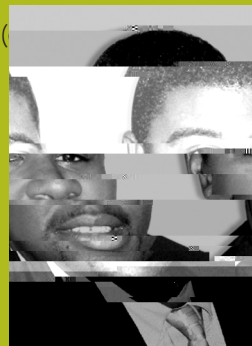




INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS FREEMAN

Founder and CEO of VirtCom and founder of
World Diversity Leadership Summit

Mr. Douglas C. Freeman is the founder and CEO of VirtCom, a strategy management consultancy group focused on solving and facilitating global diversity management issues. Mr. Freeman is also the founder of the inaugural World Diversity Leadership Summit, a conference of Global Chief Diversity Officers and Diversity Executives. Mr. Freeman's professional career has spanned 10 years.



... came to New York City where I worked for the investment banking group of Chase securities.

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Letter from the Focal Point for Women

In this issue of *News*, we cover several positive and significant developments in the area of gender and empowerment of women. First, the General Assembly passed a historic resolution in September 2009 endorsing the creation of a new United Nations entity dealing with gender issues. The resolution

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Sinfonietta Orchestra which has been around for 21 years. It is a mid-sized orchestra which performs at a symphony centre in Chicago, and they have always had a commitment to diversity as a mission. This orchestra was described by Juilliard School to be the most diverse professional symphony orchestra in the United States in its research of 1,200 professional symphonies. My father has been a proponent of diversification of the workplace. I learned from my father's insights, and started to apply it more to policymaking and to multinational activities. That was probably the beginning of VirtCom, which has been around eight years now.

In the workplace and on a global scale, the challenges differ. They differ according to ethnic or immigrant group or what the disabilities are. There are about six major demographic groups that diversity is trying to access: women, ethnic minorities, immigrants, those of different sexual orientation, the aging workforce (which is now a group seeing a lot of discrimination, particularly in Europe and North America), the disabled workforce (which is undergoing a lot of discrimination), and the religious minorities (ensuring that they have access and they are not discriminated against in the workforce for their religious beliefs).

Challenges exist in North America on the integration of women and ethnic minorities in the workforce with an emerging focus on disabilities. In Europe, the challenges lie on gender, disabilities and immigration particularly with Muslim ethnic minorities. A challenge in Europe is the integration of the Roma (gypsies), a group facing exclusion on many levels. How do you manage them as they move from one country to another? They are not integrated into the educational system and they do not have levels of opportunity to participate in the society. Thus, this group is often fully segregated from the European societies. Roma is probably one of the biggest diversity issues that Europe is facing now. Other issues around the world are religious clashes and tribalism in Africa in the areas of management wherein one's tribe may dictate an individual's ability to get a job in a certain country environment. Each continent and environment usually has a unique set of challenges around these specific target groups.

Q: What are the goals of the World Diversity Leadership Summits which you have organized? What are the ways in which advocates of diversity

and gender help in building global movements for positive changes in the society?

The World Diversity Leadership Summit launched in Prague in 2004 was set around a basic question for policymakers, and non-governmental organizations and multinational companies. We wanted to determine if diversity is valid outside of just a local or domestic country environment. Thus, if you have business operations in the United Kingdom, and if you have operations in Latin America, do your tools which you use in the U.K. to manage diversity work anywhere else? This is a simple question with very complicated answers. We are still looking at this.

Another conference was held in Prague in March 2006 wherein we compared the diversity environment of the European Union to that of the United States.

In 2007, we had the global compact in the United Nations where we looked at issues of corporate social responsibility and diversity. And in 2008, we had the Global Diversity and Gender Equality Summit where we explored the strands of gender equality across all our diversity questions.



Q: How do you think we can get more men involved in the work for gender equality?

I think men have to understand that the future of all organizations is actually women. It is the future of the whole global workforce. Societies and companies cannot continue to grow at the current rate without looking at key sources of talent. The other thing is just the numbers. Because women have not participated to the same extent as men, there is a natural growth of educated and qualified women. It is just a fact. So if you are not taking this into consideration you are undermining the future of your company or organization. It just won't work. If you exclude half the population, you also exclude half the potential for innovation and talent.

