



WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP: 10 TIPS FOR GROWING AS A LEADER

By: Dr. Artika R. Tyner

Women are excelling in leadership roles and climbing the career ladder within the legal profession. Women now represent 43% of J.D.'s awarded, nearly half of the applicants to the Bar, and 51% of all judicial clerks. Despite the many gains of women in the legal profession, women are less than a fifth of law firm partners, federal judges, law school deans, and Fortune 500 general counsels. Today, there is still more work to be done to promote inclusiveness and the full engagement of women in the legal profession. Needed now more than ever are strategic tools to empower women to unveil their leadership potential and excel in their legal careers. These tools include: mentorship, coaching, and training. The following tips will provide key guidance for women leaders, like yourself, to strengthen your leadership skills. Additionally, it will aid mentors and sponsors in supporting the leadership development of women. These tips reflect current emerging research in the field and include personal reflections from my leadership journey.

Tip #1: Start your leadership development early and unveil your potential

The old adage focused on leaders being born. However, emerging leadership theoretical frameworks focus on leaders being raised and made. The next generation of women leaders are being raised up through the aid of narrowly tailored gender specific pipelining initiatives. Leadership development programs for women in K-12 education provide an ideal model. One such example is the leadership empowerment program called Girls in Action. Dr. Verna Price founded this program which focuses on teaching young women in high school how to lead and serve in their communities. This program shares the message that starting early in one's leadership development is essential. It also provides intrinsic motivation by reminding young women leaders that they are a gift and according to Marianne Williamson's poetic words: "we are all meant to shine, as children do." An investment in the leadership development of young women aids them in "shining" their light of leadership brightly early in their lives. Therefore, it is crucial for Bar leaders to support pipelining initiatives and leadership training for women of all ages.

Tip #2: Begin developing your leadership platform today

In exploring the topic of leadership it is essential that we begin with defining this abstract concept. Historically leadership was described as an innate set of skills bestowed upon a select few "great men" like our founding fathers or political figures. However, over time the concept of leadership has evolved to have a specific focus on practical skills development. This new definition of leadership focuses on practical skills development. What are some of these skills? Research has indicated that it is essential that leaders gain core competencies like emotional intelligence, problem solving, strategic planning, and reflective listening.

You can strengthen these skills through mentorship, coaching, and volunteer experience. Similar to a physical muscle, your leadership skills will grow as you exercise new skills. If you want to grow as a leader, stretch yourself through new learning experiences. You can begin this process of exploration by studying the leadership profiles of other great women leaders like Charlotte E. Ray (who was the first African American admitted to the practice of law in 1872) or Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (the first female U.S. Supreme Court Justice in 1981) to learn more about the journey of leadership. Great women leaders have persevered and created a pathway for the generations to come. Their stories can serve as a source of inspiration and guide your leadership journey.

Tip #3: Answer the Call to Service

The servant leader is one who seeks to serve first and this passion for service motivates one to lead. Marian Wright Edelman wisely stated: "service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time." The challenge then becomes to discover ways to serve in our practice and our community. This may include bridging the justice gap by providing pro bono legal services, representing an unaccompanied child through Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) project, or volunteering with the ABA Rule of Law Initiative. Each day, you should seek to find a way to pay your rent by maximizing opportunities to serve in the global community by creating access to justice.

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dialogues that occur in Step 2. Integrate action steps where people from the majority and the marginalized group have a vested responsibility in improving the work environment (e.g., through culture, emotional intelligence, sensitivity training, pipelines, sponsorships, etc.).

Note, all the foregoing steps are ongoing. Ongoing education, training, and coaching is needed in order to truly foster a truly inclusive environment for all.

As a society, we've come a long way and should be commended for all of the hard work that has been done to become a more inclusive profession. Unraveling the

intricate web created by systemic oppression is not easy. Yet, more needs to be done. Smashing the Inner Glass Ceiling is a method that incorporates both personal responsibility and group responsibility for affecting change. It's not enough to just have people that are different. The true value of diversity comes when all people feel empowered to lead with authenticity. ☺ ☺

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Tip #4: Find your passion

Passion serves as a source of motivation for your leadership work. I found my passion when I traveled to South Africa in 2007. I traveled to South Africa to present research on how to teach law students principles of social justice. But truly I received a gift from Africa – I learned about a communal concept called: ubuntu. Ubuntu recognizes that a person is a person through others.

