

THE JOURNEY TO THE TOP

CONVERSATIONS WITH
SUCCESSFUL SINGAPOREAN WOMEN



Tripartite
Alliance for
Fair
Employment
Pactices

Executive Summary

Singaporean women have a high literacy rate, are highly educated, and comprise nearly half of the Singapore resident workforce. However, the percentage of women at senior levels within organisations is disproportionately less than men. The “Singapore Board Diversity Report 2012”, a study conducted by National University of Singapore Business School and BoardAgender, revealed that only 7.3 per cent of the 5000 board positions available in Singapore listed companies were held by women in 2011, reflecting a slight increase from 6.9 per cent in 2010¹. Instead of asking why women are not getting up there, we ask women who have successfully navigated their way to the upper echelons of organisations how they got up there. This publication seeks to shed some light on how women can successfully overcome barriers to leadership roles and provide an insight for companies on how they can leverage their female talents and be more gender diverse.

Interviews were conducted with 21 Singaporean senior women leaders to understand their paths to senior leadership positions and the factors that contributed to their rise up the organisational ranks. We found three sets of factors that play a part in this process:

FACTOR #1: SUPPORT FROM THE ORGANISATION

Organisations play a great role in the success of our interviewees. Most of the organisations that our interviewees are working in believe that great talent is not gender-specific. Developmental opportunities were given to our interviewees by way of challenging assignments, training programmes and time to participate in professional associations that are beneficial to both the individual and the organisation; recognition of female talent was seen in a company's tracking of talent even after they leave the organisation, and most importantly, flexibility in work arrangements was given to our interviewees when they needed it most. Several of our interviewees met with family crises during the course of their career, and tensions arose as these women found themselves having to decide between their job and their family. It was due to the flexibility of these organisations that these women managed to get through the crises and continue with their career.

FACTOR #2: SUPPORT OF OTHERS

At work, bosses in particular provided tremendous support for our interviewees. Eighty-five per cent of our interviewees mentioned that they had one or more bosses guiding them in their career, teaching them what they needed to know, and being there for them when needed. Their ex-colleagues too became their friends and mentors, and acted as sounding boards for them when they were faced with career-related decisions. At home, husbands of our married interviewees were their key supporters, and along with parents, parents-in-law, siblings and domestic helpers, form a network to support family needs, especially the raising of children.

FACTOR #3: INDIVIDUAL'S ATTITUDE, RESILIENCE AND SELF-CARE

Finally, while these women themselves claim that they are not Superwoman, they all embody a passion for and dedication to whatever they do. Combined with hard work and a focus on adding value to their organisation, these women also recognise that to go further, they need to take time out to rejuvenate and regenerate.



From these findings, some recommendations for employers and aspiring women leaders were identified:

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Learn how to recognise the value women talent bring to the organisation
2. Take a long-term view of women talent
3. Purposefully foster a culture where women are trusted, motivated, engaged and listened to
4. Review HR policies for gender preference and bias and remove them
5. Develop sponsorship or mentoring programmes and opportunities for women
6. Recognise that women often have more care-giving responsibilities and provide supportive HR policies (such as flexible work arrangements) to help them manage their professional and personal roles
7. Identify and benchmark the policies and programmes against other leading employers
8. Commit to, communicate and build an inclusive workplace culture that is free of gender bias or stereotypes

TIPS FOR ASPIRING WOMAN LEADERS

1. Be clear about your priorities and goals
2. Embrace change and challenges
3. Be confident
4. Review your own stereotype
5. Seek relevant support
6. Build up a network
7. Become a role model that other female employees can identify and emulate
8. Find your own balance between work and life

While this study is limited to Singaporean senior women leaders who have successfully made the climb up the corporate and public service ladder and may not be representative of other profiles of women leaders in Singapore, it nonetheless provides us with a unique insight into what worked for them and what we can learn from their experience.



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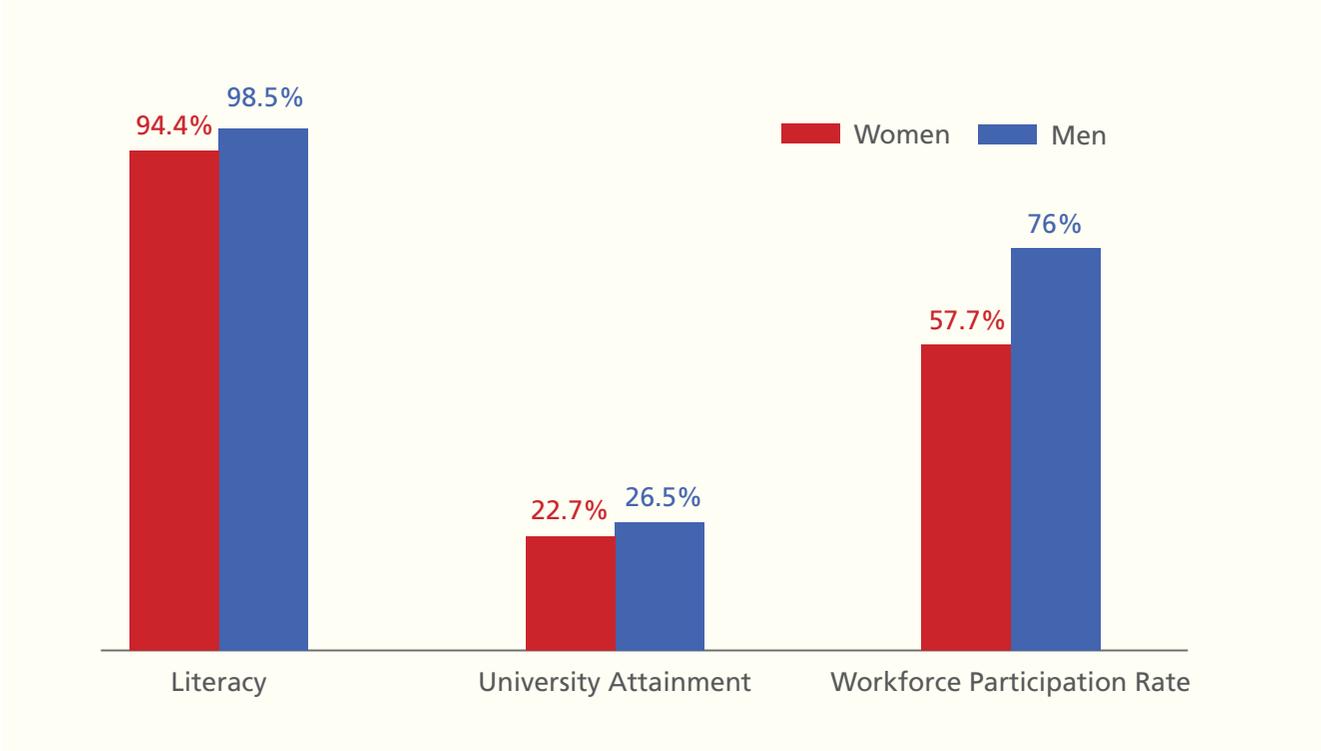


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Section 1: Introduction

Women comprise 44 per cent of the total resident workforce in Singapore as at 2012. Approximately half of these women are in professional, managerial, executive and technician (PMET) roles. In line with national policies of providing equal access to education for both women and men, Singaporean women have literacy rates and university-level education comparable to Singaporean men. Specifically, in 2012, 94.4 per cent of Singaporean women and 98.5 per cent of Singaporean men aged 15 years and above are literate², and in 2011, 22.7 per cent of women and 26.5 per cent of men aged 25 years and above have completed university education³. In spite of this, women’s workforce participation rate is significantly lower than that of men’s (57.7 per cent for women as compared to 76 per cent for men) in 2012⁴.

