

# CHINA CROSSROADS

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## Smashing China's Glass Ceiling: Insights of Female CEOs in China

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2021 marks the 100th anniversary of “International Women’s Day” (which takes place March 8). After a century of work to promote equal rights, what is the actual state of the “glass ceiling” in China and the US? Over the past decade, professional development for women in both countries has simultaneously progressed and regressed. On one hand, female professionals have gained new legal protections and have witnessed a ‘new normal’ promoting diversity and inclusivity in many corporations. Why, then, do such tired, long-discussed issues as pay inequality, employment discrimination, and gender stereotyping persist in both countries? And why have recent social movements (marriage pressure in China, #metoo in the US) fueled new discriminatory flames? This talk shines a light on the true state of women’s professional advancement in both China and the US and promotes how we, as a society, can expose and smash the glass ceiling which still hinders many talented and ambitious professional women.

[Laurie Underwood](#) is Senior Associate Professor of Management at International Business School Suzhou (IBSS), Visiting Instructor at NYU Shanghai, and Senior Consultant with Sino Associates. Her teaching and corporate trainings focus on Cross-Cultural Leadership and Communications, Crisis Management, and Digital Marketing. A frequent public presenter, her passions include promoting China to the outside world, cross-cultural sensitivity, and gender equality. She recently presented at Tedx The Bund (September 2020). She has co-authored three China business books, including [China CEO II](#) (with Juan Antonio Fernandez). Originally from the U.S. (Alaska), she has studied and worked in China since 2002. She holds an MBA and CMO from CEIBS, DBA from Grenoble Ecole de Management.

[Juan Antonio Fernandez](#) is Professor of Management at CEIBS in Shanghai. He specializes in leadership and teaches courses on charisma, change, leading self and others, and the art of living. He also has co-authored six books on CEOs on multinationals in China, foreign entrepreneurs, and state-owned enterprises. His most recent book is [China CEO II](#) (with Laurie Underwood), which contains interviews with 25 CEOs of MNCs in China and five China experts. He is currently working on a new book on The Culture of Innovation in Organizations. For more information on his work, you can visit his website: [www.juanleadership.com](http://www.juanleadership.com).

[Freda Zhang](#) is Country Commercial VP at IKEA China. She has been with IKEA for over 10 years in many roles including Purchasing and Logistics Area Manager for East Asia and Finance and Administrative Manager for North China. She holds an MBA from the University of Wales and was interviewed as part of [China CEO II](#).

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a “crossroads” of the world and itself at a “crossroads” in terms of its future global influence.