

# DON'T SETTLE FOR #BossLady

Terms such as “Girl Boss”, “She-EO” and “Boss Babe” have snuck into popular culture and don’t seem to be dying out anytime soon. In fact, there are more than 12 million mentions of “girl boss” on Instagram alone. These terms are meant to empower women in the workforce and inspire entrepreneurship—but do they really?

In a world where women are the minority in the head office and the gender pay gap is still very real, these terms can lessen a woman’s achievement, trivialize success and make serious endeavors sound more like a hobby.

After all, we don’t call physicians “Girl Doctors” or use “Girl Lawyers” to address attorneys. Why is it so different when it comes to business?

According to *CNN Money*, only 330 of the top 2,000—about 16.5 percent—of executives in the United States are women. A mere two percent of Toronto Stock Exchange’s companies have a female CEO. While Canada’s Senate is comprised of 43 percent women, only 23 percent currently serve on the U.S. Senate. The percentage is even less for women serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.

With fewer women in power, fewer women are seen as powerful.

So, how do we flip the script to make the narrative more about skills and less about gender? We spoke with 10 successful alumnae on their journey to the C-suite to learn more.

## KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS.

Before you set foot in a job interview, take stock of your practical experience acquired outside of the classroom.

“I didn’t realize it at the time but holding three offices during my collegiate years in Alpha Gam and living in the chapter house played a tremendous role in the cultivation of my leadership and negotiating skills, as well as my ability to influence and mentor others,” said Lois Jean Broadway. “This part of my education was far beyond anything I could ever learn in a class or on the job.”

Lois, who now leads an architectural design firm of more than 20 professionals, looks for these kinds of soft skills—as opposed to hard skills, such as technical competency—when seeking and hiring new talent for her firm.

“Emotional intelligence, willingness to learn, listening skills and the ability to assess risk, make good decisions and resolve conflicts are just as important to me as raw talent,” she said. “It’s not always about what you know, but what you’re willing to admit you don’t know—and the willingness to always learn more.”

Similarly, Kara Kazazeen seeks employees who are highly adaptable and continuous learners when she hires or promotes.

“Working for a corporation as large as Walmart and, specifically within our team, there are dozens of priorities at any given time. The ability to identify the highest priority items and the flexibility to adapt to new priorities is a key skill that I look for,” she said.

Kara also highly values employees who keep up with industry trends and those who are curious problem solvers.

“They add a tremendous amount of value to any team they are placed on,” she said.

Niv Persaud, a consultant who has been quoted in *USA Today*, *CNN Money*, *Reuters Money Magazine* and other well-known industry publications, also heavily considers soft skills when interviewing potential employees.

“You can teach someone technical skills, but you can’t teach someone how to have a good attitude,” she said.

She also recommends staying on top of new technologies and keeping a clean social media profile.

### REMEMBER, RESPECT IS EARNED.

Though you may have a lot to bring to the table, not everyone will know that about you on day one—and maybe not even on day 100.

“Having found success early in my career, it was a challenge to be taken seriously by older leaders.” said Emily Smith, former chief of staff for the United Nations’ Family Planning 2020 movement. “I realized that—as a young woman—I didn’t have the luxury of merely letting my work speak for itself. I had to learn the importance of carrying myself with confidence and—literally—walking with my head held high.”

Emily believes men, more-so than women, are raised to convey confidence and power, which is a narrative she’d like to change.

“I am fully aware that assertive women are often seen as pushy—or even worse—when, in contrast, assertive males are generally seen as ‘go-getters.’” she said.

To combat this, Emily recommends remembering you earned your role and title, always working hard and finding a strong female mentor who can help you navigate the ageism and genderism often found in the workplace.

In addition to confidence, Linda Henman, PhD. credits her dependability with the respect she’s earned in the marketplace.

“I learned early on that I had to let people know they could count on me if I wanted them to trust me with responsibilities.”

### BE THE CHANGE.

Relaunching a career after a long hiatus—or even after a brief stint at home on maternity leave—has its own set of challenges. What may seem like minor inconveniences to some can have a tremendous impact on an employee’s performance upon returning from work.

While a definite challenge, Liz Harriss York believes these struggles can sometimes turn into your greatest motivator.

“When I had my first child and returned to work, I wanted to meet both my career demands and the requirements of family life. Even though I had a very supportive employer, I could not rely

on my company or its culture to provide every solution,” she said. “I knew that once things settled down and I had more time to focus, I would advocate to make my workplace better for women.”

One thing Liz, a licensed architect, was determined to remedy for all females in the workplace was the lack of lactation rooms in company facilities. She knew first-hand how something as seemingly small as having access to a private, dedicated space would ease the anxiety of returning to work and allow her to be more productive.