Figure 1. Comparison of Literacy Rate, University Attainment and Workforce Participation Rate between Singaporean Women and Men

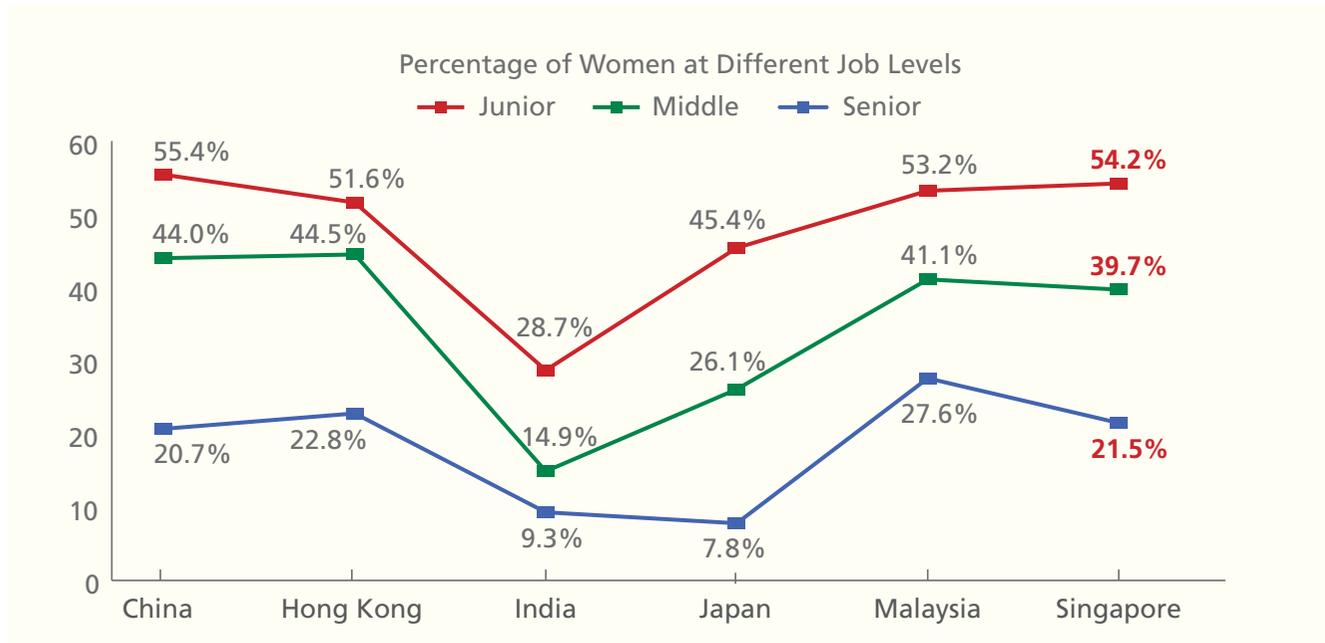


Data Source: Singapore Department of Statistics

In recent years, organisations across Asia have begun to take an increased interest in the employment of women. As the Asian economy booms, organisations are finding that they do not have sufficient leaders to keep up with the rapid pace of growth. Women constitute a pool of untapped talent, especially at the leadership level. In Singapore, according to research by Community Business, although the percentage of women at junior level positions is generally high (comprising 54.2 per cent), it drops drastically in senior level positions to 21.5 per cent⁵. Figure 2 illustrates this trend.



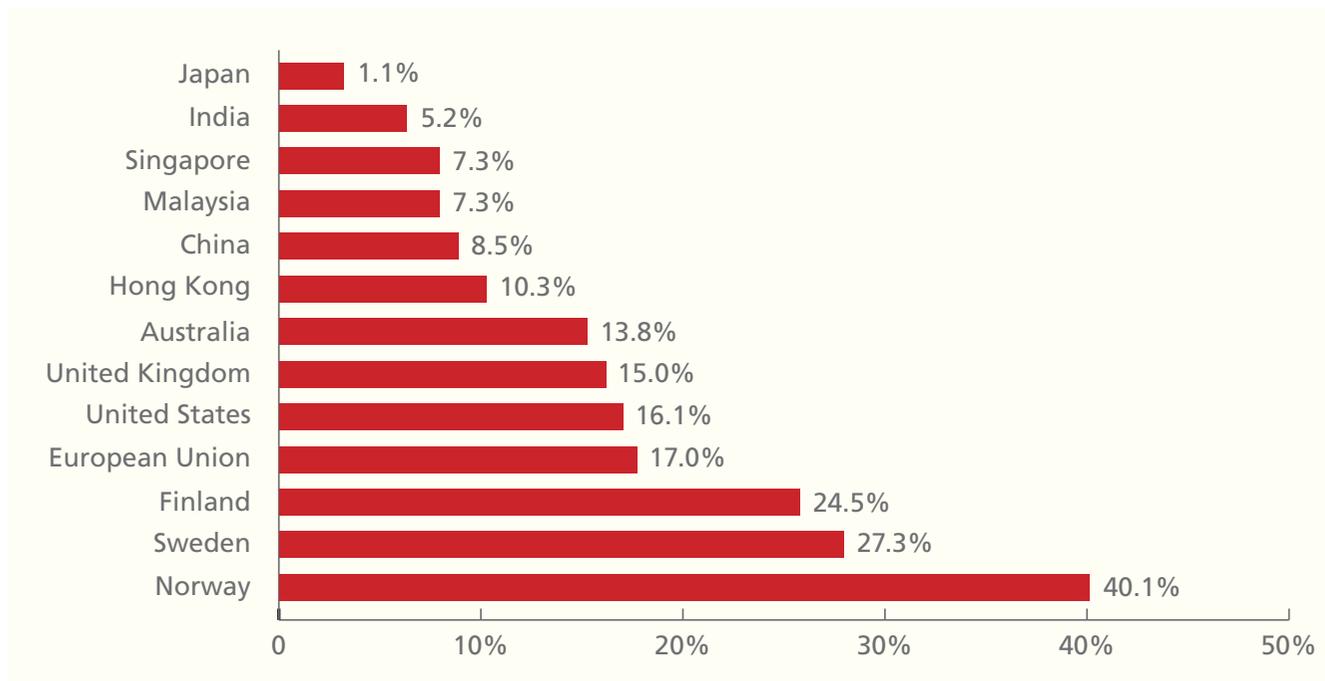
Figure 2. Percentage of Women at Different Job Levels in Various Asian Countries



Data Source: *Community Business 2011*

At the board level, the gender difference in leadership becomes even more significant, with a mere 7.3 per cent of board seats in Singapore-listed companies occupied by women in 2011¹. This is considered to be a fairly low percentage when compared to female representation in boardrooms in other countries in Asia and globally. Figure 3 shows the percentage of females in boardrooms across various countries.

Figure 3. Female Boardroom Representation Globally



Data Source: Figure adapted from *Singapore Board Diversity Report 2012: The Female Factor*.



According to research by Professors Jean Lee, Kathleen Campbell and Audrey Chia, employed Singaporean women face three paradoxes⁶:

Paradox #1:

At the national level, policies encourage high workforce participation rates by females and high reproductive rates.

Paradox #2:

At the societal level, women are expected to contribute to their families financially while being primarily responsible for childcare, eldercare and domestic duties.

Paradox #3:

Despite the increase in women's workforce participation rate and educational levels, their salaries and status still remain lower than that of men.

While the government has in more recent years taken measures to reduce societal expectations of women's responsibility at home by allowing the employment of foreign domestic workers and enacting policies for childcare leave, employed Singaporean women still face challenges resulting from the paradoxes above⁷.

Despite these odds, there are women who managed to achieve a significant level of success in their respective fields and in life. For this study, we interviewed some of these women to find out more about their journey to success.

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research study was conducted with the following objectives:

- 1) To understand the experiences of senior women leaders' journey to leadership
- 2) To identify the factors that contribute to the success of senior women leaders
- 3) To tap on the experience and wisdom of senior women leaders so as to:
 - a. help organisations design appropriate structures and cultures to support the promotion of talented women
 - b. help women get on the path to senior leadership

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Interviews were conducted with 21 Singaporean women who are currently in senior leadership roles. These women were invited to participate based on their seniority within the organisation and their experience within the same and across multiple organisations.

Interviewees were asked questions about their access to senior leadership positions, support, networks and mentors, work-life integration, their organisation's role in facilitating their career development, and general perspectives on women leadership. Interviews were semi-structured so as to allow for a set of common questions for all interviewees and to allow for supplementary questions to be asked depending on the content and context of the interview.

