

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/network-barriers>

Astia CEO Sharon Vosmek discusses the lack of value in leadership training for women that focuses on teaching women how to model their behavior after male examples. Vosmek also identifies why women will continue to struggle for equal representation in venture backed companies, if society refuses to acknowledge the current barriers around professional network access.



Transcript

So the question was about women aping men.. And quite honestly I will go a step further and say the programs that encourage this, because I cannot tell you how many corporate executives I sit with who tell me that their program for women's leadership is to help them know how to dress, help them know how to talk, help them know how to do this.. I find it so offensive.. Women are not broken.. I refuse to not wear my red dress and my heels to this talk just because most VCs would show up in their kakis and their blue shirt.. I like my red dress.. Never mind that I had to get the mic back there.. That was a little bit hard, but you know what I mean? I actually like being a girl.. It's a pretty cool space.. We have some strengths that are pretty darn awesome if I can say so myself..

But we spend so much time redefining what success looks like.. So let me tell you what success looked like when I was four.. Four was, I was going to be the best ping pong player ever, okay.. By the age of 12 my dad was telling me, my dad who by the way my dad is pretty awesome, told me I shouldn't beat boys because it hurts their self-esteem.. I bet every woman in this room has had some sort of stupid advice like that and if I ever hope to have a boyfriend I da, da, da.. Age 12.. Anyway I'm pretty good at ping pong.. But you know this stuff isn't easy stuff and when we go - that's why we go to the simple stuff, post industrial revolution was white male single head of household and we keep thinking that the models that were created out of that somehow are going to magically overnight support dual household - dual income households with two kids, a nanny, soccer all the things that go with that.. When is there going to be an executive that actually stands up and says, you know what, I get it that in the U.S today the number of people I will employ who are single head of household is diminishing rapidly and is definitely in the minority.. And therefore I've got to think about the workplace differently..

I have yet to see that corporation standup and do it, because I think what they would have to address is that their challenge of getting women in to the executive suites is about networks.. And men and women aren't in the same business networks, those deals are done over the golf course, they're not done when a headhunter comes in and says oh, you come in to the executive suite.. You can be the C whatever of our company, it doesn't happen via HR people.. That happens over a beer, over a Martini, on the golf course.. And until we recognize the barriers of networks, we won't get passed it..