

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

January 27, 2012

Topic: PINK Leaders Taking Charge with Cynthia Good



The trajectory of women's advancement has changed, as Cynthia Good pointed out this January. "It used to be about power, pay, & admiration," as Good put it. Today, a woman's definition of success is shaped by "contributing, living, and working in one's own way."

Cynthia, an award-winning journalist, shared that at her first broadcasting job, she delivered the news with a deep voice in a navy suit. At that time, women had to imitate male behavior, denying their femininity and authentic selves. Today, women are getting more comfortable in their own shoes.

Good, founder and CEO of Little PINK Book, has made it her mission to help women break barriers. Good aspires to empower the word 'pink': allowing it to accurately represent the commanding woman accomplishing her own goals, on her own terms and stripping the word of its girlish, immature, and naive connotations.

Good shed light on research related to women's advancement. While 89% of people would be comfortable with a female leader, only 17% of leadership roles are filled by women! Women still earn \$0.80 to every \$1.00 earned by men. Politicians receive standing ovations for advocating the not-so-novel notion that women receive equal pay. Approximately 63% of women in this country would rather *not* work for another woman. Women have come a long way, but there is still work to be done.

"This is a business issue," explained Good, "firms in which women are in senior level roles, see 34% total higher returns." She also reported that women tend to be more focused on sustainability and corporate responsibility, increasingly essential topics in the global business conversation. Women clearly have a place in the leadership levels of organizations; but fed up with endlessly attempting to prove their competence and potential, more and more women are leaving corporate America and becoming entrepreneurs. Georgia, Good says, has the largest number of female-owned companies in the nation.

What can companies do to successfully promote women? Cynthia indicates that many of the existing mentoring and affinity programs are not necessarily the answer. Women are better served when senior leadership visibly and systematically supports initiatives, such as formal sponsorship programs, specifically aimed at moving women into senior leadership roles.

"Women need to be better advocates for ourselves" emphasizes Good. Researchers at the Little PINK Book found that more than 60% of women surveyed indicated that they preferred taking a passive approach to success (e.g., won't ask for an opportunity,

instead waiting for said opportunity to be given). Women have to be willing to assume the driver's seat.

Here are some golden nuggets of advice from Cynthia Good on how women can better advocate themselves:

1. *Ask for a raise.* According to Little PINK Book's research, only about 50% of women surveyed over the past seven years had asked for a pay hike. Of those who actually did, more than 70% received a pay increase or a promotion!
2. *Let people know about your achievements and what you need.* Women are often very hesitant to tout their accomplishments. Although humility key, bosses do not remember every major contribution and need to be reminded.
3. *Don't ask. Tell.* Women need to be direct about what they need to continue with an organization. There is a difference between being *assertive* and *confrontational*. The trick is that it needs to be in the best interest of the organization and you don't want to be confrontational.
4. *Have the courage to do what you love.* Everyone needs to do something to satisfy their own interests. Good says many women struggle to identify what they love to do. Ask yourself, "What did you love to do when you were a little girl?"