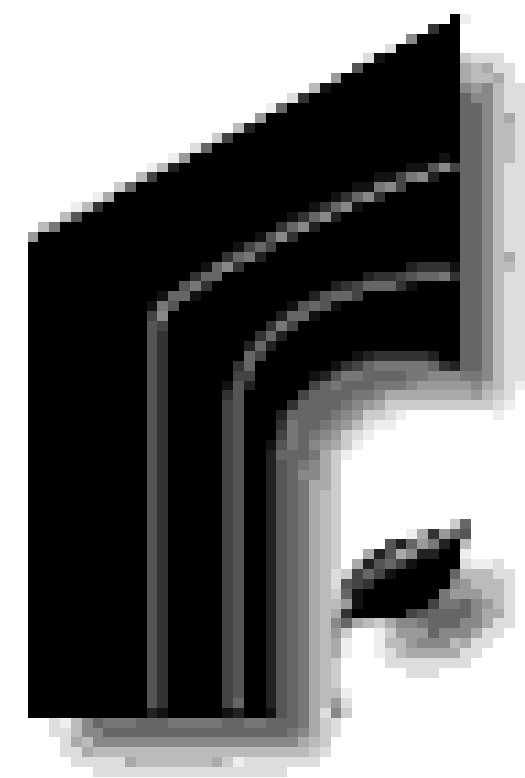


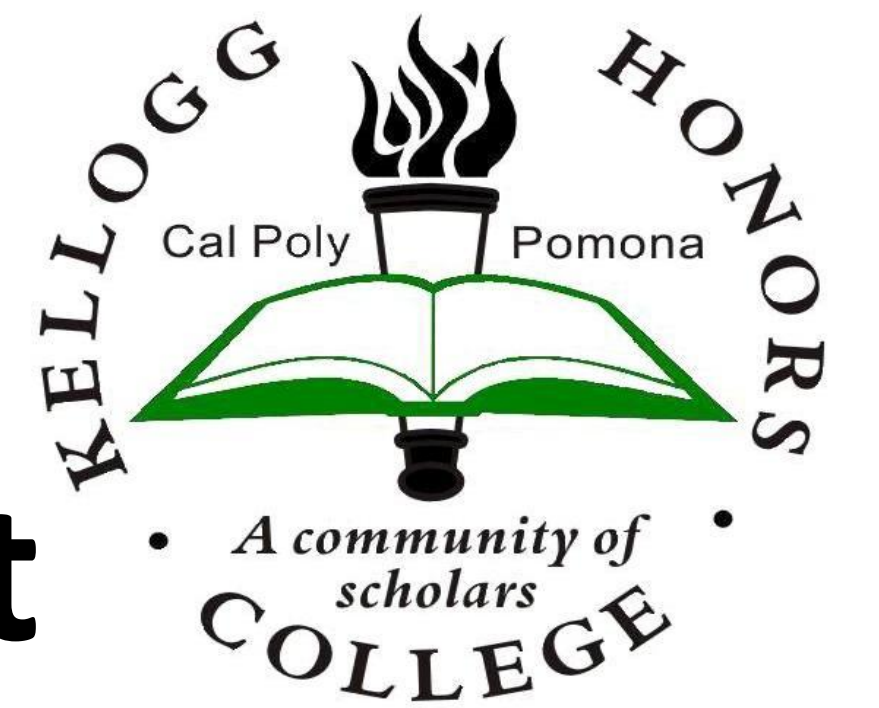
Female Leadership in the Hospitality Industry



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Kellogg Honors College Capstone Project



Abstract

With an increase in women getting college degrees and joining the workforce, the uprise of female leadership in various industries is foreseeable. Therefore, it is crucial for female college students to be as prepared as possible to be able to assume a role in leadership and become an exemplary and successful leader in the workforce. As a soon to be graduate my outlook on the real world is both exciting, but also preoccupying at the same time. After investing so much time, energy and effort in our education we all hope for a seamless transition into the workforce, unfortunately there are still a lot of obstacles to overcome. The opinions on the ease of entering the business for female graduates is in constant debate and even more so the success rate of female leaders in the industry, which is why I dedicate my capstone project to exploring ways to succeed for me and my fellow soon to be graduate women in the hospitality field. This research explores the field of female leadership in the hospitality industry with the use of literature on the subject and the consultation of experienced industry professionals in leadership roles. While conducting this research, the comparison of self-imposed barriers and societal barriers emerged as a key element in female advancement, as well as the importance of guidance & support from both male and female leadership figures, and the effects of young women's professional and personal environments.

