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WOMEN IN Leadership

2016 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY — OMAHA, NE



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Women in Leadership Report *2016 Executive Summary*

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The data on race and ethnicity presented herein were derived from answers to U.S. Census questions on race that were asked of individuals in the United States. These data are based on self-identification. The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of race recorded and presented include both racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. As such, people who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.

U.S. Census Data generally includes 5 categories, White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Another question asks whether an individual is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. However, for the analysis specific to Omaha conducted for this report, the "n" for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander were so low as to be unreportable. More inclusive Omaha-specific data sets were not found. The Women's Fund of Omaha recognizes that the limitations of these data restrict the representativeness and generalizability of this report. In the Omaha-based Census data, the three predominant racial and ethnic categories reported were White, Black, and those who had marked their origin as Hispanic and/or Latino. As result, the report reflects measures within these self-identified categories. National data cited in this report are drawn from secondary sources, which have been reproduced.

The Women's Fund of Omaha recognizes that racial and ethnic identifiers are often an inexact measure of identity and may inhibit genuinely representative portrait of the populations from which the data are drawn. However, because both qualitative and quantitative data bear out the often-inequitable experiences of women of color in work environments, the authors decided that quantitative data pertaining to race and ethnicity in the workplace should be included.

Full references for both national and local data can be found in the full research report at www.OmahaWomensFund.org



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INTRODUCTION



It has been twenty years since the Women’s Fund of Omaha first published its groundbreaking study that explored Omaha’s corporate, political and community leadership, and ten years since our last update to that original report. The *Women in Leadership* reports from 1996 and 2006 provided Omaha’s professional community with baseline quantitative and qualitative data about the leadership landscape for women in our community. The voices of our city’s leaders gave us insight into how individuals become leaders, how those leaders drive change, and also how slowly change has come for women in the workplace.

The 2016 report once again focuses on the voices of our communities’ leaders. Through 80 interviews with a wide array of Omaha’s leaders, we tapped into the influential minds in Omaha’s corporate, nonprofit, academic, governmental, and medical worlds. We spoke to business owners, CEOs, senior administrators, organizational leaders, executive directors, COOs, and many more. The leaders we interviewed were as diverse in their backgrounds as they were in their current roles. However, each shared a deep understanding of Omaha, its organizations, and the kinds of leaders it produces.

By examining each level separately, we hope to provide a more comprehensive portrait of leadership in Omaha by answering the following questions:

- ▶ What are the characteristics of the leadership landscape of Omaha?
- ▶ What are the characteristics of successful organizations that grow strong leaders?
- ▶ What are the characteristics of individual leaders?

The testimonies that leaders shared with us about both the successes and challenges, the positives and the negatives, and current realities of becoming a leader in Omaha are powerful. Their experiences and reflections urge us to ask how we can make Omaha’s working world a more inclusive environment that inspires young girls to dream and reach success at equal rates to their male peers.

VIEW THE FULL RESEARCH REPORT ONLINE AT
www.OmahaWomensFund.org

THE PARTICIPANTS

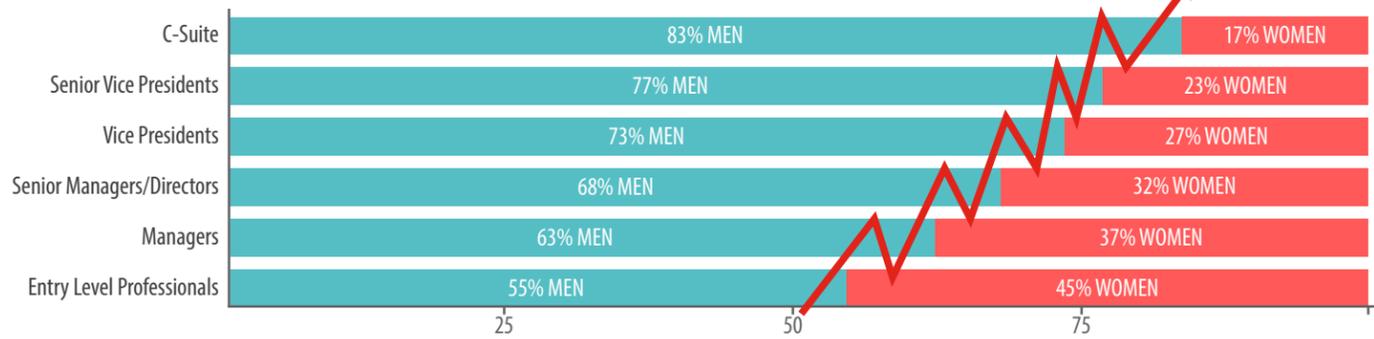
Through 80 in-depth interviews with a wide array of impressive leaders, we tapped into Omaha’s corporate, nonprofit, academic and medical sectors. Here’s a snapshot of the participants in this study:



