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Success by skirting the glass ceiling

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WHEN a male colleague in Chicago told Rhonda Brighton she wouldn't be taken seriously unless she wore trousers, she only wore skirts to the office.

And to this day, the 2009 NSW Telstra Businesswoman of the Year, who is vying for the national title tonight, maintains women should stop trying to be men.

"Women bring a different style of leadership to an organisation," she said.

"And different styles of men can get in when women are in executive positions and allow themselves to be themselves,"

The Warrawee resident and group general manager of human resources at Luxottica said she looked to Australia's first female Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, for inspiration.

"She has shown me that women can be feminine and a mother and be successful," she said.

As an executive in the world's largest eyewear company, Ms Brighton regularly travels.

She has been prepared to go almost anywhere there was a challenging career opportunity.



House husband Michael Hall recalls: "We were six weeks into our marriage and Rhonda said she had a fantastic opportunity and it could be in Singapore, London or Wagga - and it was in Wagga."

The family has also been based in Holland and the US.

"The opportunity to travel has been great for us," Ms Brighton said.

"If you both had jobs it would be hard to do, but with one person at home and one at work it makes a really nice partnership."

Luxottica colleague Phil McNutt summed up Ms Brighton's professional qualities: "She's the strongest HR leader I have experienced in 28 years in retail," he said. "She has a hunger to deliver, to help people grow and she has an unrelentingly pursuit of the best possible people."