

WAI Awards Even MORE Scholarships

AviationforWomen®

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

The official publication of Women in Aviation International®

HOW TO INTERVIEW A JOB CANDIDATE

JOIN THE EFFORT TO HONOR

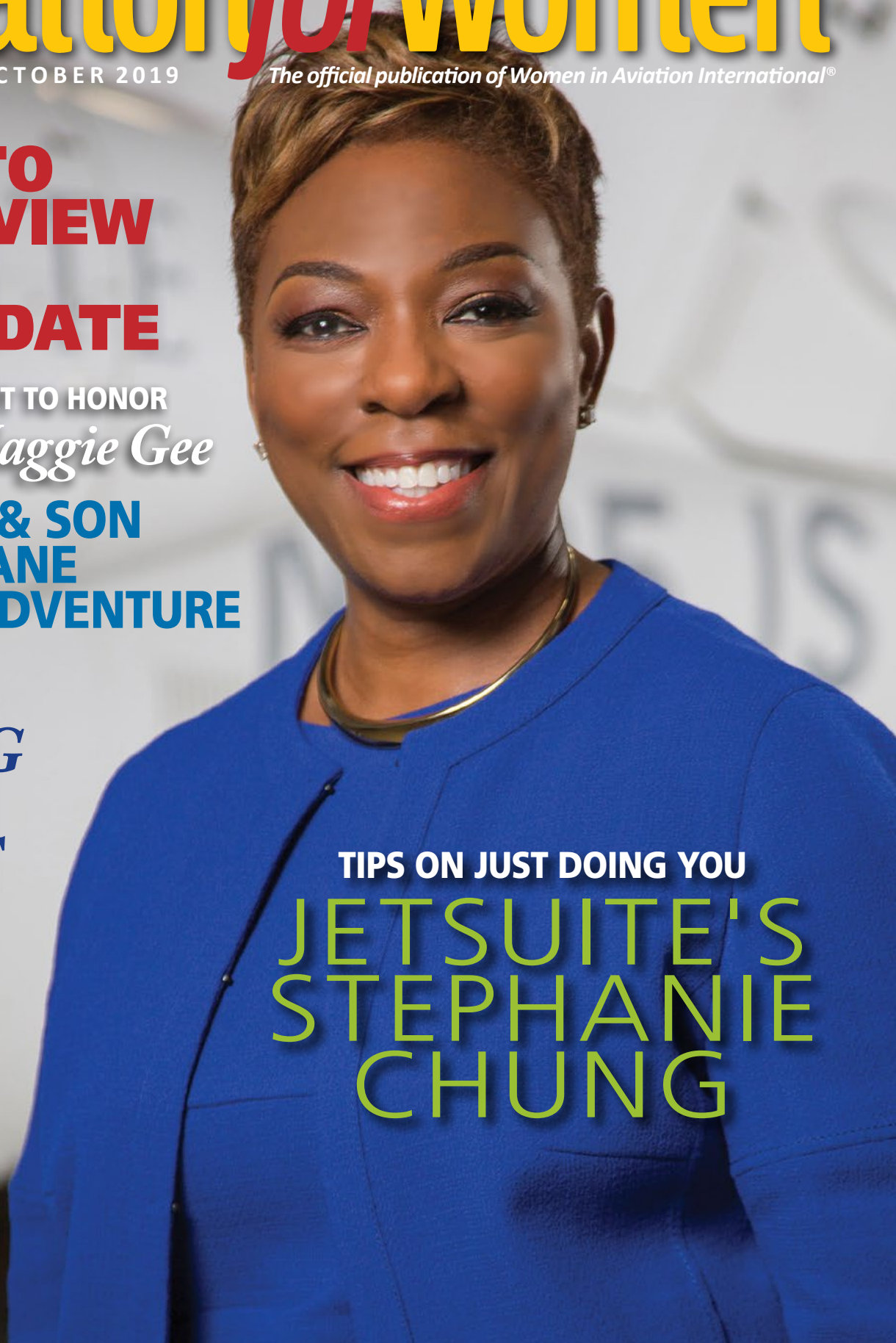
WASP Maggie Gee

MOTHER & SON FLOATPLANE FLYING ADVENTURE

ARE FLYING CLUBS RIGHT FOR YOU?

