



***Women's Summit
Your Next Step***

***Explore and Uncover Your
Links to Success***

***Question Matrix Feedback
Results***

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Brockville**

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'Your Next Step'

Women's Summit

Brockville, Ontario

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Question Matrix System

At the first Women's Summit held in Brockville, Ontario on November 30, 2006, a formal system to obtain audience feedback was utilized, called the Question Matrix system. This formal method provided the entire audience with one of four questions with its corresponding number and following a systematic rotation method, utilized the audience as interviewers and interviewees to obtain responses to all four questions. No single voice was able to dominate and no shrinking violet was able to skirt the responsibility of providing a response. Within the space of under an hour every question was asked of every participant with their response recorded on paper.

The four questions formulated sought feedback on a wide array of issues facing women in our society, both from a business and non-business perspective. With 65 women attending the event representing a wide range of ages and backgrounds, the feedback provided offers a unique glimpse into the thinking of women in the Leeds & Grenville area of Eastern Ontario.

Leeds and Grenville is situated in Eastern Ontario, fronting along the St. Lawrence River, made famous by the 1000 Islands and within an hour's drive to Kingston or Ottawa. The region has a very long history with villages and towns incorporated in the early 1800's and initial Loyalist settlement as early as the later 1700's. The region has suffered manufacturing sector losses in recent years, been largely bypassed by mass transit systems and remained largely unchanged in population. The region is proud and aware of its long history, of its unique bilateral relations and evokes a sense of timelessness.

Against this backdrop, the feedback provided from participants at the first Women's Summit offers a glimpse into the opinions of both the employed and unemployed, new residents along with long time residents of this interesting region. This report will provide

a summary of responses to each of the four questions. After all of the questions had been answered the Summit offered participants an opportunity to discuss the findings of each of the question responses. Each question number formed its own group and all of the audience participants who were responsible for asking question 1 got together to go over the accumulated responses and discuss the findings. This process was repeated for Question 2, 3 and 4. Verbal discussions about the responses brought about their own assessment and collective opinion, sometimes affirming individual responses and sometimes adding a new dimension. A summary of each of these discussions is included at the end of each section.

Challenges Facing Women Today

Question 1: What in your opinion are the top 2 or 3 challenges facing women today?

This question was left wide open to interpretation and women were allowed to interpret it any way they wished. The organizers did not wish to influence how women would interpret the question. One respondent might interpret the question to seek her opinion on health matters, another on education, another on political power, business concerns, etc.

When the Question One interviewers got together to go over and discuss all responses, there emerged four areas of common ground felt to be the key response to the question “What, in your opinion, are the top 2 or 3 challenges facing women today?” To the assembled group there were 4 major challenges facing women today:

- 1) Family vs. Work life balance
- 2) Demand and expectation that women can and easily do multi-task
- 3) The very real problem that woman do not put themselves first
- 4) Obtaining adequate education

Participants’ Responses to Question #1

- As employees they are expected to do more, work harder, for less pay
- Declining household revenues, less real spending power
- Lack of confidence

- To go after jobs traditionally held by men
- To go after what they really want, tendency to settle for less, sell themselves short
- To publicly and openly acknowledge their priorities, stand up for oneself
- To choose to stay at home and follow a traditional career with self-pride
- To abandon traditional roles and pursue a non-traditional career
- To understand one's own strengths, weaknesses and abilities
- Age discrimination compounded with sex discrimination
- Sexualization of our society, women are seen as sex objects
 - Must be thin, pretty, cute, sexy
 - Skin deep society, beauty rules, jobs go to pretty women, pretty smiles, youth, not to older women, heavysset, plain, or anything less than the stereotype of femininity
- Social expectation that women can 'do it all', that they can 'multi-task' and be the 'superwoman', 'super-mom', excel at work, at home, at care-giving, at cooking, at cleaning all at the same time. Unrealistic expectations.
- Equality in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, equal treatment on the job, equal opportunities to advance, equal opportunities to get hired
- Social image: what is acceptable and what is not
- Not taken seriously by men, by society, by those making decisions or in positions of power
- Obtaining and maintaining positions of influence, being at the centre of decision making, being highly involved in politics and senior levels of business /government
- Personal safety
- Balancing Work/Life/Family/Business demands. Time Management.
- Financial instability
- Globalization – must compete beyond our own backyard to succeed
- Lack of focus on what our dream is and how to accomplish it