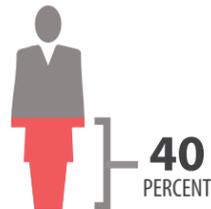
BY NAME		
Deb Anderson	Anthony Hendrickson	Karen Peppmuller
Sheri Andrews	Pam Hernandez	Barbara Person
Patricia Barron	Margaret Hershiser	Donna Polk-Primm
Jack Becker	Laura Hickman, Ph.D	Crystal Rhoades
Lisa Blunt	Mary Higgins	Amy Richardson
Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson	Anne Hindery	Ariel Roblin
Anne Boyle	Audrey Hulsey	Kim Rowell
Chris Bradbury	Sherrye Hutcherson	Connie Ryan
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Linda Burt	Angela Jones	Stacy Scholtz
Lorraine Chang	Gene Klein	Mindy Simon
Senator Tanya Cook	Sue Korth, Ph.D.	Andrea Skolkin
Pat Crisler	Beverly Kracher	Deb Smith-Howell, Ph.D.
Suzanna deBaca	Angeline Larson, MBA	Sergio Sosa
Gail DeBoer	Rodrigo Lopez	Peg Stessman
Michelle Dill	Steve Martin	Maryanne Stevens, RSM, Ph.D.
Sheriff Tim Dunning	Senator John McCollister	Mayor Jean Stothert
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John Ewing	Anne McGuire	Sarah Waldman
Annette Farnan	Kenny McMorris	Shelley Wedergren
Marian Fey	Councilwoman Aimee Melton	Gail Werner Robertson
Ann Finkner	Jane Miller	Mary Wise, Ed.D.
John Fraser	Beth Morrissette	Wendy Wiseman
Karen Goracke	Susan Ogborn	Rosie Zweiback
John Griffiths	Penny Parker	
Peg Harriott	Amy Parks	
Mary Hawkins, Ph.D	Robert Patterson	

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Nationally, women are under-represented at every level in the corporate pipeline. **Disparities increase as level of authority increases.**



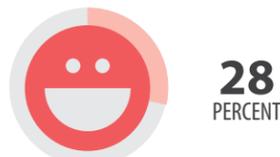
WOMEN AT S&P 500 COMPANIES CURRENTLY HOLD:



40 percent of women in senior management believe their **gender is inhibiting their success** — compared to 11% of men.

National data about women in the workforce can give us clues about why and how leaders in Omaha may encounter and engage with workplace issues in our own community. Just as the leaders we interviewed grow into leadership in the context of Omaha and its culture, so too are they part of the broader national context of women in the workplace. The statistics and numerical exploration of gender-based workplace issues that follow can provide context for the words and thoughts shared by local leaders.

Nationally, women continue to fall behind men in terms of pay equity and leadership. While they make up nearly half of the workforce in the nation's largest corporations, women still hold only a nominal share of executive positions and are also under-represented on Boards of Directors. Because of these low rates of women's participation in leadership, the United States falls short of the world's top ten countries for women in leadership. Additionally, many women still believe that their gender holds them back in the workplace and see little being done to address those barriers.



Only 28% of senior-level women are **VERY HAPPY** with their careers.

