Sometimes, it isn’t enough to change the rules. **You have to change the game.** We interviewed nine successful women who have reshaped industries, broken barriers, and elevated their companies to new heights. These women serve as role models, not for what it means to be a successful business woman, but what it means to be successful in life.
KARIN
DAVIES
Senior Vice President,
Human Resources,
Flexential

BACKGROUND: Started in electrical engineering at the University of Tennessee and switched to graduate with a general business degree. Since human resources management didn’t exist as a discipline yet, I pursued a formal accreditation through the Society for Human Resources Management (SPHR).

ONE THING YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT: Exercising at the Y keeps me sane.

AMY
DOSIK
Chief Executive Officer,
Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta, Inc.

BACKGROUND: Undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania and law degree from Emory University. I built my career as a consultant and lawyer until I made the change to non-profit leadership.

WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP: I became interested in government and policy at an early age and the impact its outcomes could have on people.

MY IDOL: Juliette Gordon Low. In 1912, women didn’t have the right to vote or own property. She taught young girls from a variety of social classes and ethnic groups how to be independent and survive and make their own way in the world. She was an inspirational and revolutionary woman. She didn’t allow herself to be defined by her circumstances. She was deaf, had breast cancer, and suffered through an unhappy marriage, but she chose to define her own path and helped to inspire other women to do the same.


GRACE
HUANG
President of Inventory Solutions,
Cox Automotive

BACKGROUND: Undergraduate degree from UNC Chapel Hill and MBA from Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP: My parents were both scientists and they steered me away from science and urged me to go into business. At the time I thought, “What is business?” They said, “You don’t want to be in a lab all day. You need to be on the business side.”

ONE THING YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT: I have a small weakness for fun jewelry and I’m intrigued by the “Tiny House Movement,” which has prompted me to eliminate clutter and donate what I don’t need.
Chief Collaboration Officer,
Highroad Global Services

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate degree from University of California, Santa Barbara. I started my own company after traveling the world and discovering my knack for writing, training, and communication across cultures. I help clients enable effective cross-border working relationships.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** I was fascinated by airplanes and rockets as a child. My dream job was to work for NASA as an astronaut, but I learned in college that I couldn’t deny my love for public speaking and analytical and writing skills.

**MY IDOLS:** Professionally, the astronauts on the Challenger space shuttle. They were some of the best and brightest people across a diverse spectrum. Personally, Alex Lifeson, the guitarist from the Canadian rock band Rush. His ingenuity and technicality allow him to play fast and flashy riffs, but also subtle, beautiful background patterns which together reveal a great form of self-expression.

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SVP, Chief Information Officer,
The Freeman Company

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate degree from St. Ambrose University in marketing and economics. MBA in information technology from the University of Kansas.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** I remember my grandmother or somebody asking me that…and the answer that resonates is: some sort of architect.

**MY IDOL(S):** Both of my parents. My mom, who taught me early on that I have the freedom to make my own choices, and my dad taught me how important it is to know what makes you happy, stay grounded, and just be true to yourself.

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SVP, Data & Analytics,
McKesson

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate degree in metallurgical engineering in India and an MBA from University of California, Irvine.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** Originally, a doctor, because my mom had always wanted to be one. I got into both medical and engineering schools, but I went with engineering because I had higher scores.

**MY IDOL(S):** Gandhi. In part because I grew up hearing about India’s independence, but also because of my beliefs—living minimally, with empathy and fairness, and leading by example. I try to apply empathy a lot in the context of understanding both the business side needs as well as the technology side. I also use this mindset to encourage me to take time to “go look and see” to be able to bridge the gap between business and technology.
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| **Chief Information Officer**,  
InterContinental Hotels Group | **CEO and President, Consumer & Commercial Banking Products**,  
Ally Bank | **President**,  
Harland Clarke |

**BACKGROUND:** I’ve worked across numerous industries in all major IT disciplines including application development, operations, security and audit, program management, and quality assurance.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** Some of my fondest memories are of going to work with my father on Saturdays. I remember typing in card punches, cleaning out the dots from the loop tape, and working in IT operations to complete impact print jobs. The experience laid the foundation for wanting to become a CIO like him and provided an appreciation for how far technology has come and what it can do for businesses today.