- Social image – social stigma of what is acceptable and what is not
- Culture shock for women from other cultures where the role of women is perceived very differently
- Education costs, accessing education, challenge to obtain high marks to be able to obtain scholarships, lack of enough financial assistance to make education affordable, lack of flexibility in how education is delivered
- Lack of long term employment, not enough jobs, not enough well paying jobs, too much part time, low wage, no future jobs
- Lack of child care assistance, enough good quality child care, enough options and alternatives
- Physical disadvantage in much of the male oriented workplace
- Demand to be self-sufficient as a woman, to be capable of standing on own, lack of respect for juggling minimum wage jobs to survive, need to have a ‘real career’
- Making time for oneself, acknowledging personal needs, addressing and valuing personal needs
- Male dominated society, men still have trouble taking orders from women, being subordinate to women
- Lack of support from men when women pursue a non-traditional male dominated career, like engineering.
- Guilt – women perceive that they ‘should’ be able to be the ‘perfect’ mother, wife, daughter, sister, aunt, grandmother, nurse, maid, cook, teacher, leader, etc.
- Lack of time to do it all
- Lack of adequate health care

Businesses owned or run by women

Question 2: Many women own and/or run businesses. What do you believe are the top 2-3 problem areas for them/for you (if you own or run a business)?

The second question in the series steered respondents toward the world of women in business and sought input from all present on their views of women's challenges in the world of business. Though some of the audience owned or managed businesses, many did not. Undoubtedly, many who did not own or run businesses may have at one time or another entertained the concept of owning or running a business and their opinions were of as much interest as those of women already owning or running businesses.

When the Question Two interviewers got together to go over and discuss all the responses, there emerged two areas of common ground felt to be the key response to the question "What do you believe are the top 2 or 3 problem areas for women owning or running a business?" To the assembled group there were 2 major challenges facing business women today:

- 1) Financial burden and insecurity for women in business, no benefits, no insurance, no pension.
- 2) Ability to balance work and personal life, business demands too much time, family demands are difficult to juggle and run a business as well.

Participants' Responses to Question #2

- Lack of financial knowledge
- Lack of sufficient access to funds
- Accessing necessary knowledge, not knowing where to turn
- Juggling family and business
- Isolation
- Financial instability
- Time
- Convincing customers to buy from a woman, particularly if competition is male dominated

- Stigma attached to women running businesses
- Lack of respect, lack of acceptance as a professional
- Often seen as someone ‘playing at their hobby’
- Financial barriers – difficulty fitting into the male designed mold, male oriented expectations of financial security, obtaining business loans, angel investors, obtaining sufficient capital
- Confidence in self
- Teflon coating, ability to ignore social expectations of ‘superwoman’ or jobs or criticisms, OK for a man to be hard-nosed businessman, but not for a woman to act the same way
 - Stigma attached to women in business who are driven and absorbed by their business, this is OK for a man but shunned if a woman is ambitious in business
- Lack of family support
- Lack of female role models, lack of focus on female role models, lack of female success stories, award winners, etc
- Less flexibility for women due to conflicting demands, conflicting roles and conflicting priorities
- Child care, not enough options, affordable, accessible, flexible
- Time management, balancing career and family. Long hours.
- Geographic limitations, restricted scope of activities due to family demands
- Marketing, finding customers /clients
- Credit strength, lack of access to funds, lack of options tailored to women’s needs
- Competing against men in a male dominated world – world of business
- Lack of ability to ‘brag’ about successes in business, women are taught to be humble and subservient, not to ‘brag’ or ‘boast’
- Lack of self-confidence, believe in own abilities, believe in ability to succeed
- Society fails to focus or acknowledge achievements of women in business, lack of media attention, lack of PR, lack of high profile media attention and glory

Unlimited Funds: Where would you spend the money?

Question 3: If you were provided unlimited funds to be utilized to address women's issues, what would you identify as the top 2-3 priorities you would spend funds on?

