
Leadership for Women™ Program

Final Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

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LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN™ PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

There has been a recognized need to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the workplace. While women represent about half of the working population, only thirty percent occupy supervisory positions. Opportunities for women to develop leadership competencies are not readily available and access is frequently limited due to shorter years of experience in the workforce than their male counterparts. Challenges in balancing personal and professional responsibilities and gender differences in conceptualization of what counts as leadership are issues that women face when assuming leadership positions. It is evident that women need opportunities to develop leadership competencies in an environment that is accessible, and sensitive to the unique challenges that women in leadership encounter.

SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

Kathy Watt of LMI Canada is offering a leadership program based on the *Leadership for Women™* Program created by Paul Meyer (2006). This leadership program was designed to respond to the unique situation of women in leadership. While the program has many components, the purpose of this specific research is to determine the **impact of goal setting on the development of women's leadership competencies**. Insights gleaned from the research assisted in indentifying the outcomes or areas of impact resulting from the overall program including women's perceptions of their growth and development with respect to personal and professional productivity, as well as strategic planning

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation initiative involved both process and outcome evaluation components. With respect to the process aspects of the evaluation, areas of investigation focused on the practices of women in setting and enacting personal and professional goals, and their perceived level of confidence in assuming leadership roles prior to the program. Changes in their goal setting practices and development of leadership competencies associated with the leadership program were followed throughout the seven months by way of program journals and conversations with the program instructor. In terms of the outcome aspects of the evaluation, a range of potential impacts were discovered, encompassing areas of change related to goal setting practices, and leadership competencies.

LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN™ PROGRAM

One of the main purposes of the *Leadership for Women™* Program was to support the participants in setting personal and professional goals as a means to developing leadership competencies. Developing goal setting practices involved the articulation of personal and professional goals in written form. Interviews with the seven participants indicated that:

- All participants wrote personal and professional goals with target dates. Four women set definite time frames.
- The women identified criteria for establishing the importance of their goals. These included: increased quality of life, career development and establishing life/work priorities.
- Participants identified challenges that could possibly interfere with the realization of their goals. These included gender issues with respect to family responsibilities and male-dominated workplaces, work setting issues and work/life balance.
- Participants identified family (47%) as the main source of support in achieving their goals with friends (23%) and workplace colleagues (24%) being the second source.
- A personal sense of accomplishment and the development of personal and professional leadership skills were the two main criteria for judging successful achievement of goals.

IMPACTS OF THE LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN™ PROGRAM

During the second interviews participants were asked to reflect on their experience of taking the *Leadership for Women™* Program and identify areas of impact on their leadership competencies. These are addressed in the following sections.

Impact on Leadership Skills in Goal Setting

The three areas of greatest impact identified by all participants in terms of personal and professional goal setting were the ability to set goals, being self confident and being reflective as a leader.

Development of Leadership Competencies

- **Goal Setting and Personal Perception of Self:** As a result of the goal setting process within the program, participants reported that the following impacts: ability to maintain a clear focus, the implementation of goal setting as a daily habit, increase in self-reflection with respect to personal and professional goals
- **Confidence:** More than half the participants (four) reported that the program impacted their confidence level with respect to their ability to lead themselves and others (team and organizations).
- **Relational Skills:** Learning to communicate effectively with others involved the development of new strategies, assessment of personal skills, the courage to move

out of their comfort zones, the building of trust in the abilities of others so that the delegation of tasks became more efficient

- **Leadership Actions:** The accountability built into the program resulted in a high level of motivation and energy in achieving goals. The majority of women reported positive impacts in terms of empowering, motivating and coaching others. Participants expressed changes in attitudes and actions with respect to time management, the work/life balance and the ability to set personal and professional priorities.

Goal Setting Practices – the Keys to Success

Various practices can either impact or thwart the successful achievement of personal and professional goals. These practices can include: writing or crystallizing goals, using affirmation, visualizing, tracking the progress, etc. As a means to capture these behaviours and practices used to help achieve the goals, actions or behaviours were examined and the following conclusions were reached.

- **Writing goals and tracking progress:** The majority of the participants, who created their goals and tracked their progress in written form, reported that this process was crucial in realizing their goals.
- **Action plan:** All participants crafted action plans; those who maintained their initial action plan indicated that this was the “*key to their success*”.
- **Support from others:** The successful achievement of one or more of the women’s goals was dependent upon themselves and others.
- **Assigning meaning:** The participants who assigned the greatest level of importance to their goals were most successful in realizing them.
- **Challenges:** All participants were able to identify and build strategies to overcome personal and organizational barriers.

Lessons Learned Through the Goal Setting Process

In reflecting upon their experience, specifically related to the goal setting process, participants were asked to share lessons learned throughout the journey. Some of these lessons included:

- Taking time to self-reflect is critical in determining what is important.
- Committing to goals by writing them down is essential to realization or completion.
- Believing in oneself and being persistent and patient is essential to self-care in the goal setting process.
- Tracking progress to measure success or to set new priorities is a step that cannot be omitted.

- Creating an action plan is required to set direction and maintain focus.
- Accepting and letting go of what is not in one's control is essential to be able to move forward.
- Having the right approach and state of mind is instrumental to staying positive and realizing one's goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Successes

The participants were asked to point out high lights of the program. The format and delivery of the program was important because:

- Working with women, hearing their perspectives, voicing opinions, learning from them, and seeing their growth was very empowering.
- Working with women in a group resulted in the formation of strong authentic relationships.
- Getting to know yourself and doing self-reflection led to heightened self awareness
- Being accountable encouraged participants to *do their homework* and led several to secure mentors.
- Taking time to focus on goal setting practices in personal and professional settings was life changing.

Recommendations for the future

The participants were asked to thoughtfully offer suggestions for future programs that may be offered to women in the future.

- Use mentors who are able to meet at least once per month.
- Make the program a little more affordable
- Offer the program more frequently and use former participants to promote it. They will be your best advocates.
- Offer the program in different locations so as to be more accessible to more women.
- Use more electronic format. The Black binder/daily planner could be made available electronically.
- Develop a stronger introduction at the beginning of the program so that all participants understand the program purpose and content.
- Offer this program in high school.