**MY IDOLS:** From a professional/career perspective, my dad and his business associate. Their personalities, leadership, and demeanors influenced me greatly. From a fun perspective, Bionic Woman and Wonder Woman. In hindsight, I realize the influence strong female characters had on me.

**ONE THING YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT:** Yoga pants for comfort on long flights, and my iPad to stay connected to family and friends through FaceTime.

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate degree from Pennsylvania State University. I worked in banks for my entire career and some of the best roles I’ve had have been those that were never on my radar screen. Being intellectually curious and open to possible career moves outside of my comfort zone or primary interests has helped me to learn new skills and expand my horizons.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** As a child, I wanted to be a teacher, which later changed to trumpet player in a symphony. Upon finishing high school and embarking to college, I realized that career path might not pay the bills comfortably, and business became my focus.

**MY IDOL:** Grandmother Emma Miller. She was brilliant and norm-defying and supported the finances for the company she shared with my grandfather. Emma was also the president of the Utah Women’s Association and held meetings that I was able to observe. I have pictures hung throughout my house as a reminder of the incredible impact she made on my life.

**ONE THING YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT:** Actually, two things: Burt’s Bees lip balm and my water bottle.

**BACKGROUND:** Undergraduate degree from Colorado State University in psychology. Liked working with people, and took a job in Sales after college where she quickly moved through the ranks at Harland Clarke.

**WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:** As a child, I loved to play with my grandmother’s adding machine as I enjoyed the logic of numbers. I would make “to do” lists and developed appointment books just like my grandmother did.

**ONE THING YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT:** My large purse and all the contents within. I also can’t live without FaceTime where I can see my family and grandbabies when I travel.
**Describe a Major Obstacle You’ve Overcome.**

**Rashmi Kumar:** The biggest challenge I’ve faced in my career has been relationships. Relationships are so critical to the business world, and as an immigrant coming to the U.S. as an adult, I don’t have the 20-year professional relationships here that drive so much of the business world. Not having those long-term relationships poses a challenge to me in building my network and leveraging my potential, even in getting the right positions to deliver work for companies.

**Grace Huang:** Most people don’t think about a woman leading an automotive company, especially one that involves used cars. I come from a very different background than most of my peers, and I’ve learned that it’s not just your smarts, but how you connect and engage with people that matters. I am passionate about creating a positive working environment for employees, which in turn helps drive a great client experience.

**Di Morais:** At Bank of America, a mentor identified an opportunity for me to run a stand-alone subsidiary as part of the mortgage business. There were many challenges, but it was energizing since it was a brand-new space. The learning curve was accelerated, and the team size was extremely large (about 700 people). I had to quickly learn how to set the strategy, align and motivate the team, and execute on the strategy while remaining customer-focused. This proved to be a big challenge and one of the hardest jobs I ever had, but it helped accelerate my growth as well.

**Jana Schmidt:** I’ve had to overcome the guilt of being away from my family due to the extensive travel that was necessary for my growing career. I had to move my family a few times and was not able to spend as much time with my daughter, bonus daughter, and bonus son in their younger years. But, now, I’ve been able to see the strength of my strong children and have been able to shower support and attention on them, as well as my grandchildren.

**Laura Miller:** As I’ve progressed in my career, I’ve recognized the need to focus on Emotional Intelligence—my EQ, not just my IQ. This has been a challenge. Employee engagement scores were lower than desired, so I worked with an executive coach to complete 360-degree reviews and address the feedback. Through the process I learned how important relationships are and how important it is to really listen to others, understand what they’re trying to say, understand their needs, and have the EQ to determine how to respond.

