

# Radical Change in the Corner Office: 2010 is the Year of the Woman

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Many top organizations where I work as an outside consult or a speaker delivering professional development seminars are rushing right now to create new internal women's leadership groups. That's because these large companies understand that as the economy imposes changes in how they do business, it also triggers a change of leadership positions within their firms. To enhance their profit margins they are streamlining middle management and top positions - and it appears that more men are being impacted in adverse ways than are women.

In an article by David Paul Kuhn in *Real Clear Politics*, July 13, 2009, titled *The He-cession's Raw Deal*, Kuhn states that "Men amount to a slim majority of the workforce but account for 75% of all job losses since the recession began in December 2007. Before the recession, there was no significant gender gap in the unemployment rate. Since then, the men's unemployment rate has more than doubled."

I see a significant transition and a positive business trend for women starting to happen as key positions become available in the coming months. Emerging women leaders need to seize the day immediately in order to refine their professional presence so that when the new dawn arrives, they are ready to step into the top-suite spotlight and take on dynamic leadership roles.

As I privately consult and coach professional women I encourage them to hone in right now on the various skills that will enhance their executive presence and prepare them to lead organizations once the tide rolls in and their ships set sail. Here are just a few of the ways that I suggest they prepare to transition into the boardroom suite:

## Personal and Corporate Brand Messaging

As the leader of any organization, all eyes are upon you every single day. You are on stage and under the microscope of people around you who expect to see a strong, inspiring example of leadership skills in action. Your outward appearance becomes a brand message that sets the tone for the entire organization. Your look - from head to toe - needs to silently communicate that you are authentic, expert, and capable of commanding and successfully navigating the ship.

Everything about your visual impact needs to communicate your personal brand attributes, values, and mission. When you work for a large organization, your appearance - right down to the minute details of your style - needs to exude the corporate brand values. When you work in a more conservative environment, for example, your look needs to be more tailored. If you work in a more innovative business, you need to really understand how to incorporate trends into your look to communicate that you are on the leading edge and style frontier of this new decade.

## The Silent Language of Body Talk

Most professionals haven't really learned the art of body talk, a tool they should become adept at handling in order to help influence others. For women to rise to top positions, for example, they first need to understand what messages they are sending through gestures, facial expressions,

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## Illustra Image Consulting

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and eye and body movements. When you master your own body talk you simultaneously learn techniques to read the revealing body language of others. You can see whether or not you are establishing rapport with them, just by looking. To successfully occupy a key position, you need to be able to influence people both within and without the organization. Business today is all about building and nurturing relationships. Understanding the art of body language can help you develop and sustain relationships with your clients while it also assists you in the creation of high performance corporate teams.

### **Dynamic Platform Skills**

Today, in every organization, women are called upon to speak professionally on behalf of their companies at various networking and sponsorship events, trade shows, or while simply selling products or services to their target market. Development of platform skills is key. You need to know how to send a powerful message through a well-designed speech that makes your audience feel a real connection with you. As a member of National Speakers Association, I understand how to get audiences to interact with me and keep them connected to my core message. As the new decade progresses, you will find more women exploring ways to enhance their presence through public speaking. I coach my clients how to communicate a powerful presence by designing a dynamic presentation, using body language to connect with the audience, and utilizing their best instrument - the human voice - to pull people in so that the message resonates with them in a powerful and personal way.

Women leaders need to have powerful communications skills for all kinds of internal and external communications if they expect to run organizations in this new business era. When they invest in these professional development tools, they better prepare themselves to assume greater responsibility with ease and poise because their executive presence evolves in ways that help to create an authentic aura of success.

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