It’s more than just having lunch
SALES PRO NORA HEITMANN IMPROVES BOTTOM LINE IN LIFE, BUSINESS

Nora Heitmann with her husband Scott and kids Katherine, 7, and Billy, 3 in the Trans-Trade warehouse.

NORA HEITMANN
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Favorite hobby: Tennis. "It's the thing that I never cancel. It's my time to clear my head."

Heitmann's agenda - she majored in communications and political science and went to work for then-Gov. Bill Owens in 1996 as a legislative liaison. However, a year later, she changed career paths with the aid of a headhunter, landing at Airborne Express before it was acquired by DHL in 2003. "I always felt I had a sales personality, you know. I was always the best Girl Scout cookie seller or soccer candy seller and I really enjoy people," she said.

Today, Heitmann’s schedule revolves around four to five daily sales calls - whether over lunches or cold calls - and working with current clients to assess shipping needs. She wound up on a list of the top 25 sales people in the state in 2009, and the University of Denver recognized her with the Ammi Hyde Award for Recent Graduate Achievement in 2010. Still, being a woman in the sales industry has had its challenges.

Although being a woman has sometimes made it easier to "get in the door, Heitmann said she often has to work harder to gain respect from potential clients and focuses on how she can best affect her clients’ bottom lines. "Some people automatically see a woman and assume I don’t know what I’m doing, so proving them wrong is sometimes the hardest part. I’m smart. I have a brain," she said.

The Colorado native, too, struggles with time management between her responsibilities at work and in the community, as well as at home.

On top of serving three different boards at DU, Heitmann is vice president of fundraising for the Junior League of Denver - an organization focused on cultivating leadership qualities in women through volunteerism.

The organization is currently focused on improving literacy rates among local youth through third grade. Heitmann oversees all fundraising efforts, including the annual Mile High Holiday Mart, which raised more than $146,000 in November 2014 to support literacy programs in Colorado.

Until last year, she was also a founding board member for the Colorado launch of Reading Partners, which provides literacy tutoring for youth in five Denver schools and two Aurora schools. Originating from California, Reading Partners Colorado launched in 2012 thanks to a grant from United Way.

"There's something about sitting down with a second grader who can't read at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, they can. You feel like you helped save their life," she said.

Beyond community efforts, Heitmann also volunteers as a "room mother" at her daughter’s school and works with her husband Scott to balance parenting duties while he works full-time and earns his master's degree at DU - something that's cumbersome at times, she says.

While the two lean on each other for support, Heitmann admits that scaling back her efforts has been necessary from time to time. "I don't want to let anyone down, but sometimes you don't have the bandwidth to do it all," she said. In her opinion, it's better to not take something on than to take it on and not complete it.

For now, she just hopes to set a good example for her children and remain involved as much as she can - both in their lives and the lives of others.