

## Highlights from Women in Leadership 7/27/07

### Chris St. Claire, Advisory Partner, KPMG LLP

**Professional background:** 32 years this month with KPMG; interned in Los Angeles; wanted to work for one of the “Big 8” accounting firms. First job – in the entertainment industry, working with Twentieth Century. She worked in an office of 800 people. Was given the opportunity to relocate to Orange Co. California (office of only 40 people) and worked there for 12 years. Helped build the practice from 40 to 400 people. Worked in real estate, restaurant, and retail businesses. Made partner while there, one of youngest and very few women.

Next move: to take the JC Penny account in Dallas, TX. Big adjustment but great move. Her husband said he’d join her there (very supportive of her career). 16 years later, he’s still in California and hasn’t moved yet! (But the bi-coastal arrangement works for them.) In Dallas, she was working with one of the firm’s high profile accounts, a huge opportunity and responsibility. While she was there, she got very involved in the community, Chamber of Commerce Bd., other civic organizations, etc.

“Had I stayed in my comfort zone, I would never had moved to Dallas or had the tremendous growth opportunities I had.”

After 5-7 yrs, she had to leave that account (company practice) and she was asked to move to Atlanta to take over the Home Depot account (1999). Again, husband was to join her here, but it hasn’t happened yet!! Learned to love ATL – “some phenomenal women here.”

“The core values of KPMG are consistent with mine: one is to give back to the community. The work is wonderful and the relationships, equally rewarding.”

A few years ago I began to think about what my “legacy” would be at KPMG and I identified the retention, development and advancement of women as my primary focus.

#### Other notes:

- 2003- Got serious about women’s retention, development, & advancement. Three of us women held a 1 ½ day strategy session on “the issues.”
- Established Women’s Advisory Board that reports to chairman- 10 women. Began tedious analysis process, e.g. looked at data from law firms, other accounting firms, as well as KPMG, and it was not a pretty picture = “Stairway to Hell”- women leaving companies at alarming rates because their opportunities were scarce.
- At KPMG 50% of our hires were women, but after 20 years we only had 11-12% female partners. Obvious question: What’s wrong with the pipeline?? To investigate further, we looked at compensation, assignments, when women left firm and why.

- Later in '03, we piloted a new program called “KNOW” which stands for KPMG Network of Women. The mission was to help all women achieve professional and personal goals. We wanted to get to the heart of the issue of retention.
- Pilot ran for a year in Atlanta office
- Chairman (now deceased) said: “Go interview female partners in company (had approximately 260 women partners).  
 Asked:
  - Why do you think women leave the firm?
  - Have you received offers of significant promotions? - Did you take it? Why or Why not?
  - Have you been asked to move? (For what?)
 Response:
  - Company was a “good old boys” network
  - Lack of female role models and mentors- don't see women at top
  - Lack of accountability for advancing women and other minority groups
  - Leadership role has been defined by men- not women- who had women at home taking care of things, therefore men could work long hours, play golf, go on hunts, etc
- Report given to the KPMG Board who said:
  - We need more flexible work-life balance programs.
- Women's Advisory Board answered:
  - That's not the answer- we need to change the culture of our company to be more supportive of flex programs, of women, and of diversity. This change needs to be a top down process.
- Need to focus on 6 areas while expanding KNOW to all offices:
  1. Networking
  2. Mentoring- need to encourage women to actively participate
  3. Accountability and metrics -start with baseline case and set objectives. Set 10 goals for 1,2,5 yrs. out. Management committee responsible.
  4. Career development and succession planning- most challenging area
  5. Communications and awareness- how do we talk about our goals? The business case for doing this. Chris chaired this initiative. (see item below)
  6. The external marketplace- what could we do in the community- many programs focused externally. “Lifting the boat outside the company.” Chris also chaired this initiative.
- Extremely important: Communication & Awareness: Focusing on the business case for women's leadership and advancement
  - If don't communicate why you're doing this then initiative won't get implemented- utilize the business case.
  - Talk about value proposition: there is a huge cost to attrition- We showed them (executives/board) bottom line impact.
  - Catalyst Study- Revenue growth & ROI 35% higher in companies that have more women in senior leadership roles.
  - War for talent is huge and is progressively getting worse. Must offer chances for advancement and development to compete
  - Also, our clients were expecting a diverse team.

- **Marketplace statistics:**
  - 40-50% of MBAs for women, and women are going to college in greater numbers
  - 85% of consumer goods are purchased by women
  - 70% of start up businesses are women-led
  - 70% of small business loans are going to women owned businesses

