

**Prior to my most recent session on Leadership for Women, I sought the advice and insights of women I know who have leadership positions in business. I asked them the four questions below and got these responses. As you will see, there is a range of advice. So, you will have to consider your values, experience and situation and select the advice and insights that will serve you best.**

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**What do you see as the difference between leadership for women and men?**

- Some women leaders don't have the support structure that many men leaders do- (family responsibilities, house chores, etc.). Women are more emotional than men. Women also are more nurturing. Women have a harder time letting go of things than men. Women have a hard time at walking away from work and work responsibilities at the end of the day. Women leaders feel they have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their worth or to make up for the distractions which occur occasionally due to family responsibilities.
- Women in leadership roles are expected to set clear expectations and be fair and be decisive all while insuring they express care and consideration for their employees, customers and company. Oh wait, isn't that what male leaders are expected to do to?
- My perspective is based on my experiences working for men and women leaders. The majority of women managers (only one came close to earning the title "leader") have seemed like they needed to prove something in the organization. This was evidenced by disrespect for their employees, using their influence to promote themselves but not their employees' in the eyes of superiors, looking for growth opportunities only for themselves.



I've worked for and with several male leaders (yes, they earned that distinction!). They were fair to all, looked for opportunities to involve all, valued opinions and contributions and told you so, encouraged growth for all, looked for ways to promote all. These were men of integrity.

- Interesting. I don't tend to think in terms of male or female when I think about successful leaders or leaders that I find inspirational; I think in terms of the person. I don't see any difference. It all comes down to trust. Do I trust this person to listen and understand? Do I trust this person to do the RIGHT THING, not the popular, or the politically correct or what will be best for the bottom line? Just do the right thing. When I trust, I find my role easier to execute, because I know I am supporting something I believe in with my heart and head. My team follows my lead, because again, they trust me.
- Leadership .....The way you conduct yourself every day is what defines you.....not what you say!!!! It is not different for women or men.
- Women have to work much harder at it. Based on genetics alone, most people automatically look to men to be the leaders, even when they aren't particularly good at it. Women have to be willing to put themselves out there and prove themselves on numerous occasions before they are typically recognized as a leader.

- For me, I choose to believe that leadership principles remain the same, regardless of whether a man or woman is leading. Great leaders serve others and are driven by helpfulness to bring out the best in all those they lead.

That being said, the differences I see are primarily related to the additional roles we women often beyond that of business leader – Mom, meal maker, grocery getter, taxi service, laundry doer, dish washer, homework helper, wife, coordinator of most things kid-wise. Even with husbands who are wonderfully committed to sharing the load, there sometimes seem to be things that only Mom can do and certain aspects of parenting and home, that we naturally assume responsibility for (as a woman) ... sometimes these multiple roles (if we want to do them all well) can get overwhelming!

- It's the same as when you're driving . . . men are aggressive; women take stupid risks. In business, when a man drives for results, takes charge, is directive and impatient, doesn't listen, and gets annoyed quickly and lets everyone know he's annoyed . . . he's powerful. When a woman behaves in the same way, she's a \_itch. The resolution for women is to be directive, take charge, listen and provide direct feedback in a diplomatic and tactful way focusing on objective information – and stick to your guns!
- Don't take it personally; when things go wrong and people make mistakes that negatively impact your plans, let it go. People are human and make mistakes. As long as the mistakes are non-intentional and not repeated, accept that the person is doing his/her best and help them to do better. Don't hold on to the mistake or the problems it caused; in almost all situations, it's not personal do don't take it that way and let it go.
- Women have to ability to listen and show their understanding and compassion. Men often have "standards" that they feel they must maintain and "cannot show emotion".

Women have an advantage, they can use the "standards" that are often expected of them to their advantage, they are able to be inclusive without "losing face"

Women are measured differently than men, often with a higher standard; it is often harder but,

- This is a tough one. I remember a story that was told to me by my first boss years after I joined my first company in Clearfield. That was over 30 years ago. He said that his boss asked him why he hired me as I was a young female and was going to get pregnant and leave. I didn't. I stayed 21 years.

