

# BUILDING WOMEN@WORK COMMUNITY

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# ABOUT ME

- Wife and Mom of 2 kids.
- Principal Engineering Manager @ MS.
- 14 years in the Software industry.
- Mentor women and men at work.
- Love biking and spending time with my family.



# WHY WOMEN@WORK COMMUNITY?

- To make the workplace a fun and healthy environment
- To enable women to realize they are not alone
- To expand our network
- To facilitate professional development
- To develop and hone leadership skills
- Simply, a forum for women to meet each other, invest in ourselves, have fun and enjoy being part of the workplace

# SUCCESS STORIES

- My personal story - “Great mentoring pool”
- Gain value from other experiences, expertise and knowledge
- Ability to connect to professionals easily and influence decisions across disciplines and functions
- Have candid conversations in a safe and trusted group
- Ability to speak openly about what you feel and how you feel
- Seeing senior women as accessible role models boosts confidence
- Feeling that you are not alone in your challenges and you don't have to reinvent the wheel to deal with them.
- An option in the professional world to connect in a personal way
- Build relationships that help deal with chaos in both professional and personal life.

# HOW TO BUILD THE COMMUNITY

- Varying women strength in numbers



- Irrespective of the company size, we can still build the women community

# SMALL BUDGET PLAN

- Bring your own Lunch and discussion on some common topics (career growth, work/life balance, getting back to work after baby, etc.)
- Listening to Personal development, professional development talks in a conference room
- Mentoring within the organization.
- Sharing technologies with each other.
- Safe Bed for learning to give presentations/talks
- Social outings like movies, Happy Hour
- Book Club
- Volunteering at local charities etc.
- Sign up and train for events together (runs, bike rides etc )
- Look out for sponsors to fund some activities.

# BIGGER ORGS WITH FUNDING OPTIONS

- Identify the group of women to lead the women initiative with you
- Prepare a proposal(1-pager)with budget for approval from a sponsor/ diversity champion
- Present the proposal, socialize the idea before hand if possible
- Gather enthusiasts to help in driving the effort
- Organize an initial meeting with the women to identify the yearly charter
- Organize and drive initiatives based on the charter
- Send quarterly/halfyearly newsletter to the division and the sponsor

# PITCH TO THE SPONSOR

- Identify sponsors/diversity champions and socialize the idea
- Prepare a 1-pager to launch Women's network in the company
- 1-pager
  - Brief list of benefits
  - How do we achieve those benefits
  - What do you need from the sponsor- budget
- Get a 15 minute slot in the next business review to pitch this proposal
- Once approved, send periodic updates on the initiative



# FUNDING

- Identify the number of women
- Identify broad categories of events/activities/initiatives that will be part of the Women@Work initiative
- Identify the frequency of these events and approximate budget for each person per event.
- Present the cumulative ask for the year
- Identify a trustworthy individual for the treasurer
- At the end of the year, if there is excess have an event with the Execs and the women

# INITIATIVES WITH FUNDING AVAILABLE

- Everything in the slide on small budget plan
- Workshops to help career growth and development
- Bring in Exec speakers on hot topics
- Paid Social outings
- Group events like laser tag, ice skating, bowling etc.
- Art and Craft initiatives
- Mentoring rings
- Attend women's conferences for outreach
- Leadership training

# MENTORING RINGS

- Mentoring ring is made up of:
  - 10-12 mentees
  - 2 mentors
- Each ring defines its own topics and activities
  - Ideas will be provided, but topics chosen by the ring members
- Each ring has regular meetings for 9 months
  - Common setup is for a ring to meet monthly for 2 hours
- Mentees drive meeting preparation and agenda
- Mentors facilitate ring activities

# WLC IN MICROSOFT

# BIRTH OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

- The WLC was founded in 2002 by a group of women in the then-Windows Server Division. Their goal was to create a support community that increases job satisfaction and networking opportunities for women by providing opportunities to build community for women

This group of women...

