



# Retail Business Services

Women's History Month 2021: Suzette Phillips

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Suzette Phillips, Systems Analyst for Retail Business Services – the services company of Ahold Delhaize USA – marches to the beat of her own drum.

"I don't have to be part of the crowd to fit in – that's not who I am," she said. "But when you find a confident woman, people often mistake it for arrogance. I try not to portray that. I am confident in what I do, and I try to share that message with other people – that they can be confident in themselves, too."

But, most importantly, she is a trailblazer who works to inspire other women in leadership.

Born in Barbados, West Indies, Suzette went to school under a British education system – which she credits with laying the foundation for her future. The education she received shaped her future career by teaching strong morals, good sense and sound judgment in practical matters and giving her the courage to stand up for her beliefs. After finishing secondary school, Suzette decided to move to the U.S. for college. While confident in her decision to move, she said she was uncertain on what she wanted to study.

"It was somewhat difficult adjusting to a new country and culture, a different school system and to being on my own for the first time," she said. "It's a tough place to be because as an individual, you have to figure out what you're going to do to make it work for you. No one can tell you how to navigate your future. You have to make your own decisions and setting the foundation for the journey that's about to take place."

Suzette attended Long Beach State University in Long Beach, C.A.; California State University in Los Angeles, C.A.; Northeastern University in Boston, Mass. and Columbia Southern University in Orange Beach, Ala. – earning degrees in Hospitality Management, Business and Project Management, and Organization Leadership and Business Studies.

During college, Suzette took a part-time job in the hospitality industry which eventually led her to a career in IT with Marriott Hotels – a job which included technical writing and traveling around the country and the world training others to navigate software in the hotel industry.

Over time, Suzette decided to move to Boston, Mass., to be closer to friends and pursue a career search for something more aligned with her personal purpose. That's when she partnered with a local staffing agency and landed a contract job at Stop & Shop.

"I actually had no idea what the job was. I walked into the office in formal business attire, and the manager looked at me and said, 'I guess you don't know what it is you'll be doing – let me show you.' It was a position in the print room," she recalled with a laugh.

Soon after, an opportunity opened up with the brand's IT Help Desk and Suzette pivoted to a role she felt confident and qualified for. During her training session, she began to write procedures on how to support the individual applications, and she soon moved into an Application Developer role where she supported the Supply Chain application and participated in developing, implementing and supporting new business solutions.

Now, with more than 20 years with the organization, Suzette looks back at her journey.

"Starting out my career, like many professionals fresh out of college, I had this ideological belief that I could make a difference," she said. "I was determined to make an impact on so many people – it's why I started mentoring. I gain so much satisfaction from seeing people grow; and I am so proud to help them on their own journeys."

During Women's History Month, Suzette said her focus is on empowerment and advocacy.

"My journey started with the strong women in my family," she shared. "To me, women's empowerment starts with a strong family foundation, or a strong role model. Next is education – but it's key that you learn through observation and interaction with another empowered person. My advice for young professionals is to get the knowledge and education that will power your success. Learn about the organization, dream big, document your goals, stay focused – and consider selecting a mentor. A good role model and mentor demonstrates confidence and leadership – and is always striving for bigger and better objectives. Women play a major role in any organization – I want to help other women have the confidence to advocate for their rights so their voices can be heard."