Q:

woman who may have to work as well as manage the children. It means that the way in which decisions are made in the workforce will have to be changed because oftentimes decisions are made in informal environments, away from the workplace for example. So when a woman is picking up her child at school, some of the men may be at a dinner discussing the business of the day and making critical business decisions, really excluding the woman from that opportunity and that often is evident. We see that it's not just the hours in the day but it's also what goes around in informal men circles, that are really exclusive to women, that impacts how women perform or manage their work on a day-to-day basis. So those kinds of issues are hard to deal with but we see ways of getting around that by simply addressing them. When work/life balance issues are not being addressed, then problems occur.

Of course, the other issue is culture. We call it an "alpha male" culture, where questions like "How many hours can we take of your time? How much more work can you take on?" are relevant. There are a lot of work cultures unfortunately that value such excessive work activities, which is not conducive to work/life balance, particularly for women. So once again, we address those cultures, those that tend to have very masculine aggressive tendencies and really asking them some core questions, such as, "Is that necessary?" Investment bankers are known as an alpha male culture. Many corporations, even certain government organizations, are alpha male cultures in their way of determining how people are promoted, how people are viewed, whether it's in humour or in jest, a very masculine type of humour that is not appropriate for everyone. So the real issue is of understanding how your culture works in those ways and how that impacts any work/life balance strategy. It is complicated, but the magnet is: What is your culture? How is it negatively impacting work/life balance? What kind of steps can be taken to make the culture more flexible? Because work can be done anywhere, people do not even have to be in the office anymore.

just force recruitment of ethnic minorities. It never works. You need to have an inclusive foundation that enables newer groups, employees from typically discriminated groups, to have an environment where they can succeed.

Q: Can you share your personal philosophy?

I think diversity and gender equality issues are core to society's success. I think they are core to organizational success. And I think it is core to personal success. I don't think everybody agrees with me but that is what I believe. And we start to see examples where society embraces diversity and it has a positive impact on the community as a whole. London and the Olympics for 2012, for example, where the positioning of their society in their Olympics as an inclusive measure helped them win the Olympics. They have placed their Olympic village in East London which is one of the poorest areas of London. New York, on the other hand, tried to do it in Manhattan. London's legacy objectives for the Olympics were inclusion, accessibility for the disabled and green sustainability. Those are the top three legacy objectives. Of course, with the inclusion



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Tuesday, 14 July 2009, 1.15 p.m.

Dear Friends,

Let me thank the Vice-President of GERWUN, Ms. Barbara Tavora-Jainchill, for her kind words of introduction. I also wish the GERWUN President, Ms. Mia Jose, a speedy recovery and I thank her for her active participation on this issue. It is a real pleasure for me to join you all today, and I am delighted to have this opportunity not only to speak with but also listen to this Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations. I am very much here today in listening mode to hear your concerns and thoughts. I am grateful that Ms. Mehrotra and Ms. Haji-Ahmed are also on hand in that regard and I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

For almost 40 years now, GERWUN members have been steadfast advocates for the promotion, within the United Nations, of mutual respect and understanding between women and men. Tackling gender inequalities in our Organization in areas such as recruitment, conditions of employment, assignments and training, GERWUN has been a constant champion of equal rights. Indeed, your work reminds management and staff alike of the standards and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and to which we have all signed up. I applaud you for your work and I thank each of you for your personal dedication to this cause.

It is fitting that I speak to you at a time when the General Assembly is debating the reform of the gender architecture of the United Nations. Our colleagues in the

2008, we would not achieve gender balance at the P-4 level until 2024. This is disappointing, to say the least.

