DOING THE RIGHT THING

Instilling a people-first culture of trust is everything to Viv Maza, and her career to date shows that it’s paying off.

Maza worked with ADP for a period in the mid-80s, initially in sales administration and later in consulting, but was laid off while on maternity leave. Happenstance was on her side, though – mutual contacts connected her to Ultimate Software founder Scott Scherr, who was looking for a manager to run his nascent office.

“He knew my name and knew I was a hard worker. When one door closes, another one opens. It was the best thing that could have happened.”

In the midst of growth of almost 20% a year, Maza was appointed VP of people. Throughout, she kept her attention on company culture.

“A lot of our culture has to do with trust and the core values of doing the right thing professionally and personally. When you build that family, when you have people who believe that mission, that goal – it builds trust.”

Maza was the fourth team member brought onboard at Ultimate, where operations were so embryonic that the company had no logo, the office had no fax machine, and the HR department did not exist – so Maza had to negotiate many unknowns.

“There was nothing in place. We did whatever it took; we created handbooks and policies and implemented everything from scratch. Everything is self-taught – I never thought of failing; I was driven to survive.”

The year after Ultimate was named the number-one Medium Sized Company to Work for in America by the Great Place to Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management for the second consecutive time, Maza was promoted to chief people officer.

“Sustaining the culture and making it better is my focus – but being able to sustain this culture with 1,000 people is tough. The awards and rankings speak for themselves, but it’s a matter of how can I make Ultimate better?”

1985 GETS HIRED BY ADP

1990 STARTS AT ULTIMATE

1992 GRADUATES FROM UNIVERSITY

1998 HIRES HER FIRST EMPLOYEE

2004 BECOMES VP OF PEOPLE

2010 BECOMES CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

“Sustaining the culture and making it better is my focus – but being able to sustain this culture with 1,000 people is tough. The awards and rankings speak for themselves, but it’s a matter of how can I make Ultimate better?”