

Better Together: Helping Women Achieve Their Full Potential.

By Alyse Forcellina



On November 2 the Rockefeller Foundation hosted an event for WSJ reporter Joanne Lublin's new book on women in leadership, **Earning It: Hard-Won Lessons from Trailblazing Women at the Top of the Business World.**

Joanne led a discussion with **Abbe Raven, former President and CEO of A+E Networks and Andrea Jung, the former CEO of Avon.** Both women shared stories about how they themselves helped create the most pivotal moments in their careers, by drawing on their belief in their own **potential**. Both were willing to take on any task or role in order to broaden their experience and break in, taking assignments nobody else wanted in order to push the boundaries for themselves; and both took calculated risks in their career choices, by taking on high risk ventures in uncharted waters, while continuing to run a core part of the business.

Perhaps most striking were their recommendations for helping women get to the top of organizations and on Boards. Specifically, the discussion centered on **mentorship** and **succession planning**. Abbe talked about the responsibility for women in leadership roles to “reach back” to pull the next generation of women up through woman-to-woman mentorship – to ensure that over time leadership teams are more balanced and represent all of the organization’s stakeholders and consumers. Abbe also emphasized that the **business impact of diverse leadership is undeniable**, and should compel CEOs and boards to support diversity across the organization, and to be deliberate about development strategies.

Andrea shared the importance of establishing clear metrics for success in creating diverse teams, and insisting that the CEO and executive team be accountable for succession planning focused specifically on women two layers below the c-suite – those that report into the executive team, and their direct reports. Only by developing a bigger pool of qualified women much earlier in the pipeline -- through mentoring, training, stretch assignments and most importantly, **a focus on getting women out of their traditional career paths and into the feeder roles for CEO and board leadership, including Finance, Operations, and management roles with critical P&L responsibility** -- will we truly change the face of CEO and Board leadership.

At Egon Zehnder we share these aspirations – we are committed to helping women (and all executives) reach their full potential. Along with my colleagues, I help lead a global effort to continuously develop and enhance our succession planning solutions for our clients. All too often our clients come to us with an external search for an important role because they have not been able to build the diversity and depth

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of talent within their own organization. **We believe that we can help our clients do better – that we must do better together.**

Earlier this year our firm initiated a global effort called **Leaders & Daughters**, with the aim of **bringing together today's most renowned leaders with their daughters and women mentees to share personal stories of women on the road to leadership.** The discussions provided a view into the structures that support or deter females from rising in the leadership ranks, and worked to identify specific actions for organizations to improve the path forward for women across the globe. In 2016, 15 Egon Zehnder offices participated in these global conversations, and we are proud to announce that **in March of 2017, in conjunction with International Women's Day, 40 Egon Zehnder offices will host Leaders & Daughters events**, to continue the drive to gender parity and unlimited opportunity for the next generation of women.

*To learn more about our Leaders & Daughters initiative, read our report, **Cultivating the Next Generation of Women Leaders: A Global Viewpoint**, which contains insights and findings from our 2016 events.*

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