

CEO/President/Managing Partner – Small Company Category	
Nominee	
Name:	Darnell Lattal
Title:	President & CEO
Organization:	Aubrey Daniels International
Nominator	
Name:	Maggie Anderson
Organization:	Words that Work

Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates Integrity:

Darnell has the most integrity of anyone I know. I trust her completely to do the right thing.

We have had customers with their own set of ethics and values that we learned were not people we wanted to work with. Even when business has not been particularly vibrant, Darnell is willing to walk away. One client company asked us to partner in some work they were doing. Then we learned they were actually putting people on the project that didn't have an actual role so they could increase their fees to the customer. We had to decide not to work with them and she is always the one who recognizes those situations and leads that decision.

If a client does not seem willing to do the things we recommend – if we suspect they are just trying to satisfy a regulator or their Board or something by bringing in a consulting firm Darnell is willing to walk away from that business.

Darnell was a senior consultant at another firm and I was her junior when we met. Her integrity stood out for me ... seeing how consistently she did the right thing with clients and our leadership. This was a startup and we had an opportunity to land a multi-million dollar engagement 2 years in. We had to do some recruiting and hiring quickly and so we were wining and dining and trying to impress many interviewees so we could narrow the selection to the best. But Darnell saw that the prospects were becoming engaged and thinking they were a good match and it was devastating for them to be rejected. She pushed back and insisted we needed to explain our process up front, and moderate their expectations. I recall being impressed. Other people agreed, but she was the first one to speak up quickly and modify our process to benefit everyone involved.

Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates Respect:

I founded ADI and Darnell took over running the company. Even if she doesn't agree with my opinions, feelings and views she is always considerate of them, even when she could enhance her own standing by opposing me. For example, we agreed to make a change in the way we pay

people and it was not popular, but Darnell completely owned the decision because it was good for the long-term survival of the company.

One-on-one with our team, she is better than anyone I know at making sure someone leaves feeling good even when the news is not good. We brought someone in on a temporary basis and realized they might work if we had the time to shape their behavior. When she sat down with the person to tell them it was not going to work long-term, they left that meeting feeling whole. She has that ability to do the right thing for the company, but also do the right thing for people.

At ADI she is the foremost leader that promotes respect within the office. We have a virtual workforce that is on the road and they depend on a support staff at the office to help them serve clients. Even a very successful senior consultant who brings a good deal of revenue can't get away with disrespecting the support staff. In many organizations the leadership might say oh that's just their personality... the way they are. I have seen Darnell jump right on it and work with the individual one-on-one until they improve or move on.

Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates Responsibility:

Darnell never turns away from making a hard decision. But she is going to make the decision that is best for the company and for the individuals involved. She instituted a customer feedback loop and when she first introduced the idea our people were worried about that, because they know the customer is always right in our company and we would take customer comments seriously. But she is a consultative leader – she does not make these decisions by herself. She involves a lot of people in the decision so she is confident that she has made the right one, and they have the opportunity to be a part of it.

One of my early impressions of Darnell was when she did work with a major oil company. These were rough and tumble environments on oil rigs in the Gulf where being a woman would be a strike against you but she would not back off. Darnell would engage with the toughest senior executives. Where others would struggle she would excel because she was direct, didn't pull any punches but is very tenacious. She would do it in such a respectful way that they would accept her direction. Darnell is so modest and warm I think many are lulled into thinking "Oh, I can snowball her" and then later they learn different and she commands a lot of respect.

Please relate an incident or tell a story that shows how this person demonstrates Leadership Character. Examples may include professional or community involvement:

I have gotten to know Darnell outside her work arena. What impresses me most about her is that despite all her professional success, awards and leadership positions, she is still involved in continuous learning, identifying new directions for her own growth personally and professionally and engaging with others to learn from them. She is currently learning to play the piano!

I already believed Darnell Lattal was an exceptional leader, but am even more convinced after interviewing others in her firm for this nomination. Like many exceptional women leaders, she does not trumpet her own great qualities or successes, but leads with a quiet elegance that fully expresses the Leadership Character model grounded in integrity, responsibility and respect.