TIPS ON JUST DOING YOU

JETSUITE'S STEPHANIE CHUNG



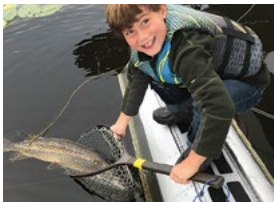
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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

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A bold and thoughtful JetSuite president, Stephanie Chung has the tenacity to position the company's product to be something special in the business aviation marketplace.
Photo courtesy of JetSuite

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JUST DO YOU

Lessons on leadership from JetSuite's Stephanie Chung

BY KATHRYN B. CREEDY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JETSUITE/STEPHANIE CHUNG

It's tough to break the glass ceiling in any industry, but to do so in aviation is rare. While several women have led airlines, aviation is still a man's world, especially in business aviation where, according to Doug Gollan, who manages Private Jet Card Comparisons, women make up only 5% of management.

There was a seismic shift last year when Stephanie Chung was named president of JetSuite, achieving what she calls her dream job.

There have been female entrepreneurs who have founded their own business aviation companies—no small feat—including Paula Kraft, founding partner of DaVinci Inflight Training Institute, and René Banglesdorf, CEO of Charlie Bravo Aviation and author of *Crushing Mediocrity*. And of course, there is Stephanie's former boss, Diana White, former FlexJet CEO, appointed in 2012 after rising through the company's finance ranks.

But Stephanie, often the only woman and minority in the room, is the first African American president of a private aviation company in an industry in which black people remain an infinitesimal percentage of the aviation workforce.

"Diversity is not just about race but gender, communication, and thought," she told *Essence* magazine in 2018. "All those different voices make any team much more effective. I get through that by staying focused on my goal. I think: 'I'll just win you over. You are going to love me.' I won't say there are no issues, but I'm not letting them stop me."

Appointing her president was a gutsy move, says Stephanie, who is leading WAI corporate member JetSuite into its second decade. Her appointment is fitting because she epitomizes a JetSuite mantra: "Make connections. Be yourself." Stephanie has followed that philosophy throughout her 30-plus-year career from airline ramp agent, as a Mary Kay star, to her role as an award-winning executive coach, sales mentor, and business adviser.

"I really admire Alex," she says of Alex Wilcox, co-founder of JetSuite and JetSuite X, with whom she has made history. "At our 10th anniversary, he is trusting me to take us to the next level continuing to position our product to be something special in the marketplace. He knew me and respected me and trusted the results I could accomplish."

"You have to be confident," she says. "You have to know yourself because there are times people will challenge you. You have to have the confidence in yourself to stand strong. Once you've taken on a position, there is no one else



“When you’re coaching and developing people—women in particular—one of the most important things is teaching them how to say no and not feel guilty about it.”

Top to bottom: A young Stephanie with her father; Stephanie with her husband and daughter; Stephanie was named the president of JetSuite Inc. in August 2018.

to look to. It's hard to say, 'I know what I know. I know what I'm good at,' and then create the style you need. I look at Oprah. No one else does it her way. Know what it is that drives you, and just do you. When you're coaching and developing people—women in particular—one of the most important things is teaching them how to say no and not feel guilty about it."

Stephanie honed her discipline and professionalism to make her a unique leader in her own right. Her major tool is mastering the complex art of the conversation and passing that on to others.

"You need to really understand how to communicate," she advises. "You need to under-

She urges those interested in aviation to think beyond pilot and flight attendants. “Our industry is so much more,” she says. “There are so many other fantastic careers and opportunities. I hope my appointment encourages people to explore all of the various roles.”

stand the construction of a conversation. When you understand conversation and neuroscience, it will change how you have conversations and the effectiveness of how you get better at being a great communicator.”

