

AN ANALYSIS OF SUCCESS FACTORS FOR WOMEN MANAGERS IN THE HOSPITALITY AND FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTORS IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The traditional top down approaches where leaders give directives are becoming less and less appropriate in modern management. The approaches are problematic especially in an environment which is always changing. What is becoming more and more appropriate for one to be successful as a leader is positive influence. Findings from a research carried out to identify success factors for women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe show that there are certain factors that contribute towards one's success (Zinyemba, 2013). The success factors include the following: good communication skills, team work, personal effectiveness skills and influence of role models. Studies have also shown that there are certain behaviors and qualities that contribute to one's success as a manager (Industrial society, 1997). Such behaviors include enthusiasm, toughness, integrity, warmth and humility. This paper analyses success factors for women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe in the light of what other researchers have identified as key to successful and effective leadership.

Key words: Success, leadership, work-life, gender, glass ceiling, Zimbabwe

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Introduction and background

A number of studies have been carried out into what makes one a successful and influential leader (Carnegie, et al., 1993; Rapaciolli, 2012; Stewart, et al., 1993. and Moshavi, et al., 2006).

Common among the factors identified as key to one's success as a manager, among others, includes the following:

- importance of a role model;
- ability to communicate and listening effectively;
- involving others and seeing things from another person's perspective;
- team development;
- balance between thinking and feeling;
- positive mental attitude;
- self confidence; and
- possession of specialized knowledge and skills.

Findings from the research into success factors for women managers in the hospitality and financial services in Zimbabwe have identified success factors which reflect those identified by other scholars. Among other success factors, the research identified teamwork, self confidence possession of specialized knowledge and adaptability. The study suggests that for women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe to be successful they should be cognisant of what they should do to succeed in managing the many challenges that they experience in their multiple manager and gender roles as they strive to achieve a good work-life balance.

Commonly cited success factors

Success factors which have been identified by other scholars and are common to them are discussed below.

Role modeling

In a study done in the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) in Zimbabwe the need for support of a role model or mentor was seen as being vital to the success of women managers in breaking the glass ceiling (Rapaciolli, 2012).

However the effect of role modeling as being influential in successful leadership development and shaping one to be a successful leader has been questioned (Carnegie, et al., 1993). The authors argue that one is unlikely ever to rise above a poor imitation of the person one is

pretending to be. The leadership techniques that would work best for one are the ones that one nurtures inside. What is required is self awareness, figuring out what qualities one possesses that could be turned into the qualities of leadership. The first step toward success is identifying your own leadership strengths (Moshavi, et al., 2006). This means that to be an effective leader one would need to maximize on one's strengths and work on one's weaknesses.

Ability to communicate and listening effectively

Another key success factor is the ability to communicate effectively. Effective communication is an important key success factor for effective leadership. "Our words really should be like a present. A little gift; something that we give to other people; something that they want; something that they reach out for; they grab our words, and they take them in, and they love them. Because our words made them feel so good." (Lewis, et al., 2006).

It can be argued that all the brilliant ideas that one has in the world are worthless unless if one does share them. That is step number one. Step number two is effective listening i.e. being open to all. People are more likely to be receptive to your ideas if you show them that you are receptive to theirs (Carnegie, et al., 1993). These authors have observed that successful leaders, more often than not, are the ones who have learned the value of listening. "Listening is the single most important of all communication skills. More important than stirring oratory. More important than the ability to speak multiple languages. More important even than a flair for the written word" (Carnegie, et al., 1993).

Involving others and seeing things from another person's point of view

Carnegie et al., (1993) also argue that successful leaders involve employees in all aspects of the work process and shows genuine interest in them. Including people motivates them and that is a key success factor in effective leadership. It is important to let people know that you respect them and that you appreciate their work and that they are important to you and that you want them to grow and rich their potential. This can be fostered by expressing genuine interest in others. There are many ways of showing interest which include using a pleasant voice on the telephone, smiling at people, learning their names and how to pronounce them, remembering their birthdays, asking about their husbands and wives and children. This view tallies well with the communal leadership discussed earlier.

