

ABSTRACT

Title: Casting for Leadership Talent: The Voices of Six Successful Women in the Banking Industry

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This primary purpose of this study was to examine the roles of women in the American banking industry who have achieved the title of Senior Vice President or above and to determine why these women, in particular have attained senior leadership positions. This study explores the facilitating and inhibiting factors for women in the banking industry, in both an individual and institutional context, to determine whether there are goals in place that focus on the retention and development of the most talented people for their organizations; especially the women.

A qualitative research design was used to analyze and interpret the six participants' perceptions and reactions. After collecting data from multiple focus groups and in-person interviews, the transcripts were compiled and narrative portraits were written for each research participant. Next, a cross-case analysis was conducted to search for common themes or roles.

Based on the results of this study, successful women in banking have a blended leadership style that includes exemplary, disciplined and servant leader characteristics. The common themes of these leaders are as follows: they report

strong parental influence and a moral compass; understand that their voices matter for their own career progression, the value of raising their hand, and women need to ask; dare to explore their discomfort zone, by challenging themselves and the process; implement a holistic approach including heart, mind and spirit; believe in self, others and a higher calling; and believe in their ability to make a difference and leave a legacy of meaning by giving back.

Recommendations for future research and practice include a review and response to both the institutional and individual factors that inhibit and facilitate women's progress in the banking industry. Removing some of the barriers and reforming the exclusionary practices from an institutional and cultural perspective, will assist women in the future. In addition, women must recognize their own role in succession planning by implementing the themes that have emerged in this research and through other behaviors and actions such as emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and seeking mentors.

