



By Tasha Phelps

Developing The Next Generation of Female Business Leaders and Entrepreneurs

The second decade of the new millennium is fast approaching.... As we embark on new technologies, new relationships and new challenges, we also embark on a reign of new business leaders. The task at hand for current business professionals, is to remember to share experiences and pass down "lessons-learned" so that the future generation of business leaders is adequately prepared.

Business owners and employees, alike, are constantly forced to adjust to an evolving workforce. Fortunately, there are resources that exist to help with the transition of many of these prospective changes. Human Resource professionals, for example, are in a prime position to help tomorrows leaders to be prepared for these challenges and changes in the 21st Century. Diane Pinkins, owner of Flexible HR Solutions, has over 20 years of experience in the HR industry. In a recent conversation, Diane shared that "women tend to excel in communication skills such as being good listeners and being able to relate to people in positions of various levels of responsibility. These are some of the types of skills that will be needed in progressive leaders over the next 10 years or so, since the use of technology will be increasingly important." Her perspective as an HR professional is extremely valuable because it illustrates how future leaders can (and should) be prepared for leadership roles.

The US Department of Labor says that, "Making informed career decisions requires reliable information about opportunities in the future."¹ This said, producing the next generation of women professionals and entrepreneurs requires them to significantly evaluate the past, present and (yes) future career opportunities. Of course, the demand for a service or product will ultimately drive this window of opportunity, but knowing how to evaluate and take advantage of them is most definitely a technique that should be mastered.

In early 2008, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, predicted that in the next decade, approximately 2/3 of the estimated 15.6 million new jobs in the U.S. would require some post-secondary education or considerable on-the-job training. Some of the fastest growing occupations are likely to be I.T. related positions, financial advisors, and healthcare workers. Training that is relevant to these industry workforces will be critical. Women are well positioned for success in the area of education, because last year more than half of all advanced degree holders under the age of 40, were women. This is a phenomenal statistic to illustrate the advancement and growth of women obtaining specialized and / or higher-education degrees.

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Undoubtedly, an education will certainly position a professional with the equipment and the skills necessary to obtain a position, but it is the *experience* and the *relationships* that actually propel that same professional into the next stage. Young women today should be reminded that there are still “doors that need to be opened” for opportunities to fully present themselves.

Anne Fisher is another professional in the HR industry and owner of HR Alternative Consulting. As a board member for the Indianapolis Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, she compiled a list of strategies that young women professionals could potentially incorporate into their tactics for business development to take advantage of some of these opportunities:

- Continually read updated federal & state laws respective to your industry
- Dress and act professional
- Find or create a group of individuals to strategically network and pass referrals in the common market area
- Be consistent
- Follow-up in a timely manner
- Be willing to share your challenges and how you over came them
- Have a positive attitude
- Do not take things/rejection personally
- Research for free seminars to gain additional information
- Join professional association, in your specific area of expertise
- Get involved in organizations that will give you exposure
- Meet one-on-one with others to learn more about their business
- Be open to new ideas
- Be creative on the job
- Reach out to others who have had the same problems
- Ask for assistance, when needed and ask a lot of questions
- Listen to others!

In the end, the most significant thought to remember for today’s generation of budding young professionals, is to have INTEGRITY built into actions. Both Diane and Anne agree (and even suggest) that it is imperative to be open to new ideas and to reach out to others and ask for help when needed.

The wheel has already been created!

Tasha Phelps is a 10-year veteran in business ownership. As President and CEO of Phelco Technologies, she believes it's all about strategy. (www.phelco.com)