

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to a new partnership between Metro T.V. and Y-PAL, the Young Professionals Association of Louisville called Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into how they see themselves and most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs a current Y-PAL board member and today our guest is Debbie Scoppechio from Creative Alliance. And for those of you who don't know her she runs and created the number one advertising firm in the city of Louisville.

To give you a background on her after about 15 years in the ad business Debbie took her energies and formed Creative Alliance in roughly the late 80s. Almost 20 years later Creative Alliance started with a three person company has now well over 100 employees and over 100 million dollars in annual billings. Debbie has achieved what many women business owners could only dare dream of. Welcome Debbie to the Leadership Landscape. I guess will start this off with what drives you to do this to go out on your own create a company that many people now brace for their advertising needs.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** I guess what drives me is I absolutely love what I do but what really drives me every morning when I get up to keep going and being motivated is my team. I motivate them but they also motivate me and we have a great team and we just all are passionate about the advertising business and what motivated me to actually start the business was having worked for other people I've always been the new business person and so I helped build other agencies so it was

time for me to build with my creative partners our own agency with our own philosophy and it's worked out very well.

**Kirt Jacobs:** How many employees now?

**Debbie Scoppechio:** We have about 150 employees. We are hiring at the moment if anyone's listening, because we just got two major new accounts so we are hiring and we have a great team.

**Kirt Jacobs:** With that, what do you credit most influential in your life. Maybe inspired you?

**Debbie Scoppechio:** I have to start with my mom.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Who never gave up, you know. Pushing me ahead. My dad also I would have to say he was an entrepreneur so his work ethic certainly inspired me but he didn't think girls needed to go to college and be professional they just needed to get married and have children so he and my mother viewed things differently as I was getting ready to go to college and including me. So a mixture of the two of them and then my first advertising boss was a gentleman named Bob Feller and absolutely in the advertising business he is always been my inspiration and is still a good friend today.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What was the most defining moment in your life?

**Debbie Scoppechio:** God I've had so many wonderful defining moments but I would have to say the most defining moment was meeting Rick Duffy, who eventually became my husband, and I met him in a business setting and he is now part of Creative Alliance and I'd have to say he was my he's the person that has taught me that there's more to life than just work but also understands and this passion about our business and so we have a great life together and I think outside of everything else you know when it comes down to it business is wonderful but I have a wonderful man that inspires me every day.

**Kirt Jacob:** If there is one, what is one professional regret you have or maybe something that you look back on and you could have done differently. Now that you armchair quarterback 20 years later if you will.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Well, you put it both ways very well first is there isn't anything I regret because I wouldn't be here if we hadn't made this group that we did make. So much regret is the wrong word. But if I look back, I would want to do things differently sure there's a couple things any hirer that is bad. That is not a good fit, that's a huge regret because it's very difficult for me to ever think that we'd have to let somebody go if they weren't working out. And it affects everybody else because everyone else thinks well you just fire them, they're not doing a good job and I don't want to do it and so that's a really I think in that think that's in anyone's business a bad hire is everyone that I've ever made which fortunately have not been very many I regret.

There was one knew business pitch I regret that we didn't do it the way I thought that we should and we weren't... I'm the leader and I took a back seat and had a male be the leader. Because of who we were pitching and we weren't us, we weren't Creative Alliance and we just sucked royally. OK we may have to re-edit that. But anyway, we did not do a good job because we weren't Creative Alliance and we are who we are. So I probably would have done that differently but we pitched it a few years later and got it anyway so.

**Kirt Jacobs:** On the flip side of that what's your biggest professional triumph. Something you look back on and that was a home run. If you will.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** There have been many fortunately and every client that we've gotten has been but probably if you held a gun to my head are going to have to had to say one it was getting K.F.C. corporate print. The first time when we were two-years-old and they were a massive account and they took us off and we went on into the future we had to hire 10 people and the same time we got another big piece of business and we really took off after that and then KFC because we've always worked hard and done a great job for

them. We have grown, you know they spun off and become YUM and now we do business with many other parts of YUM. So they're a huge clients today. Back then they were huge client for the size we were and I'd say that was our probably our biggest triumph. Although we've had many fortunately.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Follow up on that, what what what do you find exciting or turns you on about all of this I guess.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Absolutely everything I'd say. there isn't much in life that doesn't excite me. I get up in the morning and you know even if it's reading a book that excites me which I don't get to do very often but what really excites me is the win. You know the hunt the pitching whether it's pitching new business or pitching a current client on a new idea. It's very...finding a way to do it and convince them it's the best thing for their business is very exciting to me but prior to that it would be my team. So I'm always I can't wait to hear their ideas see the creative concepts. They just give me you know excitement every day sometimes the excitement that I don't want just not the headaches but I would be nothing without a team you know so many people are very very successful consultants and I never could be. I have to have a team that excites me every day.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What is your favorite word in the lexicon English language if you could pick one word.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Team might be one work -- The Team. One word would be ...

**Kirt Jacobs:** Asking an advertising executive would be a tough one.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Yeah I mean we are all about words. Love, love of everything people animals. Love is a great word I think. Loving what you do. Passion. I think that's a great word. A bad word would be no. I don't take the word no very well and at Creative Alliance you don't use the word no. We always find a way to make it work rather than say no but I think passion is a great word.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Interesting. Could you define leadership in one word?

**Debbie Scoppechio:** Would probably have to use two. Motivation and inspiration.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Why is that?

**Debbie Scoppechio:** You know when people call me a leader I don't really see myself as a leader. I've seen myself as one of the team. I think when I do step up and if I ever did consider myself a leader it's motivating and inspiring when there's bad news. You lose an account. It's up to me or you don't get you know you work your little tail off to get new business and you don't get it. I have to be the one to tell everybody after they've worked 24/7 for two weeks. That's when I really have to be a leader and find a way to motivate and inspire them to be excited about tomorrow as opposed to don't drown your sorrows over what we didn't get. So that's what I think being a leader in good times is easy. You know.

We had these two great wins and went out and party the other night that's an easy being a leader everybody's excited. The being the leader when there's issues or you know if there is a downturn in business and you have to tell people bad news or lay someone off. That's I think when a good leader comes out. And I think another thing about being a good leader is listening to your team and I wouldn't if I was going to walk. Ask my team to walk across coals and I would go too. I'd be the first. I don't ever ask them anything to do that I wouldn't do because we are team and I think that's an important part of being a leader.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Where do you see yourself for Creative Alliance in the next five or 10 years, 15-20 years. You can answer any way I guess.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** If I'm still running Creative Alliance in five or 10 years shoot me. We are a very young business. I'm fortunate to have great great young people so they keep me young. But I see that team that management team my leadership team in the next five years or so to start to take over and definitely if I'm there 10 years I'm dead but no I'd say we're going to keep growing the more new business that we get like we added 20 million dollars in

billings. We then have to offset with other kinds of clients and so it's a constant growth we're not just going to say let's sit back and relax because you could lose something tomorrow so we're going to continue to grow but I think my leadership team is really going to start one of them right now is. Sometimes I think she is the leader not me and that's good. So I hope that in the next five years that happens and then Rick and I can go off into the sunset and just be there when they need us.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I know of people .. No go ahead.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** I think it will take a few years because clients need to get used to who is going to run it and. You know we've been approached a couple of times by major firms about buying us and they're really only buying our clients and our people. So if they put somebody in there that is in our culture they've really bought nothing because they'll lose it. So it really is my team that needs to take over and they'll keep the clients because that is the culture.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That sounds like some tough shoes to fill though.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** No I don't think so but thank you for the compliment.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure

**Debbie Scoppechio:** you know they're they all have great shoes so good I'll take five of them but they could do it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** When the great day comes. How do you want to be remembered. If someone thinks of Debbie.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** I would say with love both ways for everybody and that I live life to its fullest. If I died right here right now I wouldn't have missed, I don't want to by the way but I'd be very happy. I have totally live life to its fullest and lived a wonderful happy life and the sun comes up every day whether it's there or not you know the next day and I just think that living life to its fullest is what I'd like to have there and that I love my dogs always.

**Kirt Jacobs:** We've enjoyed having you here today on Y-PAL the Leadership Landscape I want to thank you.

**Debbie Scoppechio:** thank you for having me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I am Kirt Jacobs and I want to thank you today for joining us on the Leadership Landscape and hope you can join us next time.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)