Breaking Barriers - Women's Achievement at Work

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Abstract

Woman have competed for previously all-male-oriented jobs, since the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. Females needed office survival guides more than office success guides when they found themselves in unfamiliar territory. Numerous studies have been conducted over the years to track women's advancement to the top of organizations. While there are more ladies working today, the research found that they are still laboring with career elevation and mentors for successful managerial guidance. females held nearly 52% of all specialized roles in 2014, but only 14.6% of upper management positions and 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEO positions were acquired. There are numerous reports providing professional advice and points for working females, and a dearth of articles addressing apt practices for female executives. To fill this gap in the literature, this research approached the topic from a practical standpoint, offering lessons learned from Katharine Graham, the first female Fortune 500 Company CEO.

Keywords: Women leadership, executive women, women's career advancement, best practices, managerial gender issues, motivation, and personality.

Introduction

A tiny number of females began getting employed by firms in the early 1900s. With the onset of World War II and its following aftermath, many of them who had laboured to help found themselves unemployed, despite their willingness to work. Abraham Maslow, who was studying human motivation and personality at the time, claimed that human conduct is based on a hierarchy of wants such as physical, security/safety, love/belonging, and self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). If the last three levels of Maslow's hierarchy of requirements are not satisfied, the individual finds it uneasy to proceed further, and these wants combine to generate a powerful drive to survive. The desire for self-esteem and self-actualization completes Maslow's hierarchy of requirements. Women struggled for employment in organizations in this setting, but they faced opposition from society and were deprived of chances to acquire higher self-esteem and fulfill their skills.

Since the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Women started competing for positions that were formerly exclusive to men only. When they were in unknown territory, females required survival advice in the workplace more than success guides in careers. In all these years, numerous studies have been done to follow women's advancement in organizations. Despite more women in the workplace today, these researches indicated that women continue to struggle with advancements in career and, particularly, role models for successful managerial authority. In 2014, ladies held approximately 52% of all executive occupations in the US, but only 14.6% of Top management spots and 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEO posts. Women are still disproportionately underrepresented in organizations that make decisions in the areas of finance and economics at the local, national, and international levels. There are just 28 female finance ministers, or 14% of all ministers in 193 nations, at the government level. There aren't

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many female leaders in international organizations that influence developing nations. For instance, women constitute less than 10% of governors and about 20% of leadership personnel at international finance-aiding establishments.

In the business arena, women are sadly underrepresented at the top. Out of ten-century global associations, only 25 are led by women. Therefore, there are no encouraging signals that the growing participation of women empowerment is boosted. The division based on gender is prominent in households and communities, even with women entering many previously male-dominated economic professions. This division of labor occurs both within and outside the home. Even in the working sector women are the least in population when compared to men. However, women are 40 percent of the total working population yet contribute only 26 percent of economic concentration

Women's opinions will not be voluntarily considered or encouraged in the sectors involving economic and financial strengths. Positively, for the previous several decades, women's income and job opportunities have greatly improved relative to men's, and they have proved amazing results in enterprises worldwide. Nevertheless, it is uncommon to find women running businesses as owners, managers, or entrepreneurs. There are frequently few female authorities even in the business and other producer groups, which are designed to protect and advocate the interest of employees. With strong male predominance in trade unions, the unique demands and goals of female employees are frequently disregarded. Because of the kinds of jobs, they do and how often their jobs are precarious, women may find it extremely difficult to influence traditional company policy and get support from these organizations.

As a matter of fact, is there is an abundance of publications offering career counselling and ideas for women who are working, but hardly any papers addressing best practices for female CEOs. To remedy this flaw in the secondary information, the author used a practical approach, sharing lessons gained from Katharine Graham, the first lady CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation.

After graduation, Katharine Graham was selected as the manager for the publisher of the San Francisco newspaper, but she was never allowed to take on any duty that the title necessitated, it was a cakewalk to be the first female manager, and the toughest part was being a female leader. Her male counterparts were rude, loud, boisterous, and stinky, and they hazed her in every manner possible. They gave her a sculpted male body part as a gift one day, and all Katharine could do was politely take it and eventually the hazing ended in its own time.

On the work front, her boss was mortified to have her on the team. He felt humiliated to have a female work under him after considerable thought, he handed her a project that was not her expertise. Furthermore, she never had a refreshment room or even a women's toilet. In retrospect, she realized that the chosen project allowed her to establish and acquire stronger self-esteem in the eyes of her dominating colleagues (Maslow, 1954).

She discovered the delicate boundary between normal and dysfunctional in 1974. It was not always possible to distinguish between regular challenges experienced by everybody, especially concerns that were uniquely feminine. Some instances were plainly "over the line" in terms of sexual harassment, and these were easy to identify nonetheless, they were frequently tough to handle successfully. Important Criteria's failed to exist in place at that time regarding an effective or ineffective strategy. She wondered if success was not having repeat offenders. And, "if she were a man, this would not be happening." "How would she react?" Because there was no sexual harassment statute in place at the time, she was able to manage situations on her own. While she acknowledged that the force of the law is required to protect women from heinous atrocities, legal acceptance and petty problems has diminished the true importance of leadership. Women are still unable to distinguish between actual sexual harassment and typical male/female contact. Teasing was major challenge she encountered, which may be harmful. She had the ability to question sexually harassing situations and manage these difficulties on her own, with no sexual harassment forms or personnel welfare department involved. She could create her own regulations because she was the single lady manager facing the offender alone with no support and guidance. Males could express their thoughts without fear of being labelled as misogynists, a term we rarely hear today. It was motivating for everyone to have the choice to speak freely and appreciate the opinions. Conversations were raucous as it frequently bordered on crude, but we were able to finish any disagreements on Friday afternoons where we discussed shop. It was an incredible opportunity to agree to and learn from the seasoned male-only executive team. She was aware that she was attempting to penetrate their society, form relationships, and gain their trust and respect.

