



# *In Her* Shoes

DISCUSSION ON WOMEN IN BUSINESS

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

MEG CARLSON, *MODERATOR*, Principal, The C&H Group LLC • ELINA DICOSTANZA ANNAS, Cooper Norman  
JENNIFER JOHANNSEN, Click Bank • TRACY MORRIS, Executive Director, Primary Health Medical Group  
CATHY SILAK, President/CEO, Idaho Community Foundation • KRISTA MCINTYRE, Partner, Stoel Rives

**THE MODERATOR:** What are some challenges that you've had to overcome in your career?

**MS. McINTYRE:** Not having enough hours in the day. I would say that was true for different reasons at different stages of my career. As I was building a practice there was so much opportunity and I wanted to be responsive and I needed to sleep. There just weren't enough hours in the day. And now as a mom, there aren't enough hours in the day because of the balance that you need to strike between work, mom and wife.

**MS. ANNAS:** Earlier in my career I looked for other females, women in the industry, to be my mentor, but I found that the more successful women were not necessarily interested in being my mentor, but more viewed me as competition. It was a real struggle for me. As I got older and more established, I really looked to more men to be my mentor because of that.

but it happens to be the truth. And they're not capable because they're not educated or they're not experienced.

**MS. SILAK:** I've hired women who did not have the educational attainment that we really needed in the organization and have really picked them for their work ethic, and have engaged in a lot of training, on-the-job education. I'm not finding that bachelor's trained person out there or even an A.A. trained. It would be much better for business if we had a better-educated workforce out there. I'm all in favor of the community college.

I would say that the industry, commerce, the workplace is changing very rapidly. There are businesses that didn't exist a few years ago. Each individual is being tasked with just more and more different types of functions each year. You don't want a repetitive workplace where people get bogged down. But conversely, if the leaders don't really take advantage of everybody's full talent by being collaborative, then you're going to miss out. You're going



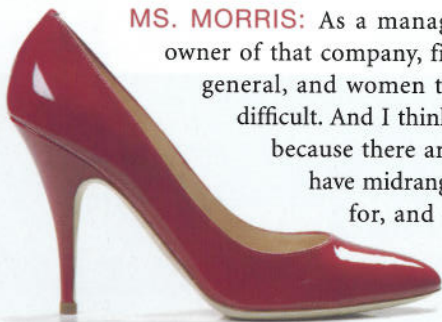
I think the greatest challenge for me was trying to **make myself fit** into what I thought was the right job for a long time. *-Jennifer Johannsen*

**MS. JOHANNSEN:** I think the greatest challenge for me was trying to make myself fit into what I thought was the right job for a long time. And I thought that I could move up in certain companies. Instead of stepping back, looking at what I was good at, finding a company that was willing to work with, mentor and guide me.

to end up hiring three employees when really you only need two because you were squelching the creativity and contributions of those two. So I think it's important for leaders to keep their eyes and ears open and really get to know who they're leading so that you can engage them to their full capacity. And if you don't, they'll leave you, because they know they have the capacity. And they'll go and find an organization that does matter to them. So it is a really challenging environment.

**THE MODERATOR:** Recent studies suggest that women are greater risk takers in an environment that they can control and influence because they're trying to meet their own goals, their personal goals or professional goals. What struggles are you facing within your companies?

**THE MODERATOR:** I think that the most important conclusion is to make sure you have strong contributors who come from different orientations and styles so that you don't end up all going down a path that tends to be not the right path.



**MS. MORRIS:** As a manager of a company and an owner of that company, finding educated people, in general, and women to work at my company is difficult. And I think it hurts business in Idaho because there aren't educated women. You have midrange jobs you're trying to hire for, and the men don't want them and the women aren't capable. And it sounds like I'm segregating,

**MS. SILAK:** All the same. I think the opening of the workplace to diverse gender, backgrounds, racial and ethnic origins, religious origins, I think that just helps. I mean, you can't give that personality test. I mean, you can, but I think just the idea of opening the workplace really helps create that balance and the dynamic that you need. Because otherwise, you know, in the old days before women entered the workforce, it was truly a good-old-boy workplace.

**MS. ANNAS:** If you sprinkle the idea of leadership and personality and all that and look at our female delivering process

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-Elina DiCostanza Annas

or the way we deliver information, I think that's probably a larger differentiator in how we deliver, because we typically, I would say, exhibit more emotion because societally – if that's the right word – it's more accepted for us to have more emotion. So the world expects women to have emotion. So emotion is all right for women, not so alright for men. Based on that, it's how we deliver our information to our staff or to the people we're trying to mentor or lead or the people we're trying to follow as the leaders or mentors. It's all in how we interact with them more than the male/female thing that only sprinkles because of our delivery process or our delivery mechanism. We can show real excitement or real sadness. Those extremes are more accepted by society.

