

Case Study: Verizon Wireless & Developing Women Leaders

Introduction

Verizon Wireless (VZW) is an innovative wireless communications company that connects people and businesses with the most advanced wireless technology and service available. Verizon customers can access the Internet and stream media faster than ever—and experience their mobile world in real-time. As the nation’s largest wireless company with over 73,000 employees, Verizon serves 98.9 million retail connections and operate more than 1,900 retail locations in the United States. Globally, it offers voice and data services in more than 200 destinations.

A company with steadfast values has the following statement as part of it’s’ credo: *We know teamwork enables us to serve our customers better and faster. We embrace diversity and personal development not only because it’s the right thing to do, but also because it’s smart business.*

VZW is committed to developing all employees to inspire them to take their career wherever they want it to go. As we know employee development is an integral part of talent management. Talent management refers to the process of attracting, selecting, training, developing and promoting employees through an organization. Organizations that focus on developing talent in-house ensure their employees have the tools and resources they need to perform well, and transition to leadership roles. Internally developed leaders are valuable assets because over time they have developed the necessary core competencies and internalized company values.

These actions by management increase the probability employees will be more valuable in the future while improving the likelihood that the company will retain the talent it needs.

Situation

Verizon’s Commitment: We want VZW to be a great place to work. It begins with a culture that respects the individual and taps the full range of potential in every employee. It continues with our ongoing commitment to every facet of their careers. This culture seems to be one where success based on your abilities will be supported.

Below are a few examples of the realities women face in reaching leadership positions where they can demonstrate the full range of their potential and contribute to the

success of their organizations. These important realities impact our Workforce, Workplace and Marketplace.

- 2.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, up from 0.6% in 2000
- In US Fortune 500 companies, women represent only 8% of executive leadership teams and fewer than 2% are CEOs
- Women represent only 31% of managers in Europe
- In Mexico there is only one woman for every 13 male officers and managers
- Women account for 1% of managerial positions in Japan
- More than 50 % of college graduates are women
- Women control 83% of consumer purchases
- In the next 10 years, 8% growth of women in the workplace vs. 5% growth for men
- A recent study of 353 companies in the Fortune 500 found that those with the most women in senior management are over 30% more profitable than the rest

At the current rate of change, it will be 40 years before women enjoy parity with men at the corporate officer level.

Women as leaders is a VZW business imperative! Not a nice to have...a must have!

To support Verizon's commitment, and to help close the representation gap of women in leadership positions, Verizon is proactive in providing high potential women the opportunity to participate in personal and professional developmental activities.

Action

VZWs credo has been the catalyst for numerous diversity and inclusion skill building and personal development opportunities for women and culturally diverse individuals and groups. One such opportunity is PRISM International, Inc. s' *Women's Leadership Forum: Women at Work: Being an Advocate for Your Own Success™*. VZW has partnered with PRISM over the last several years to bring this program to hundreds of women across the enterprise. *Women at Work: Being an Advocate for Your Own Success™* is a fast paced, highly interactive session that explores situations women face in today's workplace while inspiring them to reach higher levels of personal effectiveness, growth and development.

The goal of this program is to identify the advantages of women in the workplace and discuss challenges, explore strategies and tips for continued professional growth and development.

The objectives, succinctly stated, are 1) understand why women as leaders are a business imperative, 2) discuss 3 *strategies for success* amid challenges, and opportunities in today's workplace, 3) explore ten things you can do every day to build your career, personal value and leverage your differences, and 4) share conditions of retention.

Following is a partial outline for this dynamic program:

Women at Work: Being an Advocate for Your Own Success™

- I. Lead Now (No Titles Needed)
 - Celebrate small wins and foster incremental change
 - It's not a ladder, it's a lattice
- II. Leverage The Female Edge
 - Transformational Leadership vs. Traditional Leadership
 - Encourage Participation
 - Share Power and Information
 - Enhance the Self Worth of Others
 - Energize Others
 - IQ vs. EI (Cognitive Intelligence vs. Emotional Intelligence)
- III. Own Your Career (Be Accountable)
 - 10 Things You Can Do Everyday

Results

VZW has been recognized by numerous national organizations and spotlighted for its' practices and employment records that benefit women and encourage their advancement to top management positions.

