



Shattering The Ice Ceiling: Women Dominating in the Ski Industry

International Women's Day March 8 #ChooseToChallenge



Sydney, Aus.— March 8 – In celebration of International Women's Day, we introduce you to four women who have well and truly poled through the 'ice ceiling' in a male dominated industry, making fresh tracks for other females to follow in their wake.



CAROLINE BRAUER – MARKETING MANAGER

Caroline Brauer at Thredbo Resort is one of few women with a ski area management role in the southern hemisphere, drawn to the industry by a love of mountains and tourism over 20 years ago. So has female involvement changed during her career?

"I honestly feel that the ski industry is fairly open-minded when it comes to female career advancement. If you have the required passion, interest and dedication to the mountains, it's fair game," she says.

Brauer also shares the positive news that in our local industry, the gender numbers are beginning to balance. "Thredbo is so fortunate to be under the umbrella of EVENT Hospitality & Entertainment whose CEO, Jane Hastings is an inspiring female role model", says Brauer. "The Thredbo Guest Services team just appointed three females into management positions, my Marketing team has an even gender balance and there's an increasingly even mix of females on the Thredbo Management Team, so yes – I really do feel the gender balance in our industry is evening out."

It's no surprise she uses a ski analogy as advice for females aiming for snow topped career heights. "It's like skiing through the trees...keep a firm sight on where you want to go and try not to get too caught up on the obstacles along the way."



KATIE ERTL – SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT MOUNTAIN OPERATIONS

Like Caroline Brauer, lifetime Aspen local Katie Ertl is one of limited women in the upper echelons of management at a US mountain resort, as Senior Vice President of Mountain Operations at Aspen Snowmass since 2017.

During a panel on Women in the Ski Industry at Aspen in 2020, when asked how she'd encourage other women to reach for career summits Ertl responded, "What's the worst thing that can happen if you fail? If you have courage to step into the application or the job or the conversation, you might find that you have so much more to offer than you think you do."

Noting that just three of the 52 applicants for two mountain manager positions recently were women, Ertl points out that part of the challenge is attracting more female applicants, but not just hiring quotas and while it's important to

strike a better gender balance in her field, she thinks that conversation needs to happen a few ways.

"One is getting in front of young school kids, and letting them know early that they can dream and be. Having mentors and examples is important.

'If you can see it, you can be it'

"Second is speaking to our employee base regularly about what is available, and encouraging women to step up and apply. Taking a look at succession planning along the way, and striking conversations up about what is possible."



LORI SPENCE: SKI PATROL DIRECTOR ASPEN HIGHLANDS (photo Kelsey Brunner)

Lori Spence was the only woman in her ski patrol department during one winter season, and one of only handful in others. She's risen through the ranks over 35 years while raising two sons and last month was tapped on the shoulder to be the first female Aspen Highlands Ski Patrol Director, a position previously held by legend Mac Smith for 42 seasons.

While the transition to the top leadership role as a woman is not a particularly big deal to Spence, it is being noticed.

"I've gotten a lot of support from the ski patrol and everybody on the mountain," she said. "I've been surprised how many people have stopped me and congratulated me for taking over for now, and supporting me. Women from the other mountains have been texting me: 'This is great.' I'm not worried about taking it on as a woman."



CHRISTY MAHON - ENVIRONMENTALIST AND SKIING PIONEER

(Photo @ Ted Mahon)

The first woman to climb and ski all 54 of Colorado's 14,000 foot mountains isn't just a lover of steep descents, but two time award winner of Sportswomen of Colorado Award in Ski Mountaineering, and nominee of National Geographic's Adventurer of the Year 2016. But she emphasise that mountain experiences don't have to all be about reaching a summit.

"Everyone, with their own skills and personal life, can (and should) have extraordinary adventures in the mountains", she says. "the most important thing is to give ourselves the chance to try."

Mahon is also excited to see things changing as more women step with strength into the mountaineering world. "We need great stories about women practicing sports in the mountains - about the feeling of discovery and the deep sense of achievement when climbing or skiing down a mountain. It makes me happy that I've been able to inspire women to give it a try and live amazing adventures."

The Colorado native also uses her passion for science and the environment, working as a climate change and environmental education advocate as Development Director at ACES ([Aspen Centre for Environmental Studies](#)) to make sure that we have skiing and snow for future generations.

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