



WEB SEMINAR HANDOUTS



Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Dynamic Choices for Women

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Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Dynamic Choices for Women

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There is no question that “women at work” has been an important topic of conversation and organizational strategy for 100 years, and certainly in the last 25-30 years. There have been several key strategies that US corporations have employed to improve the work experience of women and our representation at the highest levels. This strategy has focused on breaking through the glass ceiling. There certainly are institutional forces that have created this glass ceiling. This metaphorical barrier is easy to point to as a focus for why we are limited in our opportunities, and as such breaking through becomes the focus of our efforts.

Mrs. Clinton stated during her concession speech that “the glass ceiling had 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time. Every woman who “makes it” makes it a little easier for the next woman.” It’s not however just the institutional barriers that inhibit the progress of women. There are reasons personal to individual women, societal stereotypes, and ways that men perceive women that also contribute to the poor showing of women leaders.

As organizations are greatly and justifiably concerned about the retention of women as much if not more so than the recruitment of women, the focus needs to widen from just the institutional, and to expand to encourage women to examine their own self perceptions and develop a more personal strategy for their fulfillment. This web-seminar focuses less on the Glass Ceiling and mostly on how we as women perceive ourselves, maybe get in our own way of success, and finally on identifying keys to success for women at work.

Objectives:

- Identify the factors that put women at risk for leaving an organization
- Learn some common stereotypes of women in the workplace, as well as core beliefs that keep women from career life fulfillment

- Become familiar with the 5 themes of highly successful women and how you can manifest it in your daily life
- Create strategies for fulfillment

People ~ both men and women ~ leave organizations for a variety of reasons.

- Poor job or cultural fit
- Opportunities for growth elsewhere
- Poor management and supervisory skills in the organization
- Clash with organizational leaders, values or vision

There do seem however to be some other reasons that may be more particular to women. What other people might think, a lack of clarity on values and goals, a reluctance to ask for what we want, and loyalty inspired by fear tend to characterize the departure of women of more than men.

We’ve heard women say:

- I’m not sure what I want
- I’d really like to be doing x, but it wouldn’t be right for me to leave
- I fell into this position/career by default, but I don’t know what else to do
- If I ask my X for what I want, s/he’ll think that I’m
 - Not committed
 - Being selfish
 - Being aggressive
- I’d really like to have a family but I don’t think I can do it in this organization
- I’d really like to spend more time with family

Why is it that women appear to be more hampered by these risk factors than men? Part of the answer could come from the stereotypes that have many of us grew up with that we’ve internalized and continue to be our compass regardless of how much we fight against them in

the external world. The dynamic of internalized oppression works to have us believe what the world believes about us, even if we consciously fight against it. When we see manifestations of those stereotypes around us, they reinforce our own limiting beliefs about ourselves, and as such feel like we have fewer choices that could lead to our personal and professional fulfillment. Let's look at some of these stereotypes.

- We should be docile, gracious, and pleasant
- We only speak of pleasantries
- We shouldn't have dirty jobs
- We shouldn't be loud or aggressive, use profanity, or call too much attention to themselves
- We should be happy with what we've got (jobs)
- Someone will take care of us, or, be sure to marry well so you won't have to work and you can stay home and be a good mom
- Good moms stay home

Certainly some of us grew up in families where powerful women were modeled either by our mothers, aunts, grandmothers, neighbors, coaches, teachers etc. Even if they were modeled for us personally, societally they weren't. Geraldine Ferraro ran for VP, Madeline Albright was a Stateswoman, Margaret Thatcher the Prime Minister. These women, and others like them, were more the exception than the rule. Many powerful women felt that they had to adapt the mannerisms and approaches to power and competition as men, and as such presented themselves and led in an inauthentic manner. When these stereotypes exist, we either internalize them and they become the guide posts for our own behavior, or we visibly fight against them, and determine that we will not be that person, which energetically is the same with a different result. The quest is to find for ourselves our own authentic style, know what's important to us, be clear about our values, not someone else's, and make more fulfilling choices for ourselves.

Part of discovering our values, and learning what drives and motivates us is to uncover what we call our competing commitments. This is a process identified by Robert Kegan from Harvard School of

Education. His approach helped to uncover the real reason why we don't do what we know we need to do for our fulfillment. This is accomplished by asking a series of questions to get to our underbelly, the part that we might not want to reveal to ourselves, let alone to others:

1. What is a persistent and on-going complaint?
2. What are you committed to that has that complaint exist?
3. What are you doing or not doing that has that complaint exist?
4. What would it mean about you if you did what you know you should?
5. If you did do that what must be true about you?
6. Where did you learn that this was true?
7. What are you now committed to?

