

ABOVE THE GLASS

Wall Street's Woman Problem

For women on Wall Street, personal attacks are a reminder of how far they haven't come.

By CAROL HYMOWITZ
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When Erin Callan stepped down as chief financial officer of Lehman Brothers, after her company announced it expected a \$2.8 billion loss in the latest quarter, she joined a growing number of mostly male executives who are casualties of the credit crunch. Unlike them, however, she has faced criticism not just about her performance but also about her appearance, her attire and her sense of decorum.

Readers who responded to a Front Lines blog post about her ouster attacked her for being "fluffy," and "more focused on fashion than on finance," for wearing high heels that exposed her legs too much and for "attracting the wrong kind of attention."



Erin Callan

Zoe Cruz, the other "most powerful woman on Wall Street" was similarly attacked when she was pushed out as president of Morgan Stanley in November. Nicknamed the "Wicked Witch" and "Cruz Missile" by male colleagues, some joked it was worth the billions in dollars of losses Morgan incurred last year, just to have her gone.

For women in the trenches on Wall Street, who've watched the narrow pipeline of female executives shrink further, these attacks are a reminder of how far they haven't come. They're told by bosses that they'll rise or fall on their individual performance yet they're constantly judged along other lines.

"When a man loses a job, no one talks about whether his pants are too short or he needs a haircut because it isn't relevant," says Pat Cook, head of Cook & Co., a boutique search firm in Bronxville, N.Y. "But everything a woman says, does or looks like is under the microscope -- and the knives can get really sharp if you take a fall."

Anna Fels, a New York psychiatrist and author of "Necessary Dreams," which explores the difficulties ambitious women face, agrees that some men feel freer to attack a woman when she loses power. "Ambitious women tend have their sexuality insulted -- whether they're seen as promiscuous or as unattractive old maids. And when a woman takes a fall, things some people felt but didn't express are suddenly acceptable to say, so there can be an outpouring of disparaging and hostile remarks," she says.

It isn't just when women are let go but when they are on the job, too. On Wall Street trading floors, they often face more hazing than women in other industries. They compete against men who hate losing to one another let



Zoe Cruz

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alone to a woman. And if they do survive and advance a few rungs, they often find themselves in male-only company, which can be lonely.

"I don't want to be 'one of the guys' and I'm tired of feeling isolated and adapting my behavior to suit the male majority," says a woman in a senior position in a Wall Street firm. "I have a different management style from most of my male peers. A lot of my success is the result of forming effective teams, but they don't want to hear about that." Worried that she'll be even more isolated if she advances further, she recently turned down a promotion and is mulling a move to a different industry.

This may be one of the reasons that "there's no woman on Wall Street in line to be a CEO and hardly any in the pipeline even several rungs lower," says **Linda Bialecki**, who runs a Wall Street search firm.

Goldman Sachs has three women on its management committee of 29 but two of these are in staff jobs without profit-and-loss responsibility. Citigroup's Sallie Krawcheck was moved recently from CFO to a less high-profile job. Credit Suisse has no women in its most senior ranks. Overall women comprise 15% of managing directors on Wall Street but many are in staff jobs that rarely lead to the corner office.

It's hard to predict when women will achieve more parity on Wall Street. But studies done by and for Wall Street companies show that companies produce better results when men and women are on teams together. A 2007 study by the Lehman Brothers' Centre for Women in Business at London Business School analyzed 1,400 employees in 100 teams at 21 companies. Some of the teams were all male, others all female and most were coed with various ratios of men and women. Among the findings: Efficiency and the ability to experiment were optimal when teams were 50% men and 50% women. And confidence was highest in teams where women comprised 60% of members.

Such findings may begin to propel CEOs on Wall Street to offer more mentoring to women employees at all levels and opportunities to advance, as well as more coaching to men about how to work better with women.

Meanwhile, many of the hundreds of women trained at banks and Wall Street firms every year eventually move on to successful careers elsewhere.

Katherine Putnam, president of Package Machinery, a West Springfield, Mass., equipment maker, says she's glad she switched from a career in finance to manufacturing. "I'm still in a male culture, but it's an engineering culture where men sometimes don't know how to deal with me but aren't always trying to prove they're on top," she says. A customer who was placing an order for one of her company's machines "talked only to my assembly foreman and called me 'her' during the entire meeting," she says. "But he knew that my company's equipment was going to solve his problem. On Main Street, I get to collaborate with men," she says.

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