

## A Member of the Club...

I am  $\frac{3}{4}$  2<sup>nd</sup> generation American. All of my grandparents, except for my father's mother who was born in the US, came through Ellis Island in the late 1800's. Being of Italian and Russian Jewish heritage, I grew up culturally within two ethnic groups (that are not unlike many, many others) that spent their formative years as immigrant populations being outsiders and actually restricted from getting good jobs let alone becoming members of any clubs! These groups were often seen as bad influences, unable to be educated or to do higher level educated jobs, not worthy of good pay and always looking for assistance because they couldn't make it. In short – they were inferior. Period.

So what did these always-pressing-their-noses-to-the-glass-to-get-in-but-it-seemed-they-couldn't-no-matter-what-they-did groups do? They STARTED THEIR OWN CLUBS! They BECAME SO GOOD at what they did, and SO NEEDED that – after a while – they didn't care about the other clubs. And guess what? The vast majority of these outsiders – were men.

What, you may be asking, could this possibly have to do with women breaking into the old boys' networks at companies, universities, labs, non-profits today? LOTS! Because in many ways, women are the new immigrant group trying to break-in to traditionally closed clubs.

### 1. JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE IS MALE, DOESN'T GUARANTEE HIM ENTRY TO "The Club".

Fact is that the majority of men are never asked to become part of any old boy's club. Think about it. The majority of people do not become the leaders and insiders in any organization, and as the majority of workers in technology areas are still men, that means the majority of men are outsiders. (It's kind of like the commutative law as it relates to outsideness). The people who do get in are there because they bring something valuable to the table as judged by those *at the table*. That's the key – *being sure you know what is deemed valuable by those at the table*. NOT what you would *like to be deemed valuable* or you believe *should be deemed valuable*. And remembering that even if you know, that's not enough to get in – now you have to demonstrate you should be one of them. So, to my next point – who is the "them"? HUBS....

**2. HUBS.** Now, I wish I had the magic bullet to sharing how to break-in. I don't. BUT I can tell you some things that can work. At every level, in every organization there are the play makers. These are the people who make good and positive things happen; who are well connected and know what is required to be successful. Those who make it happen, who do great work, and are recognized for it. They are hubs. Albert-Laszlo Barabasi in the book: "Linked: The New Science of Networks" clearly showed that ALL networks map the same way and work by the same rules. And with people networks, the key is knowing that some people are "better" connected than others. These people are hubs; the rest are nodes. Take out a node (people connected to hubs) and the system continues to work. Take out a hub (or a few hubs) and you can get a cascading failure. So *figure out who are the hubs, figure out what makes them hubs, learn from them and get closer*. They are usually at the center of the networks and clubs that matter. Which brings me to my third point.. YOU are THEM!



### **3. WOMEN - PLEASE EMBRACE YOUR OWN POWER & BUILD “CLUBS” THAT FOCUS ON BUSINESS AND HELPING EACH OTHER MOVE AHEAD.**

There are lots and lots of books written, talks given and advice out there on forming women’s networks. The challenge I am putting out there (and I risk annoying people with this comment, but here goes) is that these networks don’t amount to much. They become “pity parties” and wind up not focusing on the key items that help build a career. What are the issues of the organization; where are the next key jobs coming up; what “tickets” need to be punched to get ahead; what contributions are required; which skill sets are respected; who has power and who do they look to for help and why –these are some of the implicit topics that “the old boys” focus on, as work-life balance is not usually high on their radar screen – whether you think it should be or not.

So that’s my take. Have the gumption and CONFIDENCE not to need *their clubs* - let’s build our own. Let’s stay focused on developing and accessing hubs – male and female - and never forget that only we are choosing to press-our-noses-to-the glass waiting to be invited in.

Can’t wait to hear what you all have to say!! Judy Giordan

