

## **The Bottom Line to Get Women Through Radio's Glass Ceilings**

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Woody Allen said, "90% of anything is showing up." The women featured on the list of Radio's Most Influential Women have certainly done that, showing up day after day over many years in pursuit of their professional goals. There is more to a successful career than simply showing up, particularly when an individual attempts to reach heights within an industry where her presence is still the exception rather than the rule. To some the issue of glass ceilings is a numbers game, to get more women in the room in order for more women to be promoted to executive positions. Another factor in the radio equation is that, since Consolidation, the total number of executive positions has decreased while the competition for those executive positions has increased. Consolidation has made radio a bottom line industry – now more than ever – one that focuses on profitability and continued revenue growth as paramount to success. Jobs as well as careers can be made or broken based solely upon a station's, region's, or company's revenue growth or the lack thereof. In light of the current competitive and industry landscape, what is the bottom line to women in the radio industry to break through the glass ceiling in their pursuit of executive positions? Three members of the Most Influential Women in Radio – Joan Gerberding, Erica Farber, and Val Maki took time to share their thoughts and insight on how getting more women in the room is not all that needs to be done for women to break through radio's glass ceiling.

### **Pipeline or Pipedream?**

The subject of glass ceilings in American business is not new. Neither is it for the radio industry, where an overwhelming majority of those individuals currently holding executive positions are men. For years, as Gerberding points out, women have been told that much of the problem is that women need to get into the executive pipeline so that there are experienced radio women to choose from when executive positions come open. Gerberding feels that the "pipeline" seems to be a "pipedream". According to the January 2006 MIW Gender Analysis, female general managers have risen from 11.1% in 1995 to 14.8% in 2006, while female program directors have risen from 8.2% in 1995 to 8.8% in 2006. "If station managers had this little amount of growth in their revenues over a ten-year period, they would not keep their jobs. Yet we accept it in areas of diversity growth. Now on the bright side, since 1995, there has been a 21% increase in female general sales managers. In fact, women account for nearly one-third of all general sales managers of all radio stations in the country. Clearly we (women) can bring the money in," Gerberding stated. Farber added, "At the end of the day our success is measured or should be measured exactly the same way."

### **Stepping into the Spotlight**

A successful track record over time can be a critical factor in women being able to step into the spotlight and put themselves in line for promotion to an executive position. One of the biggest things a woman can do to help herself to achieve executive positions is to not only show value to the company but to *create* value for the company. This is true not

only in a financial context but an employee context. Getting noticed is a key in getting promoted. “Women need to make themselves visible,” Farber observed. “Don’t expect people to find you. A successful track record is critical for moving forward; however, letting the captains of industry know you exist and that you want to be considered has to come from you.” Gerberding remarked, “Once you can show you can do the job, once you achieve outstanding results over and over again, suddenly your gender has far less meaning.” Helping others in the organization to develop and grow professionally can also be a career builder. “Treat people like the human capital they are. Create an environment that is inclusive of diverse opinions, styles, lifestyles, experience, and skills,” says Maki. Gerberding stated that she assesses the skills of each employee, and then provides them with ways to perform their jobs effectively. If the employees are successful, then their managers will be successful also. There are things women can do personally to improve their promotional prospects.

### **To Thine Own Self Be True**

Stamina, persistence, integrity, discipline, and sacrifice are qualities that all promising executives need in their mental toolbox in order to thrive in the radio industry. This may be especially true of women who have to fight harder to achieve their career goals. Executives must be able to communicate, collaborate, and apply as well as being open to the fact that they don’t always have the answers. Farber concluded that she doesn’t need to know everything but needs to know where to go to get the answers, a point with which Maki concurs: “Start sentences with ‘perhaps’, ‘I wonder if’, ‘do you think’, ‘I need some input’, ‘I think I may have made a mistake’, ‘what do you think?’ or ‘how might we...’ illustrating an executive doesn’t require absolute knowledge but rather a willingness to best utilize the people surrounding that individual executive to meet the needs of the company. Authenticity is also important. Maki, Farber, and Gerberding agreed that being true to yourself and maintaining a good sense of humor are traits that all aspiring women executives need to possess. “I have always tried to have a sense of humor and that is critical. Laughing is one of the world’s great remedies for everything,” Farber said. If you are not happy, Farber continues, it doesn’t matter how much money you make, or how much responsibility you have – make a change. It’s not worth it! Gerberding realized that she could get farther with humor, compassion, and not taking herself too seriously.

### **Caution: Sharp Curves Ahead**

The needed skill levels are changing and in order to move up it is critical that the learning curve needs to continue at a rapid pace, Farber articulated. That being said, positive leadership skills are not gender based, Gerberding notes, they are related to how managers choose to live their lives – both personally and professionally. An ability to learn from experiences is key to the growth of any executive. Maki points out that a leader should consider what could have been done differently next time in the same situation. ‘Always be grateful for whatever experiences you have,’ Maki added. Farber observed that some of the worst experiences with people have turned out to be some of the best in terms of helping her to grow and push her to doing other things. In the final analysis, women who aspire to executive positions need to do two things, according to

Farber and Gerberding: understand the goals of bosses, employers or partners and then do whatever it takes to exceed those goals and; to make a difference. That's the bottom line.