The **United States** falls short of the world's top ten countries for women in leadership.

A SNAPSHOT of OMAHA

Local data analysis shows that Omaha is still **far from gender equity in the workplace**, reflecting national trends right here in our community.



In Nebraska, **65 PERCENT** of women participate in the labor force.

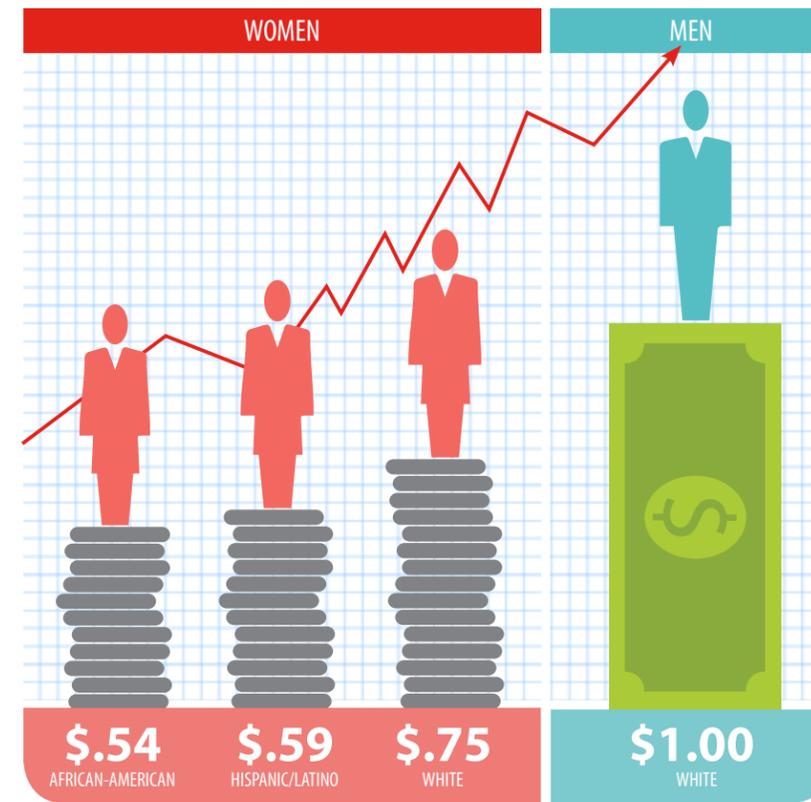
Across all measures, women lag behind their male counterparts in our community.

Median earnings, representation on boards, and occupational representation all suggest that **women in Omaha do not have access to the same opportunities as men.**

MEDIAN INCOME IN OMAHA

MEN	WOMEN
\$40,505 WHITE	\$28,558 WHITE
\$25,132 HISPANIC/LATINO	\$17,385 HISPANIC/LATINO
\$23,133 AFRICAN-AMERICAN	\$21,140 AFRICAN-AMERICAN

THE PAY GAP IN NEBRASKA



WOMEN IN THE BOARD ROOM

While most major corporations have women on their board, men still make up more than 80% of board positions in Omaha.

Company	Board of Directors
Berkshire Hathaway	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Cabela's	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Green Plains	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Mutual of Omaha	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
TD Ameritrade	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Union Pacific	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Valmont Industries	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
Werner Enterprises	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)
West Corporation	10 icons (8 blue, 2 red)

NEBRASKA WOMEN BY OCCUPATION TYPE:



OMAHA'S LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE

The leadership landscape in Omaha reflects a strong base of a few powerful and identifiable individuals and organizations. While the guidance and stewardship of the community is remarkable, the continuing challenge of integrating new leadership—especially for women—has not markedly changed. Women of color and LGBTQ women have faced even greater barriers in becoming leaders. Our research suggests current leaders may unconsciously favor those who they perceive as similar to themselves. As a result, women—particularly women of color—may be overlooked as companies and organizations look to develop, foster, and retain talent.

