

FEATURE STORY | YOLANDA WHITE

LOUNGE IN *Love*

From left to right: Chili from TLC,
Dayo spokesperson and Yolanda White,
CEO of Dayo.

Photo Credit: 10 Squared



With over 20 years of brand, innovation, global and multi-cultural marketing experience at fortune 100 companies (General Motors, Quaker Oats, Estee Lauder and ConAgra), Yolanda White has mastered the art of building brands.

The majority of her career has been spent at The Coca-Cola Company, which she began in 1999 as an Assistant Brand Manager. She has worked hard, serving in progressively larger roles that have allowed her to move from managing individual brands to portfolios that deliver over \$1Billion annually.

Yolanda's first role at The Coca-Cola Company was on Sprite, where she began building new partnership models to target youth consumers and penetrate multi-cultural consumer segments.

She was then promoted to the Coca-Cola brand team, where she played a pivotal role in driving the innovation agenda for North America by introducing Vanilla Coke and later, Coke Blak. Yolanda managed the Flavors Sparkling Portfolio and then moved to tackle African American Marketing by building new system capabilities and tools across the entire portfolio (sparkling and still brands).

Over the course of her career, Yolanda has proven to be a progressive and results driven marketing leader. Her teams have

defined her as innovative, inspiring and empowering. She continues to empower women through her new loungewear line called Dayo.

Established in 2018, Dayo Women is the premier destination for stylish, modern women who want to find high-quality, elegant women's loungewear.

PIVOT caught up with Yolanda White to talk about how she effectively pivoted from Corporate Executive to Entrepreneur.

ON HER BACKGROUND AND HOW SHE LANDED IN MARKETING

I actually grew up loving math and computers and I went to Tuskegee where I was majoring in computer science. I would be falling asleep in computer lab because it was so boring to me. I needed something more on the business side and at that time, my focus was on identifying which major afforded me the opportunity to make the most money. I found out that it was accounting, so that is what I majored in!

I did my first internship at Honeywell and accounting wasn't doing it for me and I really wanted to change my major – again – but I realized that I was about to graduate and a change at that point didn't make any sense. So, I got an Accounting degree from Tuskegee, but I quickly pivoted into sales.



Chilli wearing Dayo Loungewear

Photo Credit: 10 Squared

While in sales working for AC Delco, a car parts company, I noticed that a large part of their customer base was women, but no one was marketing to them. This experience gave me the idea and motivation to go back to school and get my MBA and concentrate in marketing. I had not been out of school very long, so I felt it was the perfect time to continue my education.

I went to Clark-Atlanta University for my MBA and I focused on Marketing. During that time, I learned a lot about consumers and how they thought. I also learned how strategies are developed from insights. I absolutely loved it!

Everyone thinks that marketing is a creative discipline and it's not. It really is a discipline that effectively helps you understand how to drive your business and teaches you where to go fish where the fish are. You don't know where the fish are unless you are diving into the numbers that tell you where they are.

I was in marketing for 17 years and I hit all aspects of it from innovation to brand marketing and I am grateful for that experience because it is helping me with my brand strategy at Dayo.



PHOTO CREDIT: 10 SQUARED

To learn more about Dayo Women visit: www.dayowomen.com

Yolanda White - CEO of Dayo



ON HER DECISION TO LEAVE CORPORATE AMERICA TO LAUNCH HER BUSINESS

Leaving Coca-Cola was hard because I was so emotionally connected to the organization. I had been there 17 years and great memories started there. It was such a big part of me and how I was, even socially. People went beyond being my co-workers, they became my friends.

Additionally, I was so comfortable with that nice paycheck every two weeks! I enjoyed the stability that the job afforded me at the time. Despite all that, there was still that one heart piece that was missing for me. I felt like I didn't have as much control over my destiny like I wanted. I want to be able to say what my worth and value is. I could see much larger income growth for myself and that was intriguing to me. I wanted to be in charge of my earning potential – that was important to me.

When you work for one of the largest beverage companies in the world, it carries a lot of weight and value to other companies out there. It's almost like currency. When I got ready to leave Coca-Cola, I felt I had a trump card that I could play to land something else quickly. The belief is that you are supposed to use that card when it's the most valuable. I quickly realized that my card was my card and it wasn't attached to any company, but that it was attached to me.

What I have learned over the years and the relationships that I have built and nurtured for so long don't have to go away. I can use them to advance someone else's business or I can use them to advance my own business.

I started Dayo really fast. As I was leaving corporate, most people asked how they can help me. Most people would say "help me find a job", but that is not what I asked for. I asked them to help me bring my company to life.

I had friends that I had worked with offer me pro bono work to help me launch the company. When people believe in what you are doing, and you have been good to them over the years, you will find that they are more than willing to help when their time comes.

ON THE STEPS SHE TOOK TO MAKE THE LEAP TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The first step had to do with mindset preparation. I got a life coach to help me think about how I should properly plan for this pivot. I also worked with a financial coach to help me think about what it would actually cost to become an entrepreneur. You have to invest in yourself to make sure that you have all the tools you need to be as successful as you can be.

One of the first things I learned and realized is that everything doesn't have to cost you money. You have to be resourceful. Before I launched Dayo, I partnered with the SBA (Small Business Association) and they helped me develop a 40-page business plan complete with competitive and industry insights and it was free!



PHOTOS ON BOTH PAGES CREDITED TO: TO SQUARED

I also partnered with non-profit organizations to expand my network of other female entrepreneurs. The investment to learn has to stay at the forefront as you continue your path to entrepreneurship.

For a person who doesn't have the luxury of doing things "step by step" – those who are thrust into being an entrepreneur because that is their only option, it has to be survival of the fittest. You have to decide what business model you want to put in place to make money. Then you have to think about how you build your network to keep that stream of revenue coming in. Finally, you have to figure out how to keep your mind ready to take advantage of opportunities that come your way. I am a proponent of staying focused on what keeps your mind right, because the people that you will ultimately meet and connect with could easily feed into the other two areas.

ON HOW USING LINKEDIN CAN HELP GROW YOUR BUSINESS

First, you have to tell your Connections what you are doing. When I first launched Dayo, I put all of our events on

LinkedIn and people responded and actually came out to support them.

When we do our next product launch, I will make LinkedIn an outlet for that communication. You have a built-in audience of followers that you need to engage. They are following you for a reason. You can't be afraid to share what you are doing and to ask for what you want from them.

You have to think of LinkedIn as more than just a portal to find a job. You have to be more purposeful in how you engage people in that space. It's a wonderful tool!

ON DAYO AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO WOMEN AND SELF-LOVE

I wanted to create something that's rooted in fashion, but I also wanted to create something that had a bigger meaning for women, and that was self-love.

The clothes that they put on after a long day should say "I won, and I am doing something for me!" We as women often feel that we have to get permission to stop and do something for ourselves.

Dayo is for stylish, modern women who want to find high-quality, elegant women's loungewear, but I want it to be so much for than that. I feel like I have won when a woman says that she feels more alive, or that she has found her "mojo" and it starts with how she feels about herself when she is the most beautiful. How she loves herself. That's Dayo.