

Her journey to leadership began at a ski resort



MARK MULVILLE FOR BUFFALO BUSINESS FIRST

Q&A

Kirsti Hunt's journey to becoming chief administrative officer of Noco Energy Corp. began many years ago at a ski resort.

The Wisconsin native didn't intend to become a human resources professional, but she took time off from college to spend a year in Colorado. What was meant to be a year became a five-year stint, with Hunt working at a ski area. She needed a year-round position, and they were hiring in human resources.

That decision has served her well in the years that followed. In the late '90s Hunt and her husband moved from Colorado to his hometown of Grand Island.

She's held several HR positions, including 12 years at United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, where she worked her way up to chief human resources officer. Hunt then spent seven years at LPCiminelli and three at Modern Disposal before joining Noco in 2021.

In January, she became chief administrative officer, overseeing marketing, customer service, HR

and several other teams.

Hunt said she's always been the type to dive into her work, taking on a wide variety of tasks and working proactively to improve her workplaces.

Noco has been undergoing a transformation during her tenure, rapidly branching out into new industries in the environmental services and energy spaces. When she started, the company had about 250 employees; now it has almost 450.

Hunt said she doesn't seek work-life balance, because

ABOUT THE FEATURE

Buffalo Business First publishes three annual Power lists — the Power 250, Power 200 Women and Power 100 Business Leaders of Color — featuring the top business leaders in Western New York. Each week, we will tell you more about an executive on those lists. This week: Kirsti Hunt, chief administrative officer, Noco Energy Corp.

balance shouldn't be the goal. Sometimes family and personal responsibilities are a higher priority, sometimes work is, and it's rarely a 50-50 split. She instead seeks work-life harmony, making sure the two sides operate well together regardless of which is taking up more time at the moment.

Power 200 Women rank: 128

What do you look for when hiring? I look for a culture fit, so will they fit the culture at Noco?

What's something people don't know about you? I love the outdoors, so hiking, biking, skiing. I was a tent camper for 20 years and we finally upgraded to a pop-up. Quite luxurious.

What's next on your travel list? I'm going on a cruise to visit my daughter, who is doing an internship at sea for the summer.

Where do you look for talent? The first place I look is internally.

How would you describe yourself as a boss? I help coach people to see themselves doing things that they may not have seen for themselves.

What advice would you give your 25-year-old self? It's OK to say no. Sometimes saying no makes you stronger.

What's your favorite part of your job? The transformation here at Noco. Every day it's a new challenge and a new opportunity.

If you had to pick a different career, what would you pick? I would love to work in patient experience at Roswell (Park Comprehensive Cancer Center). I was diagnosed with breast cancer in December of 2022 and went to Roswell that very week. And Kim Sweeney at Roswell, who runs their patient experience was amazing, and the entire team, through my experience.

— Jacob Tierney