

Tread Loudly: Call Out the Bullsh*t and Fight for Equality in the Workplace

Kristine Cherek

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Exposing sexism in corporate spaces, Tread Loudly is a forthright leadership guide filled with practical ideas for overcoming gender-based hurdles.

Kristine Cherek's motivational leadership guide *Tread Loudly* notes that women still face sexism in the corporate world and provides guidance for combating it.

The lives of strong women corporate executives, who lead major companies while sustaining families, social lives, and friendships, are often romanticized, the book claims, but these women's lived realities are more stressful. Across its chapters, the book illustrates, and deconstructs, everyday instances of sexism in the workplace—and exposes hidden challenges, too. It notes that women with high-profile jobs often confess to feeling like terrible mothers; it acknowledges that social stigmas against women without children remain. With this in mind, Cherek recommends that—instead of adapting to fit the ingrained biases and expectations of “Mad Men-like workplaces”—rising women leaders should seek to achieve success without compromising their identities.

This work is grounded in personal experience and is marked by occasional humor. Cherek writes that she was an ambitious child gymnast in Wisconsin before becoming the second person in her family to attend college. And she does a compelling job of humanizing common encounters with sexism, modeling how the complex emotions elicited by such hurdles might be dealt with. Further, her comprehensive accounts are not limited to the business world; there are stories about confronting a bullying teacher and of dealing with dismissive coworkers.

The chapters are succinct and tidy; their language is energetic and driven, securing both attention and investment. They include key takeaways that condense their plenitude of stories and ideas into pithy statements for easy recall. Each anecdote is analyzed in a thorough manner, resulting in clear, widely applicable lessons. And surprises arise as well, as with Cherek's coverage of unexpected discrepancies, like the one between her career and her corporate executive husband's.

However, where the book targets sexist beliefs beyond the corporate world, within society at large, its insights into structural issues are more limited. There are references to political and cultural events, including the infamous “locker room talk” exposed in the course of Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, but these are loose; they often drift from the core subject rather than deepening the book's insights. Whereas the accounts of Cherek's own experiences are persuasive, adding up to an effective exposé of corporate issues of sexism, the book's more general observations ultimately prove less applicable to the subject of workplace inequity.

Attuned to contemporary challenges, *Tread Loudly* is a knowledgeable leadership guide for women seeking to rise in competitive workplaces without compromising their values.

WILLEM MARX (January 2, 2024)

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