



Five Traits of a Successful Woman Leader

The traits of a successful leader include confidence, determination, empowerment and vision. While these may seem universal, only 25 CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies (5%) are held by women executives.¹ More inclusion, sponsorship and action are needed to pave the way for more women to enter into additional C-suite and board positions.

Recent research shows that at every organizational level, women are disadvantaged because they receive less career guidance and sponsorship from senior leadership.² Therefore, it's essential that women develop their own voices in the workplace. Focusing on these five traits will help women self-identify as leaders, ensuring that the female talent pools increase in companies of all sizes.

First trait

Courage

Standing out among peers requires bravado and projecting a sense of strength that doesn't always come naturally. Asking for raises, promotions and assignments that are a stretch beyond your comfort zone demonstrates a willingness to be noticed, a keen interest in the company as a whole and the ability to step up when needed.

Key takeaways



Self-identifying as a leader will help you stand out among your peers.



Women need to do more than simply embody typical leadership skills.



Your expertise and endorsement can help other women advance.



Second trait

Resilience and perseverance

Roadblocks and detours are encountered at every turn, and navigating them is an important trait of any successful female leader. Pushing on, making adjustments and even halting projects despite costs are a few of the hard decisions that leaders have to be prepared to make. Fostering these characteristics at every step of a career will hone the skills needed to bounce back from unsuccessful endeavors and provide the backbone needed to press on when the going gets rough.

Third trait

Manage ambiguity

Working without a playbook is an essential element of operating within senior management. Being decisive despite having incomplete, imperfect information is a critical part of being a leader. Software companies would be completely stymied if they waited until all software bugs were known and rectified. Be comfortable with releasing products knowing that everything won't go perfectly. Showing the ability to be nimble and navigate the unknown will help set the stage for a spot in the C-suite.

Fourth trait

Risk-taking

The dichotomy of risk and reward is very real in the business world. Taking a seemingly lateral move that breaks an upward pattern may provide exposure to another industry or business unit and be seen as a career-risk. The valuable skills, experience and foundation of risk-taking is something few people will take advantage of.

Fifth trait

The drive to mentor the next generation

Teaching and guiding someone else is a great way to cement personal knowledge and perpetuate diversity and inclusion. Articulating career options, enhancing networking opportunities and trouble-shooting new encounters provides insight into a new perspective while fueling the ranks of companies with interested talent, fresh ideas and thoughts toward fearless innovation.

Traits of a successful woman leader

Women play an essential role throughout the corporate ranks. Recognizing and developing their abilities to manage change, taking educated risks and mentoring others will spur their growth as leaders. By understanding that courage and risk-taking go hand-in-hand, those who take risks also find that possessing the resilience to manage through project failures is an integral part of becoming a strong leader. Women executives who couple these traits with their skills and experience are well-suited for leadership positions where their fresh perspectives can enhance and grow companies to great success.

Steps to consider

- Work with other women to help each other develop your voices in business environments. Encourage one another to speak up and take risks, then discuss successes and disappointments.
- Attend seminars and networking events to practice stepping out of your comfort zone and build your skills.
- Seek stretch projects that will give you exposure to other teams, expand your expertise and show your initiative.
- Consider the next generation of woman leaders in your organization. Mentoring is a powerful way to cement diversity and inclusion in your company's leadership chain.

The support you need

For more Key4Women resources to help you reach your goals, visit key.com/women, or [email us](#) to learn more.

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¹ Catalyst, "List: Women CEOs of the S&P 500," January 24, 2019, <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-ceos-of-the-sp-500/>

² LeanIn, "Women in the Workplace 2018," <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>