

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



"Some call it balance. I call it being comfortable with my choices, including the things I choose to have and not have."

Melanie Jeannotte

*Chief Executive Officer,
Benefits & HR Consulting – Canada
Gallagher*

organization. That's how we're going to gain diversity of thought and continue to achieve that principled growth.

What qualities are critical for success as a woman in leadership?

What did your roles early on in your life teach you about leadership?

I was compelled from a very young age to pursue roles not traditionally held by women or without any great diversity. Even in school, where intramurals were divided into 'boy sports' and 'girl sports', I championed to the school board that we should have choice. That spirit continued into a career in firefighting and other non-traditional sectors and roles.

One lesson my early career taught me was to be the change you wish to see; I wanted to represent and be the person I wanted to be inspired by and see. Another thing I learned was to be really clear about who I serve because that affects how I approach decisions and set priorities. Then there's active listening—it's critical to actively hear the people on your team and the people you serve.

Lastly, early in my career someone said to me, "Have fun because it's later than you think." That may not have resonated as much when I was younger, but it's something I learned that has lived with me ever since.

How do you champion the people around you—your team and your clients—to help them succeed?

I focus on helping people build internal and external networks very intentionally. I like to remind people they may not always have access to a specific mentor, but that person can be a sponsor—someone you proactively connect with and bring value to. That person may not know you deeply but will think of you when an opportunity arises because you've made a strong impression. Sponsors can help take you places you never imagined.

What are you proudest of achieving in your current role and what is your vision for Gallagher's future?

I'm proudest of our intentional and principled growth approach. We've grown for the right reasons in Canada. We can demonstrate participation in a common good for the communities we work and live in. My vision for the future includes making sure anyone who can bring us value and talent can see themselves represented in our

I prefer to focus on what I can bring to leadership as a whole. First and foremost, authenticity—and that can be uncomfortable. Second is to demonstrate a growth mindset. This can be accomplished through growing and being well personally and professionally. It also means projecting the idea that each of us can stretch by learning what will help grow our own career or business. Third, keep your head where your feet are, meaning if your feet are at your kid's soccer game make sure your head is there, too; and if your feet are in front of a client or a colleague that's where your head needs to be. And one more: Eliza Reid, the first lady of Iceland, told me, "The point isn't to try to have it all. It's to understand the art of compromise." Some call it balance. I call it being comfortable with my choices, including the things I choose to have and not have.



Gallagher

Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting