WOMEN LEADING GENDER EQUALITY:
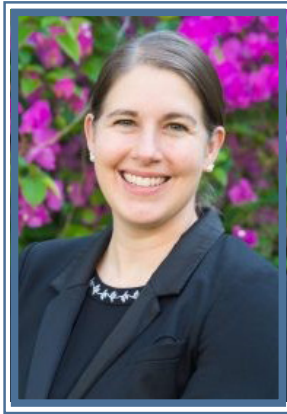
MASTERCLASS FROM CONNIE GONZALEZ

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1. WHAT DO THE STUDIES SUGGEST?

A McKinsey survey with 60 large corporations showed that the number and the percentage of women in leadership positions declines as one moves from entry level to C-suite positions. This is sometimes called a "leaky pipeline", meaning companies have a 50/50 percentage ratio of women and men in entry-level positions, but the number of women decreases as they move up the hierarchy to leadership positions: managers, deputy directors, directors, executive directors, board members, presidents. This trend has remained constant over the past decade but also worsened due to the COVID pandemic, as many women left the workforce to take on increased care responsibilities.

According to the 2021 Global Gender Equality Statistics, 75% of the workforce in the health sector were women, but women represented only 25% of senior leadership positions. Geographically, these data differ very little.

Data from 2022 shows that over the last two years, gender inequalities have increased and much progress that was made over the past 20 years or so was erased by the effects of the COVID pandemic.

2. WHY IS THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS SO LOW?

To find the answer to this question, researchers have compared the performance of women and men. Looking at the following leadership traits: relationship building, teamwork, problem analyzing and solving skills, communication skills, innovative thinking, and expert skills, researchers report that women's performance is higher than men's. So performance does not seem to be a reason why there are less women. Other studies show that employees of companies led by women are more engaged, a good measure of productivity and company performance.

Diversity studies show that the more diverse the board of directors is, considering the representation of different genders, ethnicities, and races, the higher the company's performance.

But there are other contextual factors that influence women in leadership positions. There are laws restricting the advancement of women. The World Bank's study of labor mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenting, entrepreneurship, assets, and pension states that women's have 75% of the legal rights compared to men globally. According to the World Bank's "Women, Business and the Law 2023" report, women only have fully equal legal rights in 14 countries. But this does not consider the difference between legal rights on paper and the implementation of the law, which can be influenced by other factors, such as gender norms and cultural issues. In RA, this index is 87.5%.

3. BIASES OR OPPORTUNITIES?

Biases are stereotypes about the abilities and characteristics of men and women. They can appear in the selection, hiring, and promotion of candidates.

According to research presented by Nancy Rothbard within the framework of the Wharton School's Women's Executive Leadership: Business Strategies for Success 2022 Program:

1. Men receive more critical assignments, which leads to their advancement.

2. Men are given two times the budget and three times the staff than women to carry out tasks.

3. Women are less likely to be noticed by senior management.

4. Biases based on race, gender, and social and ethnic affiliations exist.

4. HOW WOMEN RISE IN LEADERSHIP?

Sally Helgesen and Marshall Goldsmith have classified 12 habits that keep women stuck from advancing in leadership positions in their "How Women Rise: Break the 12 Habits Holding You Back from Your Next Raise, Promotion, or Job" book:

1. Women are not as demanding when it comes to claiming their achievements.

2. Women expect others to notice and reward their contributions.

3. Women overvalue expertise.

4. Women seek to build rather than build and leverage relationships.

5. Women may fail to enlist allies.

6. Women put their jobs before their careers.

7. Women fall into the perfection trap more easily.

8. Women can suffer from the pleasing disease.

9. Women are more modest when presenting their experience and skills.

10. Women are more emotional and may be accused of being too much or not enough of something.

11. Women can fall into a trap of ruminating about conversations and situations.

12. Women can let their capacity to have a "radar" that sees everything distract them from focusing on one thing.

One example of these traits is that when women speak, they tend to use "we" instead of "I" and talk about the team; men more frequently speak using "I."

5. WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender equality is the impartiality in the treatment that men and women receive according to their respective needs, either with equal or differentiated treatment, but the treatment that is considered equivalent regarding rights, benefits, obligations, and possibilities.

Gender equality does not mean that men and women are identical, it means that they have equal rights. The differences between them should not be a reason for discrimination.

The challenges for gender equality in the private sector are as follows:

Economic empowerment: there is a need to promote financial literacy and independence among women.

Equality of work and wages: formulate policies that will promote women's participation in the labor market through wage equality.

Women in leadership roles: promote the growth of women in leadership roles.

6. HOW TO PROMOTE FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS?

The guidelines for promoting women's leadership in business are:

1. clearly encouraging a business culture oriented towards gender equality,

2. promoting diversity and inclusivity of the team,

3. promoting male engagement in attracting female talents,

4. encouraging women's engagement in the decision-making process,

5. promoting female role models,

6. corporate training on gender equality.

7. HOW TO BALANCE WORK AND FAMILY?

Telework, part-time, or flexible work is exciting for employees, especially for women, because it allows them to balance work and family life.

Family leave, maternity, or paternity leave is defined and regulated by law and varies from country to country, and is sometimes mandated.

Forming care centers for patients, children, and disabled people may be easier for large and multinational companies.

Educational programs can include all employees or only management staff and be implemented through internal training and providing scholarships.

Wellness programs can be internal, offered within the company, or outsourced.

In ensuring gender equality, the involvement of senior management is important, as well as its integration into the **strategic plan.**

8. HOW TO ASSESS THE GENDER GAP?

The Gender Gap Assessment is a tool that a company can use to assess gender equality based on corporate culture, strategic planning, gender strategies, workplace violence and harassment, organizational structure, and human resource management.

The gender analysis of the **corporate culture** is the study of employees' approaches to gender equality, which should enable the identification of cases of discrimination, and contribute to the identification of stereotypes and gender roles within the organization.

Strategic planning provides an opportunity to assess the company's commitment to gender equality, which is expressed in the definition of goals, indicators, policies, and action plans.

The **gender strategy** allows evaluation of the actions implemented in the direction of reducing gender gaps, and creating wellness strategies.

An **analysis of workplace violence and harassment** enables the company to identify relevant incidents and evaluate the strategies, policies, or action plans implemented to overcome problems.

The purpose of the **organizational structure analysis** is to study the hierarchical levels of the company and to identify the percentage ratio of men and women at each level.

When analyzing **human resource management,** companies examine the ways in which personnel are selected and recruited, while paying special attention to biases that may be present during hiring, training, or promotion processes.

9. HOW TO IMPLEMENT GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES?

To implement a gender equality policy, a company should:

1. assess the gender gap,
2. identify priority issues,
3. review the current policy,
4. define corporate approaches,
5. outline policy objectives,
6. search for solutions,
7. apply a strategic approach,
8. implement the policy,
9. monitor the implementation of the policy.

Companies need to take real steps to address gender gaps by both writing policies and implementing them.