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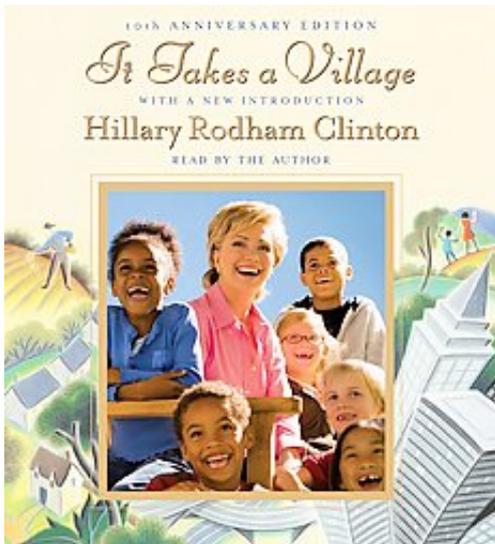
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February 11, 2010

### WorkEcology Insight Note 021110 - Moving Beyond Gender Buzz

## From Gender Buzz to "It takes a Village"



I wove myself into the "gender buzz" conversation years ago when I wrote with my co-author George Simons, **Men and Women Partners at Work** (no longer in print). The irony behind this book with respect to my own employment was the reality of today. I was a female VP in a consulting firm at that time and paid 50-60% less than my male peers. I was also laid off with cause for being a "vulnerable employee" with excessive family demands related to a special needs child and elderly dying parent.

My perspective at the time of my layoff and reflection of my ethic was simply this: I worked 40 hours a week since I was paid less, and I met all my sales goals and completed all my projects on schedule. In fact, post my termination, our operations manager called me to update me on sales that closed once I was terminated. The man who was hired to replace and lay me off was terminated and won a financial settlement after my departure.

I can find myself easily lost in the gender buzz and inspire myself in the mirror with some frequency to cheer myself on at a career I love in a gender biased world.

In 2003, I attended a conference for women alumnae in the financial service and investment industry at for a prestigious academic institution with a network of over 900 women MBA graduates. I was not a grad and was invited to attend because of my passion and interest. By the end of the day long conference, I was looked over to a woman I befriended during the day and I asked her, "Did you notice that almost 80% of the women who presented today stated that their career and the stress of that career had ended as a result of a chronic illness or life threatening episode of health?"

At the end of the day, the most "successful" alumna presented. These woman had achieved the position of Chairwoman in an investment firm. At the beginning of her presentation, she noted that her career success had caused her marriage to fall apart and altered her relationships with her daughters negatively.

That experience left an impact on me that was different than most with think. I became more dedicated to altering the consciousness and structure of how in the United States we approach work and use our earnings to sustain,

educate and protect our health.

It grew into my idea of the WorkEcology.com portal becoming a social media platform to attract today's intelligent workforce of all ages who wish to work wisely and live well had been my passion for some time. Through the guidance of many solid thought leaders along the way, I continued to develop the key aspects of creating this portal that were unrelated to technology.

This particular conference left me with the passion to create a thought leadership that through invitation, action and incubation would create a system for our workforce that steps up to the needs of today where the full employment model has failed us proven by a series of 12 recessions and reduction of jobs with benefits that continues to be the response to a need to restructure this country and the globe with a new economic vision that defines and factors the needs of its citizens Beyond a GDP.

So my hats off this week to

1. Elaine Cohen, Co-CEO of Beyond Business, Ltd. authored an excellent editorial, Down With Woman Washing. In this editorial, Elaine is asking to adopt use of CSR Reporting activity to monitor programs and outcomes for dedicating resources to the advancement of women in business. The links and the questions she provides as a source of monitoring are outstanding.

I would only add to the questions, how do you track the health of women and their families and as an employer support the health of women or anyone for that matter that also has child-rearing or care giving responsibility?

Take a minute to also read my comments and the comments of others.

2. Beverly Denver, Publisher of Houston Woman Magazine, offered an updated report, Wage Discrimination Still a Reality. This report is based on research from the US Census Bureau that states women earn 78 cents out of every dollar paid to a male counterpart. One of Beverly's resources on thinking re: gender issues, is the BMP Foundation, A spokesperson for this foundation has emphasized the necessity ensuring "that the workplace is 'ready' for all workers and the way we work today and will in the future," as we work to rebuild the economy.

Within my comments to Elaine Cohen, I realized that there is a necessity to build an emerging movement of women, who learn a new form of speaking up and structuring the workforce activities of employment of any form that include contract, micro-enterprise, full time jobs and more newer alternatives to assure a future for women that permits us to work wisely to live well so we can sustain, have health and assure our education and professional development. This is core to my vision for why I authored and developed a thought leadership and social media strategy for a portal I will call WorkEcology.com.