So, what are the causes of the slow progress within the United Nations? It is certainly not for want of trying or for lack of commitment at senior levels. As you may be aware, Secretaries-General and heads of Management and Personnel departments have made efforts to improve the situation. As a consequence of the Beijing Plan of

MORE ... AROUND THE UN

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- They have extended their networks beyond the obvious to encompass the unusual (jumping across worlds);
- They are on an inner quest that ignites their own energy and that of others (igniting latent energy).²

Dr. Gratton suggests that employees who want to Glow should seek advice from trusted colleagues. The wider network they have and the more open they are to new, fresh ideas, the more they will be innovative and energized. Seeking advice and asking questions creates energy and interest from others. It also develops insights that trigger the excitement of involvement from others. She conveys that it is essential to be proactive in making sure that the “where and with whom you work is conducive to you being able to Glow” . ■

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Zimbabwe and

adjustment period back to work. In addition, she notes that it is helpful to arrange for childcare help even before the baby is born. Having a childcare plan makes it easier to lessen anxiety about returning to work.

A career coach mentions that the best aspect of going back to work is being able to concentrate on something without any interruption, which made her feel creatively fulfilled. She added that when going back to the office, one must always be reminded of the reasons for working—whether that be to use the intellect, to socialize or to help with the family's finances.

A legal consultant in her second year of a two-year clerkship with a federal judge in New York became pregnant with her first son. The situation agitated her because taking maternity leave would greatly inconvenience the other clerk, since her workload would increase. To resolve the issue, she organized all the work that needed to be accomplished in advance of her maternity leave. Such proactive measures promote a positive relationship with one's co-workers, which is particularly helpful when a mother returns to work. During her next pregnancy, she was in the middle of looking for a job and decided to work part-time. She suggests explaining to a potential employer the financial advantages of engaging a part-time worker, rather than stating upfront that you need the part-time job in anticipation of caring for your child when it is born. She emphasized the value of making time for oneself and to refresh oneself "independent of work and family". Furthermore, she believed in sharing the duties and responsibilities with one's spouse. "Let go of the fact that he might not do everything the way you would. Don't be a martyr."⁴

In closing, Ms. Weiss stresses what one of her friends told her, "Your priorities change ... You just have to strike the balance of what's right for you. And through it all you learn in a new way how much you can love someone".⁵

Gen Y and Baby Boomers

During the current economic recession, employers are mostly focused on cutting costs rather than on capturing the needed pool of talent for their organizations. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Laura Sherbin and Karen Sumberg indicate that as the economy recovers, companies will once again

try to recruit highly capable individuals who can deliver the best for their respective organizations in their article "How Gen Y and Boomers will reshape your agenda" (*HR & Business Review*, July-August 2009). The article describes the characteristics of Baby Boomers and Gen Ys and reveals how their values could influence the decision-making of organizations.

Results of two large-scale surveys of college graduates show that Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) and Gen Ys (those born between 1979 and 1994) share distinctly similar work goals, attitudes and work behaviours. These two groups are twice the size of the Gen X group (those born between 1965 and 1978). Baby Boomers and Gen Ys seek to work together and with each other, with Gen Ys looking for professional advice from Baby Boomers, and with Baby Boomers enjoying working with Gen Ys, who share their technical skills with them. The high number of Baby Boomers and Gen Ys compared to Gen Xs reflects the implications for employers to shape a work environment that attracts and maintains the talent of both groups. Companies who then enhance a work environment with values shared by Boomers and Gen Ys will be able to capture and benefit from their talents.

The following are the common denominators between Baby Boomers and the Gen Y group. Both share the following attitudes, activities and values:

- Explore passions and hobbies;
- Want opportunities to break from work, mainly for personal fulfillment like community volunteering and improving the environment, culture and education, and contributing to society and the health of the planet. These "perk" them up so they can be more dedicated to their work and perform better;
- Believe in the benefits of flexible work arrangements, work/life balance and telecommuting;
- Love teamwork;
- Desire to give back to the community through their work;
- Affirm that a financial package is not the right reason to stay with an employer but instead regard that a great team, a challenging assignment, a range of new experiences, a definitive performance evaluation and recognition motivate and inspire them to continue their work with an organization.

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Windows taskbar area with a dark grey background. On the left, a vertical white line separates the Start menu area from the taskbar. The taskbar contains several icons: a Start button, a search icon, and several application icons. The system tray on the right shows the time as 1:33, the date as 10/10/1, and a network icon.