**Describe a Major Moment of Success.**

**Michelle Johnson:** To me, success is having been with Freeman for eight years—not because of longevity, but because that means I’m happy here. Finding something that makes you happy, is what it means to be successful. If you’re happy to wake up every day and enjoy what you do, that’s what we all look for and I can’t argue too much with that.

There was a moment in my career when I had left one position without another to go to, and a prior colleague suggested I do an exercise to think about what I truly wanted to do—what I liked and didn’t like. The theme I found that truly resonated with me was business problem-solving. For me to find a role that has allowed me to continue to focus on that problem-solving in a varied and challenging environment has been a big success.

**Jana Schmidt:** I left Harland Clarke after 21 years to work for a global energy and sustainability company, Ecova. The company merged with a French company (ENGIE) and the CEO of the business that acquired us asked me to interview for the position. I spent two weeks in Paris for a multi-dimensional interview. While I performed well, there were several highly qualified candidates with more extensive international energy experience than me. I concluded that the odds were not high for me to win the role. It was an extraordinary experience when the leader responsible for hiring told me that I was chosen due to their confidence in my drive and commitment to winning.

**Laura Miller:** I was recently announced as IHG’s new CIO. I remember attending a town hall and hearing, “Now, I want to announce Laura Miller, your new CIO.” This was the moment it finally hit home that I
had achieved my lifelong career goal. I am most proud of the journey within the IHG IT organization, including the achievements, growth in capabilities, and impact technology has had on the success of the business.

Di Morais: While difficult to select because of my blessed career, one highlight that stands out was the decision to join Ally in the peak of the financial crisis. At the time I thought, “This might be a six-month assignment, a six-year assignment; who knows?” We worked through all the challenges and transformed and stabilized the company. Ultimately, I was part of the road show team for our Initial Public Offering launch that traveled across the US and Europe to share our company vision with investors. Following a successful IPO, I was part of the executive leadership team that was present on the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange when Ally rang the opening bell on our first day as a publicly traded company. It was a special and unique experience that I will always remember.”

Grace Huang: Motherhood is extremely important to me. I make sure my kids don’t grow up with an absent mother. I think the biggest success for me is being able to do my job well and be there for my kids. The hardest thing for all women who have families is being able to balance that well. My husband and I decided together that one of us would stay at home with the kids while the other pursued a career outside of the home. I greatly appreciate my husband’s tremendous support and partnership as a stay-at-home dad.

Amy Dosik: One of the things that was a disadvantage to me was not learning how to fail in a safe environment as a young professional. You learn a lot more from your failures than your successes. One of the things Girl Scouts intentionally does is teach girls to fail in a safe space and to reflect, learn, and pivot. For many of us, when you don’t fail, it means you’ve failed to get outside of your comfort zone and you haven’t tried something new or taken a risk to help you grow.

Rashmi Kumar: I was at a point in my career where I was not promoted to partner when many others around me were. Every year, they would tell me “one more year.” I ultimately ended up leaving the company. When I left, I felt that I had failed myself and a lot of women in the consulting organization who were looking up to me to be there. I realized that life is short, and we only have one, so in the professional career, I need to go and try things. If the company I’m working for doesn’t give me the opportunity to do something, then I’m going to go try it somewhere else.

Michelle Johnson: When I was in my 20s, I developed an ulcer and although I healed from it, it returned again and again. I realized that those years had spanned cities, jobs, and grad school and that I was the common denominator. It was a wake-up call for me to take a step back and figure out what balance meant to me. I realized that sometimes I had to put the work down and step away, refresh and refocus, and take care of myself first. To those who may have a hard time saying no, or finding that balance, my advice is to be in tune with your body. Just stop and check in. It’s different for everybody. Everybody’s stress load and ability to manage it is different. The key is managing yourself before you are a disservice to your team.