It is to be noted that findings from this report are based on interviews with 21 Singaporean senior women leaders who are working across different industries. While caution was taken to identify interviewees who came from a wide range of industries, job functions and prior experiences, their views and experiences may not fit all profiles of Singaporean women leaders.



1.3 INTERVIEWEES' PROFILE

All the interviewees are Singaporean, female, and are in senior leadership positions within their organisation. Three of the interviewees are single and the other 18 are married with children. The 18 women have approximately one to four children each, with an average of 2 children per woman. The ages of their children range from 3 to 28, with their average age being 17 years.

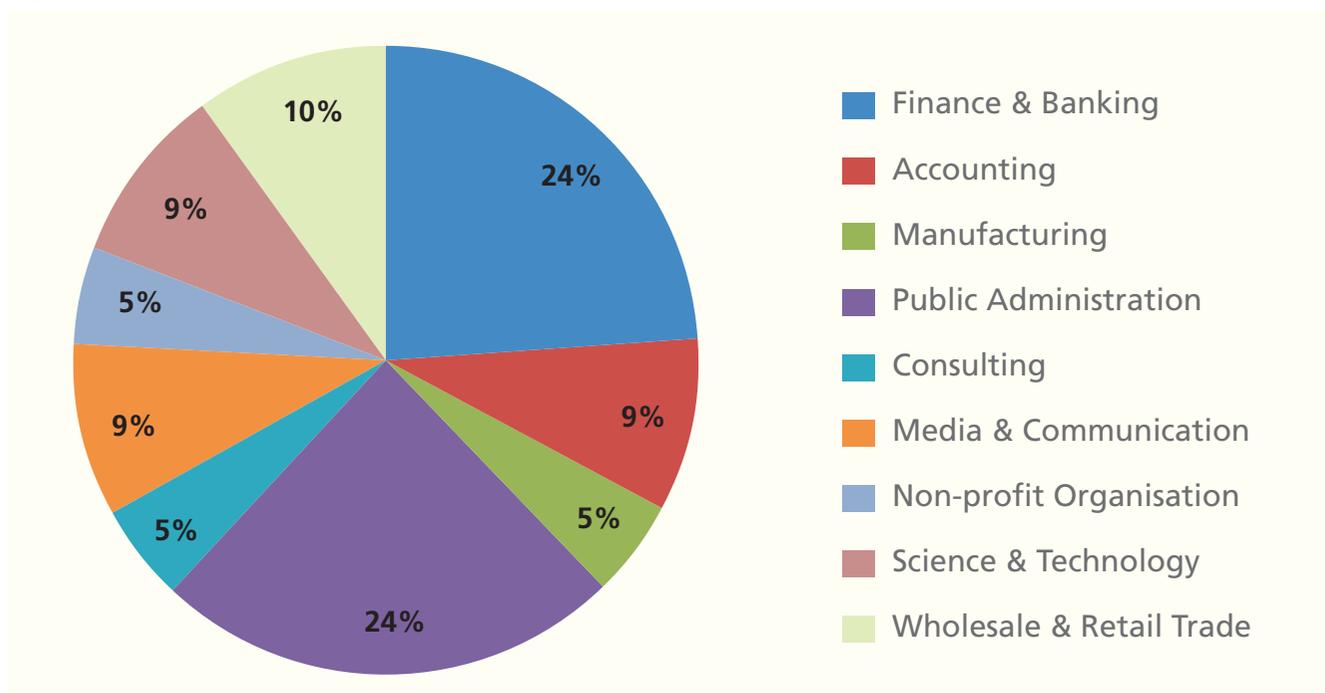
On average, the women we interviewed have worked for approximately 25 years and have worked in the same organisation for approximately 12 years. They are currently working in different industries (see Figure 4). The interviewees have had the experience of working in different functions within the same organisation and/or had prior working experience in other organisations, thus they all represent somewhat unique perspectives.

1.4 ORGANISATION OF THIS REPORT

The next three sections of the report highlight key findings from this study. *Section 2: Experiences as a Singaporean Woman Leader* depicts the common experiences shared by these women leaders and sets the stage for understanding how various factors have contributed to their rise to senior levels. The three broad factors that emerged from our analysis (organisation, other, and self) are enumerated and elaborated in *Section 3: Factors Contributing to Success*. Finally, in *Section 4: Women Reflections*, the interviewees take a step back from sharing about the day-to-day activities that engage them and reflect on their journey and experiences.

The final section of this report, *Section 5: Recommendations*, provides suggestions for organisations to help build an inclusive and meritocratic workplace for the talented women that they have. It also acknowledges the role that women themselves have to play and provide tips for aspiring women leaders to move themselves beyond the boundaries of their own imagination and to get on the path that these successful women leaders had trodden before them.

Figure 4. Distribution of Participants' Industries



Section 2: Experiences as a Singaporean Woman Leader

In this section, we describe the experiences of the senior women leaders whom we interviewed, specifically focusing on their experiences as a woman at work and as a senior leader in Singapore. Understanding their experiences provides the context for the next section, where we distil the factors that contributed to their success.

Three aspects of their experiences are highlighted in this section:

- 2.1 The roles women leaders play
- 2.2 Being a woman at work
- 2.3 Challenges encountered

2.1 ROLES WOMEN PLAY

One will be amazed at the many hats that our interviewees wear in life. At work, all of our interviewees are senior leaders and some take on official mentoring roles as well. At home, 86 per cent of our interviewees are married with children, and have the responsibility of taking care of their family. For those who are unmarried, most of them are also responsible for helping to support their parents and siblings. In addition, some of them also take time out to contribute to society by volunteering at various associations and sitting on boards of various non-profit organisations and committees. Figure 5 shows a graphic representation of the roles undertaken by our interviewees.



Figure 5. Roles undertaken by our interviewees



2.1.1 DEDICATION TO THE FAMILY

While men may also have multiple roles to play in life, women are generally expected to bear more of the family responsibilities (Paradox #2). In fact, through our conversations with our married interviewees, most of them emphasise how important their family is to them, and how as a woman, family should come first.

“I am a mother first, and a banker second.”

Patricia Quek

“Between my job and my family, there was no question in my mind that my family came first.”

Agnes Liew

Several of our interviewees have also gone through crisis moments in their family when their child took ill or encountered problems. In each of those moments, they had been willing to sacrifice their career for their children. For instance, one of our interviewees quit her job just after she took up a new role that she had asked for, in order to spend time with her young daughter who was not able to adjust to a new caregiver. Other interviewees whose children fell ill also made the decision to put family first.



“When there’s a sick member in my family, I think I’ll be mad if I were to say my work comes first.”

Lim Soo Hoon

Even though most of our interviewees did not end up quitting their jobs because they had understanding supervisors and were working in organisations that had flexible work policies, they did make that conscious choice to give their family priority when crises occurred and it did not occur to them that their husbands should be the one leaving their jobs to look after the family.

More discussion on how the organisations supported our interviewees can be found in Section 3.1.

2.1.2 DEDICATION TO THE WORK

Notwithstanding their dedication to their family, our interviewees are also extremely dedicated to their work. They not only work long hours, but some also have to travel frequently for work purposes.

“I travel 3-4 days a week ... around the entire Asia. I can describe to you what happened last week. I flew to Mumbai on Sunday night, I stayed in Mumbai on Monday and Tuesday, I took Tuesday overnight flight through Hong Kong to Beijing, I stayed Wednesday in Beijing and took another overnight flight from Beijing back to Singapore and then, I would be going to Jakarta the next day. I mean, I travel 3-4 countries a week.”

Jessica Tan



With globalisation and the advent of technology, work is also seldom confined to nine-to-five and in the workplace. Some of our interviewees shared that quite often they will continue working late into the night after spending time with their family or waking up early in the morning to get some work done before they head to the office. Some others just spend long hours at work.

“A typical workday for me starts at 8:30am in the morning. I oversee all the sites in Asia in my position as Group Human Resources Director until they close at about six, and thereafter I shift my focus to the European sites, including communicating with Corporate. Thereafter, I hit the gym for a workout before returning home to my family for dinner together. If necessary, I then continue my work at home.”

Jessica Leong

Even when their children are not feeling well, they still do their best to keep up with the work and find pockets of time to continue working.

“I took leave when my son had to go for treatment and I had to accompany him but I actually telecommunicated from hospital when I was there just to accompany him. One day, my son saw me without my notebook and asked, ‘Mum, have you lost your job?’ and I asked, ‘Why do you say that? I’m on leave!’ He said, ‘Oh, because as far as I can remember, Mum, you are always working...’”

Lim Soo Hoon



2.1.3 DEDICATION TO THE SOCIETY

Already swamped by the demands of work and family, some of our interviewees still find time to contribute to society, be it volunteering at schools, helping out in religious organisations or being part of professional associations. You can see the extent of their involvement in *Annex – Women Leaders' Contribution To The Society: A List Of External Memberships* on page 33. This finding is not surprising because studies have found that when investments are made in women, these women not only help themselves but also extend help to others around them.⁸ Whatever roles our interviewees play in their lives, it seems they do it with passion and commitment.

2.2 BEING A WOMAN AT WORK

About half of our interviewees reported that gender was not a salient factor in their career experience and that organisations in Singapore are “gender-blind”. Several of them mentioned that the gender equality in Singapore is so pervasive that they did not even notice that they are different from their peers even when they are the only woman in the boardroom or in the senior management team.

“I think the public sector is quite gender-blind in that sense.”

Mrs. Choo Lee See

“...being a female has never crossed my mind. I don't do anything, go into any meeting, or undertake any position thinking that I'm a woman... every day that I work, it has never crossed my mind that I'm a woman.”

Agnes Liew

“I guess in Singapore, we are very fortunate, I've never seen my gender as a barrier in any way.”

Debra Soon

However, while these women leaders do not see gender as playing a key role at work, the gender difference is sometimes pointed out by others or highlighted by environmental factors such as organisational policies and culture.

“And sometimes, people just point it out to me and say, ‘Do you realise that you are the only woman in the room?’”

Agnes Liew

“...in (my previous) work, I never was conscious of the fact that I'm a woman leader. Never. There wasn't a place or a context where I needed to remember I'm a woman, never. But in this work, yes. It's a very male-dominated sector that I'm in, and then my being a woman is something in my consciousness.”

Moliah Hashim

Interestingly, sometimes it is not the male colleagues who think that women are the weaker sex; some women feel that way as well. One of our interviewees recalled an incident when she was promoted into a senior leadership position. At that time, another senior woman leader came to her and said,

“Are you sure you're not a token?’ I was quite shocked that here, it was not a man who asked me that question; it was a woman. So why do women run women down? Why do women have so little faith in ourselves?”

Lim Soo Hoon

In short, while most of our interviewees do not feel that being a woman hindered their chances at success in Singapore, some of them have encountered experiences suggesting that stereotypes and unconscious biases still linger in organisations and in the society today.



2.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Given the multiple roles that these women play and societal stereotypes, it is no surprise that being a woman leader and becoming a woman leader have its fair share of challenges. While not all of our interviewees mentioned challenges specific to women, two critical challenges emerged from the stories that they shared:

2.3.1 CHALLENGE #1: SURVIVAL IN A MALE-DOMINATED WORLD

The first of these challenges is survival in a male-dominated industry and a male-dominated world. While most of the women interviewed do not think that there is any formal gender discrimination in the organisations that they work for, and do not think that men and women are different, there are subtle forms of gender bias that affect a woman's career progression.

One example is the way we talk. According to research by Deborah Tannen, men and women communicate differently.⁹ Men tend to speak in a more aggressive way and women tend to use more tentative language. Her analysis of meeting notes yielded findings that suggest that even though it might be a woman who first suggested a good idea and a man repeats that idea subsequently, it is the man whom people give the credit to. This finding also emerged from our research. For instance, one of our interviewees mentioned that she had to learn to speak men's language because that is the only way that she can get heard.



Another example that was mentioned by several of our interviewees is the old boys' network. These interviewees shared their observation that men tend to be more comfortable socialising with other men outside of work, and their tendency to form an elitist group with other men. One of our interviewees also observed that male colleagues would restrict their topic of discussion when a woman is around. This is challenging for women if they are keen to progress in their career because it is through these informal activities that critical information is shared. If women are kept out of these networks, they are then put at a disadvantage.

“Men sometimes go out for a few drinks after work and they tend to only call men along because it's easier to chat amongst men. And so the women would be disadvantaged in terms of after-work relationship-building because the connection that you build through those networks, and the sponsorship that you might get out of those networks, is often valued.”

Thio Chin Loo

In addition, men and women are perceived differently at the workplace (whether consciously or subconsciously). One of our interviewees mentioned that women have to work doubly hard in order to be recognised for their performance. She cited the following example:

“...how often I've heard this point that men are often promoted on potential whereas women will always be looked at on your past performance. People would look at men and say 'If we give him the posting in China, he will make the market for us' and toward women, 'Oh, but she's only been looking after HR. You think she can go to China and open our office there and be the general manager?'”

Ana Dhoraisingam



To overcome these challenges, our interviewees employ different approaches.

1) Do What The Men Do

Some take the initiative to manage these challenges, for instance, by proving that they can also do what men do.

“I try not to play up the difference between genders. When I first started, I climbed up the cranes, 10-storey high, just like the men would do, basically to show that I’m here to do my job; you don’t have to treat me specially, differently, just because I’m a woman.”

Grace Fu

2) Ignore and Work Hard

Some simply ignore the challenges and focus on working hard. As one of our interviewees put it:

“I don’t manage that. I know that women are disadvantaged in certain aspects but how I make up for that is through my work. I deliver a good work performance, I deliver very credible advice, and then I present myself as a good worker and as a good team player.”

Thio Chin Loo

3) Leverage on Women’s Strengths

Some leverage on their strengths as a woman and show that the male way of doing things may not be the only way, and that other ways of leading may be equally successful, if not better.

“I should be able to express and celebrate who I am as a person - so I can bring the best of me to the workplace and to the people I encounter.”

Aileen Tan

“I feel that as women, we have the advantage; we are so blessed with the skill of being able to see and communicate and understand things at different levels.”

Mrs. Mildred Tan

2.3.2 CHALLENGE #2: MANAGING WORK AND LIFE

As women progress in their career, another key challenge is that of managing their work and family. Despite Singapore’s rapid advancement as a society, the traditional notion of a woman being the primary caregiver for the family is still widely prevalent. Men often expect it, and many women themselves feel obligated to take on more of that role at home. Because of that, a woman who wants to have a good career often ends up having to choose one over the other.

“I think our society is such that a woman is still expected to play more of that family role than man.”

Lim Soo Hoon

According to several of our interviewees, at least half of the capable women they know have left their jobs to stay home and look after their family. Those who choose to stay face moments of struggle in which they have to select their priorities at different stages of their career and manage the time they have for work and family.

“... my son’s illness taught me that certain things in life cannot wait... But of course, something gives: your career must be set aside, and you must be prepared for that...”

Lim Soo Hoon

“I decided not to advance to a more senior role ‘cause I didn’t want that work-life balance to be skewed towards more work and no life, as in family life.”

Thio Chin Loo



In addition to work and family, women also need time for themselves. Having some personal time is important for women leaders to recharge themselves before going back to the “battle field”. When they take care of themselves, they are able to take care of others. The hobby outside of work also brings them satisfaction and meaning of life. As mentioned by one of our interviewees:

“It’s my tai-chi, I practice a lot on it and I go for competitions. It’s one of those things which is a “me” thing because I do it for myself. It’s something that drives me and it’s something that I can see myself progressing more and more in it. It’s one of those things that I feel fulfilled because I do it well.”

Poh Mui Hoon

Many often say that you can’t have your cake and eat it, but these women whom we interviewed seem to be able to do just that! Despite the challenges and struggles managing between work, family and their own hobbies, they actually manage to be successful career women and mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and friends.

To make that happen, we discovered that majority of them have built very good support networks comprising of domestic helpers, in-laws, parents, friends and husbands. Those who are married tend to have good help at home. Besides having parents and in-laws to help tend to their children especially when the kids were young, quite a number of these women have domestic helpers who have stayed with them for a long time. One of our interviewees mentioned that her domestic helper even helps her select her outfits for work.

“In earlier years, when the job called for me to travel frequently and the children were younger, my mother and mother-in-law often supported me by helping to take care of the children when I had to be away.”

Jessica Leong

“... If I don’t have a great domestic helper, I won’t be able to work. She has been with me for the last 20 years.”

Deborah Ong

Husbands were also cited as being a very critical part of this support network. Many women acknowledge that they would not have been able to manage work and family if their husbands had not been supportive and understanding.

“I think I couldn’t do what I do without two people. The first is my husband, and the second is my mother, especially during my early years.”

Mrs. Mildred Tan

Coupled with a strong support network, these women are effective time managers too. They are very clear about their priorities at any point in time and allocate their time accordingly. Majority of these women have clearly defined boundaries between work time, family time and time for themselves (me-time).

For example, one of our interviewees focuses intensely on work during office hours and spends non-office hours on weekdays with family. Saturday is me-time for her and Sunday is then once again family day. Another of our interviewees chose to allocate her time among all three on a daily basis. She also effectively utilises her time by killing two birds with one stone by offering to drive her children to and from school, she uses that time to get to know them better.

Section 3: Factors Contributing to Success

From the interviews, we found three sets of factors that contributed to the success of these women leaders (a) support from the organisation, (b) support of others, and (c) individual's strength, resolve and self-care.

3.1 SUPPORT FROM THE ORGANISATION

Organisations play a great role in facilitating the advancement of women to senior leadership positions. To begin with, these organisations have an organisational climate that recognises talent regardless of the individual's gender. These organisations also take active steps in investing in these talent (e.g. through training or allowing participation in professional networks), in providing them with the flexibility of time to take care of their personal needs, and in tracking talent even after they leave the organisation.

3.1.1 INVEST IN TALENT

Several of these women interviewees shared that the organisations in which they are currently working in or worked for previously invested heavily in people. This investment typically comes in the form of training, developmental opportunities and support to participate in professional networks and associations.

3.1.1.1 TRAINING

Training was provided to these women leaders as a way to upgrade their skills and to broaden their minds. Some of these organisations make it mandatory for employees to spend a certain number of hours per year on training, and one of our interviewees mentioned that she was even sent to the United States to attend a leadership course.

“In our organisation, we believe in what we call a 70-20-10 rule, that means 70% on-the-job training, 20% career coaching or mentoring, and 10% classroom training. New graduates who join us get up to about 200 hours of technical training, then from the second year onwards, it may be 120 hours. Everybody gets at least 60-80 hours of training. However, this should not be seen in isolation.”

Deborah Ong

3.1.1.2 DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

The women leaders we interviewed were also given multiple opportunities to grow and develop themselves, through challenging assignments and bigger roles. Some were offered opportunities to take on a different portfolio or a larger portfolio within the same organisation, while others asked for these opportunities and were granted their wish.

What we learnt from 40 years of research by Center for Creative Leadership is that leadership development follows the 70-20-10 rule, whereby 70 per cent of leadership development is gained through challenging assignments, 20 per cent through developmental relationships, and 10 per cent through training.¹⁰ Developmental opportunities such as stretch assignments, increase in job scope and horizontal/vertical moves are thus critical to the development of leaders.¹⁰





3.1.1.3 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP

As mentioned in Section 2.1.3, most of the senior leaders whom we interviewed are part of professional associations and some of them sit on various boards of organisations. While many of our interviewees take up these external memberships because they see the value-add that they can bring to women, their profession, their industry and society; these memberships also potentially benefit their careers.

Memberships in industry-specific professional associations (such as Financial Women's Association and Singapore Retailer's Association) afford women leaders the opportunity to network and meet people from the same industry or profession. On the other hand, board memberships and memberships in other non-industry-specific professional associations (such as BoardAgender and World Presidents' Organisation) connect these senior women leaders to others who are not from the same industry or profession. These networking opportunities provide them with contacts and information that aid in their work or career development. In addition, some professional associations hold events and courses for members, giving them the opportunity to acquire skills that are useful at the workplace.

The organisations that our interviewees work for recognise that these external memberships are beneficial to both their employees' careers and the organisation. They provide support for these memberships and the flexibility that their employees need to attend the events and meetings as most of them are held during office hours. Some organisations even sign up as corporate members and provide meeting rooms or sponsor food for these events.

3.1.2 PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY

Many of our interviewees shared with us that the organisations that they work in provide them with a fair amount of flexibility. Options are available for them to work from home or anywhere else (depending on the kind of work they do), they are given time off to take care of personal matters, and one of the organisations even allowed for a change in job scope to accommodate their personal needs. We term this "holistic employment" -- employment in which organisations view their employees as human beings with both personal and career needs and not simply as resources for the company.

3.1.3 TRACK TALENT

Besides recognising and investing in talent, a handful of these organisations also keep track of their talent even after they leave the organisation. One of our interviewees recounted how she left and returned to the organisation twice and how, each time, they welcomed her back with open arms:

"I would say that (the company I work for) has always been very receptive and with a very open mind-set, they really went out of the way and try and retain the people that they want to retain."

Agnes Liew

Given all the factors that have seemingly contributed to these women's success, it is not to say that these women have not met with failure or negative situations in their lives. They simply know when it is time to move on. As many of our interviewees shared, 'All of us go through phases in our lives.' During some phases, the priority has to be family, and in some other phases, the priority has to be work. It is about how you balance your priorities during each phase of your life.



Many have struggled and there were critical points in their lives when they almost gave up on their career. That is why having an understanding boss, supportive people around them, and an organisational culture that views employees as human beings and not simply as resources to be used is definitely helpful.

“Ultimately, it’s about being happy, it’s about choices. If you are at home, enjoy it, if at work, enjoy it. You have to be happy with yourself; you have to be at peace with yourself.”

Mrs. Mildred Tan

3.2 SUPPORT OF OTHERS

3.2.1 MENTORS AND SPONSORS

Through the interviews, we also discovered that even though hard work and performance are important factors for success, many of these women also had someone in a senior position who identified them as having the potential to go further. These senior leaders planted a seed in their head that they have what it takes, encouraged them to reach greater heights, and provided tremendous support.



“When I was pregnant with my first child, I wanted to quit because I didn’t think that I could travel that much anymore but my mentor encouraged me to rethink it. He immediately put me in Singapore for the rest of my pregnancy and gave me flexibility to try and figure out and then helped me see the possibility of changing things so that I can do both what I love on the job and also still keep my family commitment. I have now been a consultant for 12 years with two young daughters.”

Jessica Tan

Many of these senior leaders also actively took steps to introduce these women to people who are critical for their career advancement and create career opportunities for them. Some interviewees refer to them as “mentors” while others refer to them as “sponsors”. Mentors and sponsors play a significant role in women’s career development; they take accountability and create opportunities for junior talent, push them and try to maximise their potential.¹¹

“Having the right mentors is really critical. They could be women mentors, they could be male mentors. I’ve had male and female mentors throughout my life and I think they give you a greater sense of balance, they give you the guidance, they help nurture you and harness that potential in you.”

Farah Rahim



3.2.2 FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Many of these women mention that the people in their lives are often a great source of support for them. When they are down or upset, they can turn to their trusted friends and family for comfort; and when they encounter problems or difficult decisions, they can count on their friends and family to give them good advice.

“... they (my family) have helped me balance my life. I won't say they have helped me in my career specifically but they have definitely helped me balance my life in terms of giving me support so I can do my career well. Yes they have.”

Debra Soon

“The first one that (encouraged me) was my husband. He always believed that, if someone asked you to do something, he must see the value-add you could bring. So I should fight the monkey on my back. ‘Why do you think you are not credible? Why do you think you can't do this?’”

Moliah Hashim

Whether they are married with children, married without children, or single, the support of family members and good friends make a difference.



3.3 INDIVIDUAL'S STRENGTH, RESOLVE AND SELF-CARE

Unlike what many would imagine women at the top to be, these women hardly show signs of ambition or aggression. For most of the women we interviewed, thirst for power and hunger for material wealth does not seem to be the main driving force behind their rise in the organisation. As said by one of the interviewees: “For me, success is not about how thin the air is.” For many, they simply focused on doing the best they can. Most of them said that they did not plan or expect to be in a senior leadership role, but when the opportunities for bigger roles came along, they made the decision to take up the challenge.

