



daily briefing

what's news in business

bizNews

local business . markets . careers . consumer issues

FRIDAY . MAY 20 . 2005

business.nwtimes.com

RO | SECTION E1

“Never be a lone ranger. When you’re working in a large organization your success rate is increased if you become one heck of a team player.”

Susan Ershler, mountain climber and retired CEO



NATALIE BATTAGLIA | THE TIMES

Motivational speaker Susan Ershler, of Seattle, was the keynote speaker at the Calumet Ladies Spring Luncheon at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Munster. Ershler is both a mountain climber and a former corporate executive.

Climbing to **THE TOP**

BY SUSAN ERLER

serler@nwtimes.com
219.462.5151

The air thinned and turned stifling cold as Susan Ershler climbed Mount Everest nearly a year ago today.

She wrestled with whether to wrap her face with a scarf to keep from breathing dust stirred by the yak train up ahead, or forget the scarf to better free her mouth for needed oxygen.

Headaches, coughs, sore throats and

stomach aches plagued Ershler and her fellow climbers, who'd been living at 14,000 feet.

A year later the pain is forgotten, outweighed by the sense of accomplishment, Ershler said.

“It seems the more difficult the activity, the more rewarding when the task is completed,” she said.

The lesson applies in both scaling the corporate ladder and climbing the world's tallest peaks, according to

See TOP, E3

Continued from E1

Ershler, who has done both.

Ershler was the keynote speaker at the Bank Calumet Ladies Spring Luncheon on Thursday in Munster.

Ershler's 20-year career included top-level sales and management jobs with telecommunications companies Qwest, Verizon, United Technologies and others.

She began climbing mountains a decade ago with her husband, Phil, and together they scaled the world's tallest peaks.

Often the two worlds overlapped, but the same rules generally applied in both, said Ershler, who grew up in the Seattle area, where she still lives.

Mountain climbers visualize themselves standing at the top of the peak thousands of times before they ever begin the climb, Ershler said.

She learned to project sales goals in the same way.

"I learned that if you look at that number every day you naturally start prioritizing," Ershler said. "You're dedicated to making it come true."

On the mountain top, teaming with Sherpa guides can mean the difference between success and failure.

It's no different in the workplace.

"Never be a lone ranger," Ershler said. "When you're working in



NATALIE BATTAGLIA/THE TIMES

Motivational speaker Susan Ershler, of Seattle, center, greets women attending the Calumet Ladies Spring Luncheon along with Calvin and Cathy Bellamy at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts.

a large organization your success rate is increased if you become one heck of a team player."

Climbing helped her learn to manage fear.

"In business, even from the beginning I was concerned with going into sales," she said. "It's

risky. Commission is tied to sales. You can get fired if you don't produce."

On the mountain, "there was no question I was scared to death," she said. "On the mountain death is involved. That's the risk you might be taking.

"But you can dramatically reduce your risk if you're prepared. We spent nine years preparing to climb Everest.

"Those types of skills allow you to manage the fear. You learn that to get top performance you've got to take risks," she said.