**MS. SILAK:** Well, and maybe that frees other who are maybe not so emotional, whether they're male or female, to feel a little bit more free. Maybe in some other way, more creatively free, because feeling chained in or hemmed in in your occupation is not a good feeling. It's going to stifle productivity probably, for one thing. So I think, you know, to the extent that women can help people feel empowered and free in the workplace – not that they're not doing their jobs, but their – as they're doing their job, they feel good about it, they feel contributing, and they feel like, Oh, maybe there's another way that's slightly better that I could do this job. I mean, that's what we – that's perhaps what we are helping to do. And, you know, I certainly – I certainly feel that way. In my staff, we have a lot of really great people. But we also have certainly very specific tasks that each day, each quarter, each year we must accomplish. But if we're not constantly striving to let our employees and our volunteers have, you know, a freedom, we're not going to improve our process. We're going to be spending a lot of money and spinning our wheels and not improving our process. So it's so important to really unlock that. And maybe women leaders do that. I haven't thought about that before, but you make a very good point, Elina, about that.

**MS. McINTYRE:** It's interesting

...I think, conditioned as leaders or as managers to always **start with the good thing** and then you get down to the bad thing. -Krista McIntyre

because on MPR today there was a story about Toyota. And

I was thinking about this, because I was – and I was sort of struck, although you guys have articulated it now more clearly for me, about – the point being that Toyota always asks what they could have done better. So even the managers at this particular plant in Kentucky have in their meetings not how we did all these things right, but maybe we'll do that better next time. It all starts with what we could have done better, and then they get to what they did right at the end. And I thought it was interesting because not only is it so contrary to sort of how we've all kind have been, I think, conditioned as leaders or as managers to always start with the good thing and then you get down to the bad thing. But I think for men – these are all men – it was two or three men that were interviewed. But obviously that's a male-dominated workplace clearly, to sort of start by picking at each other – not really picking, but to start by criticizing or constructively observing what they could have done better is really – it is why they are about to be the number one car manufacturer in the world. It's revolutionary. And then one spokesperson that they interviewed said that it is really all about continuously improving, that if we don't keep asking ourselves what went wrong and how we could have done it better, you know, then we've lost an opportunity to make something better. But I thought it was interesting that in that environment particularly it could be – that could be a successful way of approaching things.

**MS. MORRIS:** Dr. Peterman, who's a male. Our company is very much into dissecting every event and what went well and what didn't go well. And as for me articulating that, I've never done that. He's kind of recently been on this kick about that. And I've always felt like, Well, I know what went wrong, and I won't do it again. But to actually articulate that with a group of people is, I think, very helpful, because everybody has a different perspective of what went wrong. And whether it's why where

he hired someone and why did they leave a few months later to why didn't that client not do well, whatever the conversation





...women are **greater risk takers** in an environment that they can control and influence... -Meg Carlson

is, it's helped me to get a bigger picture and get other people's perspective. So I don't know if that's a male thing or not, but it has been very helpful.

**MS. ANNAS:** Do you think we don't tend to do that because we're afraid that people are going to "You did the wrong thing" that finger-pointing, accusational process?

**MS. MORRIS:** I think a little bit, yes. For me, I don't like to blame people. And maybe in my mind I know who I think made the mistake. And maybe that's a female thing. I don't want people to feel bad about what we did, because we are going to learn and we're going to do better next time. Actually articulating it is kind of what's the new thing for me.

**THE MODERATOR:** But the true culture of continuous improvement, which is what I think Toyota lives by, is not focused on "who". It's focused on "what". It's what didn't work well for us as an organization and how can we improve on that in terms of the process, the procedures, the resources, and our decision-making, all those things. And I think it derives from if you empower people, you train them, you give them the tools they need, and they have a clear idea of where they're going, that they will do phenomenal things. And that if there is a failure, that's not because someone did something, it's because we as an organization failed in some way.

**MS. McINTYRE:** I think the other subtlety in this thing about Toyota that I've been thinking about this morning is first of all, I think the answer to that question is that it's more comfortable to celebrate the success. And the subtlety in the story about Toyota is that they are very successful. They're not talking about things that went wrong, necessarily. They're seeing within their success – instead of just celebrating that success – an opportunity to see how they could have even done it better. And, you know, to translate that to our world, it's like, "Okay, so you have a major victory in court and everybody gets the alert that we won the case," but nobody does the debrief about "How could we have done that even better? Who was here until midnight the night before that had to work on the brief, and how could we have done that so it was done at 5:00." I mean, you don't go to the part where you take the celebration and you still do the dissecting it to see how you could have improved that because you're happy with the win. And Toyota is doing so well in large part because their

successes are analyzed by virtue of how they still could have done it better.