Stephanie is eager to share how to do it, seeing her role as a mentor as one of her most important as evidenced by her book *Profit Like a Girl, A Woman’s Guide to Kicking Butt in Sales and Leadership*. She is also the creator of *High Ticket Selling Made Simple* and *Neuroscience Selling* and, with her business partner, the late Judith Glasner, wrote *Conversational Intelligence*.

As the daughter of an Air Force master sergeant, Stephanie knew aviation was her calling. She began her career on the ramp for Piedmont Airlines in Boston loading luggage, calculating weight and balance, and parking planes.

“I didn’t know how to start so I started at the bottom, and now I’m here at JetSuite,” she says. “The reaction of the guys on the ramp was I was no big deal. I grew up in the military so hanging around guys was normal for me.”

She moved to customer service and took the advice of one of her customers. “The regional vice president for Piedmont noticed me, saying I was one of the few people serving clients that was always smiling and bubbly,” she says. “He told me I should think about getting into sales. I didn’t know anything about sales, but I respected him, and his comments meant a lot to me.”

Stephanie interviewed for a sales job she didn’t get. The interviewer recommended she spend time with the salespeople, so she shadowed Piedmont’s, without pay, to learn the ropes while working her full-time job. When USAir purchased Piedmont she was ready.

She was later recruited by Delta Dream Vacations to work with affinity groups such as women and LGBTQ people. Her mandate: Go find business in unusual places. It was there she met another mentor and leadership model, Beverly McKnight.

“Beverly always kept the same demeanor whatever was going on,” she explains. “Even when something was going wrong, she carried herself with such dignity and calm. I always admired and emulated her. She was also one of those people who understands what you are saying and can disagree, but still be gracious about it.”

Stephanie opted to become a full-time mom. “I lasted three weeks as a stay-at-





Stephanie with Alex Wilcox, JetSuite Inc. co-founder and CEO. Stephanie conducting an interview with NBC5 Dallas reporter Courtney Gilmore.



Legacy 650



Taking JetSuite to the next level

JetSuite is looking ahead to the arrival of new aircraft joining its fleet, enabling the company to offer a wider array of private aviation solutions—but it is the overall passenger experience that marks how it is taking it to the next level. JetSuite is introducing luxurious in-cabin amenities from world-renowned brands, deepening its commitment to infusing every trip with the spirit of hospitality.

“Approaching this landmark anniversary, we have taken a closer look at what our customers love about JetSuite as well as how we can better serve their private aviation needs,” Stephanie says. “Beyond our track record for exemplary customer service and the expertise of our pilots, we took a close look at how we can infuse thoughtful and luxurious touches to further elevate the JetSuite experience. In the coming months, we will reaffirm our position as a leading private jet operator by elevating every single customer touchpoint to take JetSuite to new heights.”

JetSuite unveiled a collection of amenities curated in partnership with leading luxury brands, from a signature cabin scent by Paris-based fragrance house Diptyque and Venus et Fleur’s Eternity Roses on every flight to vegan and cruelty-free Red Flower amenity kits, a new line of onboard snacks curated by gourmet foods purveyor Torn Ranch to luxurious and sustainable JetSuite-branded blankets by Coyuchi. JetSuite has hand-selected partners epitomizing luxury, sustainability, and relevance. And it hasn’t forgotten clients’ four-legged friends, partnering with For the Furry to offer customized amenities. JetSuite will continue to innovate and evolve these offerings with future announcements of additional partnerships.

home mom and was terrible at it. I’d never worked so hard in my life,” she says, adding a friend introduced her to Mary Kay sales. “I didn’t even wear makeup, but my goal was to win a car because I wanted to eliminate my car payment. Five weeks later, I won the first of five cars because I knew how to sell. I was also recruiting and teaching others how to sell. That was hard because their drive was not the same as mine, and I wanted to make money. I take pride in my role as the developer of people, and I learned that at Mary Kay.”

Therein lies another important lesson. “I was around excellence all my life and that played a part in my leadership ability,” she says. “I learned while \$1 is important, \$1 million worth of praise is everything. A leader has to be super positive, has to make having fun a priority, and create a positive environment. This is not just a job or a paycheck. It is important to give credit where credit is due. Learning the softer side of leadership is important as is having them want your position and being empathetic.”

