Women in Leadership

Women Value Accountability

One of the most intriguing findings to come out of studies of women's leadership is that women tend to value accountability more highly than their male peers appear to. Organizations with women in leadership positions tend to have cultures of personal and group accountability, and in general to foster honesty and transparency. Women's focus on interpersonal relationships seems to foster this sense of accountability. When people are invested in each other, they are more likely to want to hold themselves and others to high standards. A culture of accountability is one in which people take responsibility for their mistakes, are acknowledged for their efforts and successes, and do not seek to undermine others. The greater collaboration that is found when women are leaders further fosters this sense of accountability, as people who work together are invested in each other's success. A culture of accountability also fosters respect for others, which may lead to fewer interpersonal problems (up to and including harassment), as well as honesty, which can lead to fewer incidences of theft of other such issues.

Encourage the Learning of Leadership Skills

Leadership is not a fixed quality of a person, but a set of skills that can be learned. Encourage women to learn leadership skills throughout their careers. This can be done through formal training and workshops, whether they are about leadership skills generally or geared toward women specifically. Women also learn leadership by leading. Give your women employees chances to practice leadership skills by letting them take on leadership roles – low stakes roles at first (such as leading meetings), with steady growth into more responsibility. If there are external workshops or courses on leadership skills that would be valuable, encourage women to take them. The organization should subsidize this if possible. When working one on one with women employees, encourage them to read widely about leadership and to take on leadership roles in professional organizations and other settings where they can practice leadership skills.

Networking Builds Confidence

No matter their gender, leaders need confidence. Studies show that a strong network helps to build confidence. Because networking gives people a chance to build and use skills, as well as build relationships, it builds self-confidence and self-esteem. Because women may sometimes lack the confidence needed for leadership – or be perceived to lack the confidence needed – due to ideas about gender and entrenched barriers to women's leadership, developing confidence is vital. Investing in women's networking is an investment in not only the individual confidence of women employees, but in women's leadership more broadly in your organization.