



*Jeanne S. Woodford*

***Consultant***

***Retired, Chief of Adult Probation, City and County of San Francisco***

***Former Warden, San Quentin State Prison***

Jeanne Woodford retired as the Chief of the San Francisco Adult Probation Department in May 2008, after 30 years of work in the field of criminal justice, at the state and county levels of government. Ms. Woodford served in the administrations of Gov. Gray Davis and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, and the Superior Court of San Francisco.

Ms. Woodford began her career at San Quentin State Prison in 1978 following graduation from Sonoma State University, with a Bachelors degree in criminal justice. She promoted through the ranks and was appointed warden of San Quentin State Prison by Governor Davis in 1999, remaining warden until called upon by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2004 to serve as the Director of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Ms. Woodford's mission was to reform and rehabilitate the California corrections agency, the largest correctional system in the United States. She was appointed Undersecretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in July 2005.

Ms. Woodford is considered a national expert on prison management and administration. She is also recognized for her leadership skills and ability to lead staff toward a shared vision. She brought mission-based management and data-driven decision-making to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. An expert in community corrections, Ms. Woodford implemented innovative new programs designed to improve community outcomes and public safety. Ms. Woodford has been featured in numerous publications, including a March 2004 New York Times Magazine article entitled *The Good Jailer*.

Since retiring from public service, Ms. Woodford serves as a consultant, and has clients nationwide.

***What would you tell women who are contemplating taking the next career step and are seriously considering pursuing a CEO position?***

This is a good time for women to take on leadership roles, and women should not hesitate to consider stepping up. Today, we have a good support system in place. When I came on, there was a “good ole boy” network and I had to prove myself. It was very difficult early in my career. But now there are many women in higher positions, and AWEC provides a support network.

We really need to be able to reach out to other women, and to be a mentor as well. When we need support, we need to be able to say to someone with experience, “can you get on a plane now and come to testify for me?” That is something that traditionally women have not done, and it’s crucial to our success. You need experts to support you, to talk with legislators and other people when necessary, to enhance your credibility. You need to be sure you know three or four people who can jump on a plane when you need them – you can’t wait until you are in trouble to identify your support system.

Another thing to think about is how to be successful in the job once you have it. Think about the first day on the job. Most people don’t think about that. If you walk in the door with a plan, you are going to be successful. You have to be confident and say what you are going to do, to establish yourself as a leader and a visionary. You still have to do that, particularly as a woman. You still have to prove your leadership skills so there will be no question about your leadership role when you come in with a plan. I walked in with a 30-day plan. First, I get to know the staff and see how I can help them. For a 90 day plan, you have meetings and lay out the strategic planning process. In one year, you have a new mission and value statement.

***Why did you decide to step up to a CEO position – were you encouraged or mentored by someone?***

I did not have an actual mentor, as I was one of the early women in the field of corrections. You never know who is looking at you, and this is an important point. I had no idea that I had an unknown mentor. A volunteer at San Quentin had a brother who was the most powerful senator in the California legislature. The volunteer told his brother how good I was as warden, and the senator went to bat for me without my even knowing it. A nationally known Medal of Freedom recipient had also visited one of our state prisons on several occasions and shared with me the experience with staff, noting that members of our staff did a great job, but also pointing out others didn’t understand the purpose of visiting or their community role. Visitation is so critical, and I discovered it was difficult for disabled and elderly visitors when a Senator who had a brother in state prison pointed it out to me. I sent an ombudsman to observe the visitors’ lines, unannounced, to see what was needed for the disabled and elderly, and we made the necessary changes.

***Is there a downside if you make the first cut but are not the chosen candidate for the job?  
Would you apply again in the future if that position, or a similar one, became available again?***

I don't think there is a downside if you are not chosen the first time, and I would apply again in the future. I would call to find out what I could do to improve my resume', then make sure to do those things. People will tell you what you need to know to improve when they know that you really want to learn from the experience. Sometimes it just comes down to who is the better fit for the job.

***What do you, or did you, like best about being a CEO?***

Every position is different. I loved being a warden – it's like being the mayor of a city. You get to make policy and I love to see the implementation.

When I was the director of the agency, I could make policies but you never know if things were implemented everywhere. I would visit places and see where policies were in place, and visit other locations where they were ignored.

I used a COMSTAT approach, a data driven decision-making system to monitor the field. (COMSTAT is a management tool for law enforcement to utilize data to drive decisions regarding resources and policy changes. It is still in use by the agency). We met with field staff on a regular schedule to review performance measures in a variety of areas to include budget, number of inmates in education, number of inmates who obtained a GED, number of days locked down just to name a few. The purpose of the meetings was to share information and offer assistance, when needed from Headquarters as well as to let me know how prisons and parole staff were doing meeting the goals of the department.

I am not really happy in my role unless I can inspect what I expect – when you are in a high level position there's no way you can really know if it is happening if you do not have a process. COMSTAT was my process and helped keep me informed.