

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?

Whilst co-ordinating BWB – Bristol Women in Business from corporates and large businesses when meeting in person was possible 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?

Vicky Gardner - Director, ZiaBia Events Consultancy

ninth in the series - interviewed on 1 September 2019 by Halina Jaroszewska

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

I think at different times in my life I have been inspired by different people. When I was starting my career in hotels there were women in leadership roles that I looked up to, wanted to learn from and aspired to be like. Then as my career progressed, before co-founding ZiaBia, I worked at an agency in Swindon, where I learnt all about corporate events. I had the good fortune to work with and alongside many women in senior roles at global companies who I constantly learnt from. I tried to take on board attributes I admired as I became me. Personally, there have been many women who I am inspired by – from Robin Arzon who wrote “Shut up and Run” when I was training for a marathon to more recently Michelle Obama when I read her book “Becoming”.

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

In the world of corporate events, I would say technology has changed the way we work significantly. In the beginning back in 2005, I would be travelling to London a couple of times a week to meet with clients and hold project meetings. Not always the best use of time. Technology has made the world a much smaller place as we can digitally communicate and speak to people anywhere without all travelling to be in the same room for planning sessions. There have been some instances where we have met our clients face to face for the first time at an event we have worked on together as all of the pre calls have been on Zoom or similar.

This has especially been true since March 2020, where we have planned, delivered, and built relationships with clients we have never met in person before. The events space was completely digital during the pandemic. This has changed everything forever for corporate events going forwards and how they will evolve when we work on face to face projects in the future.

People now have a much higher expectation of the digital element of live events than before when it was OK to just

/ ...

stream the main stage. We now hold project meetings online and believe this will continue in the main as it is more efficient and environmentally friendlier. This has meant as leaders we have had to adapt, innovate, and learn new ways to deliver and engage audiences for our clients.

Alongside this, I would say mental health in the work place and sustainability have also become vital when running your business to ensure your teams and business footprint are well looked after and positive for the environment.

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

Today, there are many areas we need to keep working on. New ones that the pandemic has brought to a head that we need to deal with. From flexible working and how you manage getting teams back into offices – if you are going to do this or if your policies have been completely re written to allow for flexible working and a hybrid approach.

Diversity & Inclusion has never been more relevant. It's a hot topic. For us in the service space having as diverse a workforce and community as possible around us as we move forward will aid and help our growth as we collaborate and share opinions to create new visions. For our clients events' we are using the DICE Charter as a guideline - <https://www.getdice.co.uk/dicecharter>

Mental health in the workplace; how you look after your teams who do return to the office; if you now have a high percentage of remote workers, how will you reach them and ensure there is still team morale and engagement across your entire company?

Then we have sustainability and environmental policies – how are you playing your part to help educate and set examples to inspire entire events to take these initiatives on board and support COP26 and beyond?

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

If the pandemic has taught us anything it is that we are all on the same journey. Maybe in different boats, however the best way forward is to collaborate and support. Taking time to meet with peers and talk; share ideas and experiences; learn from each other really is a huge benefit. Communication I think is the key here alongside listening.

I believe in mentors and coaches. When you have found the ones that suit you and your style embrace them and the new learnings you will gain.

What advice would you give to young aspiring leaders?

Work hard, learn your craft - listen and watch to learn the good and bad to develop your style, always be yourself, be authentic, original and be honest.

Having a good network and supportive peers around you will also help gain confidence and as much experience as you can from as many different walks of life as possible.

Love what you do!

What question would you like to have been asked?

Interesting question as in the events sector it's been quite distressing, traumatic, yet then exciting and exhilarating. We have had to learn, grow, adapt and innovate to ensure ZiaBia was still here for ourselves and our team when the pandemic is over.

As a team we have done it for each other and motivated each other to keep going, keep pushing and keep delivering in entirely new formats for our clients. We have researched, watched virtual events and honed our skills!

Personally, I have also set myself physical challenges along the way to try and balance my time which I find very helpful and find this is when I get the best creative ideas!

/ ...

Who would you like to have / recommend be interviewed?

Adrienne Herbet – <https://adriennelondon.com/>

Oti Mabuse – Professional Dancer

or Michelle Obama....

Details of previous interviews in Series One

Check them out at [Women at the Top - Halina Jaroszewska](#)

1. Fiona Jordan - Associate Dean [External Engagement], Faculty of Business and Law UWE (03.02.17)
2. Michele Crossman – Senior Leader in Defence (24.03.17)
3. Katharine Finn – Regional Leader, PwC West and Wales; Assurance Partner (15.03.17)
4. Laura Stambouleh – Partner, Public Sector Advisory – UK Consulting, Cushman & Wakefield (09.05.17)
5. Isla Baliszewska – UK Director Smart Coaching Training Ltd (26.06.17)
6. Fleur Bothwick, OBE – Director of Diversity & Inclusive Leadership, EMEA Ernst & Young LLP (15.10.17)
7. Donna Whitehead – Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law UWE (15.10.17)
8. Sarah Pullen – Commercial Director - Regionals, Reach plc (30.06.17)

**To discuss how Halina Jaroszewska can help
email halina@halinajaroszewska.com**

Compassionately Ruthless Executive Coach
Chosen by High-Potential Leaders and Teams to Deliver Remarkable Results
Inspires Change ~ Be Halina'd

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.