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Need for women leaders is a public and a private issue

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The truth of the matter is, we need more women leaders both in government and in business. The question is, what are we doing about it? Let's start with the NEWiRE public strategies committee. This committee focuses on the intersection of public and private sectors in Mass. Each year, they host the annual Women in Government Reception. The purpose of this event is to recognize women who work in the public sector at all levels, as well as our elected and appointed officials, by honoring their accomplishments.

On March 19, the 22nd annual Women in Government Reception was held at the Union Club. This year's featured speaker was former state representative Charlotte Golar Richie, who was a candidate for the mayor of Boston. One important point she emphasized is that she knew running for mayor was a risk, but she doesn't regret trying. She encouraged others to follow her lead stating, "The water is fine. Go on in."

Richie went on to speak about the satisfaction she has derived from public service. She encouraged NEWiRE members to be active in the political arena, whether by running for office or by supporting women candidates. It is especially important here in the Commonwealth, she noted, considering that only 175 women have ever been elected to Mass. legislature compared to 20,000 men in the past 20 years.

Richie sets a great example for ALL women. She embodies the courage and determination it takes to compete in the public arena. She also happens to possess some key leadership skills that are equally important to women in commercial real estate.

Here's the connection:

In 2012, the Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) Network industry research committee published a study titled, "The Evolution of Women in Leadership." This in-depth study analyzed effective leadership skills. According to their findings, which can be found at www.crewnetwork.org, there are three key areas in which we, as women, need to step up our game:

Take Risks

In order to get into leadership positions, women need to take risks. Accept assignments that stretch your skills and challenge you. Don't let the fear of failure and/or criticism keep you from trying something. Instead, focus on learning from your mistakes if an endeavor doesn't end successfully. And keep trying.

Relating and Networking

Women need to support, encourage, and back each other. Sponsorship is key. Spend time building relationships with professionals in positions of power who will advocate for you and propel your advancement.

Participative Decision Making

Speak up. Make your opinions known. Share your ideas. Show that you have something valuable to

contribute based on your knowledge and expertise. Assertive communication will earn you respect while building self-esteem.

Clearly, Richie can teach us a thing or two about leadership skills and employing all of these tactics in our own daily lives. If we want more women leaders in government and in private industry, we have to make some changes-collectively and as individuals. Let's do all we can to achieve more diversity at the top tiers of leadership.

To learn more about NEWiRE and upcoming events visit www.newire.org, find us on LinkedIn, or follow us on Twitter @NEWiREBoston.

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