Karin Davies: Early in my career when I was an HR director reporting to the president, I made a decision regarding the HR Information Systems (HRIS). There were a few mistakes tied to this effort: I didn’t fully detail the RFP, so the interdependencies were lacking, I did not include all of the stakeholders initially, and the system wasn’t mapped to the growth plan in a company that was growing. I learned from these mistakes to take time and think more strategically about the broader environment, involve more stakeholders up front and pare back as appropriate later, and spend time planning and ensuring you and the company are aligned in direction.

Jana Schmidt: Losing the relationship with a large client and the ripple effect of that impact on the organization was difficult. Rather than allowing the pain to hamper progress, I concluded that day would be the day we started to win the next big client. Two years later, my
team celebrated a win four times the size of the client we had lost, resulting in substantial hiring and company benefits for my company. I learned that rising up in spite of failure allows you to create a future that is bigger than you even believed.

Grace Huang: On my first project at BCG, I faced some challenges transitioning from being overseas (Shanghai). Admittedly, I could have made my life easier by asking for help, but instead, I powered through and made it work. In hindsight, I feel that I could have created a better outcome for my client if I had been more open about the challenges and where I needed support.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST RISK YOU’VE TAKEN AND WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Vicki Flier Hudson: One risk was to leave my secure corporate job to start my own company with no confirmed clients. I knew my passion and skill set would ultimately open opportunities if I stayed true to my vision.

Another risk was revealing my role in two progressive rock bands to my clients. I was concerned the image of me on stage in a smoky bar would not be perceived well. After opening up to clients, I realized that the relationship became more authentic. People can relate to others with similar interests.

Michelle Johnson: I’ve found a common theme in my career that has actually worked out: say no to plan A, even if you don’t know your plan B. When I worked at both JCPenney and FedEx, I reached moments when I had to make a choice to either move into a different role or location to continue to grow my career there, or make a change somewhere else. In both cases, I made the decision to leave those companies and pursue a better option for me, even though I didn’t know yet where I would land.

Amy Dosik: My biggest risk was taking the job at Girl Scouts. I switched gears from working for big law firms and accounting firms to running a nonprofit organization. There are some parts I’ve performed well and others that I’m still learning. Being in Girl Scouts has helped me get outside of my comfort zone and get more comfortable with failing.

Laura Miller: The biggest risk I’ve taken in my career was switching jobs to gain wider experience. This required walking into a new company and being as successful as possible without having the legacy business knowledge of someone who had been there 10–20+ years. Establishing credibility and reputation in a short time is challenging, especially when you may often be the “new person.”

Rashmi Kumar: One of my biggest risks was when I left my CTO-type role at Toyota—an amazing and well-respected brand. I personally felt that it was a career risk, it was a brand risk, but I really am a consultant at heart, so I wanted to go try it. It was a calculated risk, but one that paid off with the consulting position I was hoping for.

WHAT IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST SURPRISES YOU’VE ENCOUNTERED AS YOU MOVED INTO EXECUTIVE ROLES?

Rashmi Kumar: It was eye-opening to see how it’s often not a technology issue or a business issue. Most of the time it’s a people issue. If people can leave their self-interests in their offices and come together to solve a problem for a company, the company would look different. The efficiencies would be very different.

Michelle Johnson: One of the biggest surprises has been the realization that you still only have 24 hours in a day. You may have a different level of peers every time you get another job or change roles as you move up.
in an organization, but you still only have 24 hours in a day. It becomes all about learning what to do with those same hours at a different operating level. When I first became a director, I remember asking others, “How do you increase your own bandwidth?” What it came down to was reassessing how to manage and optimize my time at each step as I grew.

**Laura Miller:** I found that the dynamics don’t change much. You’re still dealing with the human factor and that has to be an important part of what you bring to every single one of those sessions and levels. The biggest surprise was learning how important relationships are in being successful at an executive level. It’s impossible to know everything that is happening in your organization and with your peers. Building relationships and trust with each other by meeting commitments is critical.

