have you learned as your career has evolved?

Be open to experimenting and trying. Don't be afraid to fail. There are a lot of lessons that can come out of not always being successful.

Be serious about what you do; be careful and respect quality and integrity in what you do; but never take yourself too seriously. You want to at least enjoy what you do. It doesn't mean you have to love your job every day—there will always be bad days. But if you don't get up every day and say, "You know, I kind of like doing this," then *don't do it*.