

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



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What are the essential ingredients in a workplace that allow women to thrive?

My career has been in our service organization, starting in a support role 28 years ago. Now I have the privilege of leading a team of 350 service professionals who are responsible for the day-to-day relationships with our customers and advisors. In my experience, there are four main things anybody needs to be successful and thrive at work.

I believe that first, it's important to feel inspired. You have to come to work every day feeling that you're part of something bigger, that you have a common vision and a common goal with those in your organization. Second, you need to feel valued and understand the importance of your contributions to the bigger picture. Everyone in our organization plays a key and critical role in our customer, member and team experience. Third, you need to feel empowered. You need to know you can make decisions and make mistakes and we're all here to sort it out together. Fourth, and the pandemic really highlighted this, you need to feel connected to your team, your unit and, more broadly, your organizational peers.

They're intertwined, but fundamentally, to thrive at work, you need to be inspired, valued, empowered and connected.

How does community support you in your personal and professional life?

In my personal life, I'm surrounded by strong, successful, happy, fun individuals. It's important to have that support system outside of work, whether it's your family, friends or community groups.

At work, I'm so inspired by my leadership team. My leaders (pictured above) are responsible for developing and supporting our service organization and, ultimately, the relationship with our 35,000 customers, 25,000 advisors and the health and wealth of 12 million Canadians. Knowing I'm part of a team of women leaders and we're doing those things together—with our teams, our sales and operational teams and everyone in our group customer organization—is empowering.

What has the pandemic changed in terms of leaders' responsibilities to their teams?

The pandemic caused a monumental shift in so many things, but it

significantly changed how we approach work. I'm very proud of how quickly our teams came together with a singular focus to make sure we were taking care of our customers and each other. I have heard from many team members, customers and advisors that they feel more connected than ever.

In the virtual workspace, leaders have had the opportunity to engage with our teams on a more personal level. We've met each other's families and pets in virtual meetings and have access to each other through town halls, virtual meetings, employee resource group programs and mental-health support strategies.

We have to continue those connections with our teams. We need to learn from them and listen to them to find out how we can support them through the next phase of hybrid working because it will be different for every business and every business unit. Knowing we will continue to do this together is a big part of what makes me so proud to be part of this great team.