

Developing Women In Leadership

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50% of people in the workforce are women. 50% of middle managers are women. 60% of college graduates are women. Yet in Fortune 500 companies only 5% of top wage earners are women. Only 8% have high ranking positions and only 2% are CEOs. Glass ceiling or sticky floor? At Pegasus, we believe both. Many ideas have been put forth including: not enough women in the pipeline, work-life choices, e.g. Mommy track, differences in leadership styles and lack of ability to lead. Some very good research has demonstrated that when men and women of equal position and skills are evaluated women routinely are rated lower. The more subjective the rating, the lower women rate. This is related to gender stereotypes which are pervasive and very difficult to eradicate. These stereotypes and the resultant behavior contribute substantially to the glass ceiling. A few years ago symphony orchestras, at the time predominantly male, were unable to make progress toward more gender equity until they began to require that auditions be held behind a screen. This is powerful information about behavior that is most often unintentional, but very real, negative stereotyping. Additionally, these cultural forces place expectations for behavior on women that are counterproductive to moving into higher level management positions. One example is negotiation. In one study three groups men and women were given a task and told that they would be paid between \$3 and \$10. This was the only instruction given to the first group. The second group was told they could "negotiate" for more money. The third group was told they could "ask" for more money. Men in groups 1 and 2 negotiated for more money but women did not. Women negotiated only when they were told they could "ask" for more money. These sticky floor issues are addressed at Pegasus by experiential learning. Our facilitators set up problem-solving activities with our horses that require skill development in areas in which research has indicated women need to develop: negotiation, verbally direct communication, rule-breaking leading to creativity, mentoring, solicitation of experiences that will expand skill sets, and nonverbal communication. Every experience is also grounded in the concept of self-efficacy which results in continued skill improvement after the seminar.

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