“I think to me, money isn't everything. In a way, personally, I'm a very much self-driven kind of person.”

Ana Dhoraisingam

“It's about passionate, and it's about the passion you see in your job, which keeps you happy.”

Debra Soon

Of course, this does not mean that they simply buried their head in hard work, waiting to be recognised. They exude a certain passion and dedication to their work and believe in making a difference and adding value to the organisation that they are in. As one of our interviewees said:

“What drives me is really to make a difference. I like making differences and seeing things happen.”

Woo Kwai Merng

They are passionate about the work and driven to walk the extra miles; they believe that their work matters and commit themselves to the goals; they see themselves as contributors and team players who can help the organisation to go further. These characteristics probably are what distinguish them from the others.

Section 4: Women Reflections

We asked our interviewees to reflect on some of the issues that we had just discussed, and to provide some advice for women who are working toward a senior leadership position. This section presents their reflections on the difference between men and women, and their nuggets of wisdom.

4.1 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Even though most of the interviewees feel that there is no gender discrimination in Singapore and women compete fairly against men, they do recognise that men and women have different qualities, working styles and leadership styles.

First of all, our interviewees recognise that women are usually physically weaker than men, but they feel that that is not a big problem in the workplace, where the intellectual and mental strengths are more important for success. Moreover, Singapore has shifted to become a service economy. In such an economy, it becomes easier for a woman to compete fairly with men.

Our interviewees also mentioned that women are generally more emotional than men, which may be positive or negative. On the negative side, women may be at a disadvantage when emotions get in the way of dealing with negative situations.

“I find as a woman, generally, even if we are high on IQ or EQ, there are not that many tough women I have seen who can deal with the failures, deal with the challenges of tough businesses, tough decisions and things like that.”

Ana Dhoraisingam

However, on the positive side, being emotional also means that women leaders can be more empathetic and relationship-oriented, which are important qualities for effective leaders¹². Moreover, while emotions in the workplace were a big no-no decades ago, it has since been recognised as an essential component of working life. It is important to leverage the positive emotions and manage the negative ones. The right emotions can spur someone to get very far ahead in the workplace.

Career women may have learnt that they need to be assertive in the workplace. However, they also have this “nice girl” in them, i.e., they are sensitive to others’ needs; they also cherish long and deep relationships. Women leaders are not only collaborative team players; they are also able to effectively bring teams together.

“Women are usually... more sensitive to ... interpersonal relationships and they are probably more observant in terms of being able to pick up on whether there are tensions among colleagues or supervisors.”

Mrs. Choo Lee See

“By-and-large, I think most women tend to be more team players and tend to want to promote the team as a whole. And not take the credit for themselves only. So I think that’s probably one of the key differences between men and women in terms of leadership.”

Thio Chin Loo

In addition, a woman’s feminine quality is related to their roles in the family domain. It may be an advantage that women can leverage, as it is very easy for them to initiate a conversation with anyone about their family.



“Men, I think equally have unique things that they can leverage on; they can take clients out and go golfing. We seldom do that. But for women, it’s very easy to take them out for a lunch and talk about their families too since most men don’t talk about families.”

Jessica Tan

Moreover, some interviewees also shared with us how their mind-set and behaviours at home influence their attitude and behaviours in the office. Several women leaders told us that they treat their colleagues like family members and enjoy cooking, baking, and bringing food for them. They also believe that there are similarities between leading subordinates and educating children. For example, an interviewee told us that as a mother, she would do the best for her children and adjust the parenting style based on their developmental stages. Such philosophy is brought to the workplace and impacts how she nurtures and trains her employees.

Men and women have different ways of thinking. For example, one interviewee mentioned how different men and women can be when looking at the same financial report. For instance, men are likely to ask questions such as: “What is the profitability of this? What is gross margin? What are some of the resources? What’s the utilisation of resources?” On the contrary, women may ask: “Are we doing well? How are the people?” “Men and women are wired differently,” she said. Other interviewees also expressed their opinion that men are task-oriented and logical in thinking; they tend to focus on the big picture and think conceptually. Women, on the contrary, may go more into the details. Also, men seem to be more risk-oriented than women.

“I think men are riskier animals than women. They are more adventurous and they are more risky and ... I think their risk appetite is higher than women...”

Carol Yong

Some interviewees also pointed out that women have some strengths compared to men. For example, they mentioned that men tend to have bigger egos, while it is easier for women to say “sorry” or “I don’t know”. Moreover, women have learnt to “speak the male’s language” to survive in such a male-dominated world; they are also able to wear their female hat and have a different perspective.

It is important for women to understand the gender differences in terms of attitude, perceptions, behaviours and the ways of working. Investing some time in understanding the men’s world will help women to “carry out themselves correctly” in the workplace and benefit their career advancement.

“If you don’t invest enough time to understand how the men see things and the men’s world, you’re still operating in the women’s world so your behaviour and way you act... is quite alright in the women’s world but in the men’s world, the way they think and the way they see things are different...”

Carol Yong

However, our interviewees also qualify that there are men and women who do not conform to these general descriptions of behaviours as well. So, instead of commenting that one style is better than the other, our interviewees see the value in different styles at different points in time and encourage women to embrace both the positive characteristics of men’s style and leverage on their strengths as women.



4.2 ADVICE FOR ASPIRING WOMEN

We asked these senior women leaders to give advice to women who are aspiring to senior leadership positions. They reflected on their journey and shared the following nuggets of wisdom.

4.2.1 WISDOM AS A LEADER

As senior leaders, our interviewees all have an excellent track record in their resume. Besides hard work, there are other “secrets” to success as well. They shared them with us below:

First of all, attitude is the key. One needs to have passion on her job and love what she does:

“I truly believe in it. If you enjoy what you do, you just wanna do it every day; you just want to keep improving in that.”

Thio Chin Loo

Second, women need to be more confident and overcome the fear in them. In one interviewee’s office hang James Dean’s photo and his famous quote: “Dream as if you live forever and live as if you die today”. The interviewee told us that after several life incidences, she realised that life is too short to wait for the “right timing”.

Another interviewee also advised women to seize the opportunities and be the trend setter:

“So, I would say, don’t worry so much about prejudice, opportunities are not there etc. I think very often, the opportunities are meant for you to create, for you to go seek them out and once you know..... go be a trend setter.”

Low Peck Kem

Seizing opportunities also means that you should take some risks:

“Sometimes, you don’t have to be that great; you don’t have to make sure that all ducks are in one row. Roughly, you know, take some risk and go.”

Poh Mui Hoon

When things go wrong, the resiliency to deal with the adversity is extremely important. An interviewee shared her opinion on dealing with setbacks in life:

“Adversity comes in different ways... you have to be able to deal with those things without letting it get to you by being very unemotional about it.”

Ana Dhoraingam

Third, our interviewees have arrived at the current position step by step, by continuously bringing value to the team. One must first know what she can bring to the team and continue to add value to the team:

“You have to be true to what you do and what you say you do and what you say you’re capable of.”

Moliah Hashim

Also, in modern organisations, little can be achieved by a single person. To succeed, team spirit is necessary:

“Be a team player... It’s important to reciprocate, not taking from others all the time. It’s also important to treat everyone well...”

Patricia Quek



Success does not happen overnight. One needs to be persistent in developing both technical skills and leadership competencies. While long-term planning is important, one should also pay attention to the present and do well at every single stage.

“If you want to grow in your career, you probably have to be committed to building blocks. For me, the building blocks would not be just technical skills, but managerial skills such as planning, delegating and motivating teams.”

Deborah Ong

4.2.2 WISDOM AS A WOMAN

As women, these interviewees play multiple roles in life. For women, family is a very important part of life. For most of our interviewees, being a wife and mother is not an extra burden but a source of happiness.

“The biggest, the strongest piece of advice I would give is, particularly to women... your family is the most important, you can change your job, but you cannot change your family. For me, it’s my personal belief.”

Agnes Liew

But of course, it is never easy to keep the balance. An interviewee advised:

“Don’t be idealistic... In order to juggle multiple roles, sometimes you have to live with some untidiness or imperfections... Sometimes let it go a bit and sometimes, you have to take a bit of risk and trust that things will turn out well.”