1 OMAHA'S SMALL, BUT **GENEROUS** LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE

According to participants, a small group of leaders is responsible for an extraordinary number of social, civic and charitable initiatives, in addition to maintaining support for Omaha's nonprofits and foundations.

"Philanthropists have done amazing things. Most of these initiatives have been led by males and have been exclusive to male leadership at the helm—we need more women in these visionary and influential positions."
–Female, Education

However, participants felt that such a small philanthropic and leadership community can restrict robust policy debate and hinders the integration of new voices into prominent leadership roles.

"It's very controlled by a few powerful men...It's a plus and a minus. Some great things have happened because those men did have some foresight for some things for the community, but the bad thing is, it hasn't allowed some, particularly women, to come up and have roles."
–Female, Business

2 A PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL NETWORK DIVIDED BY **GENDER**

Omaha's largely male leadership networks are unwelcoming to women. Since women do not have equal access to the relationship networks central to our community, participants felt that women's pace in seeking leadership roles is frequently delayed.

"I think there's a lot of barriers. The networks that you form. When we don't have women who are included in those networks, that can be a barrier to having a diverse group to make the key decisions for the community."
–Female, Business

Participants encouraged women to intentionally cultivate their own peer networks to help expand their professional learning.

"We've got so many wonderful female leaders in this community. Just continuing to support each other, lift each other up, providing opportunities, and those networking opportunities to continue to expand circles of women who are great leaders, and that we can learn from each other."
–Female, Business

3 **UNEVEN PLAYING FIELD** FOR WOMEN OF COLOR AND LGBTQ WOMEN

There are challenges in inclusion in leadership, specifically in relationship to women of color and LGBTQ women in Omaha.

"I'm here because of some unearned privilege myself, I recognized it. I had people recommend me [because] I reminded them of them...That's what perpetuates gender and lack of ethnic diversity...if you allow that to [continue], then you perpetuate the status quo."
–Male, Business

Women from racial, ethnic and sexual minority groups face compounded barriers to leadership. Many organizations lack appropriate knowledge of disparities between women of color and white women.

"Women of color haven't excelled at the rate that Caucasian women have excelled...I see people put in positions to be representative. Though we are inclusive, they're not in positions that are power positions. [And for] LGBTQ women, it's triple-hard."
–Female, Healthcare

4 FEW HIGH-RANKING FEMALE **ROLE MODELS**

Participants reported that women in Omaha have attained mid-level leadership, but are still not well-represented in top positions.

"My general word that I would use to describe the leadership landscape in Omaha is bleak...there are a lot of female leaders in second and third tier level positions. You'll run into lots of very impressive women on boards and different functions, but really, at those top level seats, I think, there is still a gap."
–Female, Business

According to participants, the lack of female representation in upper leadership means that up and coming female leaders and girls aspiring to careers have few role models.

"Unfortunately, there haven't been a whole lot of people in my life that I can look and say, 'That's it. That's what I want to be like.'"
–Female, Education

IT'S CLEAR: RELATIONSHIPS MATTER IN OMAHA.
But in our community, not all have equal access to beneficial relationships that help them succeed.

National leadership research agrees that building beneficial, reciprocal, and powerful relationships in the work world is of special importance for women in the workplace, but often more challenging than for men. Though women and men often have networks of comparable sizes, their networks are starkly different in gender composition: men have primarily male networks and women have predominantly female or mixed-gender networks.

Considering the fact that more men presently hold high leadership positions, this means that women often have fewer relationships with influential individuals. Indeed, nearly twice as many men as women report multiple senior leaders helped them advance to their positions. The lack of women in leadership compounds the problem, making the task of finding advocates is even more difficult.

Additionally, national data agrees with the barriers the majority of our participants perceived for women of color and LGBTQ women: women of color lack access to powerful, beneficial, and inclusive mentoring relationships at a much higher rate than white women. For instance, 62% of women of color cited a lack of an influential mentor or sponsor as a barrier to advancement compared to 39% of white women.

