

Matrice Ellis-Kirk

She will tell you that succeeding in business was simply a choice she made, and then executed. Still, it's hard not to see Matrice Ellis-Kirk as the "perfect storm" that roared to the top of the executive search profession in Dallas.

The stakes are sky-high when replacing top management at the largest corporations – for the company and the new executive. Playing the matchmaker requires a keen eye for talent, some marketing mojo, and the business acumen to seal the deal. Ivy League-educated Ellis-Kirk proved she can crunch the numbers at an early career foray into banking. And a number of local non-profits will gladly attest to the marketing appeal her participation lends to their efforts. An eye for leadership talent? One has only to look at her most famous client, the Honorable Husband Ron Kirk, to suspect she's picked a winner or two.

Ellis-Kirk is Managing Director of the Dallas office of Heidrick & Struggles, a global provider of senior-level executive search and leadership consulting services with offices in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. For the last year, she had been on special assignment implementing enhancements to the company's worldwide client services organization. Her role in the organization has expanded because, she says, of her "keen ability to listen, to understand the nuance, yet be action-oriented. I identify solutions and always look to execute." Excited to be re-focused on her local clients, Ellis-Kirk leads a team of 28 professionals that manage leadership talent, execute retained searches, assess existing leadership to investment partners, and facilitate executive on-boarding.

Her climb to the top did have a few setbacks, but Ellis-Kirk has a short memory. "I expect to face new challenges every day. The key is to really understand what challenges are and match each to your strategic vision." She sees challenge as an opportunity to improve; one that should be prioritized and aligned with your overall strategy. "The lesson I've learned," she says, "is to draw on resources; that I'm not in it alone. I look to accomplish reasonable, achievable short-term objectives while keeping in mind my longer-term goals."

Success is about choices, Ellis-Kirk believes. "Every day we choose ... whether to be productive or idle, whether to take chances or stay where we're at. You must choose to succeed." But how you define success is your choice as well, she explains. "You must have a vision of the success you want. With that vision, you can build a strategy and execution. Look for success that can be replicated, then execute, execute, execute."

As a wife and mother of two daughters, Elizabeth, 18, and Catherine, 15, Ellis-Kirk's strategic vision includes more than business success. She shares Ron's optimism for the city of Dallas and is determined to make a difference. Ellis-Kirk is a tireless supporter of local organizations, including UT Southwestern Medical Foundation, the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, and the Women's Museum. The family is active in St. Luke Community United Methodist Church.