Grace Fu

Also, another interviewee emphasised the advantage of being a woman and advised young women to use them and “never say that you have no choice”!

“I tell young people that being a woman comes with many gifts... young women must value and treasure those gifts. Use them!”

Aileen Tan

4.2.3 WISDOM AS A HUMAN BEING

These women leaders are also human beings; they face the problems that every human being may encounter. Many of the interviewees mentioned that self-awareness is very important. One should know what she wants from life, what makes her happy, and what makes her life meaningful.

“Never aspire to the C-suite because you want power; aspire to that because you feel that you believe in that mission and you can contribute and add value to it.”

Sharon Craggs

Finally, health is also very important. A healthy body is the best gift to the family. Nowadays, employees are vulnerable to a lot of stress, so one should really take care of health so that they are able to work hard, contribute to their organisation, and advance her career. Our interviewees told us that healthy leaders make better leaders and emphasised the importance of taking care of health. Having adequate sleep, eating the right food and exercising all increase cognitive functioning and better moods, contributing to not only a better quality of life for the leader but people around them as well.¹³

Section 5: Recommendations

It has been a wonderful experience talking to these senior women leaders and listening to their stories and experiences. They are talented, successful and happy. We could not help but ask how can we have more women like them? In this section, we attempt to provide some tips for both organisations and aspiring women leaders.

5.1 TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Based on the interviews, we distilled some of the good practices that employers engage in to provide an environment that is conducive for the incubation and development of women talent. Below are 8 key practices:

5.1.1 RECOGNISE THE VALUE WOMEN TALENT BRING

First and foremost, employers should recognise the value that women talent bring to the organisation. Singaporean women have a very high literacy rate of 94.1 per cent² (almost as high as Singaporean men who have a literacy rate of 98.1 per cent). The percentage of Singaporean women who have undergone tertiary education is also comparable to Singaporean men. These suggest that women are as competent as men.

Besides formal education levels, women and men bring different perspectives to the workplace and have different ways of leading. As mentioned in Section 4.1, while there are differences between men and women, the diversity in perspectives is beneficial to organisations, especially at the senior levels where critical decisions are being made. Different types of situations and climates in the workplace may also call for different types of leadership styles. Thus, having a good mix of women and men in an organisation is critical to the enhancement of an organisation's performance.

5.1.2 TAKE A LONG-TERM VIEW OF WOMEN TALENT

Employers should have a long-term view of women talent. As one of the interviewees pointed out, if an employer really sees talent in a woman and intends to invest in her in the next 20-30 years, a one-year break (during her pregnancy) should not be considered as a barrier to her career advancement.

5.1.3 PURPOSEFULLY FOSTER A CULTURE CONDUCTIVE FOR WOMEN

Simply recognising the value that women can bring to the organisation is insufficient, it is critical that employers purposefully foster a culture where women are trusted, motivated, engaged, and listened to. Our research has shown that building trust between employees and their bosses may be crucial to retention, especially for women.¹⁴

5.1.4 REVIEW HR POLICIES FOR GENDER PREFERENCE AND BIAS AND REMOVE THEM

To create a women-friendly culture, employers should review their HR policies and practices for gender preference and bias and remove them. The good news is many of our interviewees told us that the HR policies and practices in their organisations are gender-unbiased. We believe that all the policies and practices that benefit men will benefit women equally. These include talent management (e.g. identifying talent early in their career and providing developmental opportunities), hard-skill as well as soft-skill training programs, and mentoring or coaching programs.



5.1.5 DEVELOP SPONSORSHIP OR MENTORING PROGRAMMES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION

Our interviewees told us that they benefited a lot from their mentors or sponsors in their early career. Women often tend to be quiet doers and there is research showing that women are less likely to negotiate for their promotion and salary increase.¹⁵ If there are sponsors or mentors who can recognise women employees' contribution and provide them with developmental opportunities, it is likely that they will be able to rise to the challenge and take up more leadership responsibilities at an earlier stage of career.

5.1.6 RECOGNISE THAT WOMEN HAVE MORE CARE-GIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

Even in these modern times, women often have more care-giving responsibilities be it as daughters, sisters, mothers, or wives. It is vital for companies to recognise that and provide a supportive environment that helps them better manage their professional and personal roles. HR policies that are related to family (e.g., childcare leave, maternity leave, and flexible working hours) seem to be especially helpful for women. Organisations that show empathy to women employees and provide them with the necessary support and flexibility without penalising them for it will find that these women talent will go the extra mile and help progress the organisation.

5.1.7 IDENTIFY AND BENCHMARK POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES AGAINST OTHER LEADING EMPLOYERS

Companies should also make a conscious effort to identify and benchmark their policies and programmes against other leading employers to continuously improve. In doing so, companies are kept abreast of the leading practices as well as trends in the workforce.

5.1.8 COMMIT TO, COMMUNICATE AND BUILD AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE FREE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

At the end of the day, it is critical that a women-friendly culture must be set right at the top of the organisation. Senior management must commit to having an inclusive workforce free of gender stereotypes and communicate that to the rest of the organisation. Without the commitment and role-modelling of senior management, the message that women talent are important may be lost.

For organisations that have not put in place any diversity policies, a handy reference guide to help kick-start that process is TAFEP's "Creating an Inclusive Workplace: A Start-Up Kit", which can be downloaded from their website: www.tafep.sg.

5.2 TIPS FOR ASPIRING WOMEN LEADERS

For women who are looking to grow and develop themselves as senior leaders, below are some recommendations that we identified from our research. The 8 things that aspiring women leaders should take note of are:

5.2.1 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Women play many different roles, be it at home or at work. It is necessary to be clear and focused on your priorities and goals. As many of our interviewees have shared, there were challenging times when their strength and resolve were tested. In such difficult periods, clear priorities and goals helped them make informed decisions that they would be comfortable with.



5.2.2 EMBRACE CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

Many of our interviewees were offered developmental opportunities, in Singapore and overseas. Despite initial reservations by some, they took up the challenge and were better off for it. Some also forged a path for themselves by searching for new opportunities and challenges to grow and develop themselves. Their advice is 'Be open to change.' You may make some mistakes by trying something new, but you learn and you grow. In that process, you hone your skills and become more adept at tackling future opportunities and challenges.

5.2.3 BE CONFIDENT

Often, we are our worst enemy. Be confident. A lot of times, women constrain their own career development by worrying too much. Am I good enough? Will I make mistakes? What about my family? What if I perform poorly? Men seldom ask those questions. What these senior leaders teach women is really to have faith in themselves and their ability. If you are not confident about yourself, how can you instil the same confidence in others?

5.2.4 REVIEW YOUR OWN STEREOTYPE

Our interviewees generally did not see any difference between women and men in terms of their abilities and skills. Many of our interviewees mentioned that they do not even go into the workplace thinking that they are women. It is important to review your own stereotype and remove any biases that you may have about women as that may be stopping you from moving forward. These senior women's experiences are a testimony that women are as capable as men, and are able to have both family and career at the same time so long as they are committed to make it work.

5.2.5 SEEK RELEVANT SUPPORT

Naturally, to be able to do it all as a woman very much depends on the support that you can get from the people around you, be it at work or at home. Mentors and sponsors are crucial to the development of women into senior leadership positions. They not only give women the opportunities to develop, they also guide them and teach them the hard skills and soft skills that are needed at the top. At home, support from the husband, parents, in-laws and siblings are critical in freeing up their time and resources.

5.2.6 BUILD UP A NETWORK

Building up a network is crucial. The interviewees have benefited a lot from their networks, formally or informally. Professional networks are important because it provides a platform for professional women to access information and share similar problems at work. These networks also enable them to meet like-minded professional women and learn from each other's experience. Personal networks are important because they are a source of emotional support. Some interviewees also shared that these networks are platforms for them to bounce ideas off and gather input. A lot of these senior women leaders are very good at strategising and they invest time in maintaining their networks.