The same authors also argue that effective leadership means seeing things from the other person's point of view. If you want to have more successful relationships with your customers,

your family, and your friends, look at things from the other person's perspective. So it is important to "Step outside of yourself to discover what's important to someone else" (Carnegie, et al., 1993).

Team development

Team development is another key success factor that many authors cite. It is argued that the greatest legacy a leader can leave is a group of talented, self-confident people, who are themselves ready to lead (Carnegie, et al., 1993). A successful leader is one who develops his team and keeps the team focused. Focus is the ability to ignore distractions and pursue only what is important. This view is echoed in transformational leadership which focuses the team on vision and the broader context of the organization. Leaders must keep people focused on core values and mission, and encourage perpetual transformation of the organization as a means of pursuing its core mission, (Burns, 2002).

The same view was echoed much earlier by Kotter (1996) who argued that a leadership skill that is commonly associated with effectiveness is the ability to develop visioning capabilities. A leader should be able to develop a strategic vision and to inspire others to adopt and share the vision. In addition to visioning skills it is important for a leader to align and communicate direction, motivate and inspire employees.

Positive mental attitude and self confidence

Creating a positive mental attitude contributes to successful leadership (Carnegie et al., 1993). The authors argue that outside influences do not usually determine personal happiness. What matters is how one reacts to those influences, good or bad. They argue that one of the leader's most important jobs, then, is to set a positive, self-confident tone, showing others that failure isn't even a possibility. Positive mental attitude and self-confidence as a success factor is important especially for women who are traditionally seen as weak and lack self-confidence.

Balance between thinking and feeling

Establishing a balance between thinking and feeling in decision-making is essential to enhance leadership capabilities. The advantages of thinking style include analysis, logic, objectivity, and impartiality. The disadvantages associated with the thinking style include over analysis of situations, avoidance of emotional expression, undervaluing the feelings that motivate others, and lack of approachability (Barr & Barr, 1989). In order to overcome these weaknesses one has

to develop an aptitude for using the feeling style. The advantages of using the feeling style of leadership include supportiveness, shared emotion, sympathy, expressiveness, and the ability to provide descriptive and interesting account of events. The weaknesses include avoidance of conflict, lack of assertiveness, overly emotional responses.

Given the advantages and disadvantages of thinking and feeling styles it appears that optimal decisions are based on a balance between the thinking and feeling preferences.

This line of thinking is supported by another study which also stresses the need for high level of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000: Mayer et al., 2008). These studies show that the ability to manage one's own and the emotions of others is fundamental to transformational leadership. What is required then is for women managers to strike a balance between thinking and feeling styles.

Possession of Specialized Knowledge and Management Skills

Another important managerial skill for effective leadership is the possession of specialized knowledge. It becomes especially important when directing subordinates. To be successful a leader just must have the necessary expertise.

Behaviours and qualities people value in leaders

Researchers have identified specific behaviours and qualities that people value in leaders and that contribute to their success. The behaviours may, in a way, also be considered as key success factors of effective leadership. There are a number of qualities which are generic to good leaders even though the qualities required of good leaders may vary somewhat from situation to situation (Adair, 1984). The following characteristics are regarded as contributing to leadership and management success: enthusiasm, confidence, toughness, integrity, warmth and humility. Research conducted by the Industrial Society (1997) also identified a number of similar behaviours people value in leaders.

An awareness of the behaviours and qualities people value in good leadership is important for women managers as they develop strategies for meeting leadership and gender challenges.

Research Methodology

Qualitative techniques using in depth interviews, focus discussion groups and questionnaire with open ended questions, were used to identify success factors for women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe. Using in depth interviews, data was collected from a case study of 8 women managers from the hospitality and financial services

sectors in Zimbabwe. The questionnaire was administered to 60 women managers from the same sectors who did not participate in the case studies. Data was also gathered from two focus discussion groups of 6 participants in each group. The participants in the focus discussion groups were not the same as those involved in the case studies and had not been asked to complete the questionnaire. The multiple sources of data enabled cross referencing and validation. Participants were asked to provide responses to the following two questions:

1. What do you attribute your success as a manager to?
2. What advice can you give to other women for them to effectively manage leadership and gender challenges that they meet?