...Networked by sharing experiences and realizing common challenges

...Educated upper management on “what it’s like to be a woman” in the org

...Provided mentorship, a discussion forum and brown bags to the broader community

# WHERE IS WLC NOW?

**80%**

of initial founders are still with Microsoft & C+E!

We organically grew into a larger community of women in C+E and beyond

Several of our large-scale programs have been handed off to the diversity group and are now run for the entire division

The Council has launched, maintained, and in some cases spun off a wide variety of activities:

- > **Professional development**
  - + Example: Leadership training circle, presentation training
- > **Personal enrichment**
  - + Examples: Mom & kids talk series
- > **Large scale programs**
  - + 1 Degree Community (1200+ across Microsoft)
  - + C+E mentoring ring program (spun off)
- > **Outreach**
  - + Mentoring program @ U of Waterloo
  - + GeekGirlz dinners
  - + Grace Hopper for technical women

# MS PIONEER WOMEN CHAMPIONS ...

- *Building a women's community is a voluntary undertaking. You have to juggle it along with all the other demands of work and life. If you aren't getting as much out of the experience as you put in, then it won't be sustainable. Contribute in ways that are fun and revitalizing to you, and you can rest assured that there will be other women who want to participate in those things as well.*

*- Terrell Cox, Founder of WLC, Group Program Manager, Microsoft*

- *For most part of my career at Microsoft so far, I tried very hard to stay away from any specific community. My reasoning was that I want to be recognized as an individual, not because I am a woman. Now as I embark on senior leadership position, and as I hear from the women in my own team, I realized a lot of the obstacles I struggled and conquered in the past, they would be much easier if I shared with the other ladies, both learning from their experience as well as give back my learnings. So now I participate in the women community because I can give back, learn from and just simply enjoy the company of other successful women in our industry.*

*-Joy Chik, Champions Senior Women Community, Partner Director of Engg, Microsoft*

# MS PIONEER WOMEN CHAMPIONS...

- *For me there are two reasons, both equally important, for why I engage in community. The first is to give back. Life is challenging enough as it is, I can't imagine being in a place where I could help those around me and not doing so. Participating in women's community enables me to share what I've learned with those around me and hopefully make it a little easier for someone else, help them avoid the mistakes I made, help someone achieve their goals a little faster. There is part of me that believes it is our duty as women to help each other. The second reason is selfish, it is to increase my support network and my overall enjoyment at work. I like the women I work with. I want to spend time with them. I learn from them. They are some of the first people I turn to for help. Not being part of the women's community would be more of a tax on me than being a part as I get so much from the smart, motivating, energetic women that are part of the community. So I use it for everything I can get from it – enjoyment, experience, a kick-in-the pants when I need it! I would encourage everyone to both give as much as you can but also ask for what you need as you think about building your community.*  
*- Erin Chapple, Founder of WLC, Partner PM Group Manager, Microsoft*



# MS PIONEER WOMEN CHAMPIONS...

- *Initially, I participated in my women's community assuming that I'd be helping others around me. That initial perspective quickly changed when I realized that I was drawn to the community because I needed to be there. The camaraderie and support that I received from these women through work and life changes were instrumental to my overall happiness at work. In an uncharacteristic move for most women, we focused on ourselves first and never looked to satisfy what executives wanted to see or didn't embark on any altruistic activities. That philosophy grounded how we evolved the community – if it was something we needed or wanted, then others might find it beneficial too and then we did it.*
  - **Deb McFadden, Founding WLC board member, Principal PM Manager, Microsoft**

# IN SUMMARY

- Let's make our workplace a fun place for ourselves.
- Do something , anything to grow and retain the women community
- Do something you want to do and feel passionate about, not because someone told you to do.
- Don't feel guilty about getting together and having fun with no agenda.

# REFERENCES

- Other companies are forming the women's communities – Here's a link to Square's initiative

<http://www.women2.com/what-square-is-doing-to-build-a-female-friendly-culture/>

- Systems – a great forum to connect with technical women

<http://anitaborg.org/initiatives/systems/>

**THANK YOU!**