**Grace Huang:** I’ve had great mentors as I’ve moved up in my career. It’s been really important when someone offers feedback to take it, use it, and grow. Feedback is a valuable gift that reflects someone’s perception of you. It may not be grounded in reality, or data, or facts, but there’s no point in arguing against it. Instead, take action and change their perception.

**Vicki Flier Hudson:** The criticality of defining, creating, and maintaining your brand while staying true to your values. You are your brand, especially when you lead the company.

**Jana Schmidt:** There were a handful of surprises, from the focus on finance to the shortage of information available to make decisions. The biggest was knowing that the person who worked the hardest wasn’t always the person who reaped the rewards. Often it was the person viewed as more strategic who was promoted. Learning how you present yourself and distinctly articulating business views are just as important as what you know. Most important is, getting the right people in the right roles as fast as possible so that you have a team that excels.

**Karin Davies:** I found the saying “it’s lonely at the top” began to resonate when I got to the vice president level. At director and senior director levels, there are smart constituents and colleagues to collaborate with for advice and counsel. At the vice president level, there’s still a sounding board, but people aren’t in the trenches with you. Decisions are yours and become a bit scarier given their magnitude and impact.

**Amy Dosik:** It can sometimes be lonely to sit in the CEO chair. There are a lot of critical decisions that happen every day, and it can be challenging and lonely to not be able to share some of those things with others. As CEO, and particularly as a woman CEO, having a “kitchen cabinet” or network of peers to draw on has been the most helpful thing to counteract that.

**DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES AND SKILLS? HOW DO YOU AND/OR YOUR COMPANY BENEFIT FROM GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES?**

**Laura Miller:** I recently attended a CIO conference where the findings of a study on the differences between male and female leaders were shared. A key reported difference was a greater drive in women. Studies are in progress to determine the reason. The environment or the challenge of balancing multiple roles at work and home may be contributing factors. I believe that everyone brings different skills to the table though. People tackle problems and situations differently. Diversity of perspectives and approaches ensures the best resolution is reached. My goal is to ensure that I am surrounded by a talented and diverse team to ensure success.
Di Morais: I don’t feel that there is a meaningful difference between men and women on a skill front. Sometimes, women can have a broader perspective, but that doesn’t imply that men aren’t capable of the same. I encourage women to look at opportunities and challenge themselves as opposed to opting out because they don’t have “all the skills required.” Men are more inclined to tackle the challenge and seem to be better at focusing on their interest in the opportunity and understanding where it may go in the future.

While it is critical that businesses cultivate corporate cultures that are “blind” to gender in terms of recognizing professional capabilities, it is also important to acknowledge that women often have different personal responsibilities from their male counterparts. For this reason, women should rid themselves of feeling guilt when it comes to balancing work and family. Everybody’s value system is different, and what’s most important is the instinct to know when juggling so many balls which ones are “glass” and will get damaged if dropped, versus which are “rubber” and can withstand being dropped because they will bounce back.

Michelle Johnson: I’ve been asked this question quite a lot, and to me, it’s not about gender. Everyone is unique in their background and experience, and everyone acts and reacts uniquely as a human, regardless of gender.

My experience is that there is not a difference in how men or women react to a situation, and, I think that question actually unintentionally perpetuates the divide. It’s time that we start to move away from it.

Vicki Flier Hudson: This was historically a blind spot for me. I had not previously considered gender as a factor in my ability to get work done and providing value to clients. But it’s impossible to deny the reality of gender bias, nor should we. I want to encourage women who have faced challenges in this area and, as a frequent traveler, I have been exposed to a wide spectrum of ways that various cultures treat women. My career is about enabling collaborative environments. Sometimes that means having tough conversations about biases which may be inhibiting work.

Rashmi Kumar: This is a hard question because when I interact with people I’ve been very good about taking myself out of it personally because I have predominantly worked with men throughout my career. I’m not sure if it’s a man versus woman thing or it’s just me versus other leaders, but the difference I bring is that I am able to put all situations in perspective quickly while making a decision.

