



OWNER EQUITY BY CHAD CRANDELL
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It's lonely at the top...Let's change that! (Part I)

(The views and opinions expressed in this blog are strictly those of the author.)

This past October at the [ISHC](#) Annual Conference, I had the unique opportunity to sit on a panel entitled "Paving a Brighter Future for Women in Leadership." The panel was led by Peggy Berg, well-known hospitality consultant and investor, gaining more recent recognition for her latest venture, [The Castell Project](#). The Castell Project is a nonprofit focused on strategies for advancing women into hospitality leadership positions through specialized training, corporate support and engagement, and targeted research tracking the hospitality industry's performance and progress in this regard.

Research [published by the Castell Project](#) shows that while women comprise approximately half of the workforce (and make 75% of all travel decisions impacting our industry) less than 10% of the most senior positions in hospitality companies (CEO, president, partner) are held by women, lagging other industries and making little improvement in recent years. It doesn't take a full-fledged study to see this in real life. Take a look around the lobby (or at the panelists) at the next industry conference you attend, and you'll quickly get the picture.





Personally, I had always felt quite proud of my own organization, in which about 50% of our senior leaders and partners are female. So, I'm doing a good job right? Well, yes and no.

I have always sought to hire the best and brightest people, and those who are with us today in the senior ranks have earned it, whether male or female. But recognizing the gravity of the issue on a larger industry scale, and understanding better the root cause, is not something I can say I've been as in tune with as perhaps I should. Nor have I actively socialized and attributed our company's success to the diversity we have achieved or focused on ensuring we maintain this balance.

Perhaps there are others out there who share similar thoughts. You don't see the problem because you think you've solved it, or it doesn't appear to be an issue within your company.

The question is whether you have really looked at the data and what it's telling you within your own organization. You may have X number of women in leadership positions, but what is the right number and how many more are capable and waiting in the wings? Or, perhaps you empathize with the issue but aren't quite sure what you can or should do about it?

After much reflection from participating on this panel with Peggy and discussions with senior colleagues, I've concluded that my role is not done. And, in fact, to really move the needle, it's just beginning.

I have learned a great deal through this experience, including the role of unconscious bias that both men and women bring to this issue. I look forward to further exploring the impact of unconscious bias in Part II of my blog, as well as sharing some thoughts on how we (men and women in leadership) can ride the wave of needed change which appears to be gaining tremendous momentum and support greater gender diversity within the hospitality industry together.

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