

Confronting the Glass Ceiling

What is the Glass Ceiling?

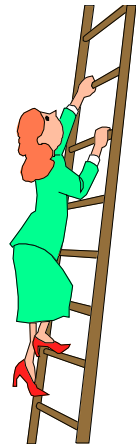
The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the glass ceiling as an intangible barrier within the hierarchy of a company that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions. The phrase was first used in a 1987 *Washington Post* article by Alice Sargent when she was interviewed about her book *The Androgynous Manager*:

“Women in corporate America are bumping their heads on the glass ceiling.”

Recognizing the Boundary

Even though the glass ceiling is a common form of discrimination, it can go unnoticed for a long time. These are some examples of ways that you can recognize the glass ceiling at your own job:

- Employer doesn't try to hire or promote women
- Women are not getting paid the same wages for the same work
- Sex, race and ethnic-based stereotyping and harassment occur
- No rules that allow for women to have families and continue to work
- No opportunities to move up to higher positions



Barriers that Create the Glass Ceiling

These are some factors that contribute to women being “locked out” of upper-level positions

Wage Gap

In 2005, on average, women were paid 77 cents for every dollar a man was paid. This wage gap contributes to the glass ceiling because women still aren't getting paid the same amount as men for the same jobs. Policies that work to close the wage gap are a step towards confronting the glass ceiling.

Social Differences

Social differences which lead to stereotypes, prejudice and bias also contribute to the glass ceiling. Noticing this as a barrier and encouraging your employer to implement diversity training can help employees to recognize social differences and learn to accept and tolerate them.



Occupational Segregation

More than half of all women workers hold sales, clerical and service jobs. Studies show that occupations in which there are large numbers of women (and people of color) have lower wages. Seeking non-traditional jobs like construction work, which are usually dominated by men, can help to confront the glass ceiling and open doors for women everywhere.

Lack of Education

Having an education is one of the best ways to confront the glass ceiling. An education can also help you increase your earning potential and your ability to stay employed.

How can *You* Break the Glass Ceiling?

Visit www.womenwork.org for more information about programs and resources

Know Your Rights: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has simple and in-depth information about the laws that prohibit this form of discrimination. Being knowledgeable about what these laws mean for you can help to break the glass ceiling. Their website can tell you everything you need to know about discrimination and how to file a complaint if you feel you have been a victim of discrimination.

Be Professional: Being professional does not only mean your work attitude but also your work appearance. Women Work!'s *Work Your Image!* program provides basic information about creating a professional appearance to get and keep a job.

Educate Yourself: Being aware of the glass ceiling and its effect on your life makes it easier to "break" it. Women Work!'s *Worker's Rights* tip sheet tells you all you need to know about major laws that affect your work life. Women Work! provides many other resources that will keep you up-to-date about current issues and policies that can change your life.

The Employer's Job

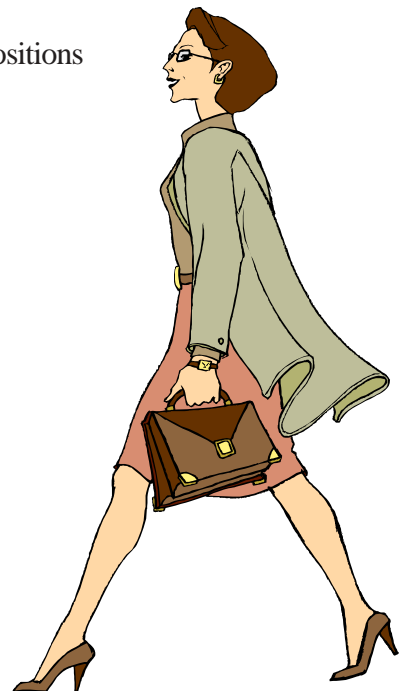
Confronting the glass ceiling is not just your responsibility: it's also your employer's. These are things every employer should be doing to bring about change in the workforce.

- Performing an assessment of the company's success at supporting women
- Having affirmative action programs
- Conducting diversity training for individuals already in upper-level positions
- Having work/life and family-friendly policies

Catalyst's Top Tactics for Cracking the Glass Ceiling

- √ Measure women's advancement
- √ Move women to positions seen by managers
- √ Find mentors for women
- √ Create a women's network
- √ Work to make cultural change happen
- √ Get women into nontraditional work
- √ Promote women in professional firms
- √ Support customized career planning
- √ Include flexibility in the workplace

Visit www.catalystwomen.org to find out more.



Title VII

Title VII protects individuals against employment discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, color, national origin and religion. It is unlawful to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of his/her sex in regard to hiring, termination, promotion, compensation, job training, or any other term, condition, or privilege of employment. Title VII also prohibits employment decisions based on stereotypes and assumptions about abilities, traits, or the performance of individuals on the basis of sex. Title VII prohibits both intentional discrimination and neutral job policies that disproportionately exclude individuals on the basis of sex and that are not job related.



Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Resources

United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The EEOC is a federal organization that works to stop discrimination in the workplace. Their web site provides information on federal laws as well as information on how to file a charge if you feel you have been discriminated against. www.eeoc.gov

BreakTheGlassCeiling.com

This website is a great resource to learn about how to “break” the glass ceiling; both employers and individuals can use this site. www.breaktheglassceiling.com

EthnicMajority.com

This website was made to provide information for women and minorities to move up in many areas including work. Here you can find specific information about the glass ceiling and look for a job with diversity-sensitive employers. www.ethnicmajority.com

Catalyst

Catalyst is a research organization that works with employers to make things better for women workers and provide work opportunities. They provide current information and research about what is happening for women right now. www.catalystwomen.org

