

we. WILL

Issue 01.20 | August 2020

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Personal and professional development in women leadership from the perspective of MBA alumni and students

FRANCE AND HER STORY

More you know, More you understand,
More you enjoy, More you care

we.WIL

Editor-in-chief Suri Yang

Designer **Monica Yusuf**
Writers **Akanksha Rashmi**
Kritika Taneja
Proofreading **Jason Kleinman**

EDITORIAL OFFICE

 @hecmbawil



EDITOR'S LETTER



Gender equality is always a hot issue from time to time. While the mission of the Women in Leadership club is to emphasize this spirit via our mission statement of "Embrace solidarity, celebrate equality" in order to inspire the leaders of today and forge the leaders of tomorrow. We would like to have a platform that can accommodate growth in the form of WIL and expect that this platform can be a bridge for growth through events, mentorship programs, networks, and relevant discussions. All the activities that can bring the student body closer together.

In each issue, we are glad to present **Up Close and Personal** in which we conduct interviews with inspiring individuals from our cohort. The **Alumni Corner** will allow us to have an enriching experience from our HEC Paris alumni. **France and Her Story** is this edition's special as part of our Enlightenment effort, composed to expose insightful articles, videos, books, and other sources to complement our we.WIL spirit. Last, but not least, in **Events** we would like to share upcoming internal and external events that will add value to our we.WIL community in the form of industry experts, panel discussions and networking functions. Without further ado, we proudly present our very first issue of the we.WIL bulletin.

RINI BANKHWAL

talks about incubating her business, Tribana, in Cherie Blair Foundation, to advising women-leading businesses, and now enrolling in the HEC MBA J21 program.

An interview by Kritika Taneja

Hi Rini, welcome to the HEC Paris community, please tell us about yourself?

I am an incoming MBA at HEC (J21), with a background in brand strategy and digital communications. I am passionate about building brands from the ground up and have worked with fashion and consumer-tech startups in India such as Fabindia (USD 155Mn), Madura Garments-Aditya Birla Group (USD 1.2Bn), Lenskart (projected USD 65Mn), to name a few across a gamut of digital and marketing roles.

As an entrepreneur, I launched a premium artisanal jewellery brand, Tribana, creating a value chain for marginalised artisans. Tribana was incubated at Cherie Blair Foundation for Women & Dhriiti, from where I scaled it to 11 multi-brand stores across 9 cities in India.

I have been a core team member of Fashion Revolution, a UK-based not-for-profit organisation and the world's fastest growing sustainability movement that is focussed on furthering socio-economic and environmental justice within the fashion industry. I've led the team as a Regional Head for North India and built the campaign in the region on-the-ground, over the last 4 years.





Rini Bankhwal with
Cherie Blair

How would you define women in leadership?

To me, to lead is to influence, empower and uplift people with diverse skill sets and abilities in order to align with a common goal and objective while also catering to the individual's personal growth, creativity and sense of purpose, which together, should result in value creation and performance. As a leader, you are also someone who takes risks before anyone else, absorbs threats to create a circle of safety and defines the culture of the workspace.

Women's leadership is all of those things, except that their representation in positions of leadership is approximately 70% behind those of men. (obviously, this % varies across industries and regions). The definition of women's leadership is incomplete

without acknowledging that women face harder choices to gain professional success, sometimes at the cost of achievements.

I definitely want to highlight that supporting women in leadership positions is not just the moral thing to do, but there is an economic benefit to it. According to an HBS report, Venture Capital firms that increased their proportion of female partner hires by 10% saw, on average, a 1.5% spike in overall fund returns each year and had 9.7% more profitable exits. According to an ILO report based on data from 186 countries over a period of 1991-2017, it was noted that a surge in female employment is positively associated with GDP growth.

Through its Global Gender Gap Report, the World Economic

Forum quantifies gender disparities by country. It has consistently highlighted the strong correlation between a country's gender gap and its economic performance. Though women are chipping away slowly at the glass ceiling and not waiting for opportunities, we are probably quite far from defining "women's leadership" as just "leadership".

What was the most significant contributing experience/factor to your personal and professional development?

A few years ago, I launched Tribana, a brand modeled to create socio-economic sustainability for artisans in parts of rural India. I called it the "urban tribal collective", a brand that epitomized contemporary trans-cultural lifestyle but was rooted in magical folklore of India.



"I have a theory that women are generally given space and appointed to jobs when the situation is tough"

CHRISTINE LAGARDE

I employed women from government run craft-clusters in Rajasthan and Assam (northern and northeastern states in India), providing them with market linkages where the income for artisans was less than \$30 or completely non-existent. Artisans engaged with us and on average, could earn up to \$110 monthly.

I remember when a round of salaries went out, one of the women artisans in the cluster told me with utter joy, "I just bought myself a pair of jeans! None of my sisters have ever worn jeans before". I believe this is the most value I've ever created at any job I've ever done.

