



## First Job Fridays: Susan Story

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With the way wealthy folks are portrayed in the media, it is easy to think that CEOs just fall into their highly paid positions. The reality is that most of these business leaders come from modest beginnings. And their best strategy for climbing to the top is to tackle their careers step-by-step.

Like anything, that first step is often the most important. In a new, regular feature on Information Station we are profiling CEOs and their first jobs.

This week we are taking a look at Susan Story, the CEO and President of the American Water Works Company. Susan grew up in rural Alabama without a lot of money;

her mother and father both worked hard at the local cotton mill. When she was 17 years old, Susan began working at the Sand Mountain Reporter—a tri-weekly local paper.

Making the minimum wage—\$2.85 an hour—Ms. Story photographed and wrote about local weddings and events. She quickly learned that, “The responsibilities outlined in a job description are just a starting point.” The future CEO looked for things that weren’t being done in her workplace and began doing them herself. By the time she left, Susan was writing the “Society Page,” helped with sports reporting, and frequently wrote in the news and editorial pages.

However, Ms. Story’s first job wasn’t without a few bumps along the way. One time Susan photographed an event for two hours before she realized she hadn’t put any film in the camera. “I had nothing for the story!”

There are lessons in every mistake and Ms. Story learned the importance of preparation and planning for every aspect of the job. While we all will make mistakes, it can help to listen to people who’ve learned from theirs. Susan’s advice to those starting their first job is to bring lots of energy and enthusiasm. “Learn from everyone around you, and show your appreciation to them.”