



Indispensable

Wherever Janet Rantala goes, she finds a way to get the job done.

By Allison Iacone

Make yourself indispensable. It's a nearly universal piece of advice from career counselors in today's job market. And it's something WITC-Superior alumna Janet Rantala put into practice 40 years ago when embarking on her career.

Throughout the years, she's gone from bookkeeper and administrative assistant to vice president and business owner. Her can-do philosophy earned Rantala the WITC-Superior Foundation's 2012 Distinguished Alumni award, which she received when she delivered the commencement address last spring.

A native of Oulu, Wis., Rantala graduated from WITC-Superior with a diploma in data processing in 1971 and earned her associate degree in accounting on the same campus in 1977.

Her first bookkeeping job at a Wisconsin manufacturing company came with some surprising "duties as assigned."

"I learned how to assemble, weld and spray paint large pieces of equipment," Rantala told the graduating class of 2012. "I've always tried to learn something new from each opportunity that has come my way."

When the opportunity came her way to join a start-up company in the Twin Cities, she was ready. In 1988, Rantala joined the MSP Corporation, a research and manufacturing company started by two University of Minnesota professors.

"When I was hired, I was their first full-time employee, which meant I got to do basically everything. I was taking sales calls, purchasing parts, building the instruments, testing and shipping them out to the customers," said Rantala.

And while her degree got her the job, her innovation is clearly key to her success.

During the past 24 years, Rantala has designed and developed products from prototype to manufacturing for MSP, become part owner of the multi-million-dollar business and, two years ago, was promoted to her current position of vice president of finance.

"I feel the education I received at WITC is the foundation of my career and successes in the accounting and corporate world," said Rantala. "It gave me a base on which I could expand and build on throughout my various work and personal experiences. I would compare this to having a great foundation for a home where one can build and add on to as your needs require." ■

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