

Interview with a Woman Leader Pre-Retreat Assignment

Vira I. Heinz Program for Women in Global Leadership | Fall Retreat

We are pleased to welcome you back to Pittsburgh for the September Leadership Development Retreat! The Leadership Development Retreat focuses on leadership as the set of behaviors that influences others to take action and make positive change. Many people think that exerting leadership is the sole responsibility of a person who has been selected, appointed or hired into the position as leader. We will explore how leadership behaviors can be developed and enhanced in anyone, as well as provide you with experiences to further develop your skills.

Prior to the September Leadership Development retreat, find a woman leader in your community who is at least 35 years old with whom you are able to conduct an interview. Your goal during this interview is to unravel the story of this woman and her leadership development journey. There are many ways to explore her journey. For example, you may want to examine her education, career choices and professional development. You could focus your questions on what she is passionate about and how her childhood helped to shape her vision for change in a particular arena.

Understanding this woman leader's interpersonal skills and how she inspires others to action could be central to your interview. You may want to inquire what skills she believes make her an effective leader. It may also be interesting to find out where she was, academically and professionally, in her late-twenties, as well as what her intercultural and mentoring experiences were. Finally, you may find it beneficial to inquire about mistakes the woman leaders has made throughout her journey, how she would handle those situations differently today, and what advice she has for you. Specific questions follow:

1. *How has organizational culture helped or hindered your journey as a woman leader?*
2. *What are the key differences between leadership styles of men and women in your organization?*
3. *Is there subtle discrimination (or not so subtle) against women in your organization? If so, how does it express itself? How do you deal with it?*
4. *Have you witnessed how women within your organization are judged for how they look, dress, act and express themselves more than for the quality of their work?*
5. *Have you experienced the double bind (women leaders are perceived as competent or well-liked but rarely both).*

Please take notes during your interview. *Bring these notes* with you to the session of the Leadership Development Retreat so you can share your insights with the group.