

## Stephanie Atkinson: Personifying of Excellence in Research and Analytics industry



Leadership has grown to become a very dynamic term in the business world. A leader has to wear multiple hats in order to keep the organization running efficiently. And to attain that, he/she must imbibe various sets of skills. One of those skill sets includes knowledge. Knowledge is what differentiates a leader from the rest and helps him/her to grow in the career and **Stephanie Atkinson** is a perfect example of the same.

Stephanie is the **Founder** and **CEO** of **Compass Intelligence**, where she leads the organizational direction of the company. The foundation of her company lies in her vision, which was to start her own market research and advisory firm after she started working for the 3<sup>rd</sup> company in her career. In order to do so, it took her years of strategizing, planning, and dreaming. She wanted the company to offer specialized B2B and custom services, and to develop long-term relationships through personalized and flexible services, as the market research industry at that time was very impersonal and not very flexible at all.

Stephanie's graduation was focused on supply chain management, logistics, industrial distribution, business management, materials processing, and engineering technology. For Masters she chose a traditional MBA educational curriculum with a focus on Management of Technology. She pursued her MBA while she was working and went to night school, as she knew that having the next or advanced degree was very well-received in the market research industry from a pay grade and overall validation perspective.

Her educational background and affiliation with Texas A&M University got her an opportunity at Alcatel USA (now Nokia), which was a telecom manufacturer and she worked in the R&D division. This was a great start to her career as she worked with every level of engineer including mechanical engineers to ASIC design engineers to electronics engineers, but at the same time was able to be on the factory floor and work with purchasing and parts ordering for planning purposes.

This vast interface allowed her to see many of the working parts of a manufacturing facility. Being in the telecom industry led her to her next career move to work for a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC), and there she jumped right into the IT department helping with information systems design, planning, and even helping with a brand new billing system. This telecom or carrier background allowed her to become a telecom analyst working in San Antonio.

Today, she continues to work in the technology analyst industry and focuses on providing strategic advisory, market intelligence, and research services to tech companies across the globe. The stepping stones throughout her career may have been unpredictable but the focus on owning her own business was present from a very early part of her career.

Stephanie wishes to share her personal experiences with the upcoming generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. These experiences, as a guiding light, could be instrumental in building many more aspiring leaders. She states, “One advice I tell the younger generation and those in college, is that in some cases your degree might get your foot in the door but your career will take you where it takes you.” She recommends Data Science programs for those who are looking to get into the next big area, as the tech industry needs individuals with a balance of business operations and strategy, as well as analytical software tools and programming. Other gaps include statisticians, data/software engineers, and those in the field of graphics and visual design for business applications.

Stephanie believes that if one has the entrepreneurial drive, one will realize the same quite early. Then all the ambitions and expectations will drive the career path to push hard to eventually start one’s own business. In her personal experience, after those few mentioned positions in the early part of her career, she constantly dreamed of doing something on her own that she had not only ownership of, but also something that she could grow and be a part of, every step of the way. She pushed hard to move up at every company she worked for, even in companies she felt did not support women executive advancement. Stephanie was stubborn, aggressive, and knew that she needed to differentiate through her actions and hard work. At first, she was not sure what business she

wanted to start on her own but after working in the technology market research industry for 3 years, she knew she wanted to branch out and start her own practice.

Stephanie has learned so many lessons in the passing decade of her career while running Compass Intelligence, and most of them have nothing to do with clients, products or services. According to her, when one first starts a business, you may not be prepared for the “ugly” part of owning a business like taxes, accounting, personnel, HR, and legal issues. You may also not be prepared to address the changing tides of the industry itself.

The market research industry was changing when Stephanie started Compass Intelligence, and that was probably one of the best leadership lessons she has learned in her career. She believes, one must adapt and move quickly to address not only the changing client needs, but also to be a few steps ahead in terms of innovative services, flexible options for clients, and be first to market in terms of expertise in emerging technology areas. The tech industry is moving at a fast pace, which means analysts and advisors must move at that same pace with expectations of where the market is going and to provide market intelligence and research services to help the market prepare, plan, and develop strategies to grow and expand.

“For those who are exploring and starting their own practice, one must first identify what makes their company or their skill set so unique and differentiated and push that hard, continue to develop those skills and if change is required due to market dynamics, then be prepared to change.” adds Stephanie.

Stephanie also found that in her industry, one needs to be armed with not only the technical and market expertise, but should be a good listener and people person. The analysts who moved up quickly and became well-known or influencers, had the traits of being likeable, approachable, listeners, and engaged with clients in a very natural and personable manner.

Compass Intelligence has recently completed 13 years and while the structure of the company has changed, the company remains a trusted name to some of the top technology, mobile, and IoT companies around the globe. The company’s future plans include embracing partnerships, bringing on the top experts to support client needs, and leveraging technology including data analytics, modeling tools, and software to provide more visual and actionable intelligence to the market. Stephanie enjoys getting involved with the start-up community, the heart of what’s next, and serves on a number of advisory boards for colleges, start-up conferences, and tech events. She plans on doing more of that to expand her volunteer goals and give back to others in the tech industry.

Read more: <https://is.gd/4DOkEy>