Shattering the Glass Ceiling: Suggestions for Success
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1. Work hard; there is no substitute for hard work.
2. Seek work you enjoy and you’ll never work another day in your life.
3. Do your homework before you make proposals. Make study a lifelong habit.
4. Analyze! Analyze! Obtain all the credible data you can find. Consider the pros and cons of every decision. Weigh them against alternative decisions, especially when the pending decision can change your life, e.g., choosing a career path, a school, or a job change.
5. Dare to take calculated risks based on credible data and analyses.
6. Be prepared; when opportunity knocks, be ready to open the door.
7. Take advantage of networking opportunities. Networking is more than exchanging business cards; to be truly effective, join organizations with which you share common interests and support them by serving on committees and contributing your knowledge and experience if it is relevant to the issues at hand.
8. Build on what you already know; you will attain the depth and breadth of knowledge and experience that provides the launching pad for your next opportunity.
9. Exceed expectations; those who do are more likely to be recognized and given new opportunities.
10. Never assume you already know everything about any subject.
11. Keep an open mind.
12. Learn from leaders.
13. Be aware that policies on paper handed down from “headquarters” do not always translate in real life as intended. Listen to the staff who are working directly with clients. They often have a more realistic sense of whether the policies they have been asked to implement are having the intended results.
14. Seek mentors.
15. Be a mentor; help others to multiply the knowledge you have attained.
16. Collaborate: emphasis on collaboration is a key factor in many of the most effective organizations.
17. Give credit to those who help you achieve your objectives. It is amazing what can be achieved when you do not care who gets the credit.
18. Work within the culture of your environment to gain the confidence of peers and supervisors. Your opinion must be valued if your efforts are to be effective.
19. Use thoughtful judgment when working with others.
20. Demonstrate confidence without being arrogant.
21. Be a team player.
22. Maintain your principles and integrity in a non-threatening, respectful manner.
23. Be patient with those who do not understand.
24. Take responsibility for your own actions.
25. Be dependable; if unforeseen circumstances prevent your keeping a commitment, notify your supervisor and colleagues as soon as possible (ASAP). This may help them to implement “Plan B.”

26. When you make a mistake, admit it ASAP. Some organizations establish procedures for relating to the media if the mistake has possible negative consequences:
   a. Deal with it promptly.
   b. Tell the truth.
   c. Do not attempt to cover up the error. A cover-up is often more damaging than the inappropriate action.
   d. Handling the mistake in this way may help to make it a “one-day story” rather than having it drag on until “60 Minutes” investigates it.

27. Know when to dig in your heels on a controversial issue and when to compromise. Almost without exception, laws that are passed are a product of significant compromise.

28. Take a lesson from how high profile professionals work together to achieve positive results. The late Senator Ted Kennedy (Democrat) and Senator Orrin Hatch (Republican) had fundamentally different philosophies. Yet they worked together and took leadership for encouraging their colleagues to pass significant legislation that benefits families. They maintained respect for each other even when they disagreed.

29. Consider: Is this issue worth a battle? Some issues are not.

30. Determine the difference between “a war” and “a battle.” You want to win the war even if you lose some of the battles.

31. Using leadership ability wisely is a key factor in breaking the glass ceiling.

32. Leadership does not always have to be on a large scale to be effective. Consistently taking responsibility for making thoughtful, rational decisions, one at a time, can be just as effective as making a single big splash.

33. Respect cannot be bestowed; respect must be earned, and is an essential factor in becoming a leader.

34. Your actions will always speak more loudly than your words.

These suggestions are steps that can be effective in helping to break the glass ceiling. No single one of them, alone, is likely to break the glass ceiling. Rather, they are an accumulation of what I have learned through my 26 years of professional work experience with industry, government and non-profit organizations.