“It was important to reframe the way facility designers and managers—who are predominantly male—meet the needs of all possible employees. I began by writing articles for the American Institute of Architects to provide better information on the importance of this issue and its effect on company productivity,” said Liz.

Pam Parsons Alvord remembers a time when open disregard for working mothers was far too common.

“Shortly after returning from maternity leave, I interviewed with the president of a newly-merged company. After about 20 minutes of conversation about benefits packages, I asked him if he had any questions about my qualifications, experience or career goals. He responded that investing in women of my then age wasn’t worth his time because I’d ‘just have another baby and leave.’” Pam said. “I was still in shock as he continued on to tell me that the only way he believed I could be committed to my job is if I had a full-time nanny—and he knew I couldn’t afford one on my salary.”

Though tighter human resources regulations from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission prevent prospective employers from asking questions about family planning, these attitudes and biases can still be found in the workforce.

“I carry a lot of guilt for not pursuing legal action because he continued to treat women this way (and worse) for the rest of his career,” Pam said.

### KEEP LEARNING.

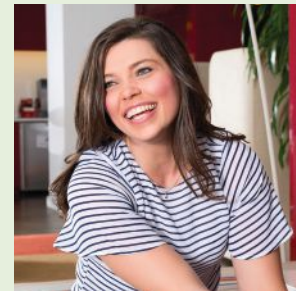
While there is much to be said about practical experience, sometimes it takes some extra letters behind your name to be seen as accomplished in your chosen profession. *(Continued on page 18)*

# Panel OF Experts....



**PAM PARSONS ALVORD**

Alpha-Syracuse University  
Senior Vice President,  
Executive Group  
Director at Ogilvy  
Industry: Advertising



**EMILY SMITH**

Beta Xi-Purdue University  
Owner, Emily Smith Consulting  
Industry: Business



**LOIS JEAN BROADWAY**

Omicron-University of California-Berkeley  
Principal/Owner, TGB Architects  
Industry: Architecture



**LINDA D. HENMAN**

Beta Eta-University of Southern Illinois Carbondale  
Owner, Henman Performance Group  
Industry: Business



**NIV PERSAUD**

Gamma Phi-Georgia Institute of Technology  
Managing Director/  
Founder, Transition Planning & Guidance  
Industry: Business





**KIM THOMADSEN KLEBER**

Alpha Beta—University of Michigan  
Director, Product Marketing at GoDaddy  
Industry: eCommerce Marketing



**LEEZA HOYT BRAY**

Delta Alpha—University of Southern California  
President, The Hoyt Organization, Inc.  
Industry: Public Relations



**LISHA STEINWEISS-CRYTZER**

Epsilon Nu—University of Central Oklahoma  
Founder & CEO CE Health Careers/Founder, Fast Inc. Network  
Industry: Healthcare & Entrepreneurism



**KARA KAZAZEAN**

Gamma Phi—Georgia Institute of Technology  
Senior Director of Payment Services, Walmart Inc.  
Industry: Financial Technology



**LIZ HARRISS YORK**

Gamma Phi—Georgia Institute of Technology  
Chief Sustainability Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Industry: Government

# Run LIKE A Girl



**Kay Ivey**



**Elaine Marshall**

One way for women to use their voice to enact change and represent women at a higher level is to run for public office. According to a study by Rutgers University, only 25.5 percent of local U.S. state legislators are women. As women outnumber men in the U.S. by more than 6 million, this is far from balanced representation in government.

We spoke with the Governor of Alabama and the Secretary of State for North Carolina on how the Alpha Gam experience can prepare someone for a future in political service.

"If you have a passion to make a difference, I strongly encourage you to step up and pursue public office. Our country needs more good women to serve as elected officials," said Governor Kay Ivey, Gamma Delta—Auburn University. "In fact, I am only the second woman to ever hold the Office of Governor in Alabama."

Kay urges anyone considering a run for office to make their principle beliefs a priority.

"Run on your own convictions, merits and experiences. Because I speak from my personal experience, I know that there is great joy in empowering the people where you serve," she said. "As Alpha Gamma Deltas, we seek to 'Impact the World,' and if you answer the high calling to run for public office, on any level, you can certainly fulfill that vision."

Secretary Elaine Folk Marshall, Alpha Xi—University of Maryland-College Park, recommends calling on the practical skills learned in chapter leadership roles.

"Being an Alpha Gam is excellent training for public service, as it requires organization, public speaking skills, project identification and leading teams of sisters. Basically, having a plan and working that plan," said Elaine.

She believes, though, that it's important to expect some level of discord.

"Develop a thick skin. There will always be naysayers. Don't take it personally," she said.

When Leeza Hoyt Bray began her career in public relations, she often found herself the only woman in the room full of high-powered real estate, finance, technology and healthcare professionals.