**MS. ANNAS:** Does that come from a cultural perspective?

**MS. McINTYRE:** It is.

**MS. SILAK:** It must come from a cultural perspective. They've created a culture where they feel very comfortable in dissecting that and going to the root of it. And no one must feel threatened, or else they wouldn't participate if they felt threatened.

**THE MODERATOR:** And the value is in the learning and improvement process, not in the winning, which is very American. The winning is very American.

**MS. SILAK:** Right. As opposed to living in a process. So if you're living in an automobile manufacturing company, this is your life, and you want to make that the best life process possible so that you and your customers are going to benefit from that as opposed to saying, "We had the most sales this quarter." It's, "are we living in a process that is really the best?" We're getting the best cars, the best day because we don't have to work overtime.

**THE MODERATOR:** The best customer experience.

**MS. SILAK:** The best customer experience.

**THE MODERATOR:** More free time to be with my family.

**MS. SILAK:** Right. So you have to create a culture that values that on a smaller scale than Toyota, perhaps.

**MS. MORRIS:** We've kind of experienced that in a change from being owned by a venture-capital-backed owned firm or company to now the doctors own the company. And I think that's maybe why we've had the switch from the dissecting. We dissect the good things too. We just changed computer systems, and it went really well but not perfect. And so "Why was that?" But now the doctors can focus on "How do we take care of the patient?" versus how to make enough money to make the venture capitalists not yell at us every month. Seriously, that's how it was. It is a big change. It's taken us two years to get away from focusing on the financials, because it was ingrained in us, that's what you do, to "Now you can take care of the patients."

**MS. McINTYRE:** And the financial probably comes from – it just follows along then; right?

**MS. ANNAS:** I was going to say that because the investment is from within rather than, “Did we win this month?” or “Did we lose this month?” rather, “I did what I have a passion for; as a result, because I did what I have a passion for, I am profitable.” That always is pretty close in partnership, those two things: passion and success. If you’re doing a job or doing what I call government work – and I don’t mean that in a negative sense, in that people go to work every day, they work from a 9:00 to 5:00. I grew up in D.C., so I saw the federal government lines working all the time. 9:00 to 5:00. You leave, your goal is to be there for eight hours versus to be generating a passion for what it is that you do.

I think just the idea of opening the workplace really helps create that **balance and the dynamic** that you need. *-Cathy Silak*

As an entrepreneur, you generate that passion, which crosses all those other lines that we have talked about today.

**MS. MORRIS:** We worked with Dave Cooper, one of the principals in your firm, and he told us this was going to happen. He said it was going to happen, that the doctors would start having a switch towards their passion, which was take care of patients, versus compete and engage, because they felt like what they did didn’t matter because of these venture capitalists. And we thought it would happen faster than it did. But it finally has happened. He was right. It just took a little bit longer.

**THE MODERATOR:** So I think as a wrap-up perhaps it would be interesting to hear your perspectives as you look ahead over the next five or ten years in your industry, in your organization, what your outlook is, because – other than the sort of community college opportunity, is there something else you’d like to call out that we need to do?

**MS. ANNAS:** I think we’re in a vibrant economy in Idaho, let alone Boise. My feeling as far as being a business owner/entrepreneur in this environment is that if your doors are open and you’re not making money today, you’re not providing customer service, bottom line. You’re not making your consumer happy with the product that they are getting from you, because it’s almost impossible to fail in this environment with the growth for Idaho and the growth for Boise right now. We certainly feel that in our industry. We see it in the clients we service. And I ask the questions, “You’re not making money? You’re going

out of business? What is the problem here? Are you providing a commodity that’s overpopulated at this point with service providers, or are you not providing customer service?” Because if you make your client happy, your customer happy, you are going to be prosperous. If you’re a woman or you’re a man or you’re a monkey, it really doesn’t matter. You’re going to be prosperous in this environment if you provide that open environment for your clients.

**MS. JOHANNSEN:** Finding creative ways to go out and find those talented people, people that have stayed home with their kids when they’re young. Some of our best employees are moms that have come back to work 10 years later, but you have to go dig a little bit to find those



people. And that takes time and energy.

**MS. MORRIS:** For me, and my industry specifically, I am always thinking about what is going to happen to the uninsured.

**MS. McINTYRE:** I worry that kids today aren’t getting leadership training or experiences in their lives that will groom them to be leaders. I read a little bit about maybe this goes to education relating and what values we as a society place on our education system. And I don’t think right now it’s about developing leaders. It’s about developing followers. And maybe that’s good for an industrial society. But there’s a bigger issue there, I think. So I look 20 to 30 years from now and I think about my son in this environment, and I’d like him to not even have a question about what his business or professional environment is like. But I think we have a lot of work to do in terms of creating a current platform for those future leaders to succeed. 