Leaving a trail of success

Stephanie advises those starting their careers to be open to detours. “Young people need to be more open because sometimes an opportunity will arise that takes them down a different path such as my experience with Mary Kay,” she says. “I went to win a car but developed the leadership skills, which showed me how to lead teams, connect with people, and leave a trail of success. So, my advice is: It is okay to go off kilter. But it is also important to get a strategy on how you get where you want to go and be disciplined in the execution. You’d be amazed how much of a competitive advantage that gives you.”

She urges those interested in aviation to think beyond pilot and flight attendants. “Our industry is so much more,” she says. “There are so many other fantastic careers and opportunities. I hope my appointment encourages people to explore all of the various roles.”

Stephanie moved back into aviation with a sales position at Bombardier’s charter division SkyJet, where she experienced a rapid rise through the ranks. Unsurprisingly, that caught the attention of Bombardier’s fractional division, FlexJet, where she worked for eight years.

Once again, Stephanie stepped out of the industry to create her own executive coaching and consulting business specializing in selling to high-net-worth individuals.

“These were the 1% of the 1% and businesses always struggle to find and train competent salespeople,” she explains. That’s where neuroscience comes in—learning how the brain functions during conversations.

Stephanie with Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of Embark, a luxury lifestyle partnership, at JetSuite's 10th anniversary celebration.



“I learned while \$1 is important, \$1 million worth of praise is everything. A leader has to be super positive; has to make having fun a priority, and create a positive environment.”

“I saw a void, and we specialized in developing sales teams for high-ticket products,” she continues. “We needed to teach them how to lead, how to make a human connection. They needed to understand and read people. We taught leaders how to effectively communicate to drive top-line sales.”

Challenges

Perhaps Stephanie’s greatest challenge was wrestling breast cancer into submission. But in listing her challenges, cancer is not one of them. Instead, she cites not becoming a pilot.

“Sales teams expected me to be a pilot,” she says. “While I respect pilots, I’ve never had a desire to become a pilot. It wasn’t my cup of tea. I had one flight lesson and said to myself, ‘I’m never doing that again.’ So, I had to earn their respect. Now as a woman and a minority I have challenges along those lines because we still have a lot of room in the industry to address diversity.”

Stephanie echoes a familiar refrain from most women mistaken for the help. “Clients brush over me,” she says. “Then they’d find out who I was they would say, ‘Oh, you must be really good.’ But you knew in the way they said it and how they said it, it was not a compliment. It is amazing to me they don’t even mean it and don’t know what they are doing. What I choose to do is give them the benefit of the doubt because we all have unconscious bias. We have to challenge that thought process, however. The great thing is we have a lot of men who do get it, and we need their voices as well.”

She also counts Fred Reid, former CEO of FlexJet and Virgin America president, who now

is the global head of transportation for Airbnb, as a mentor and admired leader.

“My lesson from him was how to have healthy confrontations which a lot of women shy away from,” she says. “He saw early on we were a divided sales team. He taught us how to care about each other’s divisions because we had to understand how to lead the entire organization. If someone was not making their sales, we had to figure out how to help them accomplish their goals. It helped us make the business grow, become more successful and profitable.”

What the industry needs

Stephanie is playing an active role in increasing diversity and is on the NBAA’s advisory council. “I’m excited to help with professional development,” she says. “We need to learn from other industries who are much further ahead than we are.”

She says conference organizers need to be more inclusive ensuring panelists and speakers are representative of diversity including women and minorities. “I believe the conversation needs to start there and then the industry can begin to move forward,” she says.

Stephanie is proud and humbled to be chosen to lead JetSuite into the next decade and, in addition to her personal and corporate goals, she has one mandate. “That is making sure that I’m setting a great example for the women and minorities in this industry,” she says. ➔

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Kathryn B. Creedy, WAI 61288, is a freelance aviation and adoption writer, and president of Communications Strategies.