"I found confidence in my credentials," said Leeza. "My MBA and APR [the industry standard for public relations certification], both carried a great deal of credibility in my early years."

Today, Leeza runs her own agency which is considered one of the leading PR companies in Los Angeles, according to the *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

Linda Henman has found that continually educating herself has propelled her through her career as both an educator, corporate trainer and business consultant.

"At each juncture of my career, I found I needed more training and education. With each step, I've figured out what I needed, got it and moved ahead," she said. "I still spend about \$20,000 a year on training to keep me current and at the top of my game."

### FORGE YOUR PATH.

A report from the Kauffman Foundation shows that 550,000 Americans launch new businesses each month. As the concept of entrepreneurship is continually redefined, and the rise of innovation-based "startups" steadily grows, the World Economic Forum suggests that 65 percent of today's primary school children will end up working in jobs that don't exist yet.

However, with a failure rate of 50 percent over five years, the amount of risk it takes to start a business can be incredibly daunting.

"No woman has ever started a business because she felt like it would be easy. Starting a company is a commitment to using your passion for pushing through obstacles like fear, exhaustion, lack of resources, and many unforeseeable fences to climb," said Lisha Steinweiss-Crytzer.

Those obstacles can be even more of a hurdle for women, as female entrepreneurs receive a fraction of venture capital funds as their male counterparts. Regardless, since entering the workplace, women have defied expectations, often outperforming men by capitalizing on adaptations they've been forced to make in even the most emotionally toxic working conditions.

Lisha's company, which was near bankruptcy two years ago, recently earned the 910 spot on the prestigious Inc 5000, an annual report which ranks the fast-growing innovators.

One way she has done this is through resourcefulness, which she demands of everyone she works with.

"Don't come to me with a problem without offering a couple of solutions," she said.

She's not alone. The World Economic Forum predicts by 2020, more than a third of the desired core skills of most occupations will be comprised of those that are not yet considered crucial to today's job market. Because of this, social skills—such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others—will be in higher demand across all industries.

One of these skills is the ability to collaborate. Kim Thomadsen Kleber credits her ability to work in a group setting and collaborate with a variety of personalities in the room to her collegiate time in Alpha Gamma Delta.

"Alpha Gam showed me the importance of connections, working with others, and that not everyone thinks like you," she said.

Kim also admits that, early on, she wasn't afraid to use the 'fake it until you make it' tactic that seems to come more naturally to men.

"Much has been written about how men will 'go for it,' whether they have the skills and training or not. In contrast, women tend to underestimate or undervalue their skills," Kim said. "Stepping up—even when we aren't 100 percent certain—usually leads to the realization that we are far more capable than we believe."

# BEING A ~~#BossLady~~

By Brittany Graham Papciak, Zeta Alpha—Eastern Michigan University

Each day, women are faced with a range of obstacles that many of their male CEO counterparts never have to even consider. These issues not only prevent many women from achieving their goal of becoming a company leader, but diminish their opportunities to get ahead in business.

For many women, becoming the boss is about being the best version of themselves while making an impact on their organization—or even the world. Here are five things to keep in mind as you make your way to the top.

**1. OWN THE ROOM.** It's not enough to be in a role or to sit at the head table. Being a leader requires that you speak confidently and engage with others, without fear being ostracized or rejected. Part of becoming the boss is finding your self-confidence and feeling secure in your abilities. While this looks different for every woman, knowing who you are and possessing the self-assurance to be present in the space with others speaks volumes.

**2. EMPOWER OTHERS.** A strong, bold woman with confidence and integrity will always strive to build up other women, instead of tearing them down. Use your confidence, presence and drive to empower other women to see their potential and help them take ownership of those abilities. Remember, there is power in numbers and you can never underestimate the value of creating allies.

**3. OWN YOUR MISTAKES.** Overcoming our mistakes is how we stretch our wings. It provides valuable problem-solving experience and illustrates how all choices have consequences. The real power comes from how we respond to our mistakes. Being in charge means owning, appreciating and learning from all experiences. A confident boss is aware of and owns their own shortcomings.

**4. FIND YOUR PEOPLE.** Surround yourself with women who push you to be the best version of yourself while giving you the right amount of truth and sincerity. Every boss needs her tribe to get through the bad and thrive through the good.

**5. DON'T LOSE YOURSELF.** There is no single way to be a leader. Devote your time and energy to prioritizing yourself first. It's not selfish; it is necessary. Find your path to becoming the strong and empowered boss you want to become and own it until it no longer becomes a process—it's just who you've become.

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Brittany Graham Papciak, Zeta Alpha—Eastern Michigan University, serves as the Harm Prevention Manager at IHQ. She supports the Fraternity in crisis response and educates chapters on risk reduction, safety and accountability. Prior to joining IHQ, she worked on college campuses in housing, student activities and fraternity/sorority life.