It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being able to go the extra mile for the sake of others. My passion for justice is informed by these principles of ubuntu.

This gift informed my definition of leadership. I discovered the interconnectedness of the human experience in a new way. I now define leadership as a process of influence that can be used to empower others to lead and engage in community-building.

Tip #5: Find female role models

Role models are essential guides during your leadership course. They create a path for you to follow as you establish a firm foundation for your leadership platform. A study co-authored by MIT economist Esther Duflo established the positive impact of role models on career aspirations and goals of younger women. This study conducted in West Benegal region of India evaluated the impact of the female role models in

government on the educational achievement of young women. This region has a mandate for the full inclusion of women in leadership within governmental posts. When families were surveyed about the attitudes of education and achievement in comparison to villages without any women leaders in government, a stark contrast was discovered in the villages with women in leadership roles. Parents were 25% more likely to report ambitious educational goals for their children. While the other villages with the absence of women role models, parents were 45% less likely to desire their daughters to graduate from school when compared to their sons. This example is illustrative of the powerful impact of female leaders in inspiring future generations of women to lead.

Tip #6: Build relationships strategically

Studies show that women are naturally good at building relationships however they struggle with effectively leveraging these relationships for their future benefit. This exemplifies a woman's ability to be relational and nurturing within her interactions with others. In comparison, men network in a different manner which follows the nature of a transactional process by exchanging ideas and establishing quid pro quo career favors. For instance, men tend to build relationships with the expectation that it will be used as leverage for future gain or a seed for a future business transaction/dealing. In "Six Paradoxes Women Leaders Face in 2013," women are challenged to follow suit by strategically converting their connections to opportunities for career advancement. This is especially important since research shows 60-80% of jobs are landed through networking.

Relationship building is at the foundation of networking. Therefore, find ways to leverage your relationships in a strategic manner.

Tip #7: Build a circle of mentors

A circle of mentors is integral to your career success. Mentors can provide guidance for becoming acclimated to the practice of law or advancing on the career ladder. My circle of mentors have provided me with opportunities to explore new practice areas, discover my strengths, and build my leadership skills. These experiences have provided me with a professional learning community. I am welcomed into this community to learn, reflect, and strategize on how to achieve my professional goals.

Tip #8: Enlist the assistance of a coach

In addition to mentoring, working with a coach provides an individualized approach for developing a strategic plan for reaching your professional goals. Coaching and mentoring are complementary learning processes. A coach will assist with you creating an individualized development plan for advancing your career.

Start now with-Tip #9: Don't wait to be asked

Countless studies have shown that women tend to wait to be asked before assuming a leadership role. A study conducted by Zenger and Folkman demonstrated that women have the vast majority of effective leadership qualities when compared to their male counterparts but fall significantly behind in developing a strategic perspective as it relates to career advancement. It is imperative that you see your vocational vision and take the strategic steps required to achieve your goals.

I am asking you today to heed to the call and to lead. This is your invitation to reach for the stars and create a new leadership path.

Tip #10: Overcome Fear and Lean in

For many women, fear keeps them from reaching their full potential. These fears come in many forms: Fear of our potential. Fear of inadequacy (imposter syndrome). Fear of assuming leadership roles.

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO, in her new book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, offers a key word of advice in overcoming fear and moving forward/making progress –which is to lean in while moving forward. Here are a few tips that she offers:

- The challenge: What would you do if you weren't afraid?
- Build your self-confidence: "We hold ourselves back in ways big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands and by pulling back when we should be leaning in."

In conclusion, leadership is a growth process. Throughout this process, it is essential for women leaders to maximize opportunities to learn and grow. Additionally, the Bar is a prime position to foster this growth process by empowering the next generation of women leaders to lead.

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