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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
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Problems Faced By Women In Newspaper Management

By

Siew Nyoke Chow
We are living in a world undergoing constant changes. Raising rates of change compel us to look at our familiar situations with a sense of insecurity. But a stronger sense of facing up to challenges drives us to be adaptable to unfamiliar situations.

Working life in the newspaper is one of keeping up to constant changes taking place within the industry and the society at large.

In my little less than a decade of journalistic career, I notice that changes in this field are tremendous and wide ranging. One of them is the influx of women journalists into the profession.

What I say in this note is mainly relevant to Chinese newspapers in which I work. Nevertheless, similar experiences may have been encountered by fellow women journalists in other language newspapers.

Women journalists are found in all Chinese newspapers, small, medium or large, in the country. It is estimated that 40% of the workforce in the profession are female.

On management level, there are women journalists serving as heads of sections at the Editorial Department. Few women executives are found in the Business, Administration, finance and personnel branches within the newspaper industry. Most of the appointments were made in recent years. It is a reflection of the rapid increase of women journalists in the last decade.

Newspaper industry used to be the domain of men, few women ventured into the field. This owes to prejudice held by women against the profession. It was the general belief that the profession lacked in respectability to female. The nature of the job was not suited to women. The late entrance into the profession resulted in the small number of senior executives.

Newspaper industry is unique in that it is not just a business for profit only. It is more of a profession which sets out its goals, ideals and commitment. So, management staff should ideally consist of persons with journalistic background.

As there are few experienced women journalists now, there will not be many women executives coming from present pool of journalists in near future. But the situation is changing.

There is no apparent discrimination against women within the industry. But, men are preferred to women with equal qualifications and ability in most cases of promotion exercise. Family, children and maternity leave are understood to the grounds upon which the male colleagues made their decision. This state of affairs will be ratified if there are sufficient number of women executives participating in the decision making process.

There are also incidents where women newspaper executives obstructing women aspirants from moving up the ladder. These are, however, isolated cases where human weaknesses prevail over a sense of duty.

Needless to say newspaper industry is just as competitive as any other ventures. It is even more demanding on women if they want to do equally good job like the men. It is with regret to say that the performance of some of the women colleagues in the newspapers is just not encouraging indeed. The lack of a strong sense of duty, right attitude of work and dedication help strengthen the case of those who biased against women getting a place in the profession.
Women journalists and executives are subject to same entrance requirements as men. There is a tendency toward that male colleagues often leave for other jobs after attaining higher qualifications. This may result in more qualified women than men in the profession in the future!

Women working in the newspapers are faced with many problems which are not experienced by male counterparts. Some of them are inherent ones. But they are not insurmountable if one decides to make it in the profession.

Journalism needs men and women with talents and skills. Training opportunities are required to improve such skills. Currently, in-service training plays an important part in developing the career. Women have certainly gained the rightful places in any profession, including journalism. But, one has to work hard, to overcome problems to pursue for excellence in the profession.

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