Similar anecdotes were echoed at an incubator run by The Do School, Germany, in collaboration with UN Women

and We Empower Asia. I was advising entrepreneurs leading women-benefitting startups or women-leading startups.

My takeaway and my motivation from these experiences is that creating a sustainable source of revenue is the sweetest form of silent revolt.

That sounds really interesting! Any key message you would like to give to the budding women leaders of HEC Paris?

I'm proud of the fact that HEC Paris, which is known as the business school producing the highest number of CEOs, is also the one that focuses on gender parity in the classroom. Many alumni from HEC that I've interacted with speak strongly of, and in fact, embrace the motto, of not only leadership beyond a title and

self-enhancement, but also a responsibility to pay it forward. That was very inspiring to see from people coming from the institution.

I would like to share a quote that Christine Lagarde, a woman of many firsts, has very famously said, "I have a theory that women are generally given space and appointed to jobs when the situation is tough." To all women leaders, I'll say given that the world has not faced a situation tougher than the one we are all currently experiencing, and given that we are already seeing a slew of powerful women globally taking reins, clearly, this is our time to shine!



WHY OBSERVING YOUR SURROUNDING MATTERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH TRICIA WILSON
BY AKANKSHA RASHMI

What made you choose your career path?

Information is the centre of every organisation. By working for a company that focuses on protecting the information of all the world's companies, you get to see how different businesses operate, what makes them great and what makes them successful.

How did you reach your level of success, given the sector's gender gap, especially among leadership?

I would credit being self-aware. Being self-aware meant that I had a clear sense of my weaknesses, and was always trying to improve on those. That quality stands out to managers and leaders when they look for talent. But being self-aware also meant I knew when I was capable of more, and so I asked for more even when the company wasn't looking! I can think of at least 5 very specific moments in my career where I accelerated my career growth, both in pay and in position.

I initiated the conversations with my bosses, and I pursued them until we agreed on the promotions and salary packages that I knew were fair. It wasn't always quick, and my heart was always pounding with anxiety during those conversations - but I knew it was the right thing for me to fight for.

What was the most significant contributing experience or factor to your being in your type of work?

The most significant experience at HEC that has led me to my latest role change was the Digital Innovation specialisation. During the specialisation, I had the opportunity to work on innovation projects for companies like Air Liquide and Rakuten. It was as if I had finally found my home. I knew that I would never be more satisfied in my work than when I worked in product and innovation. That experience has led me to pursue this path doggedly. It took 12 months of working in a role that was less ideal, but

in the end I was successful in being nominated as the Global Product Manager for EMEA in February and now have been selected to lead one of only 5 innovation pods globally for our organisation!

Persistence beats resistance.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

I am inspired by the cleverness of people. I need only look around me to see an endless list of amazing achievements made possible by the cleverness of people. I like to say - in the history of everything that is, there was a time when it wasn't and a person who dared to say it was possible. So, when I am facing a challenge, I talk to my people. What do they think? What ideas do they have? Have they seen this challenge before? And what a gift it is to have access to such a huge reservoir of incredibly clever people.

What would be the top 5 skills needed to be a top performer in this job?

First - Skills can be taught and learned. Skill needs are always changing. Don't believe me? Who is looking for a Visual Basic programmer anymore? Instead focus on behaviours - because these can help you succeed in any job, in any industry. First, be curious about everything - you never know what you might learn that helps you solve a problem from somewhere else. Second, listen and learn from anyone and everyone - don't be fooled, you can learn just as much from a bus driver, a farmer and a CEO. Third, try to assume there is always another way, and look for that way as it could be better. Four, is the need to trust your teams, your coworkers and your bosses. 99.99% aren't out to screw anyone, if you think they are, you probably don't know the person well enough yet. Last, be comfortable making decisions even with ambiguity. You won't always know, and you won't always get it right. That's okay. It's a chance to learn and doesn't make you weak.

If you had it to do all over again, what would you do differently?

If I had to do it all over again, I would put more focus on work/life balance earlier in my career. It's not a coincidence that my best work has been done when I didn't work myself to the bone. Making time and space for my mind to recharge has meant the quality of my work is substantially better. The only person that can make sure you take time for yourself, is you. So do it!

What book, show, or movie that inspires you and you highly recommend watching ?

I recommend documentaries. Whether you are learning about fake wine, the creation of Helvetica font, or Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado - you are bound to come away with inspiration. I cannot begin to tell you how many times an idea for a problem I am trying to solve at work has come from seeing how something is made, done, or solved in another field.

What are the key message to the budding women leaders of HEC?

Don't put an asterisks on your leadership by thinking you are a woman in leadership. That very phrase makes it sound temporary, like it is this phase you are moving through. Being a leader is not transient. You are a leader. Just the same you aren't a woman leader, being a woman is really just as much a coincidence to the fact you are a leader as your eye color. Start thinking of yourself simply as a leader - you're not in it - you are it. You aren't a woman leader, you are a leader. Full stop.