This morning, I previewed the latest on Justmeans.com, where I am active community member. I checked on a link provided by Deb Berman, Managing Director pointed out with enthusiasm which brought me to a new Justmeans.com member company, Criterion Ventures. I found myself immediately drawn in by the fact that this venture is

1. led by a woman, Joy Anderson as President and Founder. If you read Joy's bio, you will see how her vision leveraged from a remarkable portfolio of work as an educator and consultant with non profit background complimented by her education in American History with a focus on prison reform; and
2. Criterion Ventures has formatted their identity and offer to bring communities of people into changing perspective that is so key to moving beyond the buzz of protest and debate often the trap of today's post modern industrial world that inhibits change. The link to Criterion Ventures will bring you to the page that directly describes this program.

This is the perspective of thinking I can get behind as a way to construct change. This is why I worked so hard not to define my life as a victim when discrimination altered my capacity to earn, learn and work. Criterion's approach is my approach that no one can create as a masterful practice alone. It is what Hillary Clinton once wrote after her failure with health care reform in the 90's. "It takes a village."

Best,

Lavinia Weissman

Posted at 12:05 PM in [Power of Yin](#), [WorkEcology Insight Note](#) | [Permalink](#)

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## Comments



[elaine cohen](#) said...

hello Lavinia,

Thank you for this post and your important personal stories and perspectives. I agree with you that workplace / career issues can have a significant impact on health and that this is often an unnoticed consequence of, and let's call it what it is, discrimination and abuse of the rights of women in the workplace. I agree with you that this is a systemic issue, one which individuals are powerless to change alone. We need to work it out together. I agree that we need new models. Thanks for adding your powerful voice to this conversation. Let's build a village.

warm regards, elaine

[Reply February 11, 2010 at 02:27 PM](#)



[MarkyMark](#) said...

Great insight, Lavinia - I'd just like to offer a male perspective if I could. The importance of removing barriers (and these are as manifold as the stars) to women joining - and rejoining - the workforce cannot be overstated.

Aside from the issue of gender parity, the shrinking working-age population means many global labor markets are facing an economic timebomb. Despite the current economic climate, many companies are already having difficulty finding the talent they need and this will only be exacerbated as the economy improves and the workforce grows older.

Therefore it is imperative to tap into underrepresented sectors of the workforce, the most obvious of which is women. Companies and countries need to reform outdated work practices and help women overcome cultural barriers to employment. Those that don't will struggle to remain competitive.

[Reply February 12, 2010 at 01:47 PM](#)



[Lavinia Weissman](#) said...

Elaine, you started out with your blog post examining the issue of CSR Reporting and gender.

For quiet some time now I have felt that companies have not been accountable for the health of their employees from a view of exercising precaution.

This is very specific to the US where employers are relentless about their demand in hours and 24/7 availability from professional employees, or they hire contract people hourly to keep permanent and fully employed employees head count low in numbers.

It is a bottom line exercise. If you use the Triple Bottom Line companies would have to ask from an occupational view how they are creating venues of potential harm for employees re: health, compensation and more.

It is complex and that I why I am so thrilled that Mark introduced his point of view here.

Specifically I organized my thought leadership for WorkEcology to address this. Our program on the Foundations of Portfolio Work teaches people how to think of their career and accomplishments like an "artist portfolio" and to describe how when they are employed what they have accomplished, what they have gained from education and credentialed programs and what they have done to broaden their scope of work and competencies during transitions that require people to work less and be more home focused.

The course, is an introduction to the thought leadership of WorkEcology which is more complex and I am now building this blog to report on all elements of thinking as it relates to complexity of exercising precaution, health and education.

We have much more planned as our membership and organization and system of communication grows and I am able to have others join working with me.

Reply February 12, 2010 at 04:22 PM



Jan morgan said...

Hello Lavinia:

This is my first time reading your blog. Thank you for this presentation and for your comments on CSRwire's Talkback Blog. ( CSRwire Talkback - Secrets of a More Just & Equitable World: <http://bit.ly/aeWtOK> via @addthis ). You mention Joy Anderson and Criterion Ventures. She does wonderful work and I have attended her 2 day workshops and met some incredible people. Also thank you for pointing out the work of Elaine Cohen. Warm wishes, Jan Morgan President of CSRwire

Reply March 14, 2010 at 05:31 PM



Lavinia Weissman said in reply to Jan morgan...

Jan,

Thank you so much for visiting here, I very much appreciate it. We were in a crowded room together at Marlboro College when there was a presentation re: SRI and I am sorry the evening framework did not permit us to meet and talk further.

I have been a follower of CSRWire since inception and working to develop a message that is personal and needed for CSR for quite some time.

If you would like to get to know more about my work and the international group of advisers supporting my project I would be happy to provide you some background.

At this time we are looking for the "right media partner in Sustainability," not just a partner to support this project which I plan to lead into a upgraded subscriber based community from a media platform that is news based.

I don't want to distract from your comment or what I is written.

Joy Anderson has some grace that has not come my way by nature of network and investment and I could recognize the value of her work because I have spent a lot of time learning about how Sustainability and CSR in this phase needs to incorporate a style of inquiry cross sectors that requires thoughtful design similar to what Joy does and how I have worked and trained.

Best,  
Lavinia

Reply March 14, 2010 at 07:16 PM

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