

Elevating Women in Leadership

March 18, 2023 - Pat Campbell started her career as a ski instructor, and it didn't take her long to rise through the ranks, combining her passion of skiing and riding with her leadership skillset. She eventually became the Chief Operating Officer of Breckenridge Ski Resort in Colorado, and later, the first woman to lead the company's Mountain Division, overseeing all the company's owned and operated resorts. She now serves as Senior Advisor to the company.

When running Breckenridge, she occasionally had trouble explaining to guests that she was, in fact, the leader of the resort, even though she had been in the ski industry for almost 30 years. She shared the story with [Vermont Ski and Ride Magazine](#):

"I remember this one time, I was riding the chairlift at Breckenridge with these guys and chatting with them and they were like, 'Well what do you do?' I said, 'Oh, I run the ski resort.' They said, 'Well what does that mean?' I said, 'Well, you know, I oversee the resort.' They said, 'So you do H.R.?' Finally, I said, 'No, I am the chief operating officer. I am the head boss at the ski resort.'"

Getting more women to participate in the sport has been a goal of the ski industry for years. Broader participation will make the sport more resilient, and data shows that women are typically planning family vacations and guiding discretionary spend for their families – meaning they decide if the family goes skiing or not. Yet, according to the National Ski Areas Association, female participation in the sport has remained largely unchanged for more than ten years and is stagnant at around 30%.

"One of the most important opportunities within the ski industry is inclusion and diversity. It's critical to growing the sport, staying relevant and sustainable," says Pat, Senior Advisor to Vail Resorts and Chair of the National Ski Areas Association Board of Directors.

Breaking the Ice Ceiling

At Vail Resorts, we're intentional about representation, and are building a culture where women are celebrated and promoted. [Trailblazing women across Vail Resorts](#) are breaking the "ice ceiling" and [transforming snowsports](#). Today, nearly a fourth of our resorts are run by women, including our two largest resorts: Park City Mountain in Utah, and Whistler Blackcomb in British Columbia.

In 2021, Kirsten Lynch made history by becoming Vail Resorts' first female CEO and the highest-ranking woman in the ski industry. Now, six of our eleven board directors are women and a third of our executive committee members are women. Not only was Kirsten's appointment historic at Vail Resorts – she is the only female CEO among Travel & Leisure companies listed on the Fortune 1000 list.

As Beth Howard shared with [Travel Weekly](#): "I think our company is unmatched in the industry as far as focusing on leadership in general and then allowing women in leadership to have a path toward these bigger roles," says Beth Howard, Chief Operating Officer of Vail Mountain. She joined the company in 1985 and grew her career from working in food and beverage to leading the company's iconic namesake resort, adding, "Inclusive leadership development has become a big part of our culture."

Over the past 15 years, our investments in gender diversity and leadership development have disrupted a historically male-dominated industry. We are continuously working to [grow the number of women in leadership](#). A huge part of that success is because of the spaces that have been created for women in leadership.

Women & Allies ERG

Team members in our Women & Allies Employee Resource Group (ERG) at Vail Resorts are creating community and working to ensure we are building an inclusive environment for all. Shannon Buehler, Vice President and General Manager at Stowe

Mountain Resort is a Co-Lead of the Women & Allies ERG. She underscores the importance of gathering input from women across our network of resorts.

“We have conducted workshops, focus groups with 100+ employees, and analyzed data to assess how we can best empower and elevate female employees across our network. Aside from analyzing data, taking the time to listen to our female employee population is so important. Their input is so valuable,” said Shannon.

“We also meet with business partners such as our recruitment teams and human resources to identify ways we can create more opportunities for women across our network of resorts.”

The ERG is just one more way the company is ensuring that more women are being supported in their pursuit of leadership development and career growth.

A Workplace for All

Vail Resorts was named one of America’s Best Employers for Women by Forbes, and our work to [support, develop, and advance women](#) doesn’t go unnoticed. The Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce named Vail Resorts a “Champion of Change” for continued efforts to advance women in a historically male-dominated industry.

Despite these efforts, there’s still a long way to go in making the sport more welcoming to not just women, but to newcomers of all backgrounds. Elevating women in leadership at Vail Resorts helps to build a better experience for all. Decades of studies show women leaders help increase productivity, enhance collaboration, inspire organizational dedication, and improve fairness.

To women thinking about working in the ski industry, Deirdra Walsh, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Park City Mountain says, “This is an industry for everybody. Come and join Vail Resorts. This is a place where you can thrive.”

Additional assets available online: [Photos \(1\)](#)

<https://stage.mediaroom.com/vailresorts/Elevating-Women-In-Snowsports>