

Executive Coach Offers Her Own 'MBA for Success'

What becomes of the women who graduate with MBAs from Harvard Business School? Do most go on to fulfilling careers, or do they drop out of the work force when they become moms?

"The number that has been floated for years, and is quoted by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg in her book 'Lean In,' is that 15 years after graduation, only a third of them are working full-time -- and they're working for their male classmates," says executive and business coach Debora McLaughlin, author of "The Renegade Leader, 9 Success Strategies Driven Leaders Use to Ignite People, Performance and Profits," (www.TheRenegadeLeader.com) and the forthcoming "Running in High Heels".

"That statement suggests that, even when they hold advanced degrees from an Ivy League university, women are less ambitious, less willing and less committed than their male fellow graduates. ... I just don't believe that."

In fact, McLaughlin is right. Harvard Business School recently surveyed more than 6,400 male and female alumni and found that well more than half the women aged 31 to 47 were working full-time. Sixteen percent were working part-time, and 10 percent were caring for children full-time.

Ninety-five percent of the men were working full-time.

"This tells me that women are making difficult choices. Certainly, to do what it takes to get into Harvard and complete an MBA, they're ambitious," McLaughlin says. "But women, especially those who want to become mothers, face extra challenges in trying to strike a work-life balance. And, let's face it; it's still a male-dominated business world that lacks understanding of the needs of working Moms."

No matter where a person – male or female – earns her master's in business administration, there's a lot they won't learn in business school, McLaughlin notes. She offers her own MBA for successfully having it all:

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Written by Ginny Grimsley
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• **M – Management skills:** A lot of the female professionals and business owners McLaughlin works with don't enjoy managing people. "They may have gone into a particular industry because it's their passion – whether it's architecture, engineering or small business. They want to move up, but in business, that almost always involves assuming managerial responsibilities," McLaughlin says. You can't duck this and you won't be successful if you're half a manager. Find a mentor, an executive coach, a good course or just read up on current management tools – you'll be happier and so will your employees. And you'll be on the path to becoming an inspiring leader.

• **B – Balance:** Finding the right work-life balance for you is essential! If your dream is to own that corner office or grow your business into a Fortune 100, carefully "choose your regrets," McLaughlin advises. Will you regret giving up your career to manage a home and children? Will you regret the lost mommy time if you continue working full time? Be bold, ask for what you need. "Why do women give up their careers and men do not?" McLaughlin asks. Striking a balance means being unapologetic about what you need when you need it. When you say "yes" understand what you are saying "no" to.

• **A – Advancement:** In order to achieve your dreams of success, you have to put yourself out there. "You have to show up and speak up, be authentic and unapologetic," McLaughlin says. Although women now account for more than half the bachelor's and master's degrees in the United States, they fill only 16.6 percent of the seats on Fortune 500 boards and women CEOs represent only 4 percent. Get the experience that puts you in the position to be a board candidate, McLaughlin advises. Actively network, find female role models who can help you to achieve the kind of success you're aiming for, and be seen and heard in the workplace.

"If you have a fingerprint to leave on the world and you want to live your life with the greatest impact, know that you can," McLaughlin says. "You can have all that you want, when you want it."

About Debora McLaughlin

Debora McLaughlin is the best-selling author of "The Renegade Leader, 9 Success Strategies Driven Leaders Use to Ignite People, Performance and Profits" and the forthcoming book,

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“Running in High Heels.” She is the CEO of The Renegade Leader Coaching and Consulting Group, combining her experience as certified executive coach, cognitive behavioral psychotherapist and as a top sales performer in New York City and Boston to help CEOs, business leaders and organizations achieve accelerated results.