

Women at Work Gender roles blur in the workplace

By Courtney Bustillos

We spend a lot of time at work, which makes it a big part of who we are. The experience of the workplace varies greatly for different individuals, but most people expect to be judged on merits, being recognized for accomplishments, unique talents, insights and efforts.

Women in the workplace are one of the biggest “emerging markets” in our economy. The increased level of influence that women have in making the purchasing and strategic planning decisions for both work and home can be seen in the changing demographics of marketing and advertising campaigns across our economy.

“Women continue to move into non-traditional roles such as project management, field supervision and operations, where in the past women were typically part of the office staff or support services,” says Allison Beall, director of business development for Pacific Building Group, a San Diego-based general contractor.

“During the past 10 years that I have been involved in the construction and real estate industries, I have seen the growth of women moving into executive roles and bringing an

alternate perspective and approach to doing business successfully.”

Beall is unique in that she holds a high level position in the male-dominated field of construction. At Pacific Building Group, Beall is responsible for new business development in tenant improvements, corporate facilities and health care projects. Additionally, she manages all aspects of Pacific Building Group’s marketing efforts. “Construction and real estate industries are historically male-dominant, and women need to have a strong voice in order to gain a seat at the table or to establish themselves amongst their peers,” says Beall.

Beall is also active with Commercial Real Estate Women of San Diego, better known as CREW. CREW aims to promote, educate and support a network of female professionals in the field of commercial real estate. Career resources like CREW are proving to keep women motivated and connected. “Women intrinsically understand the value of relationships and can be great influencers of ideas leading to long term success,” says Beall.

Lynn LaChapelle, managing director of

Jones Lang LaSalle, an international real estate company, agrees with Beall and has witnessed first hand how difficult it can be for women to feel confident in male-dominated industries.

LaChapelle executes and oversees Jones Lang LaSalle’s capital markets group in San Diego. She also is a member of Jones Lang LaSalle’s National Life Science Practice group where she lends her capital markets expertise in equity, debt and joint ventures on both corporate and institutional transactions.

“Commercial real estate remains male-dominated with a lack of women in the overall profession, for the most part. Women have made strides in the industry, but there are very few women in senior management and in transactions,” says LaChapelle.

However, she is also convinced that now is a great time to be a female looking to climb the corporate ladder.

“Women will have a significant impact on the workplace moving forward. Qualified, well-educated, creative, goal-oriented women will always have opportunities to



Lynn LaChapelle of Jones Lang LaSalle



Allison Beall of Pacific Building Group



Lois Kosch of Wilson Turner Kosmo

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succeed in the right environment. In a rapidly changing work environment, the skills of multi tasking combined with the ability to collaborate are the differentiator.”

At the same time, more workplaces try to accommodate women who want to start families in terms of providing more time off for baby bonding and reduced schedules for those who want them upon return to work.

“Similarly, there is more widespread support of men who wish to take paternity leave,” says Attorney Lois Kosch, of Wilson Turner Kosmo LLP.

Kosch’s practice emphasizes the litigation of harassment, discrimination, wrongful termination and wage and hour matters. In addition to litigation, she regularly counsels employers on employment-related issues.

“I think all workplaces are trying to provide employees with some measure of flexibility to promote more work/life balance. This is a step in the right direction, but unfortunately California’s rigid wage and hour laws hinder employers’ ability to modify work schedules too much unless they are willing to incur overtime costs,” says Kosch.

She adds that California provides extremely generous workplace protections. “If anything, we may have too much regulation in the workplace which hampers the ability of businesses to agree to simple employee requests like, ‘Can I work through lunch to leave early today?’”

California is known for going a few steps beyond other states and federal law in providing worker protections from the requirement that workers be paid overtime after eight hours in a day to being one of the first to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. California is one of the only states to provide job-protected pregnancy disability leave separate and apart from other leave laws like the Family Medical Leave Act.

Our state was also a pioneer in providing paid family leave through a program that provides compensation for workers who take time off to care for an ill child, spouse, parent or registered domestic partner or to bond with a new child.

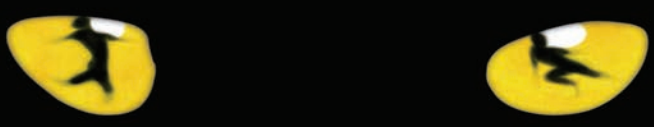
Most people will spend a third of their adult lives at work. Work defines people in the most basic way. Work can provide identity, friendship, a steady routine and a salary. A decade from now, where and how we work will be different. As gender roles blur in the workplace and in the family home, adapting to and solving workplace issues will remain the key to any company’s success.



Courtney Bustillos was born and raised in San Diego and has more than 10 years of experience in television news. She is an award-winning journalist and works as a consultant with TW2 Marketing.

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