

FEMALE LEADERSHIP BIASES

The greeting card on my wall says, “God created man in his image---but, thought again, and created women!” With no intended male disrespect and with a personal whimsical exaggeration, it was an affirmation of the importance of women—especially women as a powerful change agent in leadership.

With women’s general wealth of skills and unique perspectives, there is a significant recognition of the many unique qualities of women in predominately male leadership positions. It is through a woman’s usual general propensity to mentor, be a role model, share a diversity of thought, collaborate, empathize, be caring and effectively gentle, and often other non-masculine skills that the female leadership role has been known to flourish! However, let us not be naive—we all have known a few women (at least) who fail to meet this glowing recognition. Nevertheless, let us concentrate on the recognized and most frequently admired qualities of the female in a highly competitive leadership role!

Decades have shown the need for more equity between genders within the higher prestigious realms of leadership. As a society, we have begun to close the gender and wage gap. Nevertheless, there is still a fundamental absence of women in prestigious leadership roles.

It has been shown, that the greater the gender diversity among senior leaders, the greater the profitability within an organization. Therefore, with the many researched benefits regarding the inclusion of women in significant leadership roles, it is time to seriously rethink male-dominated leadership! (Naturalhr—a website for transforming business)

SOFT SKILLS IN LEADERSHIP

Soft skills (versus technical measurable hard skills) in leadership and management are known to increase leadership effectiveness and are most often found in women. (Harvard Business Review)

Presently, research has shown that:

1. Ninety-two percent of hiring professionals feel that soft skills matter more than hard skills in determining employment success.
2. Eighty percent of successful organizations recognize that soft skills are important to an organization's success.

Soft skills include:

Communication: Active listening and willingness to share information effectively and gently help to increase trust, respect, verbal mentoring, and team building.

Communication skills are known to be one of women's

strongest skills, enhancing mutual understanding and clarity.

Problem-solving: Helping others by listening, empathizing, coaching, and directing others toward effective problem-solving when another person is confused, frightened, or unsure of happenings.

Emotional Intelligence: Understanding the feelings of others and helping others connect successfully and effectively with their cohorts/team.

Adaptability: Responding to change and helping others accept change.

Decision-making: Making decisions to maintain a sense of “steady-as-it-goes” -- especially when negotiating.

Time Management: Enhancing teamwork and productivity through listening and seeking outcomes that promote “getting the job done.”

Conflict Resolution: Using empathetic strategies to resolve problems in a comforting and feeling of safe environment.

Positive Outlook: Projecting a kind, unhurried, positive approach that tends to encourage and help others toward positive outcomes.

Flexible Working: Working remotely and flexible hours are often a viable option. Women often understand the need for flexibility in hours and work situations.

Transformational Ideas: Creating innovative ideas and new perspectives.

The human ability to use successfully soft skills is a defining characteristic that sets humans apart. Soft skills are mistakenly perceived to represent weakness. Until 2019, it was believed that effective business leadership meant traditional stern methods of control and demand, corrective actions to encourage performance, and individual decision-making to get things right. Even with the advancement of AI, the most effective ideas (not machines) will continue to be the human-enhancing qualities of soft skills as a significant part of leadership.

THE FEMALE TRANSFORMATION

Many organizations/businesses have agreed: Add a woman with leadership abilities to a group of male leaders and watch the group energy rise for the identification of new ideas. 😊

The Fortune 500 current gender leadership list in America identified that 15% of CEOs in America are now women. They, as female CEO leaders, have been recognized by some observers to outperform men CEO leaders. Women were, also, noted to be a significant part of more profitable organizations than an organization without a notable number of women CEOs. (Naturalhr—A Moorepay Company)

McKinsey and Company found that throughout the United Kingdom (UK), the senior executive team with the “highest performance uplift” was due to greater gender diversity. This claim included that with the input of female structural and cultural differences in leadership, there was an existence of finer leadership details that seemed to be absent without the female leadership presence.

FEMALE CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP

Leadership is no longer just a “Man’s Game!” However, for the female leader, it is no “walk in the park!” This requires a female leader to:

Challenge #1: Stand out in the group and make her contributions known!

Challenge #2: Build a support network of both men and women in the work arena who are supportive of the female leadership role.

Challenge #3: Establish reasonable yet higher goals than are seen in male leaders. Have faith in female abilities and showcase who a female is as a responsible leader.

Challenge #4: Show the ability to balance home responsibilities with work expectations.

Challenge #5: Use a woman's gift of sensitivity to recognize and respond humanely to reactions and needs that can curtail effective work production.

Challenge #6: Lead and teach upcoming women leaders to be effective leaders/managers for a more cooperative and less authoritative environment. (In 2021, the number of women in senior management roles within the U.S. was 31%--the highest number ever recorded.)

Challenge #7: Present the recognized research showing women have more capability and knowledge related to leadership power, compassion, outgoing qualities, and creativity.

The Pew Research Center and Democratic Trends Survey recently ranked 2,250 adult women better than or equal to men in seven out of eight categories. The survey revealed that only 20% of the respondents' believed men were more honest than women; whereas, only 38% believed women were smarter, more compassionate, outgoing, and more creative than men.

IN CLOSING:

Women have much to offer in leadership. Yes, women with their known soft skills are usually different than men in their approach, sensitivity, and management of leadership problems and concerns. With such a usually known and

accepted difference between female and male leadership propensities, what a wonderful, researched reason to encourage and incorporate female leaders into an organization's success story.

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