Objective

The purpose of this project is to investigate what hinders female advancement in the hospitality industry, what can be done to overcome these internal and external hurdles and how to implement these findings as a female newly graduate looking for a position in leadership.



Findings

Literature Research:

When conducting the literature research the following themes surfaced repeatedly and were rated as important.

Education – as the key for closing the gap between student and industry expectations, as well as teaching the necessary skills to succeed; such as leadership and mentoring skills. Another top theme was the importance of female role models and the need to rise awareness of the inequities women will face in the workforce.

Mentoring – as a way of finding a role model or someone to look up to for guidance, who will dedicate time to influence the mentee's career in a positive and supportive way.

Networking – as a tool to meet and interact with fellow industry professionals to foster business relations and advancement.

Leadership Skills – “Leadership is the action of inducing followers to accomplish certain goals that represent the values, wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and follower.” (Merritt, 2008, p. 2) The importance of learning about different and effective leadership approaches.

Discrimination & Stereotyping – eventough work conditions have improved significantly for women over the past decades, there are still some gender based disadvantages in the hospitality industry, due to a prevalence of the gender specific roles mindset. Furthermore, there is counter productive behavior of male coworkers and social exclusion - being ostracised from informal networks of communication at the workplace. (Boone et al, 2013, p. 231)

Self-implemented Barriers – life choices such as: family and household responsibilities that interfere with women's career advancement.

Industry Professionals:

Education – mastering all coursework and understanding its relevance in the workforce.

Mentoring – finding a mentor (male or female) who is ready and willing to invest time and effort in mentee.

Leadership skills – assuming leadership roles on campus and at work.

Networking – attending conferences, guest speaker events and taking advantage of one's college's faculty and staff.

Staying current – reading industry related magazines, joining clubs, student and professional associations.



Process

Information was gathered from academic articles on the topics of female leadership, gender discrimination in the hospitality industry, work-life balance, mentoring, networking and hospitality education. Leadership material from Collins College's „Strategic Leadership in the Hospitality Environment“ class was used to deepen the knowledge about different elements of leadership and its effectiveness.

In addition to the literature research, seven female hospitality industry leaders were interviewed on the topic of female leadership, which helped tremendously in building a bridge between the literature and current real world experiences. The subjects used were chosen out of different sectors of the hospitality industry such as : lodging, food & beverage, special events, private clubs and the financial sector.

Application

How to become a great leader?

- Assume leadership positions in colleg. Ex.: become an executive board member of a campus club, or take the lead in a group project can serve as a training platform.
- Get real world experience through an internship with leadership or supervisory training.
- Take leadership courses in college
- Be aware of barriers, but do not let them hold you back.

How to network?

- Learn how to sell your abilities and capabilities.
- Be confident.
- Stay current on industry trends.
- Join industry associations and/or clubs.
- Attend industry events such as conferences and training to deepen your knowledge.

How to find/chose a mentor?

- Attend guest speaker events.
- Choose someone who believes in you.
- Be open, flexible and respectful of their time.
- Choose someone who's work you admire & who is ahead of you in the field.

How to manage work-life balance?

- Be honest with yourself, know what YOU want and own your decisions.
- Know that it is possible to have a family and a leadership position.
- Plan ahead and always keep your longterm goals in mind.
- Work hard and smart.
- Time-management is key.
- Ask for help if you need it, it is absolutely acceptable to do so.

*(Various industry professionals)



Conclusion

Women are still confronted with workplace barriers such as gender discrimination and stereotyping. Unfortunately we also have a tendency to limit ourselves additionally through self-implemented barriers. After researching several articles on the different kinds of obstacles women in leadership positions face and consulting with female industry leaders; a solid education, leadership skills, a great network, a supportive mentor, persistence, great time-management skills, a good family support system and the courage to follow through with one's plans are the key to success.

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