

SECURITY (S)HERO

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Leadership happens at every level, and it's really a mindset someone puts into play. Knowing which leadership traits are needed in the game at specific times requires empathy to be in action at all times.

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Ahead of International Women's Day, **National Security Services**, in partnership with **Women in Healthcare Security Network**, promoted a series of interviews with women who work in different ranks on the Security team. The result was an outlook of the security industry from the lenses of our female officers, managers, and leaders. In this article, you will learn about the importance of support, leadership, and allyship to build a more inclusive and equitable security force in alignment with KP's commitment to the principles of inclusion, accountability, and advocacy to close equity gaps across the organization. According to a recent study from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics[1], published in January of 2024, only 26.7% of security service ranks are filled by women. Although the security team at KP is ahead of the curve, reflecting consistent efforts to promote an inclusive workforce[2], the underrepresentation in the industry is partially explained by the stereotypical notion that security is better carried out by a male, particularly of imposing presence;

A notion quickly clarified by the interviewees. In their experiences, having an amenable and empathetic attitude often trumps any physical endowment.

The concept is illustrated by the experience shared by Fremont's Security Manager, Sara Lung, who stated that it wasn't until after working for some time in the security field that she began to realize it was a male-dominated industry. In her own words, "After understanding the types of work involved, it was perceived that a male officer was more effective than a female officer [...] for example, if a belligerent male or a female, saw a male in a uniform approach them, they might think twice about acting out as opposed to seeing a female in a uniform. I will never forget [once when] a very large male became unruly, verbally threatening... When security was called, I was the only one available. The first question I was asked was, 'Are you sure you can handle this?' They were expecting some big bouncer-type security to show up to, you know, settle this man down, and I [was able to] engage that gentleman and walk him out without any incident." ▶



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Sara Lung, Security Manager

This is just one example of the resilience and self-reliance needed for everyone, particularly women, to succeed in the security industry. This concept was reiterated by Laura Douglass, Director of Programs and Support for all Markets Outside of California. She believes the security team works primarily in advocacy, and for female officers to advocate for their own seat at the table is as important as advocating for staff and patients. “Impostor syndrome and doubting myself and really just having to find a voice and understanding that the things that I brought to the table, the different perspectives, the whole career that I was able to bring into security from being at the bedside to working on employee injuries all make me a great fit.

And the more that I got comfortable with my own voice and my own opinions, the more [I] got over that block that I was putting up for myself. My voice does matter, and I bring great work to the security department.”

An understanding shared by the Security Administrative Specialist at Vacaville, Jasmine Rodriguez, for whom leading by example is more than just inspiring other women in the security team; it is a requirement to gain the trust of the personnel from her medical center. “They saw that I was able to stand my ground on my own. It just took time for them to get to know me and to see that I was as capable as all the other guys that I work with.” For Jasmine, knowing about other women’s feats also serves as a source of daily motivation to perform at her very best and share her experiences and what she learned with everyone on the team.

Taylor Smith, Service Area Security Leader for the Fresno service area, hits it out of the park by linking the presence of women in the security force with the accurate

representation of the communities it serves to create a sense of belonging. “Over a 10-year career in the industry, I can count [female] leaders on one hand, and that is where representation comes in. [It is hard to find] examples of successful female leaders in executive positions to look up to and serve as a source of inspiration. It was only in the last couple of years that I truly felt that I belonged and that this was a career choice for me.”

Still considering the proper representation of general demographics, changing the status quo of the security environment involves a full industry revamp that “starts in elementary school when they ask, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ [This is when you create] security as a place for women,” ponders Alli Szutu, Director of

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Laura Douglass, Director of Programs and Support

Strategy and Business Operations for the contract security Blackstone Consulting, Inc. She carries on: “a lot of times it goes beyond who we recruit, how we recruit, where we recruit, and it goes to how do we change the narrative around what security is, who

can be in it, and how do we design it to be more inclusive.” Alli adds that making the field more equitable includes understanding different backgrounds and abilities and, as leaders, creating spaces for people to thrive in any industry.

Acknowledging the challenges in the path ahead, one word can be used to describe what all the women interviewed have in common: grit. They all have, like Jessica Budd, Security Manager for Walnut Creek, found in the KP Security team place where they can build a career. Jessica also introduces another important element for the success of men and women alike in health care security, which is connection. “I really encourage [everyone] to be part of the team, be a team player, and bring solutions to the table, not dwell on the problem. Don’t be afraid to network with people.

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Jessica Budd, Security Manager

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These accounts provide a small glimpse into the accomplishments of women who form the KP security team and are leading the path of a more inclusive and diverse security workforce by being mentors, examples, and stewards of change at every position level. They carry out KP’s equity vision of building a healthier, more equitable future for every life we touch.

To discover more about the diverse and inclusive STARS that make the security team, their contributions, and unique points of view, we invite you to engage your local security team and share your experiences with National Security Services. ■

[1] Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>, accessed on Feb 15, 2024.

[2] 65% of open leadership roles in the National Security Services team, between 2022-2023, were filled by diverse candidates.

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