Melanie Miller, PRISM's Senior Consultant and Keynote Speaker has delivered this program several times to hundreds of Verizon high potential women with exceptional results. During a recent session, she said, "It was amazing...there was great senior leadership representation and a great group of 180 women. There was applause, there was crying, there was excitement."

Afterwards, in the presence of the Region VP a host of about 18 women told Melanie how great the program was, how proud of the company they were and how they felt Melanie's message was inspiring. One woman said she had been to one of the programs two years ago and was not a manager then. She said she was back this time because she had been promoted and she credited that session for giving her the tools to get the promotion. Another woman told Melanie, with tears in her eyes, "after your speech today I really do feel like I can do this".

Melanie continued by saying, "I am in awe every time I step up to the microphone and look out at the women tapped as high potential women at VZ. They show up in all shapes and sizes, colors, hair colors, haircuts, women with fuchsia pink hair, women dressed in men's suits, in high heels, in flats, all ages, gay and straight, able bodied and disabled. They sit smiling and excited in anticipation of what awaits them. They speak of gratefulness in being selected to attend. The irony is that the organization is making an investment in them and it is they who will ultimately give back to the company."

One of Verizon's regional vice presidents recently expressed the following thoughts. "For every year that there was a women's conference on the West Coast, the women that I spoke with are still motivated, engaged, inspired and empowered. They still speak of the great experience they had at the Conference and often site their own personal success stories regarding what they used from the conference."

Other participant comments about the program include:

- "You have no idea how your message is touching people, I am only a project lead right now, but after your speech today I realize the impact I can have and I am going to apply for a promotion"
- "I had no idea how empowering this would be - I have so many ideas I am going to take back to my call center. I am excited to start my folks down a new path that can help everyone"
- "I have been to one of your previous sessions. I was recently transferred and I was able to use the skills you taught last time to make a transition. The men I work with have no idea what I am going to bring back to them this time!!!"

The Associate Director of HR expressed extreme pleasure with the program when she heard the attendees emphatically sharing their "takeaways" during the closing moments. She stated how lucky they are to have Melanie and PRISM to deliver such a powerful message and program.

Awards and Recognition

Verizon was ranked No. 47 on DiversityInc's "Top 50 Companies for Diversity" list. A longtime diversity leader, Verizon Communications was recognized for its efforts to recruit, retain and promote women, as well as exemplifying inclusive talent-development best practices for minority employees.

For the ninth consecutive year, Verizon was recognized by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), earning a spot on the annual listing of America's Top Companies for Women's Business Enterprises (WBEs) in 2012. Verizon Communications was honored for its world-class supplier diversity program, which creates a level playing field for women's business enterprises to compete for corporate contracts.

DiversityBusiness.com ranked Verizon No. 7 on the site's 2013 list of "Top Organizations for Multicultural Business Opportunities." The companies on this list were selected through an annual poll of minority and women-owned suppliers, and based upon factors including volume, consistency and quality of business initiatives that an organization grants to multicultural suppliers. Over 1,300,000 diversity business owners participated in an online election to determine the top organizations.

Closing Comments

"During both our Women's Leadership and Multicultural Leadership Forums, PRISM's senior facilitators brought relevant messages delivered at the right energy level to engage, motivate and educate attendees. Their subject matter knowledge and flexibility supported our event managers' objectives. We think the forum attendees left with knowledge and skills they can use to continue to develop their careers with us." - Verizon Wireless

"It is my honor to work with such a committed and dedicated leadership team. I have never done this work for any client where I felt it was better received, but more importantly where the material was better utilized, put in practice and reflected upon." – Melanie Miller, Sr. Consultant, PRISM International, Inc.

About PRISM International, Inc.

[PRISM International, Inc.](#) is a WBENC certified, full-service provider of innovative, proven consulting services and training programs and products for Leveraging Diversity & Inclusion, Managing Talent,, Increasing Global & Cross Cultural Effectiveness and Preventing Harassing & Discriminatory Behaviors

Since 1992, PRISM has assisted over 200 organizations in 23 countries by providing a systemic process and best-in-practices performance solutions focusing on optimizing the opportunities and complexities of the workforce, workplace and marketplace.

PRISM is the parent organization of the [Association of Diversity Councils](#), and the founder of the annual [Diversity Council Conference](#) and the [Diversity Council Honors Award](#).

For more information about this program contact us by emailing info@PrismDiversity.com or calling 888.997.7476.