

BLACK ENTERPRISE

December 2004

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

POWERPLAY

[CAREER TRENDS]

SPRINGBOARD TO SUCCESS

Organization to help underrepresented groups navigate the corporate landscape

The women's liberation movement in the '60s was galvanized by women who demanded basic rights—the ability to hang up their aprons and take the workforce by storm. Fast forward about 40 years; women now have access to better jobs and feel less pressure about their decisions to choose a business suit over an apron. But even as women have made considerable gains in the workforce, the challenges for women of color have always been separate from the women's movement, due in large part because women of color are marginalized by race.

In 2004, Catalyst, a nonprofit group dedicated to the advancement of women in the workplace, released the study *Advancing African-American Women in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know*. What Catalyst found was that the term “glass ceiling,” which is often referred to as an impediment to career growth for white women, is characterized as concrete for African American women. “The underpinnings of these barriers include stereotypes, visibility, and scrutiny; questioning of authority and credibility; lack of fit in the workplace; double outsider status; and exclusion from informal networks,” the report says. Springboard-Partners

in Cross Cultural Leadership was developed to correct some of those disparities. Its goal is to strategically shift this demographic from lower level positions and increase its presence in upper management.

After 20 years in investment banking, Pamela G. Carlton, president and co-founder, created Springboard to target underrepresented groups that were neglected early on in their careers due to sparse entry-level training. According to Carlton, who retired as the managing director of U.S. Equity Research at JPMorgan Chase, she was looking for a way to make a significant contribution to other professionals. “The philosophy of the company is that leadership development cannot start early enough, particularly for women and people of color,” she explains.



CARLTON PROVIDES A STEPPING STONE FOR WOMEN OF COLOR.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women and people of color will represent the majority of the workforce by 2010. By 2008, women are projected to make up 48% of the workforce, in which women of color are the fastest-growing segment. Springboard offers an extensive menu of leadership and development series for individuals and companies. There are six distinct workshops to take advantage of. Each workshop is customized for professionals in different stages of their career.

Carlton notes that people of color often begin their careers with enthusiasm, but can lose their drive in the abstractions of corporate culture. “Women have been taught to keep their head down and work hard. If we keep our heads down we can't see anything. We miss out on the inner workings and politics of the company.”

—Nkechi Olisemeka

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