

## Women in Leadership Highlights January 29, 2010



**January 29: "Perceptions of the Glass Ceiling: Voices of Minority Women"** – featuring Kym Harris, Ed.D., Sr. Dir. of Employee & Leadership Development & Training for Manheim, a Div. of Cox Enterprises. Kym has had a distinguished 25 year career in HR and Talent Development in the public and private sectors as well as higher education. Based on her design of an exemplary leadership development program, Emory received the John Blackburn Award presented by AAUA. Recognized as one of the "Women Putting their Stamp on Atlanta," Kym is also president & CEO of Vision Compatible Coaching, LLC and co-founder of *Girls with Vision* which partners with the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy.

- Dr. Harris starts everything she does with a question: "What's the vision?" She follows up with "compatible action."
- Her doctoral dissertation and research is no exception. She chose her topic because it was personal to her and her experience – focused on African American women only.
- While her interviews included the actual perceptions of minority women and how they viewed the workplace, their career opportunities, etc., Dr. Harris clearly aimed to go beyond just stating "the issues." She wanted to be proactive, to see how to make things better, and to recommend strategies and then actions to be taken to resolve issues and improve the status quo.
- Some key quotes: "Get out of your comfort zone." "Be true to who you are." "Take responsibility." "Hold yourself and the organization accountable." "Step up to lead." "We should not expect race issues to be resolved in the workplace. These are issues that permeate society at large, not just work. We need to separate what can and cannot be addressed in the workplace." "There is definitely a value in having mentors and coaches, formal and informal, men and women, peers and superiors, and at all stages of our careers."
- Essential Organization Resources:
  - Exposure to senior leaders
  - Opportunity for movement within the organization
  - Developmental assignments
  - Professional development budgets
  - Tuition reimbursement programs
- What More Can Organizations Do?
  - More informal access to senior leaders

- Talent review and succession planning with an emphasis on diversity.
- On-going diversity programs.
- Conclusions
  - Career success/advancement requires skill/strategy
  - Relationships are critical for all women, but are more difficult to form in the absence of “common ground.”
  - Outside of comfort zone experiences are critical to building relationships with corporate decision makers.
  - The need for ownership of career cuts across racial lines, but can be more challenging given GC barriers that require a different kind of negotiation.
  - Organizations and leaders inside organizations should play a more active role in fostering trust-based relationships.
- Strategies for moving beyond the Glass Ceiling (or concrete ceiling as it were!)
  - Establish mentor/mentor-like relationships
  - Own your career
  - Move outside your comfort zone & build relationships
  - Be true to yourself
  - Don't be afraid to ask for help
  - Give voice to your confidence
  - Take risks & learn as you go
  - Establish and communicate career goals
  - Be open to the gift of feedback
  - Learn the business – move beyond areas of expertise
  - Leverage your past experience
- Overall Strategy: *Take Time for Development*
  - Gender Based Affinity Groups
  - Leadership Development
  - Board Membership
  - Professional Meetings
  - Formal Coaching Relationships
  - Professional Certifications
  - Formal Education
  - Public Speaking/Toastmasters