



AUTHOR, AUTHOR

by Britney Porter

Rhonda Levene

Glass Walls: Reality and Hope Beyond the Glass Ceiling

Twenty years after *The Wall Street Journal* introduced the term “glass ceiling,” Plano resident Rhonda Levene and co-author Jean Rostollan have introduced the Glass Wall Theory. *Glass Walls: Reality and Hope Beyond the Glass Ceiling*, exposes the marginalization of women in the workforce after they have moved up or through the glass ceiling. “Walls are sideways, so [the theory] is not necessarily about mobility and roles as it is about acceptance and inclusion,” says Levene. “Glass walls prevent women from having the same level of access, influence, and power [as men].”

Because glass walls are invisible, some women may not realize they exist until they feel the walls closing in. While Levene acknowledges that women have made progress over the years, she says, “When you look at the statistics, there’s only 11 women CEO’s today in Fortune 500 companies. Eleven. Out of 500!”

According to the author, “Many [women] say their paths of accomplishment have been a testament to their own endurance rather than a progressive and enlightened marketplace.”

After enduring 20 years in corporate America, Levene is currently the vice president of business development for Pepsi Co. She facilitates sales and marketing teams and says that her

background in finance has been helpful.

Her background includes a bachelor’s degree in accounting from Southern Methodist University and a master’s degree in finance from the University of Dallas. Her first job out of college was with Club Corporation of America (a Robert Dedman company) as a controller. After a few more jobs in

Last March, *Forbes.com* revealed a report titled *Expectations and Achievement: Empowering Women from Within* where 2,200 executives believed that their careers have progressed, but “women have lower expectations than men do about how high they might advance in their professions.”

This is where the Diamond concept comes in. To Levene, Diamonds, or good business leaders, are confident that they will progress. “Diamonds take chances, sometimes at their own personal sacrifice,” says Levene.

As explained in *Glass Walls*, diamond is the hardest matter found in nature; its physical properties

make it one of the most sought after substances in the world; and it is rare. Plus, diamond cuts glass.

Diamonds cut through glass walls with confidence. “The only competence on which women score lower than male counterparts is self-esteem,” says Levene. “Some women are so critical of themselves, the way they’re perceived in the world, and if they’ve offended people, and I just don’t think the male psyche thinks about that as much.”

With confidence, women are more likely to take risks. “I’ve read that women tend to be more loyal than men in companies. Men will change jobs more often for a higher salary. But women



finance, Levene was hired on as a CPA for the Coca Cola company devoting almost 15 years there in eight roles.

About halfway into her career at Coke, she switched from finance to sales management, and when she left the Fortune 100 company, she was the vice president of sales for food service.

Awife and mom of two twins, Levene is also the cofounder of Glass Walls Enterprises where she speaks at conferences about the Glass Wall Theory and listens to other women’s stories. “It’s really rewarding hearing other people’s stories. But what’s amazing to me is how things haven’t changed as much as you would think.”

tend to be more safe. Women want to have it all planned out, but that prevents them from taking the chances they need to grow and break through glass walls.”

Levene continues, “When they came to me at Coke and said, We think you’d be great in sales management well, I didn’t have any experience in sales, and I didn’t know if I was going to like it. On the first day of the job, I noticed that my sales team – a team of all men – had come up in the ranks in sales. I thought, How am I going to get their support? Well, I’m still in contact with most of them today ... and they say, You provided us with more support ... you listened to what we had to say and let us take risks.”

Levene’s team became one of the most successful sales team in the division. “Sometimes you’ve just got to take some risks,” she said. “Sometimes the thing you’re most afraid of is the one thing you need to do because you’re going to learn from it.”

For more information, visit www.glasswalls.org.

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The vast majority of successful corporate women attribute portions of their advancement to those special individuals – Diamonds – who in a variety of ways ‘made a difference’ in their work life. ... Why aren’t these amazing Diamonds running more organizations? For one thing, Diamonds don’t possess the narcissism needed to fuel a personal campaign for attention and advancement. They don’t focus on promoting themselves through attending conventions or seeking high-profile situations that offer a stage for individuals striving to become corporate bigwigs. In addition, many Diamonds are women, a group that regardless of talent or style is automatically denied access to male peers and many plum positions inside the ivory tower. Diamonds, by rising above many politically charged situations, aren’t inclined to play the games and kowtow to expediency; they aren’t willing to deal with the entanglements that would result from the subjugation of their souls.”



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