

# Female Leaders:

*What we can learn from their  
experiences*

Research and interviews by Lori Davis

# Female Leadership

- 1) What studies show
- 2) Quotes from famous people
- 3) What women I know say about it
- 4) Why are we even talking about this subject?

# Key factors that affect female leaders: (Kantrowitz, 2005)

- Education level
- Marital status
- Parental status

# Key factors that affect female leaders: (Pameroy, 2007)

- Building relationships (networking)
- Being comfortable dealing with staff at both the top and the bottom of the org chart

Oprah says...

“Women have a greater sense of intuition than men.”

## Vera Wang (fashion designer) says...

.....as a woman she shares more with her staff, feels more, and feels the responsibility of those who depend on her as part of every-day decision making processes

# Interviews with 4 women

- Note the different types of answers they give to the same questions
- Watch for gender capacities and balance and draw your own conclusions
- Remember: A balance between the gender capacities makes for the best leadership

# Why these 4 women?

- They are all so different they provide diverse perspectives of expertise and experience
- They all have promoted one or more times in the last several years
- They have strong leadership skills and perspectives

# Susie Smith: Planner to PW Director



Susie Smith, Public Works Director for the City of  
Springfield says

***factors that contributed to her success:***

BEING:

- Aware
- Open
- Strategic
- Persevering

## When Susie Smith was asked

*What tips do you have to help women leaders succeed-*

*(she said she gives men and women the same tips)*

- Provide teamwork between elected officials and staff
- Ask yourself, what are the steps to achieve where you want to go?
- Don't get wrapped up in the drama of the moment (background noise)
- Keep your ego and emotions out of it and don't get wrapped up in the petty stuff

# **Sarah Medary:** From Irrigation worker to Assistant City Manager with several jobs in between



Sarah Medary, Assistant City Manager for the City of Eugene says

***factors that contributed to her success:***

- Having an education and solid experience
- Good support of managers who saw her potential
- Her ability to understand and adapt to different work cultures

Sarah Medary, Assistant City Manager for the City  
of Eugene says

***factors that contributed to her success:*** (cont...)

- Took every opportunity presented (committees, extra work, etc.)-*which contributed to cross organizational exposure*
- FUN to be around!
- Returned the favor to others
- Had balanced parents
- Has a balanced personality profile

When Sarah Medary was asked

*What tips do you have to help women leaders succeed?*

- Pay attention to the culture of your workplace
- Maintain a good sense of humor
- Take time to build relationships before you try to lead
- Understand the culture before you try to change it
- Use what women are good at: intuition and collaboration

When Sarah Medary was asked  
**What tips do you have to help male leaders succeed:**

- Hire lots of women and pay them well!
- Use your female leaders to gain intuition
- Work on listening more and not so much on solving the problem
- Relationships are key: know the names of your employees children
- Recognize your audience and be aware that your actions could be interpreted as sexist, even if they were not intended

# Susan Muir: Planner to PDD Exec Director



Susan Muir, Planning Director for the City of Eugene  
***factors that contributed to her success:***

Susan Muir had a female mentor she attributes all of her success to.

- The mentor pushed her farther than she thought she was ready to go
- From that point on Susan knew she could do anything she ever needed to do

When Susan Muir was asked

***What tips do you have to help men & women leaders succeed?***

- Find someone in the role/position/ job you want to be in and go talk to them.
- Ask them how they got there and what do you need to do to get there
- Figure out your weaknesses and work on them
- Find people who can give you honest feedback and work on improving

When Susan Muir was asked

*What tips do you have to help women & men leaders succeed: (cont.)*

- Have a female mentor
- Turn around and mentor someone else
- Dress professionally
- Dress for the job you want to be in
- Be culturally competent and learn to navigate cultural issues well
- If other people throw barriers in your way, jump over them

# Keli Osborn: Newspaper editor to CMO Division Manager



Keli Osborn CMO Division Mgr. for the City of Eugene

***factors that contributed to her success:***

- Luck and timing
- Inner work: What do I want out of life? What do I want to contribute? What matters?
- Education: Got Masters in Public Administration along the way
- Gave herself permission to give attention to some areas and ignore others to live priorities and tell key relationships about it

When Keli Osborn was asked  
*What tips do you have to help women & men leaders succeed:*

“Balance self-confidence and leadership with collaboration and the recognition that we need other people.”

When Keli Osborn was asked

*What tips do you have to help women & men leaders succeed:*

- Be honest and straight forward with people  
by: -giving timely feedback  
-keeping your commitments  
-renegotiating commitments if needed
- Keep learning: get outside your comfort zone, get outside the box, try new things, do things a different way, expand your brain

# Keli Osborn

“ Working for the City of Eugene offers the value of flexibility for women and men to have a work/life balance that has helped me live my priorities.”

# Summary on Female Leadership

While each female leader is born with a certain style and shaped by different experiences we can:

- Use the successes of others to learn how to improve our leadership
- Use gender capacity to balance out our natural born tendencies

Why are we talking about this subject?

This subject can expand your  
*thinking* and *behavioral*  
*approaches* to the subject of  
leadership

# Leadership Diversity

Breaking Through Gender  
Stereotypes: “Feminine Men”

# Dede Henley

## “The Secret of Sovereignty”

What is the feminine?

It is inclusive, adaptive, yielding to the moment.

It is not rigid.

The feminine flows easily from one energy or activity to the next.

# Dede Henley

The masculine encompasses focus and accomplishment;

It's intensely directive and goal-oriented.

# Stephen Covey

## “The Habits of Highly Effective People”

- Be the assistant of your subordinates – remove obstacles – get out of their way.
- A coach doesn't carry the ball.

Jennifer James

## “Thinking in the Future Tense”

“Athletic coaches have changed their tactics from control and sometimes humiliation to empowerment, self-esteem, and team-based motivation. Most of the bullies are gone because fear and intimidation are limited motivators. The sources of human energy have changed. You now need to be able to sense people’s needs on an emotional level. When the going gets tough, the tough get sensitive.”



**Jon Ruiz**

City Manager  
City of Eugene

# Feminine Problem-Solving Approach

Just because I can't see the solution right now doesn't mean one doesn't exist.

With the input of the talented staff, I'm confident we can find a solution.



**Kurt Corey**

Public Works Director  
City of Eugene



## **Feminine Man**

Not afraid to wear a skirt...

# Who wants to wait at a red light when no one else is on the road?

## **Masculine Paradigm**

### Signalized Intersections

Controls human behavior with a machine that requires an external source of energy (electricity).

## **Feminine Paradigm**

### Roundabouts

Enables greater human discretion  
Respects human capacity for discernment  
Results in more fluid movement of traffic

# Stormwater Management

**Masculine**

**Feminine**

Single Function

Multi-function

Conveyance

Mimicking nature

Slowing things down

Inter-connected  
consequences



## **Billy Curtiss**

Stormwater Program Manager

City of Eugene

“Collaboration” & “consensus” are defined as “feminine” attributes, whereas the “masculine” would be more “independent” & “authoritative”

# The value of inclusive process

When people are included in the decision-making process, they are more willing to follow rather than begrudgingly comply.



## **Pete Kerns**

Police Chief  
City of Eugene

# Perceived Challenges

Perceptions of physical strength challenges for women can be overcome with proper tools and training.

# Unique Strengths

Women are more inclined to see an employee's potential, whereas men typically evaluate from today's performance.

In this regard, women are more often “transformational” leaders.

# Balance

Balance gender on selection committees –  
not only for a different/diverse perspective,  
but a more accurate perception

# Feminine Themes

- Working with employee strengths and seeing their potential
- Including others in decision-making process
- Investing in people and process