Karin Davies: Women tend to struggle with bragging about their accomplishments. Since this is the case, it falls to others to more actively identify women who are high performers if they aren’t self-identifying. Leadership can have such a wide line of sight that it can be difficult to identify accomplishments that are meaningful but don’t have a near-term impact or are supporting secondary initiatives. By transforming the perspective, women can be recognized and given more opportunities. Men seem to be better at this.

Amy Dosik: When you look at the research, girls begin to think that they’re not as smart as boys at age 6. Having programs like Girl Scouts that can help them understand their worth and navigate a mixed gender environment is more important than ever.

Jana Schmidt: I don’t think it’s a gender discussion for me as much as an ego discussion; focus on creating something special that will outlast you. I want to help create an organization that is sustainably better for the work that we’re doing and so that our employees have better careers, our clients are better for it, and our communities are better for it. It takes a team of great men and women to build such an environment. I would like to help women better understand what is available to them. I’ve promoted women who deserved it, but didn’t ask for the promotion. I’ve increased women’s pay for equal roles and performance even when they didn’t ask for it, because I could see men were being paid more. Men are more comfortable asking for promotions or amenities that may not even be available to offer. Teaching women how to navigate these situations will help them long-term.
IS THERE ANYTHING THAT MEN CAN DO TO BE ALLIES IN WOMEN’S CAREERS?

Karin Davies: There are two ways men can help women progress: 1) Men can set one woman-oriented goal each year, such as becoming a mentor of a female executive, or aim to have at least two women that are in the finalist stage for a job opening. 2) I also recommend husbands lean in on parenting to be equal partners and really encourage their daughter’s being independent, outspoken, and equal. My husband put our daughter’s hair in a bun for dance for years when she was little, and he would tell her “Don’t accept the status quo. Stand up for yourself. Offer different ideas. Stand tall in your community. Put others before yourself. Reach out.”

Vicki Flier Hudson: People often choose their own comfort over talking about tough topics and issues. Rather than avoid an uncomfortable conversation, men can instead ask questions and try to understand differences. By setting aside any defensiveness, I’ve experienced that acknowledgment and actionable change are keys to being allies to women in the workplace.

Jana Schmidt: Turn the perspective around. How can we help men understand how to enable the environment for their smart, confident, hardworking, and capable daughters to achieve anything they want? Personalize the problem and the opportunity.

Laura Miller: For both men and women, I believe the key is to create a diverse team and then provide them with opportunities. This also applies to people and to their families. It starts with childhood; fathers can ensure their daughters have opportunities to learn about fixing their bikes just as much as playing with dolls.

Amy Dosik: Men need to understand unconscious bias. When you unpack what executive presence means to a lot of people, it means: white, male, and tall. Having men check their unconscious bias at the door and ask themselves, “What’s holding me back from mentoring or promoting a woman?” It is important to counteract the unconscious bias that all of us, both men and women, have in the workplace.

Rashmi Kumar: I think there’s no other way everybody can progress without allies and advocates—regardless of gender. The most successful companies are not male-driven or female-driven, but are places where men and women are able to work together to achieve success. The advice I’d give to anyone trying to progress their career is to not wait and sit there expecting someone will come and serve you something. It’s up to employees to reach out to their leadership, raise their hand, and ask for a sponsor or mentor. If you ask someone to be a mentor and they decline, that’s okay. Ask someone else. There’s no harm in asking.

Grace Huang: Men can do a lot to further women’s careers, but it can’t be an afterthought; it has to be a deliberate effort to help women succeed. While at Cox Automotive, I’ve had a great mentor in Joe George. I appreciate his support of my career, as well as other female leaders in the company. It takes extra work, especially in this industry where there’s just naturally more men to begin with.

One way men can help women move forward is by including more of them as interview candidates. I also recommend male hiring managers work with diverse teams that include women to make it easier to recruit females.

Di Morais: I think it’s important for male leaders to help create an environment where women’s perspectives

Everyone is unique in their background and experience, and everyone acts and reacts uniquely as a human, regardless of gender.