I think that the mentality of companies has changed in the last 30 years. I don't believe that companies see females as short termers. They come and they stay and contribute. They want a career for many reasons...desire, economic needs, etc. I do though believe there is still in many older companies a "good ole boy" mentality that women have and will continue to have a hard time in cracking. This mentality allows the men to form close ties both personally and professionally that would be difficult for women to crack.

With that being said I believe if a female works hard (and many times has to work harder), is proactive and provides the time and energy to the job, she will be respected. With respect comes a leader.at the same time, more challenging and rewarding.

**What is the most important advice for a female business leader?**

- Don't try to be superwoman - ask for help from friends, family and colleagues, learn to say 'no', it's ok if your house looks lived in, let go of some of your standards and be realistic, don't stress the small things, and don't take life so seriously.
- Women are way too hard on each other. Stop being critical of other women and support each other.
- Learn to balance your work and life. You can't work all the time because you will burn out. Exercise, good nutrition and sleep will make you a better leader; more energy, stamina, patience, boost your mood, keep the 'small stuff into perspective', etc.
- Never be afraid to learn or to say "I screwed up". Surrendering, not giving up, but surrendering to the possibility of another alternative, and Fast Failure are keys for all leaders, even women.
- Be confident in your abilities. Also know your weaknesses and don't try to bamboozle your employees, peers and superiors that you are someone and something you aren't! Be authentic! Be assertive, but not cocky. Care about others, not just yourself! Look for ways to encourage and develop your employees. If you're put in a role, actually work to figure out what it is you're supposed to know and do in that role. Use your power and influence for the benefit of others, not just yourself.
- Be yourself, take ownership of the problems and the success, acknowledge others and their contributions to the success of the team, department, and organization. In today's virtual world, pay attention to how you communicate, is it courteous? Polite? If you haven't done it yet, take a personality profile and understand your own profile and then understand how you need to adapt your style to work effectively with others who may have a different style. You need to understand their priorities.
- Be yourself. Let your uniquely feminine qualities of care, compassion, and service work for you! The heart of modern leadership is "serving others" and sometimes women "get this" more quickly than men do. Service is NOT servitude; it's serving others in a way that unleashes the potential of those who work around us.

Take time to breathe, reflect, and see the big picture. Sometimes that means visioning as leader and seeing long term, but balancing that with living "a day at a time."

- Here is the advice from one woman leader:
  1. Understand the importance of Leadership and Human Nature and ***continue to read, update and learn*** (see list of books in the next section)
    - a. First Break all the Rules
    - b. The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit
  2. Understand you are a women not a man
    - a. Basic Black
  3. Know yourself and be confident in who you are



- a. Complete Strength finders and Personality Code
  - b. Use your knowledge of your strengths and personality to understand the strengths and personalities of others
4. Be yourself, know you are different and be proud
  5. Don't be afraid of emotion
  6. Take your time to plan or speak and do not be afraid to change your mind through information seeking or learning
  7. Don't be afraid to ask for help
  8. Always have a plan and be proactive not reactive
  9. Look at programs, issues and situations from all sides
- Be yourself - develop your own style and be consistent.
  - Listen, Listen, Listen to the members of your team....they have the answers.
  - Don't let your natural inclination to be the nurturer and follower hold you back. If you do, that's the way you'll always be seen.
  - Follow your heart, do the right thing at the right time with the right audience, and never compromise your own beliefs for the sake of a paycheck.
  - Don't try to do everything. Even as women, we can't do everything. Realize that everyone has limitations and, once you've identified yours, work to improve them. But, remember, you can't do it all or have it all. That's a myth perpetrated on us by television where you see the gorgeous woman who is a CEO or attorney, looks great (good figure, white teeth, perfect hair and make-up, etc.), plays tennis, serves on the local PTA, keeps a perfect house, is a great cook and has beautiful and wonderful children and a handsome, loving husband. Really? Does anyone believe that?
  - Not sure my advice is female exclusive. I had some great mentors growing up in business. A couple things they taught me I have used my entire career:
    - "Bend your shoulders and let it roll off." Actually this was advice from my dad. Basically don't let work get to you. It will eat you alive. Enjoy what you do and walk away at the end of the day.
    - "Sleep on it." This means never make quick decisions, particularly if you are angered. Sleep on it. It will look different in the morning and you will be able to make a more rational decision.
    - "Give them rope." Not sure if this is applicable, but I always liked it considering I'm in HR. Basically, don't jump too quickly. If an employee is a problem time will permit them to solve their problem or fire themselves.

