

## It Was Scary – Till It Wasn't



The first time I rode an Aegis ship, I was the only female riding alongside 300 sailors during a week-long underway. I remember being excited but feeling overwhelmed and extremely intimidated, as if 300 sets of eyes were ready to critique my every action. I had no choice but to put my fears aside.

Fast-forward 20-something years – I was nominated to participate in a Women Unlimited, Inc. (WUI) Leadership Program known as LEAD. At our very first meeting, I felt the same intimidation – only this time I was surrounded by 40 female professionals in leadership positions.

The [Learn Engage Achieve Deliver \(LEAD\) program](#) “focuses on developing leaders who think globally and act strategically.” The goal is to broaden each participant’s perspective to gain a greater understanding of themselves, potential opportunities, and organization. Using a combination of mentoring, education and networking program experiences, LEAD creates a dynamic environment for personal growth and development.

Not knowing what to expect, I attended my first session and was immediately engrossed. Thirteen companies are represented, and Lockheed Martin is the only defense industry participant. Two other Lockheed Martin colleagues are in my co-hort, providing a bit of familiarity surrounded by women from the full business spectrum.

In one assignment, we were tasked to create a transformational shift statement. This is a self-evaluation of how you expect to grow over the next year. After I finished my draft, I (surprisingly!) found myself volunteering to present it to the group. As I read aloud, I could feel those 40 sets of searing eyes again. I was hoping for and expecting some positive reinforcement from the moderator. But instead, she tore it apart. “It needs a LOT of work, Trish,” she said, and “it’s much too general.” She explained I must already be doing much of what I stated or I “wouldn’t have been nominated for this program.”

Yikes! I could feel myself shrinking as she went on. It felt like the self-challenge of “what’s the worst that could happen?” had happened! I licked my wounds (and after a few others received similar criticisms), sat down and tried to pivot my thinking. Eventually, I found myself thankful for the honest constructive feedback. I have since improved my statement and feel confident I can achieve my goals.

Much like pushing forward to overcome my fears during that first underway, participating in this unique setting has been invaluable. After each LEAD session, I see real growth within myself, including some areas that have surprised me.

Lesson learned: If a growth opportunity presents itself to you, go for it! Push outside your comfort zone.

Oh, and that underway so many years ago? I gained foundational knowledge of our operational customer and have been on more underways than I can count at this point. That knowledge became the start on the path toward today's challenging assignments!