Tricia, is an MBA 2019 graduate from HEC Paris. Currently working as a director for Iron mountain, an information Management service company, she was one of the key organiser of the first TEDex talk in HEC Paris.

What made you choose this career path?

Long term ambition to join a Board position.

How did you reach your level of success, given the sector's gender gap, especially among leadership?

Pursue every conversation and opportunity presented to me.

How has the experience at HEC Paris carved your career path as a leader?

Understanding of how to manage better and how to motivate individuals across cultures

What was the most significant contributing experience or factor to your being in this type of work?

Consulting is a stepping stone to a leadership position and a stepping stone to enter an industry role

What part of this job do you find most satisfying? most challenging?

The international aspect of consulting. The hours, constant rigor and the lack of structure from case to case.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

Visualizing the end goal and continuing to work towards that end goal makes every challenge livable.

What would be the top 5 skills needed to be a top performer in this job/?

Resilience. Ability to take feedback. Natural energy. Humility. Ability to separate from friends and family.

If you had it to do all over again, what would you do differently?

Take more time before seeking the hardest cases in consulting.

What book, show, or movies that inspires you and you highly recommend watching?

Joy - a humourous comedy that shows how resilience can reap great results despite day to day challenges.

What are the key message to the budding women leaders of HEC?

Never say no to a conversation, an interview or an opportunity that is outside your area of focus. You will be pleasantly surprised.

NEVER SAY NO

AN INTERVIEW WITH TEEJANA BSINGH
BY AKANKSHA RASHMI



Teejana is an MBA 2019 graduate from HEC Paris and is currently working as a Senior Consultant at BAIN in Dubai.



Olmpe de Gouges (1748-1793)

A figure that one might not be so familiar with unless one is into European history. She was a French playwright and activist, and wrote *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*. She was also an advocate for improving the conditions of slaves in colonies.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the life of this French social reformer and writer.

**"Well-behaved women
seldom make history."
-Laurel Thatcher Ulrich**

Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

Joan of Arc is probably one of the most famous female figures in history. We heard her name numerous times in movies, and literature. As a national heroine and the patron saint of France, Joan of Arc has been an inspiration to many historical French figures.

Click [here](#) to find out more about this fearless heroine.



**"You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end, each of us must work for our own improvement."
- Marie Curie**



Edith Piaf (1915-1963)

Even if you are not be familiar with her name, you are most likely familiar with the song *La vie en rose*. Edith Piaf was one of the greatest French singers. She is best known for the romantic realism of her songs. She was France's biggest international star and the first to conquer America with her melancholy music becoming an indelible part of the soundtrack for the post-war generation.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the legendary "Little Sparrow".

Marie Curie (1867-1934)

Marie Curie is probably one of the most well-known scientists in the world history. Her efforts with her husband Pierre led to the discovery of Polonium and Radium, and she championed the development of X-rays. She was the first person ever to win the Nobel Prize twice, and also the first woman to win the prize.

Click [here](#) to learn more about this extremely intelligent physicist who broke the glass ceilings.



Coco Chanel (1883-1971)

She is probably one of the most well known female names of all time. She was one of the most innovative fashion designers of the 20th century who revolutionized the whole female aesthetics. Chanel dressed the new modern woman, and made Parisian women world famous for their sophistication and refinement.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the biggest fashion influencer of all time.

**"Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable."
- William Pollard**

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)

"Just as I do not believe that women are inferior to men by nature, nor do I believe that they are their natural superiors either."

Her landmark book *The Second Sex* arguably served as the first inspiration to the activists of the Women's Liberation Movement. She was also known for her open, lifelong relationship with French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

Click [here](#) to learn more about her story as a French writer, intellectual, existentialist philosopher, political activist, feminist and social theorist.



UPCOMING WIL EVENTS & EXTERNAL EVENTS

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
14- September	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Mixer- Woman in leadership	25	26 Field-Trip - Woman in leadership	27
28	29	30	1- October	2	3	4
5	6	7 Woman at the top- Financial times, digital conference	8 Woman at the top- Financial times, digital conference	9 Company Event- McKinsey & Company - Women in Operations	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18

We invite you to participate our field trip to Paris on **the 26th of September**. This event will enlighten you with the lesser-told side of the city's history; by inspirational women. We will cover some of the figured presented in this edition and much more.

We are collaborating with *Women of Paris Tour* to offer you the best insightful experience. Stay tuned as we will be sending the registration early September and we have limited spots available!

WIL.Calendar



Read the Qr code to sync our calendar and don't miss our events!

**"ACHIEVING
GENDER
EQUALITY
REQUIRES THE
ENGAGEMENT OF
WOMEN AND
MEN, GIRLS AND
BOYS. IT IS
EVERYONE'S
RESPONSIBILITY."**

BAN KI-MOON
**THE EIGHTH SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**