

Women at the Top Leadership Research

Started in 2017, this research project is about leadership from the perspective of women at the top. Always curious, I am fascinated by the potential for women at the top to inspire upcoming women essentially by sharing broader, different, surprising maybe even similar perspectives. Influencing, and encouraging the realisation that we are all role models, inspiring teachers, brave trailblazers.

How are those doors opened, glass ceilings dissolved, seemingly insurmountable cliffs scaled, limitations challenged, assumptions overturned? One courageous or foolhardy person or a combination of many making those ripples spread way beyond what might be thought possible?

What women at the top are thinking about leadership gives women the courage to say if that is possible, if she did that so can I.

Thank you for being one of those inspirational women.

As a result, I have invited women at the top to share their thoughts regarding leadership and create this series of interviews. I began with five questions and as the first interview was nearly finished two more questions were determined to be asked: What question would you like to have been asked? And who would you like to be interviewed or suggest that I interview?

Janeé Franklin, HR Specialist, CRS

28th in the series - interviewed on 17 August 2023 by Halina Jaroszewska

You have no doubt inspired a lot of aspiring leaders – from where (or from whom) do you draw your inspiration?

As a Christian, I have come to understand leadership based on Jesus' description in the [biblical] Gospel of Matthew: "You know that the rulers of this world lord it [their power] over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others." (Matthew 20: 25-28). This verse exemplifies the type of leader I aspire to be. I am far from it yet. And these verses provide me with a measure by which I can determine where I need to grow.

Leaders who inspire me: Barack Obama, Pope Francis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Stacey Abrams, and Sojourner Truth.

What would you say have been the biggest developments in leadership that you have witnessed in your years as a leader?

The two biggest developments in leadership that I have seen in the last several years are:

1. a recognition of the importance of having leaders from multiple backgrounds and
2. the push for inclusive leadership skills.

While those things were important in theory before, they are seen today as essential components to being a more successful company and leader.

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What do you think are the most significant trends and challenges faced by leadership today?

A significant trend that is also a challenge is the expectation from employees that leaders be more culturally sensitive, humble, empathetic, caring, and inclusive. My understanding is that employers, and by extension leaders, expected people to conform to their standards, preferences and cultures without having to reciprocate. Now, they are expected to do so - and quickly. For those who were not doing this before, I imagine this is quite the challenge!

What do you think today's leaders should be doing to keep moving leadership to a new level?

Honestly, I think it is to strive to meet the new expectations employees have of them. I believe that by staying open to these changes and trying their best to serve their coworkers rather than balking or resisting the new standards, they will find that their employees will respect them and extend grace to them along the way. With their own resolve and support of their peers, I feel that leadership will continue to move to a new level.

I also think being open to different ideas of leadership will be key. In the Western world at least, what makes a "good leader" is largely shaped by white, male standards rather than recognizing that other cultures and other genders have different, equally effective approaches. As such, I think supporting such leaders rather than being threatened by them will benefit everyone.

What advice would you give to young aspiring leaders?

Look around you and see what kind of leaders both are respected and have produced the most positive results for the people they are leading.

Learn how they got there and what key practices they implement to achieve those results.

These can be a guide as you become a leader. At the same time, you should not be inauthentic.

As an aspiring young "leader" myself, I am learning to embrace what makes me unique whilst also pushing myself in those areas that are not as conducive to good leadership.

What question would you like to have been asked?

I would have like to have been asked about what kind of leader I am. Since I am in one of the most junior positions in my organization, I usually don't think of myself as a leader. Additionally despite my leadership aspirations, I would be curious as to how other people would describe my current leadership style.

Who would you like to have / recommend be interviewed?

Within my organization, there are several female leaders who would be great to interview:

- one of the three women executives
- my next level supervisor
- director of our knowledge management unit.

I would love to learn more about their leadership journeys, what (or whom) inspires them, and how they view leadership today.

And an interesting question to consider although not part of the original research:

If the myth about women not being able to hack it at the top is 'fake news' what would you suggest as a top tip to shatter that myth?

Just look at the women in your personal life and community. I bet you will see women leading without titles in so many facets of life as store owners, household leaders, the backbone of many faith communities and social justice movements.

We have always been able to lead and often support the [male] leaders at the top, with or without formal titles and often with little credit.

Knowingly or unknowingly, whole families and communities have put their trust in women for millennia. They just need to trust us when we also have the title.

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Details of previous interviews in Series One

1. Fiona Jordan – Associate Dean [External Engagement], Faculty of Business and Law UWE (03.02.17)
2. Michele Crossman – Senior Leader in Defence (24.03.17)
3. Katharine Finn – Regional Leader, PwC West and Wales; Assurance Partner (15.03.17)
4. Laura Stambouleh – Partner, Public Sector Advisory – UK Consulting, Cushman & Wakefield (09.05.17)
5. Isla Baliszewska – UK Director Smart Coaching Training Ltd (26.06.17)
6. Fleur Bothwick, OBE – Director of Diversity & Inclusive Leadership, EMEA Ernst & Young LLP (15.10.17)
7. Donna Whitehead – Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law UWE (15.10.17)
8. Sarah Pullen – Commercial Director - Regionals, Reach plc (30.06.17)

Details of previous interviews in Series Two

9. Vicky Gardner – Director, ZiaBia Events Consultancy (01.09.21)
10. Patricia Patilla Sanchez – Technical Service Representative, Rolls Royce plc (23.09.21)
11. Kate Redshaw – Senior Associate, Burges Salmon LLP (09.11.21)

Details of previous interviews in Series Three

12. Heledd Wyn – Director and Head of Private Client & Long Term Care at GL Law (25.02.22)
13. Tracey Burleigh – MPWR Business Club Founder & CEO (04.03.22)
14. Michelle Michael, MBE – Director Grand Pier Weston super Mare & Director AGM Holdings Ltd (09.05.22)
15. Pauline King – Regional Employer Engagement Director, RFCA (31.05.22)
16. Susie Warran-Smith, CBE – Award-winning business woman, author, speaker; The Food talk Show; Breakthrough Funding Founder (31.05.22)
17. Sarah Brooks – Head of Business Development, EVO Ultra (21.06.22)
18. Emily Gee, FCILEx – Chartered Legal Executive, Sadlers (11.07.22)
19. Emma Godivala – Director & Founder, York Gin (11.07.22)

Details of previous interviews in Series Four

20. Liz Barclay – Small Business Commissioner UK (04.01.23)
21. Katie Machin, PFPS – Director, YorWealth Ltd (19.01.23)
22. Ciara Eastell, OBE – Professor of Practice in Leadership, University of Exeter Business School (27.02.23)
23. Michelle Mook – Managing Director, Pro-Development (UK) Limited (28.02.23)
24. Stacey McVeighty – Founder, Change Accountants (21.03.23)
25. Joy Newton – Deputy Branch Manager, Handelsbanken (28.06.23)
26. Alice Ingram – Business Engagement Manager, York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (24.07.23)
27. Haddy Njie – Founder & Chair Inclusive Rights UK 3.0 (IERUK) (13.08.23)

Check them all out at [Women at the Top - Halina Jaroszewska](#)

**To discuss how Halina Jaroszewska can help
email halina@halinajaroszewska.com**

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Halina helps fast track and aspiring leaders, also key teams, to turn uncertainty into a powerful tool for exponential growth. Her aim is to enable clients to switch surviving into thriving, take business and personal performance to the next level and maximise their potential during challenging times.