5.2.7 BECOME A ROLE MODEL THAT OTHER FEMALE EMPLOYEES CAN IDENTIFY WITH AND EMULATE

Leaders are often people that employees look to for advice and support, and act as a role model for other employees. As a senior woman leader, it is important that you embody qualities that other employees can learn from, identify with, and emulate. While many of our interviewees mentioned that they do not have a specific role model, they acknowledged that many people around them are role models in different ways and that they learn a lot from them. Most of our interviewees are themselves role models for



other female employees and even females outside of their organisation. This helps to signal that there is room for women at senior levels in the organisation.

5.2.8 FIND YOUR OWN BALANCE

Almost none of the interviewees told us that work takes up 100 per cent of their time. They have different approaches to balance their lives. Some spend time with family, some spend time with self, and some have a hobby. Ultimately, each person has to know her priority at each stage of life. It may be work at an earlier stage of their career, family in the next stage of their career, and maybe self at the following stage. It was stressed that whatever the priority is, it is important to be happy with whatever decision that was made. Even if the priority is work, our interviewees cite the importance of having other things in life to balance it out – be it friends, family or a hobby. One interviewee also emphasised to us that health is very important. “When I saw my colleagues collapsed at work, it really made me think.”

In the workplace, women not only encounter “glass ceilings” (barriers to move upward in the organisation), but also “glass walls” (barriers to move across the organisation). These unique barriers make it critical for women to embrace and develop political savvy.

Compared to men, women often have more negative attitudes toward organisational politics. The fact, however, is that politics is a natural part of organisational life. It does not mean that someone else has to lose in order for you to win. Rather, it involves the sincere use of skills to be more effective.

The research from Center for Creative Leadership shows that women and men do not differ in the use of politics. Moreover, women leaders who are good at using political skills are rated as more effective and manage their career more successfully. The important political skills are:

1) Interpersonal influence

Leaders need influencing skills to convince people and to obtain buy-in. Those who are good at influencing others are able to adapt their behaviours according to the audience and context. They make people feel comfortable and build collaborative relationships.

2) Networking

Networks provide leaders with access to information, resources, and opportunities. As such, networking is an important skill for leaders to have. Networking ability is related to the success of career management. Leaders with political savvy develop, maintain and leverage relationships with their mentors and/or coaches, seek feedback and continuously grow their career.

3) Thinking before speaking and acting

An important feature of leaders is composure. Good leaders know how to manage their emotions, especially during difficult times. They are aware of the impact of what they say and are able to put people at ease.

More information about women and political savvy can be found in Center for Creative Leadership’s White Paper titled “Women and Political Savvy: How to Build and Embrace a Fundamental Leadership Skill”.¹⁶

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ANNEX - Women Leaders' Contribution to the Society: A List of External Memberships

3rd National Committee on Youth Guidance & Rehabilitation

Behavioural Sciences Institute

BoardAgender

Business for Families Council (BFC)

Career Woman's Council

CFA Society

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Chinese Chamber of Commerce

Community Development Council

Esplanade Co Ltd

Financial Women's Association

Gardens by the Bay

Geylang Serai Redevelopment Workgroup Committee

Health Promotion Board (HPB) Audit & Risk Management Committee

Home Management Committee, Pertapis Centre for Women & Girls

HR Circle

Human Capital Singapore Academy

Inter-Agency Aftercare Committee

Khoo Teck Puat Hospital Medifund Committee

Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS)

Marriage Central Advisory Board

MDA Audit Committee

Media Development Authority (MDA)

Media Development Board

MOE Inter-Consultative Committee on Education

MOE Malay Language Learning & Promotion Committee (MLLPC)

MUIS Awards Committee

MUIS Wakaf Disbursement Committee

MUIS Zakat & Fitrah Committee

National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA)

National Council of Problem Gambling

Ngee Ann Polytechnic

Northlight School

Northlight School Board of Governors

NParks

Onepeople.sg Management Committee

Onepeople.sg Youth Outreach & Engagement Sub-Committee

Orchard Road Business Association

Press Club

Public Relations Institute

Singapore Cancer Society

Singapore Institute of International Affairs

Singapore Retailers Association

Singapore Tourism Board

SNEF's Industrial Relations Panel

SPRING Singapore Panel on SMEs

St Nicholas Girls' School

SW Comcare Local Network (CLN) Steering Committee

Transplant Ethics Committee

UNIFEM

Various churches

Various women events

Working Committee on Racial & Religious Harmony

World Presidents' Organisation

Young Presidents' Organisation

Corporate Profiles

TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (TAFEP)

The Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) promotes the adoption of fair, responsible and merit-based employment practices among employers, employees and the general public.

TAFEP is co-chaired by Mr. Bob Tan, Vice President, Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) and Mr. Heng Chee How, Deputy Secretary-General, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). Members include employer representatives, union leaders and government officials.

Leveraging its unique tripartite identity, TAFEP works in partnership with employer organisations, unions and the government to create awareness and facilitate the adoption of fair, responsible and merit-based employment practices. TAFEP provides tools and resources, including training workshops, advisory services, and educational materials, to help organisations implement fair employment practices.

Those who have encountered workplace discrimination are welcome to contact TAFEP for advice and assistance or to provide their feedback.

To find out more about fair, responsible and merit-based employment practices, please visit www.tafep.sg.

BOARDAGENDER

BoardAgender provides a forum in Singapore to facilitate greater awareness and understanding of the benefits of gender balanced business and the advancement of more women to senior leadership and board level positions.

Its website is a resource for gender diversity board statistics, research and news updates for Singapore and other countries around the globe.

BoardAgender's membership is open to business women and men, as well as private and public sector organisations that wish to participate in its events, discussions, and benefit from its resources.

BoardAgender is an outreach arm of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) and endorsed by MCYS.

www.boardagender.org



CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP (CCL)

Founded in 1970 as a non-profit educational institution, CCL is a global provider of leadership education and research. Ranked among the world's Top 10 providers of executive education by *Financial Times* and *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, CCL accelerates strategy and business results by unlocking the leadership potential of individuals and organisations. CCL serves clients through three campuses in North America, as well as locations in Singapore; Gurgaon, India; Shanghai, China; Brussels; Moscow; and Addis Ababa Ethiopia. Its work is supported by 500 faculty members and staff.

CCL's Research, Innovation & Product Development (RIPD) group combines a sustained investment in leadership research with an educational mission. With more than 50 faculty and staff from around the world, the group seeks to drive bold innovation in leadership and leadership development the world over.

IMPACT TO THE WORLD

CCL annually serves more than 20,000 individuals and 2,000 organisations including more than 80 of the Fortune 100 companies across the public, private, non-profit and education sectors. More than 500,000 leaders have attended CCL programs since 1970.

ENGAGING THE ASIA PACIFIC

CCL has maintained a regional presence in Asia Pacific since the 1970s through the delivery of programs. Now, with well-established offices in Singapore and India, we are serving corporations in Asia Pacific through the delivery of programs that target the real-world challenges unique to each level of leadership – cultivating the leaders the world watches.

Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Pte Ltd - Asia Pacific Office

Tel: +65 6854 6000 | Fax: +65 6854 6001

Web: <http://apac.ccl.org> | Email: ccl.apac@ccl.org

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Carol Yong

Human Resource Director
Dairy Farm Singapore

Mrs. Choo Lee See

Senior Director, Employment Facilitation Division
Workforce Development Agency

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Partner and Risk & Quality Leader
PwC Singapore

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Press Secretary to Minister
Ministry of Manpower

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Executive Director
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Jessica Leong

Group Human Resources Director
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McKinsey & Company

Lim Soo Hoon

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Ministry of Finance

Low Peck Kem

Divisional Director, National Human Resources
Division
Ministry of Manpower

Mrs. Mildred Tan

Managing Director
Ernst & Young Advisory Pte Ltd



Moliah Bte Hashim

Chief Executive Officer
Yayasan Mendaki

Patricia Quek

Managing Director
UBS AG

Poh Mui Hoon

Group Chief Executive Officer
ICONZ-Webvisions Pte Ltd

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Head, Compliance (Singapore)
Standard Chartered Bank

Thio Chin Loo

Senior FX & IR Strategist Asia
BNP Paribas Corporate & Investment Banking

Woo Kwai Merng

Executive Vice President,
Entrepreneur-in-Residence,
Science and Engineering Commercialisation
Exploit Technologies

*Information is accurate as at time of research.

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In Partnership:

