

## “A woman's achievement in leadership”

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### **ABSTRACT**

Women 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 organisations. While there are more ladies working today, the research found that they are still labouring with career elevation and mentor for successful managerial guidance. females held nearly 52% of all specialized roles in the USA 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, the author 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.

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 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 organisations in this setting, but they faced the opposition from society and were deprived of chances to acquire higher self-esteem and fulfil their skills.

Since the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Women started competing for positions that were formerly exclusive for men only. When they were in unknown territory, female required survival advice in the workplace more than success guides in career. In all these years, numerous studies have been done to follow women's advancement in the organisations. In spite of 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. The matter of fact is there are abundance of publications offering career counselling and ideas for women who are working, but hardly any papers addressing best practises 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 realised 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 realise 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 realised 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 sessions which were 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 colleagues 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 jeopardise 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 Rs of leadership included being resourceful, resilient, an experienced "reframer," a reality checker, and capable of relegating relational rules. She had to become valuable in making people to do things and get work done by them by persistence, persuasion, and patience. Because there was no precedence, she could create rules to control the relationships at work. She had the ability to draw the line with colleagues and subordinates, and she frequently utilised 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. Of 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 recognising 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 steps of a beautiful journey there has to be a first starting step".

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