

WOMEN IN CORPORATE AMERICA

As it is known social change occurs when a significant alteration in the structure of society forces us to re-evaluate our current positions. In relation to women in corporate America, the significant change occurs in family structure, economics and class status. Women are in positions that have authoritative control, which has caused our nation to rethink the structure of its economic policies. In corporate America it is not the wealth, but who controls the means of production. Women in the workforce are pursuing higher degrees, more authoritative positions and juggling the daily job of maintaining family structure.

A survey conducted by Catalyst in 1999 reported, that women now account for 11.2% of officers at large corporations, up to 10.6% last year and 8.7% in 1995. So, Corporate America is doing better by women. Right? Let's consider the raw number--- 11.2%-that equates to one officer in nine. The few women that do attain the executive suite, still mostly occupy staff positions--corporate marketing, human resources and the like. They hold just 6.2% of the line posts that, with profit and loss responsibilities, and at the top, women still earn substantially less than their male counterparts. (Hammonds, NY Bureau Reports)

In the changing social structure of society, women have numerous obstacles or subtle restrictions that prevent acquiring promotions, tenure and other forms of advancement. The juxtaposition of Career and Family are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The major segment of the workforce--women, comprising 52% is struggling to balance the two most important forces in their lives. The plight of the working professional women was pictured in the "drawn and quartered" of the first female nominee for U.S. Attorney General, Zoë Baird. The question regarding quality childcare based on her decision resulted in her declining the nomination. Regardless of personal beliefs about respect for the rules, integrity, or credibility, the fact remains: Had a male nominee ever been asked about his childcare arrangements? The answer: NO. (Watkins, Herrin & McDonald, Winter 1999)

The research of the history of women and work supports the limited success for professional women with families. (Ezrati, 1983) More women are working than ever before, and they are looking for solutions to the problems of juggling work and family, making ends meet and finding respect and opportunity on the job.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREER INTEGRATION:

- Higher Aspirations by Women: Women sometimes do not actively work toward promotion. Women must begin to change their mentality about professional opportunities and advancement. (Hampton, 1982)
- Financial Independence: seek to achieve and maintain financial independence. (Parker 1991)
- Enhancement: women must enhance career opportunities and remain current. Take advantage of internships, volunteer for opportunities, which lead to additional experience and seek advice from experts in the field.
- Dual Career Couples' Recruitment: development of placement policies, which recruit dual career couples. (Hensel 1991)
- Networking with Colleagues: align themselves with productive employees, participate in a network. (Holt 1981)

In conclusion our society has difficulty determining what women are worth, or even seeing traditional women's work as "work". There may be another primitive linkage between sexual behavior and business success. Men are seen as virile, which is visibility in society and as a product, which is tangible. Women who demonstrate virility is discerning and men would be concerned with keeping status positions for themselves.

Due to the fears and insecurity of our male counterparts, women are faced with occupations segregation, the principal form of sex discrimination today. Women are channeled into becoming secretaries, nurses, librarians, department store clerks, staff and elementary school teachers. These jobs are not only gender typed, but also poorly paid. Alienation in the classic sense refers to separation of the worker from work. Occupations that have traditionally led to power positions and high rewards such as professional or managerial jobs have until recently been out of reach for women.

The current economic picture of women in corporate America show improvement in positions of authority based on strides which have been made, by government, and business, as well as proponents for women equality. In the 1990's we have seen the rise of women in government, entrepreneurships, and major business corporations. With the current breakdown of American families, women constitute 46.2% of the economic stability of families as of 1997. Women are pursuing higher educational degrees and becoming vocal in the policy-making process. Despite the political resistance to affirmative action, women are more self-confident, as men tend to have sudden insights to their negative feelings about women colleagues and find that women are not so threatening, as they once seemed.

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