ACTION STEPS:

- Recognize the losses associated with not having a welcoming and inclusive leadership landscape, with special focus on the informal networks that drive decision-making in Omaha.
- Take steps to eliminate barriers to including all leaders, regardless of gender, in professional networks.

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Participants shared that being a leader takes perseverance and strategy. Much of the strategy involved in being an effective leader in Omaha, they said, was observing and analyzing organizational climate to create a more collaborative, supportive, and inclusive work environment. For our participants, genuine teamwork and collaboration is the key to engagement and investment in a successful workplace environment. Understanding what employees need and expect is part and parcel of this. In particular, participants spoke to the importance of organizations and leaders promoting work-life balance for all employees, regardless of gender. Relatedly, leaders recognized the importance of acknowledging and adjusting to generational differences among workers.

5 LEADERS' RESPONSIBILITY TO DEVELOP FUTURE FEMALE LEADERS

Leaders ought to shape their work environments and networks to better facilitate knowledge transmission and coaching to young female potentials.

"Unless the corporations take some ownership for moving women into those positions, it's going to be really hard to change it here in Omaha."

– Female, Education

Participants saw intentionality in developing up and coming female leaders as a critical aspect of their leadership role.

"We are growing leaders. I consider it a great responsibility, because we have so many female leaders with potential, we have to grow that potential that sometimes gets lost. Let's face it. It's those soft skills that are so important...I'm really, from my part, making a concerted effort to mentor others and to seek those who are able and willing to be mentors."

– Female, Nonprofit

6 THE BEST DECISION MAKING IS COLLABORATIVE

Participants emphasized the importance of a willingness to collaborate, listen, and problem solve with colleagues.

"I'm a huge, huge, huge fan of collaboration and I think having more input [means] seeking out as much information and as many diverse opinions as you can, I always believe [collaboration] makes the solution that much better. You're not always going to agree with everyone's opinions and inputs, but I do believe if you get them and you use them in the evaluation process, again, it makes the company, the organization, whatever we're calling it that much stronger."

– Female, Business

Collaborative decision making leads to more fruitful, productive, and equitable organizational decisions.

7 WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES' SUCCESS

Participants recognized the importance of ensuring that all employees—parents and those without children, those who are partnered and those who are single, straight and LGBTQ individuals, and people of all genders—have the ability to strive for work-life balance.

"I think we have to get to the point where we don't [see] some of these things as women's issues. Child care should not be a woman's issue. Taking care of parents should not be a woman's issue. These are family issues. These are societal issues."

– Female, Nonprofit

Most participants shared that they believed employees, regardless of gender, benefit from flexibility and other methods intended to help attain work-life balance.

"Having the flexibility to make family life a part of all your executives' [lives], so that being away from family is not an expectation to being executive. That shouldn't cut across either gender. If you have that culture that puts families first, so you want your executives to take time off to go to the child's school or pick the child up early and have the flex time to work, then you're empowering both genders. You're setting an example then that it shouldn't hold either behind."

– Male, Business



8 EMERGING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Participants indicated that intergenerational understanding is critical in being able to be an effective leader for a younger generation, and also in staying relevant in a changing professional world.

The generational differences that participants perceived, especially with millennials, largely concern issues of flexibility and work-life balance.

"I think when leaders stop thinking or learning about leading, they stop leading effectively. I personally believe that you have to think about leadership until you're done working because even if your gut is really good, the world changes so quickly...The Millennials are so much different than Gen X that's different than Gen Y. You just have to think about leadership all the time. The world's changing too quickly not to think about leadership in your whole entire career."

– Female, Healthcare

BEING A LEADER IN OUR COMMUNITY REQUIRES VALUING, LISTENING TO, AND LIFTING UP OTHERS.
This can be achieved by emphasizing work-life balance, collaboration, and advocating for young potentials.

Omaha's leaders reflect national trends when it comes to recognizing what it takes to effectively grow and retain talent. Research tells us that while proactivity is indispensable for women's advancement in the workplace, intentionality on the part of current leaders is central to ensuring women's advancement. As our participants told us, current leaders must have specific advancement in goals as they provide women with development opportunities in order to best amplify and grow their potential.

Growing potential, our participants recognized, also means honoring employees' lives outside of the workplace regardless of gender. Research backs this up: men and women report putting an equal amount of emphasis on work and home lives, and also report difficulty balancing work and life at equal rates. As a result, businesses that approach balancing work and home life as a "people" issue rather than an exception for mothers have been shown to have more success in recruiting, retaining, and advancing talented employees of all genders.

In the workplace, our participants recommended a collaborative leadership style that research shows has results. Indeed, collaborative leadership, often more common among female leaders, has proven to be more effective in the workplace. With this in mind, recognizing and valuing a breadth of leadership styles may be advantageous not just for women, but for business as a whole.



ACTION STEPS:

- Evaluate each stage of your professional pipeline (including hiring, promotions, and succession plans) for unconscious bias with special attention to race and ethnicity, gender, and other social identities.
- Construct accountability systems to evaluate and foster the advancement of candidates from non-majority backgrounds.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

While organizational opportunities are critical in growing women's leadership, participants emphasized that individual initiative and strategy are indispensable as women seek to become leaders. Participants recognized that women who hope to become leaders need to be creative and pursue diverse strategies in their pursuit of success. Along this pathway, women are advised to invest in quality, beneficial mentoring relationships. In order to identify beneficial relationships early and combat an observed tendency of women to hold back in the workplace, participants suggested that women and girls ought to be exposed early in life to opportunities that allow them to grow confidence and visualize success.

9 BUILDING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS MATTERS

Participants highlighted the importance and benefits of young professionals seeking guidance from others, and encouraged those of younger generations to pursue mentors and sponsors.

"I think leadership is all about having relationships and having mentors and having people that you can give advice to that can coach you. I don't mean paying for a formal coach. I think if you have relationships that people can get you in the door...I think it's all about relationships and experiences...You can't underscore the importance of getting out there and building relationships."

–Female, Nonprofit

10 WOMEN MAY NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO LEAD

Participants observed that women often need to be asked to lead or encouraged by others to recognize their strengths, and that this may restrict women's ability to advance at equal rates to men.

"You hear that one of the biggest obstacles is that women wait to be asked. I was recruited for both of [my positions]. Someone did come and say to me, 'Would you consider this?' I did. I still think that women oftentimes don't visualize themselves in those positions, positions of leadership unless somebody says, 'Would you consider?' "

– Female, Elected Official

They recommended that aspiring leaders stretch themselves: take on high-profile assignments, run for office, or put themselves forward for a promotion.

"If you just close the door and you say, 'I'm not going to try it,' then you'll never know. You're not challenging yourself. We talked about courage and taking risks and so forth. They have to be calculated risks but don't be afraid to try. If you fail, you fail and have a fall back plan. That always works."

– Female, Elected Official

11 PREPARE GIRLS FOR LEADERSHIP EARLY

Participants viewed early and frequent messages for young women as essential to empowering young women to take leadership roles or career risks.

"I'm a huge supporter of mentoring, coaching and sponsorship and so forth of young women and girls. Girls at any age, but particularly middle school on, can benefit so much from having role models in their lives and champions and people who are willing to give them supportive feedback."

– Female, Elected Official

Specifically, participants emphasized the need to reach young girls with messages about leadership and potential career paths, and to develop specific training opportunities to enforce these concepts.

"I think it's important for us to show the girls their option is for higher education, there are opportunities for different types of jobs and not just jobs that are female dominated. Just really show them that there's no limit to what they can do."

– Female, Nonprofit

12 SUCCESS IS DRIVEN BY HARD WORK AND PREPARATION

Participants reported that successful leaders are proactive in focusing on career goals and identifying how to achieve them.

"It's all about the next step. It's all about what you're going to do next. It's about making sure that you have energy when you're at the top, that you've done everything efficiently and correctly, and you're building up your stamina and your capital."

– Female, Education

Participants felt that aspiring women had to work hard and possibly even harder than their male counterparts. There are no short cuts or substitutions that replace the need for hard work to achieve and maintain successful leadership.

"I just think it just takes some energy, and focus, and want to be in the game. You just want to be there. You want to work, and give 100%."

– Female, Business

13 RESPECT, INTEGRITY, AND VISION MATTER

Integrity, honesty, respect for others and self, and hard work were identified by participants as essential for leadership success in Omaha.

"At the end of the day, when you're done with your leadership, when you're done with your service, what is it that you want to be remembered for? Don't get caught up in the political minutia, don't get caught up in people's positioning and posturing, pressures from outside groups. All of those things happen, what was important to you?"

– Female, Elected Official

BECOMING A LEADER IN OMAHA TAKES DRIVE, PERSISTENCE, INTEGRITY, AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS FROM DAY ONE.

For many women, focus and intentionality are particularly important in seeking success.

As highlighted in Section One, relationships matter in leadership, hence the importance of finding mentors. Having a mentor at the executive level is linked to increased promotions and compensation for women. However, studies suggest that many high-potential women are over-mentored and under-sponsored relative to their male peers and that ongoing mentoring does not completely close the gender gap in terms of advancement and compensation. As a result, best practice models call for an increased emphasis on senior leader sponsorship of promising women.

Empowering women and girls to put themselves forward in leadership is of special importance. Workplace programs that provide individual feedback that reinforces high-performance and builds confidence can empower women to take on more high-profile assignments and leadership positions.

Finally, participants told us leaders are proactive in focusing on career goals and identifying how to achieve them. Each of their suggestions require foresight, planning, and critical self-reflection – all skills that help build the integrity and respect necessary to a strong career.



ACTION STEPS:

- Map out your career trajectory and assess your own skills and experience against that trajectory.
- Make a concrete plan to fill any gaps in your experience or skills, and engage help from both mentors or sponsors.

ACTION STEPS

With the results of our research in mind, we offer the following action steps to our community, organizations, and individuals seeking to lead. These action steps were developed with careful consideration of both the voices of the participants and an extensive review of best business practices. We hope that members of our community view these action steps as both challenges and tools to succeed.



COMMUNITY

- Recognize the losses associated with not having a welcoming and inclusive leadership landscape, with special focus on the informal networks that drive decision-making in Omaha.
- Take steps to eliminate barriers to including all leaders, regardless of gender, in professional networks.

Further resources: "Why Diversity Matters" McKinsey & Company (2015) <http://goo.gl/fxqAEx>



ORGANIZATIONAL

- Evaluate each stage of your professional pipeline (including hiring, promotions, and succession plans) for unconscious bias with special attention to race and ethnicity, gender, and other social identities.
- Construct accountability systems to evaluate and foster the advancement of candidates from non-majority backgrounds.

Further resources: "Optimizing Mentoring Programs for Women of Color" Catalyst (2012) <http://goo.gl/byCjkl>
"Why Diversity Matters" Catalyst (2013) <http://goo.gl/JPMRZP>



INDIVIDUAL

- Map out your career trajectory and assess your own skills and experience against that trajectory.
- Make a concrete plan to fill any gaps in your experience or skills, and engage help from both mentors or sponsors.

Further resources: "Mentoring: Necessary But Insufficient for Advancement" Carter, N.M., & Silva, C. (2010) Catalyst <http://goo.gl/iJFbAx>

We know that we observe the growth in productivity, output, mission adherence, and problem solving when everyone in a community is encouraged to succeed to their highest potential. This is the kind of growth we want to see continue and expand in Omaha.

The power to make Omaha a leader in gender equity in the workplace rests with each of us.



WOMEN'S FUND of OMAHA

The **Women's Fund of Omaha** is dedicated to improving the lives of Omaha-area women and girls. As a trusted expert in the community, we identify critical issues, fund innovative solutions and influence dynamic change. We envision a community where every woman and girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential.

Learn more at www.OmahaWomensFund.org

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