



# Women in Field Management: Let's Go!

by Bianca O'Brien, CLF®

Recruiting female talent into field management.

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**I BEGAN MY CAREER** in New York Life's headquarters in New York City and spent 19 years navigating the corporate environment. I loved it and was thriving when in 2004, after having worked more directly with the company's agents and field managers, I decided I wanted to switch my career from a corporate environment to one that gave me entrepreneurial opportunity, control, flexibility and a path to field management. I never considered my gender an obstacle or a plus. I just knew I was as capable as anyone else to get the job done. You see, I had ambition, the willingness to work hard and a belief in myself and the company that employed me.

I became an agent and excelled. Four years later, in 2008, I was ready to become a partner, which was my first position in field management, and I received a promotion to senior partner in 2011. I currently manage and lead the Jericho Sales Office, which consists of more than 100 agents.

As the number of women agents increases, it makes sense to believe this would correlate over time to seeing more women in field management positions. How do hiring managers ensure this happens? Here are some tips I use in my managerial role that are not new, but mainly a shift in thinking and mindset.

### **TIP 1: TAKE GENDER OUT OF IT COMPLETELY**

Are assumptions that managers have about a woman's family responsibilities preventing growth? I believe that the skills of motherhood are similar

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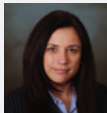
to those required of leading managers—stamina, dependability, delegation, communication, self-discipline and prioritizing. I have witnessed many women who are successful leaders because they work smart and take time off to be with their families. It is not a lack of commitment but an ability to live a whole life that gives women staying power.

### **TIP 2: COMMUNICATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE INTO A MANAGEMENT ROLE EARLY ON**

Hiring managers need to present opportunities to men and women early in the interview process and ask them about their management goals up front. Women need to know the opportunity is there and if they are interested, they will take the proper steps to strive for a management position.

### **TIP 3: BE PATIENT AND UNDERSTAND THE TIMELINE**

Women who will go into management may not follow a traditional timeline. Recruit them young, recruit them early, recruit them late—it all works for women. At New York Life a typical timeline for an agent to transition to management is two years, assuming they meet all the requirements. In



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my case, although I had met all the requirements necessary to become a partner, due to family needs, I was not able to transition until after my fourth year. This delay did not deter my goals to enter management and was not looked upon negatively. It gave me time to prepare for the move and to set a plan in place for a smooth transition under my own timeline.

**TIP 4: TAKE THE FEAR OUT OF MANAGING WOMEN**

Remember, it is professional to be professional. There should be no issues with recruiting, managing or developing women. For many managers, they may perceive managing women in the field differently. The environment in the field is performance-based, which can often result in managing to results. Put everyone on an equal playing field and manage for the results expected.

**TIP 5: USE THE FEMALE FIELD MANAGERS IN YOUR COMPANY TO HELP RECRUIT**

Having female role models in the field manager position can help women to envision themselves in that role. If there aren't any in your office, then use someone from another office. Many women's groups in the industry can also be utilized. Women must be able to paint their own picture of themselves in management. They need to know that to be successful field managers they don't have to act or look like their mentor. Management looks different to each of us and we must remember that we are not always recruiting ourselves.

To increase the number of women in field management, you may need to look to your own pool of women agents to find them or make a point of recruiting them. If you make finding women part of your recruiting plans and develop a



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We are all from the same industry and deserve the opportunity to make the move to management. I am proof that women in our industry can be successful field leaders. Finding future women leaders is just a matter of letting them know the opportunity is there if they want it and providing the support required to make it happen. ■■■