

## Women at the Top Leadership Research

It is always interesting to be curious about the ripple effect of role models, inspiring teachers, trail blazers bravery. How are those doors opened, glass ceilings dissolved, seemingly insurmountable cliffs scaled, limitations challenged, assumptions overturned? Is it simply one courageous or foolhardy person or a combination of many making those ripples spread way beyond what might be thought possible?

With BWB – Bristol Women in Business now in its 4th successful year connecting women both from corporates and large businesses in the city the opportunity to input another dimension became clear. Inspirational women at the top by sharing their story have influenced, intrigued and encouraged the realisation that we are all role models, inspiring teachers, brave trailblazers.

As a result my inspiration has been to invite women at the top to share their thoughts regarding leadership and create this series of interviews. I began with five questions and as the first interview was coming to a close two more questions were determined to be asked – What question would you like to have been asked? And then to ask the interviewee to answer it which was fun. And the other question was ... who would you like to be interviewed or suggest that I interview?

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### Sarah Pullen, Commercial Director Regionals Reach plc

**eighth in the series - interviewed on 30 June 2017 by Halina Jaroszewska**

#### **You have no doubt inspired a lot of aspiring leaders – from where (or from whom) do you draw your inspiration?**

I am inspired by many different people, many different things also what I read, watch, listen to so I can't say it is just one thing. For example, I sat with one of our telesales people who only been in the business 6 months to do a coaching session. I was surprised and inspired by his enthusiasm and what he said. So, there are a range of inspirations in fact ... daily ones. Career-wise I have been fortunate to have had leaders, very good ones who have mentored me. As well as great leaders who have mentored me, I have been inspired by my peer group and my management team. It could also be someone on TV who is maybe saying something different, doing something amazing in the world. I think wow! It's a number of inspirations and it's constant.

#### **What would you say have been the biggest developments in leadership that you have witnessed in your years as a leader?**

I would say accepting change as the norm. You've got to be flexible, adaptable, nimble ongoing. Another thing is that people need to be led in different ways. For me it's not my way or the highway. As a leader one needs to adapt for one's people so that they can respond therefore get the best out of them.

#### **What do you think are the most significant trends and challenges faced by leadership today?**

It's getting the right people to fit in the right culture, by which I mean the right behaviours, with the right skill set. Today work life balance is more important than ever. In the past you worked hard then got the benefits and that was sufficient. Our young, enthusiastic staff has a very different communications set than my generation because of social media need to connect via that platform rather than me talking to them direct. Communication levels are very different, very different engagement especially with millennials. I use a monthly team brief, our intranet, Facebook Live sessions. The latter was hysterical, and my marketing team said it was perfect.

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**What do you think today's leaders should be doing to keep moving leadership to a new level?**

I think there needs to be more connectivity with different leaders from different organisations. Conferences of leaders in different cities around the country so that leaders can learn from each other, get inspired. I attended a conference recently and it was a day that made me think of different things that I had been doing and I have re-introduced them. Leaders need to test themselves regularly to see if they are bettering themselves daily. As a leader you need to self-learn all the time.

There is a clear difference between a leader and a manager. The two are very different. A leader says this is me like it or not which gives a 50 / 50 chance of a match. It's more about adapting to different levels, different styles, different departments.

**What advice would you give to young aspiring leaders?**

My advice is to focus on the people who work for you and who want to work for you. Put energy into the people who are going to make a huge difference.

**What question would you like to have been asked?**

*(ED: to be advised)*

**Who would you recommend to be interviewed?**

Donna Speed, at Bristol Commercial Ops

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Outstanding Executive Coach | Chosen By High Potential Leaders, Key Teams |  
To Deliver Remarkable Results | Inspires Change

Halina helps fast track and aspiring leaders, also key teams, to turn uncertainty into a powerful tool for exponential growth. Her aim is to enable clients to switch surviving into thriving, take business and personal performance to the next level and maximise their potential during challenging times.