Women as Business Leaders

SUBMITTED BY: Knowledge@Wharton Summer Educator

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

☰ OVERVIEW:

This lesson is intended to introduce students to the accomplishments of women as business leaders. Although women remain under-represented in senior level positions for reasons other than their qualifications, they have made an impact in the world of business in their own unique ways. This lesson will provide an opportunity for students to investigate multiple sources to learn about the actions and choices women have made en route to becoming leaders and executives.

☰ RELATED ARTICLES:

- "The Conversation: Investing with a Gender Lens"
- "MLK Day Tribute: Student Lessons in Leadership"
- "Laying the Framework for a Successful Startup"
- "Future of the Business World: A Girl Scout Advocates for Redefining Success"
- "Exploring the Business of Money with a Few 'Girls Who Invest'"
- "ElectNext's Keya Dannenbaum: Who's Your Perfect Political Match?"
- "Educator Toolkit: The Chief Executive Officer"
- "Digital Natives Are Poised to Solve World Problems – and Close the STEM Gender Gap"
- "CEO David Pottruck on How to Be a Great Leader"
- "Career Insight: Lean In's Rachel Thomas on New Challenges for Women at Work"
- "Career Insight: Advice from New York Stock Exchange President Stacey Cunningham"
- "Business in 3: Cell Phone Forensics, Smart Homes and Wage Bias"
- "5 Questions for Amber Yang, Master of the 'Space Debris Apocalypse'"

NBEA Standard(s):

Personal Management: Develop personal management skills to function effectively and efficiently in a business environment.

Common Core Standard(s):

- CCR Standard for Reading Informational Text: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCR Standard for Reading Informational Text: Determine the central idea of a text and provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCR Standard for Reading Informational Text: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.
- CCR Speaking and Listening: Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely and logically in such a way that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to the purpose, audience and task.
- CCR *Writing Standards*: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating an understanding of the subject under investigation.

Objectives/Purposes:

To expand students' knowledge of women as leaders and executives

Knowledge@Wharton Article:

"Avon's Andrea Jung: "You Will Stand on Our Shoulders""

Other Resources/Materials:

- Internet Access
- Markers
- Butcher Block Paper

History of Avon: http://www.avoncompany.com/aboutavon/history/index.html

Activities:

1. Introduction: Inform students that they are going to be learning about women in leadership positions. To start this exercise, ask them to brainstorm on as many women leaders as they can within two minutes. Have a student help with writing the names on the board.

2. Discuss the list that the students were able to compile. *(6 mins)*
    1. What types of people made the list? Is the list representative of an array of career areas? Who is missing diversity-wise? Why is that the case? etc.

3. Ask the students if they have heard of Avon and to define what the company does. Some questions that could be asked are: *(3-4 mins)*
    1. Who started Avon? David H. McConnell
    2. When was it created? 1886
    3. When did Avon hire its first female CEO? 1999

4. Inform the students that they are going to read an article about the appointment of Avon's first female CEO. Distribute the Knowledge@Wharton article on Andrea Jung for students to read. *(8 mins)*

5. Afterwards, discuss the article using the following questions as a guide: *(5-8 mins)*
    1. From this article, what can you infer about women's representation in executive level positions today?
    2. What do you make of Jung's statement about Avon being founded by a man who wanted to promote the economic independence of women? (As a 120-year-old company, it seems odd that it took over 100 years to appoint a female CEO)
    3. Does anyone know of someone who works for Avon? What can they tell us about that person's experiences? Does this person see himself/herself as a CEO of their "own" business — as Avon representatives are described as being on the Avon website?
    4. Why do you think women are still so under-represented in leadership/executive level positions? Are the reasons valid?
    5. What do you think your chances are of reaching such a level in today's world? Ask students to clarify their responses rather than simply accepting a yes/no reply.
        1.
            i. Trivia:
                1. How many of the Fortune 500 businesses have women CEOs? Answer: 15 (as per the website

http://chiefexecutive.net/are-quotas-the-answer-to-more-female-representation-at-the-top).

2. How much do women earn, on an average, in comparison to men? Answer: 77-80% of every dollar men make.

6. For the next part of the lesson, divide students into pairs to investigate a woman leader who they will report back on to the whole class. The goal is to create a Women's Leadership Hall of Fame.

1. The students may choose a name from the following list:

Condoleeza Rice (politics)

Madame C.J. Walker (entrepreneur)

Mary Kay Ash (entrepreneur)

Brownie Wise (Tupperware)

Ida Cohen and Enid Bissett (entrepreneurs)

Bette Nesmith Graham (entrepreneur)

Virginia Apgar (medical)

Grace Murray Hopper (entrepreneur)

Oprah Winfrey (media)

Estee Lauder (entrepreneur)

Martha Stewart (entrepreneur)

Paula Deen (entrepreneur)

Bell Hooks (scholar, activist)

Angela Merkel (politics)

Indra K. Nooyi (CEO)

Margaret Thatcher (politics)

Hilary Clinton (politics)

Marian Anderson (entertainment)

Ida B. Wells (educator, activist, journalist)

Mary McLeod Bethune (educator, activist, presidential advisor)

Mary Ann Shadd Cary (journalist, educator, and activist)

Harriet Tubman (activist)

Benazir Bhutto (politics)

Indira Gandhi (politics)

Golda Meir (politics)

Elizabeth I (politics)

Liliuokalani (politics)

Mae Jemison (scientist, medical doctor, astronaut)

Meg Whitman (business executive)

Lucille Ball (entertainment)

1. Direct students to include information about the time period in which these women emerged as leaders; what their specific leadership accomplishments were/are; information about their preparation for these positions; any noted challenges in reaching their positions, etc. Also, based on what the students learn about their leader, have each pair come up with some words of wisdom that their particular leader/executive might offer (direct quotes or something that can be inferred from the way in which they lived or operated). The students should also include a picture of the woman, and if possible,

bring in an item that represents their leader to show-and-tell. Presentations should be 5-7 minutes long.

2. Walk around and check-in on students' progress as they work independently.

Tying It All Together: On presentation day, you could use a timer to keep the presentations on schedule. Each pair can be allocated a 2 minute Q&A following their presentation. Once all the students have presented their work, display their posters on the wall or a large bulletin board. You may also consider uploading their work onto a school or class website for a wider audience to check out. Likewise, the class can work on a YouTube posting that pairs music with text and pictures.

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently: Depending on the thoroughness of the end product desired, this assignment can be a relatively quick (1-2 day) research project or continue for a while longer. Keep in mind that more thorough projects might entail reading a biography/autobiography, watching a film, and reading and listening to interviews, etc. This is a great project to boost students' literacy and research skills. In the summer program, the students actually had limited resources and a very short timeframe to do projects like this. In an ordinary school setting, I would build in a session on information literacy and another on giving presentations.

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