



MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

MARY HAMMOND



As a woman leader in the Federal Government, what is one piece of advice you would give to aspiring women who seek to attain senior leadership positions?

Lead “big,” be tenacious in your achievements, and never be afraid to step back from an obstacle to reassess your strategy and then reengage. You are good enough and you have a lot to offer. It’s important that women don’t paralyze themselves with doubt and hesitation. Women have a special role in organizations because we see challenges clearly and we can envision the long- and short-term solutions. Lead “big” by solving challenges beyond your immediate “sphere of control.” Your “sphere of influence” is likely larger than you realize. Senior leaders will take notice and more opportunities will come your way. Be tenacious in your achievements. We look and sound different than our male counterparts. This is our superpower! You will encounter obstacles that you didn’t anticipate. Be courageous when a step back is needed, reassess your strategy, and then reengage, always with an eye on reaching the end-goal. The path to success may not be linear, but I promise, it’s there. Trust your instincts and GO FOR IT! The world needs you to lead and needs your voice in the discussion.

What motivated you to pursue a career in public service?

I knew when I was 12 years old that I wanted to be a federal agent. I learned of this career from movies involving female heroines and I wanted to make a difference. As I’ve progressed in my career, I continue to be motivated by my appreciation for the significant role that IRS Criminal Investigation plays in making the world safer. We are strong in the face of the political winds, we are steadfast in our mission to protect the American public, we are experts at following the money to dismantle criminal enterprises and we are great collaborators with our law enforcement partners and Department of Justice prosecutors. As women, we are moms /sisters / daughters / spouses, we are leaders, we are friends, we are colleagues, and we are role models for those who will stand on our shoulders next. The public will never know all that we do, but we will continue onward anyway because protecting them is our mission.

What challenges have you faced on your path to senior leadership, and how did you overcome them?

The most pivotal moment in my leadership career occurred when I was a new frontline supervisor. The frontline supervisory position is a critical, foundation-building position in most leadership journeys. It also has the largest learning curve, especially for an overly confident agent with no experience in leading people. A few months into the job, the most senior leader in the field office told me that I was failing. To this point in my life, I had never failed at anything. After an embarrassing “burst into tears” moment, she asked me to pull myself together, have a seat on the couch, and have a conversation. She talked to me about political savvy, leading in a male-dominated professional, network connections of those in my leadership chain, and importantly, how all this would negatively impact my career progression if I didn’t learn to better navigate things. She told me that she would help me if I was willing to listen and learn. I rose to the occasion and conquered the challenge! For the rest of her career (she is now happily retired), this leader mentored me and supported my growth in leadership responsibility. There are unexpected moments in your career when someone invests in you by trying to teach you something critical to your success. They might not use the nicest words or have the best timing, but it’s up to you to recognize the moment that you are in. The choice is to be defensive shutdown and pout, OR actively listen, ingest the teaching points, and do something great with the feedback. When you find yourself in this moment of opportunity, take a deep breath, spend the energy to move past the words and get to the substance of the feedback.

About You

My Special Agent journey began 24 years ago with IRS Criminal Investigation. With full federal law enforcement capabilities and a mission to make the world safer, a successful case agent of 10 years, then increasing leadership responsibility for 14 years, I was promoted to Executive and achieved the distinction of being the highest-ranking female agent. “Operations and policy” are my areas of expertise, including undercover, asset seizure/forfeiture, narcotics, counterterrorism, national security, and international operations. My passion is fierce advocacy for positive culture change in support of CI’s mission and personnel. Recently, I partnered with a team to initiate CI’s first-ever “affinity group” to support women, called “CI NOW,” success of which is surpassing all expectations!

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