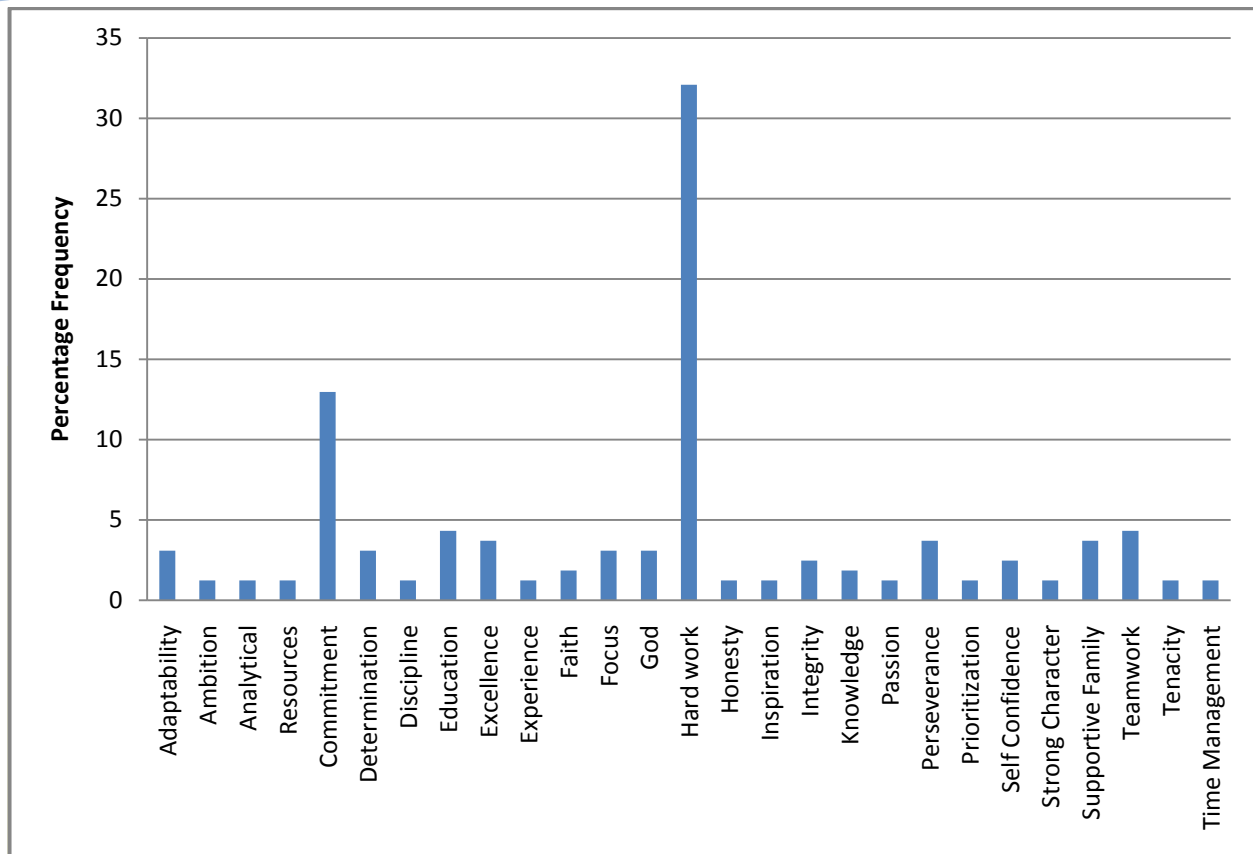
Research findings

In response to the question on what contributed to the success of respondents, the findings showed a range of success factors including adaptability, ambition, being analytical, availability of resources, commitment to work, determination, discipline, educational and professional qualifications, hard work, being focused, having supportive husband, good time management, passion, perseverance, self confidence, tenacity and integrity.

Figure 1 is a chart that shows the frequency of the factors that respondents indicated as having contributed to their success as managers. The chart shows that the outstanding factors contributing to the success of the participants were:

- hard work;
- commitment;
- education and professional qualifications;
- teamwork;
- determination;
- excellence;
- support from family especially husband;
- adaptability; and
- self confidence.

Figure 1 Success factors



Adair (1984) and the research conducted by the Industrial society (1997) also identified similar factors.

The findings show that participants quoted their own personal qualities as success factors. This analysis echoed what was cited in a Canadian study (Catalyst, 1998) that senior women managers often quoted their personal qualities as critical success factors.

Suggestions and advice to other women

The research study also asked participants to provide advice to other women managers on how they can manage the leadership and gender challenges that they meet in order for them to be influential and effective. Top on the list of the advice from the participants were the following:

- being knowledgeable;
- being of good character;
- determination;
- educational and professional qualifications;
- excellence;

- hard work;
- open mindedness;
- not having an inferiority complex;
- professionalism;
- self confidence;
- praying; and
- good time management.

The above suggestions and advice to other women are indicative of the behaviors and qualities that people look for in good leaders .

Figure 2 Suggestions and advice

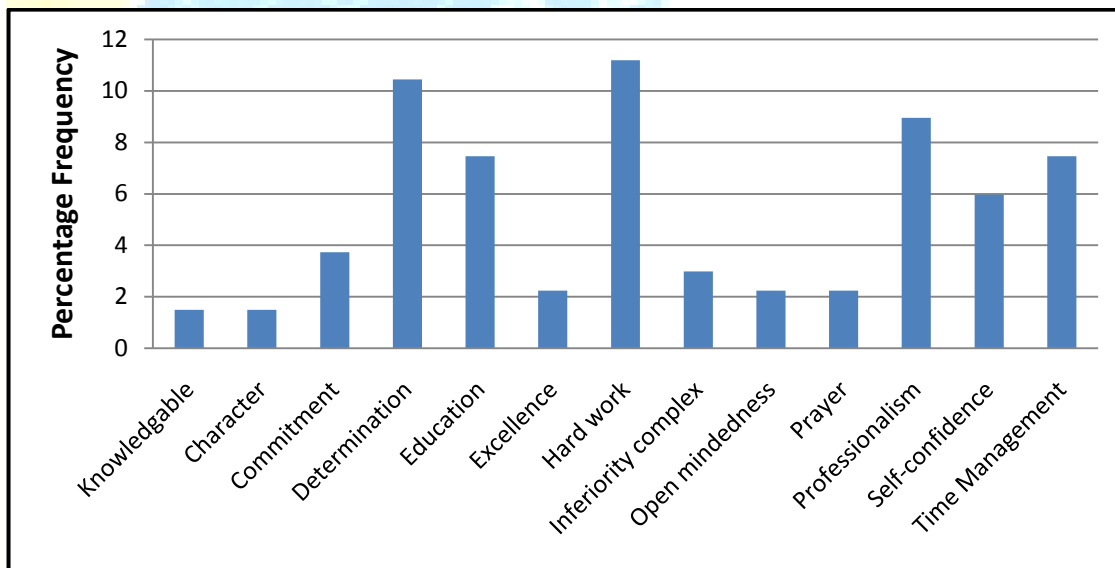


Figure 2 shows that women managers were advised to be very hard working, to show determination, to have the necessary educational and professional qualifications, to have a professional approach to work, to learn to balance work and life by good time management, to be confident and to be very committed to work. Being of good character, aiming for excellence and professionalism are linked. Not showing an inferiority complex can also be linked to having self confidence.

Being of good character was taken to mean not succumbing to men in order to obtain favors at work. It is linked to being professional whereby women were being advised to dress professionally so as not to be misunderstood by men.

Conclusion

The success factors and advice to women managers identified in the study tally well with the success factors and behaviors people look for in leaders identified by other researchers. However what is coming out as new in the study on leadership and management that this study is revealing is the advice on prayer. In the literature review, the student did not come across prayer as either a success factor or as contributing towards the effectiveness of a manager. Within the context of Zimbabwe it appears that there is increasing reliance or adoption of praying as a key success factor for one to be influential and effective as a manager or to run a successful business.

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