

Managing Change – Women Matter!

On yesterday, I had the honor of attending Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's Colloquium of Women in Public Service Project in Washington, DC. It was a dynamic meeting of power-house women who have not just made significant change in their own countries, but who have also had a tremendous impact on our world – not just because they hold prestigious positions – but because these women understand what it takes for women to become leaders – in the workplace, in their communities, in their countries, and in our world. This Colloquium of current and future thought leaders highlighted for me just how important it is for all members of Management, both in the private and public sectors, to do more to engage women in leadership roles.

Why? Because women are different! Yes, I know.... You already know that women look different and they act different, etc. But throw away all the stereotypes that you have about women and consider this. In her speech on yesterday, Christine LaGarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, cited the McKinsey Study, "[Women Matter](#)" to remind us of a key finding of the study: ***Companies with a higher proportion of women in top level positions tend to have higher performance.*** In her speech, she noted that men in corporations often say things like, "I would love to have a woman on my Board, but I am having a hard time finding someone with the right qualifications". The Managing Director said that if we ever heard a man say that, we should give them "the list" of women attending the Colloquium. And as I looked around the room...I could not help but "*see*" all the possible candidates that are available – not just in that room but around the globe!

There were a number of other prominent women at the Colloquium who spoke or sat on discussion panels. These women shared "tips" for women who aspire to hold leadership roles – not just in public service, but in engineering, in finance, in education, in manufacturing, in media – in any organization. And they talked about real issues that women have advancing in the workplace. As it would happen, I am also reading a very relevant book, [Women Don't Ask](#), by Linda Babcock and Sharon Laschever. Two of the key premises in the book are that women don't negotiate salaries or vacation or flexible hours when they are hired and they don't ask for raises, or promotions, or any of the perks that men naturally (and often) request once they are employed. This book also attempts to explain why women -- although they are perfectly entitled to the very same salaries, benefits, and perks – don't ask and don't get the same consideration for promotions, raises, etc. as their male counterparts. But should women (or men for that matter) have to ask? And if they do, shouldn't they be given the same consideration as their male counterparts?

The McKinsey study cites 4 things that organizations can do to help women advance in the workplace:

- Create transparency by implementing gender diversity KPIs
- Implement measures to facilitate the work-life balance
- Adapt the human resources management process

- Help women master the dominant codes, nurture their ambitions

The McKinsey study also states that the CEO plays a pivotal role in implementing this sort of change. Companies that do not embrace gender diversity at the highest levels will not be successful in the effort without transformative organizational change. And this type of transformation requires commitment from the top.

As the Colloquium continued, women like, Liberian Minister of Agriculture Dr. Florence Chentowerth, Vice Admiral Carol Pottenger, President of Kosovo Atifete Jahgaga, and others discussed how they advanced to the top. They talked about risks and rewards, but they also talked about people – men and women in leadership roles -- who mentored and supported them along the way.

So what can you do? Those who hold or have held leadership roles (both in ISA and in your company) – both male and female- can aggressively seek capable women to mentor and help them to advance through the ranks. If you are a leader in ISA, you should do this – not just at the local level – but at the Society level as well. And you can help mentor young women who aspire to become leaders by volunteering with organizations like the [Step Up Women’s Network](#) and [I Mentor](#).

If you are an influencer or leader at your company, you can help educate your company’s leadership about disparities that you know exist and be an advocate of gender diversity.

And if you are a woman who aspires to hold a leadership position at your company or within ISA or some other organization – ***don’t be afraid to ask!***

Why? Not just to increase the numbers of women in the Corporate Office or on the Executive Board, but to add all the value that women bring to every thought process that occurs. ***Because after all, women are not just different – women matter!***

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