She had once employed a machinist on force and discovered he only added more to her misery. He had the labour union and management on the verge of a discrimination action due to his ailing back and seniority position. He parked his white Cadillac prominently in front of the company. She discovered

that when he vanished, so did his Cadillac. How does she hold him responsible for not working for whatever he is paid for? Even the expert seasoned manager struggled to meet this challenge. She was adamant about dealing with him. She researched the hiring contract as well as the disciplinary procedures. She learnt the rules and was well prepared. When she found that her male friends had "set her up," she became fearless to the point of becoming reckless. Her demeanour shifted to "I'm going to castrate you." Few employees gradually began to listen to her as they understood that they have a tough boss with great self-worth and confidence to deal with the elusive Houdini (Maslow, 1965).

Female managers are often mistaken with female leadership. Manager is exactly what the job entails. Followers, on the other hand, play in striving for the success of the female leader. For example, a true lady leader is both competent and loves to employ a supporting strategy to descend into the interior of a massive tank. That function would most likely be delegated by the female management.

She definitely gained the knowledge to realize when men should lead and when women should lead as she faced few situations. On a day when a senior employee was bid farewell and the department was arranging a celebration, she oversaw the employees, especially Mel, the harshest critic. The liquor flowed freely at the party location. One inebriated male employee made unwanted and aggressive approaches. The situation was out of control, she was confident and determined to handle it alone. Mel appeared out of nowhere, like a hero in shining armour, to defend her. Then she realized that at times wisdom lies in not leading.

Just not this, she remembers another incident in the hotel room where she was assaulted. It was her first business trip, the travel expense and training were sponsored by the company for a week. she was very excited about it. Several of her colleagues were enrolled in different session which was for more senior managers. Because they were staying at different hotels, she was happy when a colleague called and invited her to join them for dinner. One of her colleague was supposed to pick her from the hotel. She believed that her peers had finally accepted her. That notion was interrupted when she opened the door and he began hitting her without hesitation or words. She was terrified and felt it was very inappropriate. It should never have happened, yet it did. She was not physically hurt and chose not to report the event. She came to the conclusion that she was responsible for protecting herself and would face a "she said/he said" situation. Reporting the event may jeopardize her management's reputation. In retrospect, she stated that she did not consider protecting other ladies from this individual. She learned from her supervisors that she should hire "for values and qualities like a sense of humour, resiliency, "earning your way in" and fitting-in with the company by being passionate for the task. She grew to value the wisdom more when she faced problems on the work. One of the most important lessons she learnt was to be professional come what may the show must go on. She still had to deal with the problems at the end of the day. She discovered that the R's of leadership included being resourceful, resilient, an experienced "reframe," a reality checker, and capable of relegating relational rules. She had to become valuable in making people do things and get work done by them by perseverance, pursuance, and patience. Because there was no precedence, she could create rules to control the relationships at work. She could draw the line with colleagues and subordinates, and she frequently utilized humour to smooth over unpleasant situations. There were a lot of unethical practices and she could let it go if she wanted to but the absence of norms, structures, and laws aided her. This is how she reframes diverse circumstances.

Some may see these encounters as "war stories" of a seasoned woman as these incidents occurred many years ago, however they shaped her to be a better version each day. Each person's experiences will build him or her to be a better person sooner or later. Off course there is no shortage of books and articles about leadership nowadays, and perhaps we are wise enough to distinguish between excellent and terrible leaders but we are not that wise in recognizing leadership's intrinsic uniqueness. Leadership is as individual as fingerprints, varying according to personality, situation, and style. To make a difference in the lives of others, leaders must embrace the unique contributions that only they can provide. Someone rightly said for "ten thousand step of beautiful journey there has to be a first starting step".

Conclusion

However, women are striding high to keep it up and work hard to achieve self-actualization position. Proficient leaders cultivate a feeling of direction by striving for objectives that coincide with their principles and promote the health of the group. This provides them a strong motive to act despite their worries and uncertainties and enables them to see beyond the present circumstances what is conceivable. Because they aren't hesitant to take chances to further common objectives, these leaders are regarded as genuine and reliable. They encourage dedication, strengthen resolve, and assist colleagues in discovering a greater sense of purpose in their jobs by uniting them behind a common goal.

The three recommendations to guide women advancement into leadership roles are:

(1) Educating men and women about gender bias in the second generation.

(2) Setting up secure "identity workspaces" to facilitate the advancement of women into larger roles and

(3) Focusing women's development initiatives on the purpose of leadership rather than how women are viewed. Women who take these steps will gain an understanding of their organizations and themselves, which will help them more skillfully navigate their path to leadership.

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