

Leadership Lessons from Canadian Businesswomen

By Joanne Richard

“There’s a saying: ‘If I can see one, I can be one,’ says Colleen Moorehead of women in leadership positions. She should know—she is one of them, an influential leader in her own right, and she’s put out a book to elevate young leaders.

Moorehead just released *The Collective Wisdom of High-Performing Women: Leadership Lessons from the Judy Project* (Barlow Books), a platform for learning, to mentor and pull up women navigating companies in their early careers. Seventy top Canadian businesswomen lend their voices to share compelling stories, advice, challenges and important characteristics of great leaders that strengthen companies—compassion, honesty, generosity and authenticity.

“The goal is to show that a leadership style once dismissed as weak is actually a powerful way to make organizations stronger and more profitable,” says Moorehead, chief client officer at Osler, a leading business law firm and cofounder of E*Trade.

Along her career path, many men mentored Moorehead but very few women. “As a young woman, I would’ve valued a woman in a senior position pulling me up, telling me they faced similar problems, that you’re allowed to cry, and that you can reinvent yourself,” said Moorehead, whose book is an extension of the Judy Project at Rotman School of Management’s executive development program and supports the rise to power of women in Canadian business. It’s available at [amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca) and [chapters.indigo.ca](https://www.chapters.indigo.ca).

So just what do some of these leaders say?

- When it comes to raises, if you don’t ask, you don’t get. First do your homework and find out what the job is worth, whether it’s from a co-worker in the same role or a recruiter. Before the ask, if there’s room for improvement, then improve. Always go in with confidence. Tell a story grounded in your accomplishments because your manager might not know about everything you’ve done. It’s also important to convey what’s in it for them.
—Nancy Vonk, co-founder of Swim, leadership consulting and training
- You hear a lot about work/life balance, building borders between work and home, knowing when to mix and not to mix both lives. My advice is the opposite—mix it all up. Be yourself at home and at work, bring your whole self to both, your whole energy to work—you will create better relationships, teams, products, and will certainly be a happier person. After all, research has shown that across all ages, genders and work platforms, happiness at work is improved if you have a best friend at work—in other words, mixing your personal and professional lives, for a better overall one.
—Ikram Al Mouaswas, partner, infrastructure advisory, Deloitte Canada

- Embrace your own leadership style. It is your strength. We don't have to acquire male leadership characteristics to be successful. The female leadership traits highlighted in the book are the characteristics that are critical for success in today's complex business world—including tenacity.
—Colleen Moorehead, author and chief client officer at Osler
- Be sure to network—it serves two beautiful purposes. On a personal level, it is a recognition that every conversation changes the world. When two people come together with open hearts, the universe shifts. On a professional level, strategic networking—the intentional identification of people who could be influential or impactful on your journey to live your best life with purpose and meaning, followed by reaching out and connecting with those people—is essential. In doing so you are building a bridge into the future with no certainty of where that bridge will lead other than somewhere different from where you are right now.
—Kim Armstrong, deputy city manager of employee services, city of Edmonton
- Having an authentic conversation with your boss before you go on maternity leave can be your way of controlling the narrative.
—Tina Lee, CEO, T&T Supermarkets
- The unexpected benefit of compassionate leadership is that it creates an immeasurable degree of loyalty and an even deeper engagement among team members to deliver their very best.
—Aileen Kheraj, vice-president, credit-card products, loyalty and account management, TD Bank

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