**What is your favorite leadership quote?**

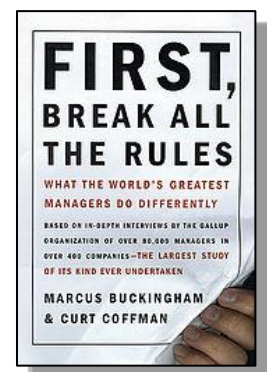
- "Don't let making a living prevent you from making a life." by Coach John Wooden

- "Life is too short, take time to have fun!" (my own - Lisa W.)
- "Ask, don't tell." - Austin McGonigal
- "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." (John Quincy Adams) ... if not, get out of the way and let a real leader take over (I added this part)
- Proverbs 31: 10-31. I realize this is long and probably not what you're looking for but for me it's the description and inspiration these passages provide.
- "Make the world a better or more beautiful place because you have lived in it." Edward Bok
- "Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition." Timothy Leary
- "Don't let anything stop you. There will be times when you'll be disappointed, but you can't stop. Make yourself the very best that you can make of what you are. The very best." - *Sadie T. Alexander*
- "Hire good people and let them do their job. "
- "Leadership is an action not a position." Donald H. McGannon
- "Leaders and managers are very different kinds of people, they differ in their motivations, personal history, how they think and act, in their orientation towards goals, work, human relations, and themselves and in their workplace views" Zalwznik 1997
- "I've never met an effective leader who wasn't aware of his talents and working to sharpen them." Allied Commander of NATO Wesley Clark



### What leadership book would you advise other women to read?

- *First, Break All the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman
- *Servant: A simple Story about the True Essence of Leadership* by James C. Hunter
- *The Dream Manager* by Matthew Kelly
- *Good to Great* by Jim Collins
- *The Speed of Trust* by Stephen Covey
- *Three Signs of a Miserable Job* by Patrick Lencioni
- *Monday Morning Leadership* by David Cottrell.
- *Please Understand Me* by David Kiersey & Marilyn Bates (after completing the MBTI).
- And this one is specific for women: *Unstoppable* by Cynthia Kersey.
- The Bible!



- *In the Company of Women* by Pat Heim and Susan Murphy – a good read on the unfortunate, but real dynamics of women and in the workplace. Illuminating.
- *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers* by Lois P. Frankel
- Pat – I haven't read it but I've had 3 women refer a specific book to me saying it was excellent. The title is "*Bring Out the Best in Every Employee; How to engage your whole team by making every leadership moment count*" by Don Brown & Bill Hawkins. It talks about the "new normal" and how we have to bring the personal touch back within the framework of the new normal. I found the research fascinating and the many, many tips practical and useful.
- *First Break All the Rules* by M. Buckingham and C. Coffman
- *Basic Black* by Cathie Black
- *Strength Finders 2.0* by Tom Rath
- *The Personality Code* by Travis Bradberry
- *The 8th Habit From Effectiveness to Greatness* by Stephen Covey
- *Speaking as a Leader* by Judith Humphrey
- I really don't have any. My book has been life experiences.

I hope you find some help in this advice from other women leaders. I'll leave you with this saying from a woman I used to work with who is now a successful leader of her own business.

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

- Eleanor Roosevelt