The last two questions maneuvered the audience into looking into the future. The hypothetical question number 3 offered each woman a chance to declare her top priority areas if unlimited funds for programs aimed to help women were put in her control.

When the Question Three interviewers got together to review the responses to their question, two areas of concern repeatedly dominated discussions and emerged as the two key areas in which spending would be directed if the choice were provided to the assembled group:

- 1) Child Care: provide affordable, accessible and flexible child care
- 2) Education programs: more accessible, affordable and flexible education, training programs, re-training, certification, literacy, personal development, self-esteem, business courses, workshops, etc.

Participants' Responses to Question #3

- Flexibility and accessibility of education, programs, courses, to fit into the lifestyles and needs of women, permitting them to take courses from home and adjusting to demands on their time from other facets of their lives
 - Education for self-employment
 - Education for better employment
 - Self-esteem classes, learn confidence
 - Professional development courses, certification, accreditation
- Literacy programs, command of the English language, written and spoken
- Access to transportation, affordable and accessible transportation
- Start-up funds for women in business, easier access to start up funds and ongoing funds, improved financial support for women in business
- Helping women to assess and understand their skills to that they could develop natural talents and seize opportunities

- Encouraging networking events: open concept forums to share ideas, empowerment opportunities, mentorship opportunities
- Re-training programs for stay-at-home mothers and for women re-entering the work force
- Improved system for finding jobs, centralized one-stop location for job seekers
- Establish special programs for women starting a business, access to money, access to information, access to knowledge, systems, support networks and mentors
- Child care, more child care options, more affordable and accessible child care
- Affordable education, flexible and accessible
- Political influence, give a voice to women, permit women to participate in decision making
- Pay equity: equal pay for equal work, more access to jobs that pay well
- Establish programs that monitor to ensure that there is equality in the hiring process
- Workshops on financial matters, retirement, managing money, budgets, etc. Help women learn to be self-sufficient.
- Start-up funds, seed money, to encourage women to start businesses or expand existing businesses
- More services for abused women: more shelters, more support at shelters, more programs to offer a new start, new life, new training, and offer concrete programs to help abused women rebuild their lives.
- Encourage women to become decision makers in government, policy makers, provide funding and programs that encourage this
- Improved healthcare for women
- Develop a mentorship and training system for women in non-traditional careers and fields: Sciences, Engineering, Services, Skills Trades, Research, etc.
- Develop mentorship and funding programs to support women in business

Opportunities for Women – Where does the future lie?

Question 4: What do you believe are the 2-3 areas of greatest opportunity for women in the coming years?

The organizers were curious to learn from the diverse group what they felt were the areas of greatest opportunity emerging for women. Though a wide array of responses were elicited by the question, some surprising responses were provided including political leadership and lobbying.

When the Question Four interviewers assembled to review the responses that had been provided and discuss the findings a number of key areas dominated discussions. This group did not find 2 or 3 areas that emerged above all others, rather, they found a handful of recurring themes emerge as areas of greatest opportunity:

- 1) Higher political positions (Prime Minister, President of USA), and generally more involved in politics and more female politicians
- 2) More women in Senior Business positions / Government positions
- 3) More self-employment
- 4) More education opportunities
- 5) More self-sufficient
- 6) More opportunities for women to have a voice in policy making

Participants' Responses to Question #4

- More job opportunities
- Political power, more women in politics, positions of leadership and decision making
- Increased public relations and media recognition of women's achievements
- Social acceptance of versatility in women's choices, roles, education, careers
- Higher education
- Pay equity, hiring equity

- Business Leaders
- More financial assistance, flexibility of financial assistance, designed with women in mind and assessing their situations
- A more supportive society, less judgmental
- More management roles for women
- More women-run businesses
- A new definition for a 'successful' business, not merely a definition based on monetary profitability
- More advisory roles for women in society
- More environmentally friendly business, more holistic business, more medical care and health care businesses
- Overcoming the stigma of women in business
- Greater opportunities for faster advancement
- Acceptance of women in positions of leadership
- Increased self-confidence of women in general
- 'Glass Ceiling' broken, more opportunities for women in high profile high income careers
- Prime Minister
- President