

Speech of Mrs. Hana Pri-zan, Head of Client Asset Management Area, Member of the Board of Management of Bank Hapoalim B.M. Tel Aviv

Dear Minister Jacobs,
Dear Colleagues and Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to participate in this conference, which focuses on an issue that is of great importance to me – helping women advance their careers to senior positions.

I must admit that I myself have not been subject to gender discrimination in my climb to my current position. As a member of the Board of Management of Bank Hapoalim, a major global bank, my professional environment is dominated by men, particularly in my specialty, which is capital markets. Yet, as said, I feel I have been treated fairly since I first joined the bank, as a young officer just out of the Israel army!

My case, however, is the exception. Statistics show that women are repeatedly faced by a glass ceiling. That is why I am proud to be a mentor to younger women determined to reach the top.

So if you ask me today what qualities helped me to advance professionally, I can say with confidence that it is hard, hard work and, concurrently, respect for my employees. As you can imagine, mine has not been a nine-to-five job. I set myself the highest standards, and my achievements can, and are, measured regularly. I set these standards for my employees too, but I give them the space to achieve it. I know there are many paths to the same goal, and I expect each and every one to use his or her talents to attain our goals.

And now, if you ask me whether I have also managed to have a satisfactory personal life, the answer is a resounding yes. I have been happily married for over three decades, and have two children.

How did I do it all? The key, I believe, is my attempt in every facet of life, professional, family and personal, to achieve balance. It is not always possible to achieve this goal, but if it is kept in sight and pursued persistently, on the whole, balance can govern our lives. Within this equation there are three elements to be juggled: work, family and one's personal self. I mention this because we ambitious women must never forget that, first and foremost, we must be true to ourselves.

I would like to point out in this context that I do believe there is a difference between the way men and women perceive things. Women tend to be more holistic. Men tend to focus more on the trees, and not on the forest. That is why, I always try to have a balance between men and women in the teams I manage.

This strength, of viewing reality holistically, is also what makes it more natural for women to achieve balance in their lives. More and more women are finding that with determination and optimism they can build both successful professional and personal lives.

Today's generation of future women executives, I am happy to see, are boldly seizing opportunities. I cannot promise them that the way will be easy, but I can forecast that it will be exciting and fulfilling!

Thank you.