– Michelle Johnson

PERSPECTIVES FROM TODAY’S FEMALE EXECUTIVES
or differences, if there are any, are welcomed and appreciated. People are not all the same, and women need to be made to feel as though they are contributing even if they’re not the ones turning off the lights at the end of the day. Balance is important and personal, and we shouldn’t judge each others’ approaches. Focus on valuing the individual contributions of females should be the focus, not just face time in the office.

**WHAT DO YOU DO TO CONTINUOUSLY DEVELOP PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY?**

**Di Morais:** I read a lot to leverage my time on planes. I also try to talk with people both within the financial services industry and in other sectors. Spending time with other leaders to collaborate and share information is extremely valuable. There is applicability to what we do, and how we continue to cross the divide. I’ve established a circle of trust with a variety of people that includes mentors, bosses, and others who provide wisdom or advice throughout life. Maintaining these relationships is invaluable while progressing through jobs and companies.

**Jana Schmidt:** Be intellectually curious! Take every opportunity for hands-on learning. If we’re not staying up to speed and investing in ourselves, we can quickly become out-of-touch with what’s driving the economy, what’s driving consumers and our employees, and what’s driving the solutions of the future.

**Rashmi Kumar:** I talk to my sons. Learning from their generation is very important for us to stay refreshed and advance in our careers. They are a very sharp bunch because they have been really exposed to technologies. I also stay up to speed on new technologies and companies that are leading innovators. I follow news releases, I read a lot, and I go to meet-up events where I can discuss the latest trends with others and learn from them.

**Michelle Johnson:** I enjoy doing things like this interview because they help me articulate my experiences and reflect on them more than I would typically have time to do. It also allows me to give back to others who are on their own journey. I also make sure to regularly “check in” with myself and keep track of what is working and what’s not, both personally and professionally, so I can consciously adjust when something is no longer working.

**Grace Huang:** I’m a proponent of leveraging input as soon as I get it. When I get feedback, I do my best to put it into action.

**Vicki Flier Hudson:** In addition to reading, traveling, and playing music, I like to regularly obtain new professional certifications to expand my skill base and quench my constant thirst for learning—most recently I did the DISC certification. I always choose something I’m passionate to explore.

**Karin Davies:** The HR field has transformed from being transactional—focused on payroll paperwork—to focusing on differentiators and people. There are numerous routes available to pursue, many with certifications, such as becoming a coach or expert in employee happiness, assessing and nurturing employee engagement, speaking as a keynote at a conference, etc. Your network can be a powerful source for development as well.

**Amy Dosik:** I do a lot of reading around youth development. I try to understand trends between the work Girl Scouts does, how kids are learning in school, and trends around workforce development and anticipated employer needs. I challenge myself to stay inquisitive and delve deeper into the “why” upon initial answers.
**Key Takeaways**

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**Be Strategic:** Dedicate time to think strategically. Learn the core business and goals of your company and align accordingly.

**Prioritize:** Know which balls are “glass versus rubber” and focus on the top priorities. Then, assess your performance regularly.

**Step Out:** Take a risk. Ask for more. Tackle a new opportunity. Embrace and lead change for yourself and your organization.

**Fail fast/Fail small:** Learn your lessons from the past and pursue a better plan for the future.

**Keep Perspective:** Your current position may be a test for your next, bigger role and no challenge is the end of the world.

**Include the Men:** Help male colleagues set one woman-oriented goal (e.g. taking on a woman mentee).

**Be You:** Be authentic to yourself and others. If you’re in a rock band, own it!

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**SHARE A TIME YOU WERE PROUD OF HELPING SOMEONE ELSE TO SUCCEED.**

**Amy Dosik:** I knew someone with learning challenges who didn’t know what they wanted to do in life. I helped her get connected and ultimately hired her at Girl Scouts in our camp department. I’ve been able to watch her shine as she’s started on a great path and seen her skills and confidence grow, which has been rewarding to watch.

**Laura Miller:** While in a leadership role, I was asked to intervene with a team that had not been performing well. When I listened to the lead and his team, I realized that their ability wasn’t the problem. They were brilliant. They were just culturally different from the rest of the organization. I spent six months with the lead, helping him change his interactions and ensured his team was recognized for its achievements. I helped the organization leverage his talents. It shows how we have to think about diversity and how different people can fit into our environments.

**Vicki Flier Hudson:** I once asked a U.S.-based client, “What language do your Indian counterparts speak?” The answer: “Business is performed in English.” I challenged them to dig deeper and learn their Indian colleagues’ childhood languages to create a bond for the team. Some of the responses the team received from the Indian partners were, “We’ve never been so proud. You motivated us. We want to work hard for you.” Sometimes a small action can result in a significant and notable difference for team morale.

**Laura Miller**

Every single person out there needs to understand that there’s nothing you can’t do if you set your mind to it. We may not have the same resources to be able to do things, but there are always ways to get there if you really want to get there. If you really want to do something, you can find a way.

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**Di Morais:** I’ve worked with and around many incredible leaders and role models throughout my career. I’ve taken pieces from each of them, and I operate with the mantra that it is now my job to do the same for the next generation of leaders. I love mentoring, both formally and informally, and focusing on helping younger leaders continue in their journey of professional growth and development. Watching some of my mentees and other teammates really tap into their potential and embrace some of the guidance and advice I’ve given them is incredibly rewarding. At this stage of my career, I can honestly say that helping groom our next generation of leaders is probably the thing that gives me the highest amount of satisfaction.

**Grace Huang:** I believe that helping an individual grow is a very rewarding experience and feedback is a gift that should be honored. I’ve treasured providing assistance to others, as well as being the beneficiary. I recall times when I’ve had to deliver difficult feedback and was impressed by the recipient’s ability to embrace it and make positive changes. Reflecting on such moments of personal/professional growth and related outcomes makes me proud.

**Karin Davies:** The cool thing about Human Resources is the scale of the impact that can be made by your decisions on a daily basis. I’m specifically interested in positioning women for success. I’m in a position where I can identify high-potential women, lean in, help them determine their career path, and establish support across many leaders and functions. I’ve helped women in my company in that respect.
Survey Analysis

We surveyed over 600 women to learn more about their workplace experiences, idols who have influenced their lives, and advice received throughout their careers.

77% say Yes. Most women feel that their female peers are supportive of each other.

Role Models

- Activists: 22%
- Family/Friends: 42%
- Other: 9%
- Religious Figures: 9%
- Political Figures: 18%

Other:

- None: 6%
- Celebrity/Artist: 2%
- Scientists: 4%
- Superheroes: 3%
- Business Figures: 2%
- Athletes: 1%
- Authors: 1%
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?

1. Work with animals
2. Teacher
3. Entertainer/Artist
4. Medical Professional

More than 50% of respondents wanted to be one of these four things when they grew up. It is likely that young girls are influenced by what they see the women around them doing. One respondent commented, “women tend to be put in roles that emphasize nurturing qualities.” It is important to ensure girls see all opportunities as possible future careers.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A DIFFERENCE IN HOW MEN AND WOMEN ARE TREATED AT YOUR COMPANY?

- Yes: 35%
- No: 65%

There has been significant progress in the workplace and the majority of women feel that they are treated equally and with the same opportunities. However, the 35% who said yes show that there is still work to be done on gender equality in the workplace.

CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

95% of women are proactive about continuously developing themselves in the workplace.

WORST ADVICE RECEIVED

- Don’t take chances.
- Money equals happiness.
- Play by the rules.
- Failure is not an option.

BEST ADVICE RECEIVED

- Work for the position ahead of you, and as if you are already there.
- Dream big.
- Find the humor; it’s important to laugh.
- Don’t tell people what you know, show them.