### **Rewards and Challenges:**

- **Challenges for Chris personally**
  - Candidly, there are times that you can be branded in an organization as “she’s driving her woman’s’ thing” but I’ve decided it’s ok to be labeled.
  - I also know that I have to careful to demonstrate that I am extremely business-focused, i.e., improving processes and serving clients for my organization.
  - One can also become known as “everyone’s mentor”- get calls everyday from women/people who want advice and mentoring. You have to share this experience and responsibility with other women who are coming along and find a balance.
- **Challenges for the organization**
  - Change is slow to come- must be patient.
  - Must set metrics to measure progress- can lose passion because change is slow. There will certainly be things that happen in the marketplace that impact or effect progress.
  - When KPMG’s program was launched- the toughest time for women retention are for women between the ages of 26 and 35 because those are childbearing years; time of highest attrition rate; SOX 404 happened at exactly this time- we had an 18 month period when all the employees were regularly working 60-80 work weeks to meet clients’ requirements. Fortunately, SOX is now embedded in our business process.
  - Biggest challenge: resisters to culture change- must keep emphasizing the business case / not quotas.
  - Resisters’ Question: “Why do women need a special program?”
  - Answer: B/c men have always had their own networks, they are just not formerly recognized
- **Rewards:**
  - Annual employee surveys:
    - Shows how women see opportunities in the company
    - How women feel about the KNOW program
    - Results: women’s survey positive responses going up faster - programs are changing the ways women are seeing things.
    - Turnover rate for women in the 4 year program is down 29%- in the last year that ratio is lower than the male ratio.
    - 44% increase in women partners = 9% of all partners currently
- **Goals:** by 2010, to have 25% women partners for the whole firm (33% in the US) and 19% female partners

### **Other insights and status:**

- Compared to Deloitte's progress: Launched women's initiative programs in 1993- even w/ initiatives in place 10 yrs later than Deloitte, KPMG's matching them in terms of new partners
  - They're still ahead of KPMG in getting women into meaningful leadership roles
- Issue of "getting women in meaningful roles" - There is a real disconnect between what men thought leadership roles were and what women thought. The way we defined was 1 %, but it's now 10%.
- KPMG : 50% of rehires are women
- Catalyst magazine cited (certain percentage) of women left work place, but 92% came back to workforce- just in a different industry.
- KPMG now has Opt-Out Opt-In program
- Organization is enjoying success so far and seeing payback for investment in women's initiatives.
- New business being measured – business that has come from / been influenced by women. Supporting women in external ways- meaning we are getting business from women leaders.
- Personal Rewards for Chris:
  - Talking about KPMG story
  - Hearing women say that they have stayed in the company b/c of these programs (personal testimonials, etc) Knowing that I've directly or indirectly impacted their lives.
- **My best advice to women:**
  - Believe in yourself and in the impact you can have: Tell Your Story- Don't sit back in your career believing that because you're doing a good job you will be noticed. Talk about your successes and what you've done, projects you've led, clients you've brought in, etc. Men are typically braggers and women need to do more (but no one should become too egotistical).
  - Ask for what you want: e.g., when you want special educational opportunities or international assignments, tell the right people.
  - Take control of your own destiny. Talk about your goals but be flexible.
  - Understand the power of networking; Build your web of influence; form relationships
  - Read Gail Evans "When She Wins, You Win"- Importance of women helping women, support women, and reach out.
  - Numbers are a great way to get attention- How did you quantify winning at recruiting; started looking at hiring women and women were asking, what are you doing for women

#### **Q&A:**

- Importance of People, Performance, and Culture
- Cost of Attention- Australia did data analysis on investment in training, recruiting for replacement, and figures for losing in different lands- Germany, France, Netherlands- all of those countries are far behind- they need to be where we are. But in many countries, women are doing better because goals have been set: e.g., Norway must have 40% of women in certain elected positions and on public boards.

- Bi-Coastal marriage: In 16 years of commuting Chris and her husband have only missed 15 weekends. They make it work and maintain 2 homes so they feel “at home” in either place.
- When measuring women in leadership positions:
  - Were saying- offered women position in another city, she didn’t take it
  - Found that men were typically given more responsibility when asked to move, women weren’t
  - Wanted the Women Advisory Board (WAB) not under HR but included in business strategies; under executive leadership
  - Dennis Donavon said in HR, exit interviews should be done 30 days after the employee leaves because will get better (more objective) feedback at that point.
- **KNOW:**
  - Open to everyone- client service support- client service delivery
  - Learned which topics of interest- sometimes need to segment
  - Some examples of things they’ve done / topics they’ve explored:
    - KNOWing Wine- launched b/c women were hosting client functions and women need to be able to confidently order wine and talk to a sommelier
    - KNOWing Tennis
    - KNOWing Golf- golf lessons at East Lake, \$100 for 5-6 lessons, the 1<sup>st</sup> is in the office, the rest on the course
    - KNOWing Negotiation- art of negotiation from a female perspective
    - Partner Lunches- where employees can meet and have lunch with firm’s partners, both men and women. Usually small group at a restaurant w/ round tables, usually no more than 6 people.
    - KNOWing use of email
    - Celebrate/ participate in Women’s History Month – used online trivia game
    - Panel of seasoned company partners talking about life issues
    - Making relocation work
  - Build confidence, better leaders, etc
  - Usually only have a group of 20 at a time to maintain an intimate atmosphere and let women get to know each other
  - Have women invite guests to KNOW events- understand how to “host” someone
  - Try to make it fun and informative
- Younger women (GEN X & Y) very focused on big issues, doing something for the world
  - Environment
  - Poverty
- Many times a man gets religion around this issue of women’s opportunities when their daughter gets out of college
- Several companies are now forming Women’s Advisory Boards
- Chris was on Wyndham Hotels’ advisory board to discuss what worked and what didn’t