

Women at the Top Leadership Research

© Halina Jaroszewska 2017

It is always interesting to be curious about the ripple effect of role models, inspiring teachers, trail blazers bravery. How those doors are opened, glass ceilings dissolved, seemingly insurmountable cliffs scaled, limitations challenged, assumptions overturned? Is it simply one courageous or foolhardy person or a combination of many making those ripples spread way beyond what might be thought possible?

With BWB – Bristol Women in Business – now in its 4th successful year connecting women both from corporates and large businesses in the city the opportunity to input another dimension became clear. Inspirational women at the top by sharing their story have influenced, intrigued and encouraged the realisation that we are all role models, inspiring teachers, brave trailblazers.

As a result my inspiration has been to invite women at the top to share their thoughts regarding leadership and create this series of interviews. I began with five questions and as the first interview was coming to a close two more questions were determined to be asked:

- What question would you like to have been asked? And then to ask the interviewee to answer it which was fun!
- Who would you like to be interviewed or suggest that I interview?

**Fiona Jordan - Associate Dean [External Engagement], Faculty of Business and Law UWE
first in the series - interviewed on 3 February 2017 by Halina Jaroszewska**

You have no doubt inspired a lot of aspiring leaders – from where (or from whom) do you draw your inspiration?

I am fortunate to have worked with a number of inspirational women leaders, to have had strong female role models, in particular my PhD supervisors. One of my lecturers at University of North London during my Master's talked about feminist research and inspired me to seek and support equality of opportunity for all. She is now a very senior leader who certainly walks her talk and still does what she can to inspire young women into leadership. In my time at UWE I have worked for, and with, some female leaders who are successful role models and enthusiastic in their support and encouragement for others. I feel that having strong female role models is essential in inspiring women to succeed.

What would you say have been the biggest developments in leadership that you have witnessed in your years as a leader?

- The environment in which we lead and the influence that has on how we lead.
- Biggest influence has been technology – the move from face-to-face and having the time to craft communication to a world of instantaneous electronic communication.
- Communication and technology are inextricably linked with the ways we lead. The multiple channels of communication can make it more difficult to communicate key messages effectively and with clarity.
- The challenge is how to lead effectively in what is increasingly a mediated environment.
- Media gives us role models for leadership eg in programmes like The Apprentice. The selection of which leaders and styles of leadership get most represented can skew what we think leadership is or should be - i.e. we mediate what leaders should be.
- Mediating is anything that interprets or communicates what we are trying to say or be as leaders. 93% of communication is non-verbal and we lose that in many forms of contemporary communication such as email or Twitter. In this way, what we say is subject to mediation by technology. . The more we use technology the more influential it is on our experiences and perceptions of leadership - eg US Presidency by Tweet giving minute by minute communication which is subject to mediation and interpretation.

- US is being led very differently now than 3 months ago. It is presented as very open communication but the reality of this is much more complex and subject to debate. halinajaroszewska.com
www.halinajaroszewska.com
- Technology's influence means we are expected to lead 24/7, to work faster. It decreases face to face and group interaction. It creates a set of expectations with speed of response as a critical success factor.
- Through the use of social media and websites such as ratemyleader.com - leaders are subject to public scrutiny as never before.

What do you think are the most significant trends and challenges faced by leadership today?

- Using technology which both enhances and detracts from our abilities to lead effectively.
- Effective leadership needs to be a dialogue with an emphasis on listening and understanding how to make sure people feel listened to.
- Leadership has changed seismically from a year ago because of global political events.
- Leadership and leaders need diversity in their teams.
- Political isolationism is potentially very damaging as it can reduce the perceived value of diversity.
- Interesting gender politics, where women can influence leadership by being role models but sometimes choose not to do so as they would rather be seen as "one of the boys".

What do you think today's leaders should be doing to keep moving leadership to a new level?

To be reflective practitioners, thinking about the impact of their leadership on others. I have been privileged to have lots of training and receive 360 type feedback on my leadership. More leaders are prepared to engage with feedback from their teams and peers these days. It is important to look at the leadership characteristics of all the people in a team to understand how one is part of a leadership team. Diverse teams can be stronger by recognising that one person's strength is another's weakness and utilising each person in the most effective way for the greater good of the team.

What advice would you give to young aspiring leaders?

1. Take every opportunity to develop a network yet keep one's life in balance.
2. Do as much staff and professional development as you can.
3. Engage with supportive people, confidence building, find mentors, emulate good role models.
4. See how people get to where they are; how they perform as leaders.
5. Decide what sort of leader you want to be.

What question would you like to have been asked?

I would like to have been asked two questions:

1. **What kind of leader do I see/consider myself to be?** I like to think of myself as a consultative, collaborative leader who isn't afraid to take on tough challenges. I would like to be (hope to be) be an inspirational one.
2. **What do I feel makes a good leader?** Someone who listens, inspires, creates shared ownership of goal/s and support people to achieve it/them; someone who will tackle difficult problems and come up with solutions.

Who would you like to be interviewed or suggest that I interview?

I'll have to think about that as there are several.

**To discuss how Halina Jaroszewska can help
please call: 07718 658909 (international +44 117 927 2276)
or send an email to: halina@halinajaroszewska.com
www.halinajaroszewska.com**

Halina Jaroszewska is an Executive Coach, professionally certified by the International Coach Federation. Halina helps leaders and aspiring leaders to turn uncertainty into a powerful tool for change and growth. Her aim is to enable clients to take their success to the next level, switch surviving into thriving, and maximise their potential during challenging times.