What we've learned from leading hundreds of women at all levels of organizational success through competing commitments is that there are several themes held by almost all women we work with, regardless of years of experience, industry, or background. These assumptions keep them (us) from doing what we know we need to do to be fulfilled. The themes are:

- I'm not lovable
- I'm not smart
- I don't belong
- I'm invisible
- I don't have value
- I'm a fraud

We all have assumptions about ourselves that we believe to be true. We construct a life around these, as if the assumption is true. The assumption comes from something that happened to us when we are very young, usually in our family of origin. Everyone, regardless of quality of parenting, has something that happens, sometimes as seemingly inconsequential as having a sibling born. These core assumptions are all learned from these events. They certainly aren't the truth.

Why do we focus on this? Your ability to make any

fundamental or incremental behavior or attitude change effectively will rest on your ability to distinguish what's true about us vs what we assume to be true. Uncovering our own competing commitment allows us more freedom to make authentic choices that will lead to greater fulfillment, where women choose more for ourselves rather than what we think we should choose, or what we think others believe we should do. Anybody who attempts to do career planning without uncovering their competing commitment will continue to make choices that will likely not be fulfilling.

Once we're clear about ourselves and what motivates us (for better or for worse), we can then learn from women who have had successful and fulfilling lives. A number of researchers have identified themes from successful women across age groups and industries. These themes differentiate successful women from successful men.

What is particular to women is the desire to:

- Act with authenticity
- Have meaningful relationships
- Know where we want to go and how to get there
- Determine what balance means, and express ourselves in all parts of our lives
- Know ourselves, our strengths, and where we need to grow

We have found that fulfillment is the key to retention in organizations. Fulfillment is typically available to women who have gained clarity about their authentic selves, and have been able to dissociate their assumptions about who they think they are from their essence.

Dynamic Choices for Women is a program created and offered by Cook Ross with many components designed to address the issues raised in this web seminar. It is structured around these five themes of successful women. The program takes place over a period of 30-45 days, and includes the following components:

- Values pre-work to help hone what fulfills us

- One day high value, transformational workshop to build relationship, self agency,
- Peer coaching to reinforce learning, and help participants with accountability
- One on one career life coaching to offer an outside perspective, and to help participants see their potential blind spots
- Group mentoring to continue learning
- Organizational feedback to support the institution in encouraging fulfillment among its women employees.

Finally, there are key resources we reference during the program that are highly information and motivational:

1. Standing at the Crossroads, Center for Creative Leadership, 2004
2. Pitch Like a Girl, Ronna Lichtenburg, 2005
3. Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office, Barbara Frankel, 2004
4. Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way, Robin Gerber, 2004

Institutional efforts are critical for men and women to address the barrier of the glass ceiling, but unless we encourage ourselves as women to examine our motivations and drive, where they come from, and what feeds them, the glass ceiling will remain cracked but impenetrable for much longer than it needs to be.

Dynamic Choices for Women©

What would it look like if the women in your organization had an increased ability to manage boundaries, make clear requests, take full responsibility for their choices, and create a Strategy for Life Fulfillment that could be supported with your organization? The Dynamic Choices for Women program is the perfect solution for organizations looking to retain and attract women. [One day session (up to 20 participants per group) followed by individual coaching sessions]

Upon completion of the course:

- Participants will have had an engaging and reflective experience that will leave them with greater clarity on their short and long term goals – both personal and professional.
- Participants will have clearly defined actionable plans based on existing work life options and programs inside the firm.
- Your company's work/life programs will be positioned as valued options for multiple professional paths.
- The company will be provided with clear and actionable feedback on
 - how better to support this group of participants
 - issues that are surfacing in this group of participants

Please call for pricing.

About Cook Ross

Cook Ross is one of the country's leading organizational change and diversity consultancies.

Founded in 1989 and based in Silver Spring, Maryland, Cook Ross is a nationally recognized, certified woman-owned consulting firm. Cook Ross provides diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency solutions through award-winning training, consulting products and services.

We view diversity as a powerful resource that can be globally acknowledged and managed to create unprecedented learning and growth as well as an issue of legal compliance and awareness. We believe that attention to diversity, if done well, can improve productivity, morale, work satisfaction, creativity, internal and external communication, leadership, satisfaction in the communities that are being served, and ultimately drive business profitability.

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