



## Women & Men Can Lead Together

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### SUMMARY

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Women and men have come a very long way in treating each other with respect and dignity and recognizing the contributions that both bring to the workplace. Perhaps we need to become more conscious of the subtle and unintentional behaviors that occur in business meetings, educational institutions and day-to-day interactions. In addition, we need to enhance our skills to consciously and conscientiously harness the skills and abilities that each contributes to an organization's strength.

- √ Be aware and alert.
- √ Non-intentional bias is still alive.
- √ Gender bias affects healthcare for women.
- √ Diversity is good for business.
- √ Men and women make unconscious assumptions.
- √ There are "CURES."



## Women & Men Can Lead Together

***How can men & women collaborate to use all their talents?***

### **AWARE & ALERT**

In the course of one day, I had two revealing experiences. During a luncheon business meeting, I presented a report about a transition team and how it would enable us to retain a new CEO for the long haul. Most of the participants in this meeting were men who ignored my report and read the financial report while I was talking. The light dawned on me! They were more interested in the "bottom line" than in developing enduring relationships. We each had different ways of thinking about success. That evening, I heard a two-hour history lecture which was attended by an even distribution of men and women. The people who asked questions were both genders. The instructor, a 45 year old man, called on approximately ten men, and not one woman to read. I believe that both incidents revealed a subtle lack of awareness and understanding rather than intentional disregard or discrimination.

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## SURPRISES

- **Non-intentional Biases**

Social scientists have studied gender inequity in the American workplace for more than two decades. Across every professional arena, women's achievements and potential are typically viewed through the lens of "gender schema" defined by Dr. Virginia Valian, of the Graduate Center of CUNY, (City University of New York) in her research as "non conscious hypotheses about sex differences." Gender schema "lead men and women alike to overvalue men and undervalue women."

In the corporate, professional (including health care) and academic arenas, these unconscious assumptions result in "advantages men have that are small but numerous, molehills that accumulate over time to produce a mountain of advantage for men," according to Valian.

Steve Konop, a partner with ECOA, Industrial Products, located in Hialeah, Florida says, "I am a chauvinist, I can't help it, but I do work at trying to change. It's not easy to make this change but I think it is necessary. I think there are a lot of men like me, that want to be a certain way but our upbringing doesn't allow us to make that change without a concerted effort on our part. Remember this is a learned process and it mostly comes from our Mothers teaching us that we must be men and take care of women. Even though you know it's wrong, it's really hard to change without making a real effort."

"When a woman tries to be strong and forceful she's characterized negatively. Or when a man tries to be compassionate, it's often viewed as weak," says Kay Snowfleet, a Human Resources Specialist with 34 years working for the Federal government (located in Chicago, Illinois.)

- **Gender Bias Affects Health Care for Women**

Although progress has been made, more strides need to be taken to *systematically and intentionally* address hidden gender biases. In the article, "Gender Bias and Women's Health Issues" Catherine Heath states, "Women's health issues have traditionally been ignored in patriarchal systems such as our own. The old paradigm viewed half the population as primarily emotional beings whose purpose was to bear offspring and serve the male. Although some progress has been attained in this area, many of the issues facing women continue to be marginalized, negated, and outright ignored by the male-dominated medical community."

Heath explains that the under-representation of women in decision-making roles causes the medical community to "continue to mishandle women's health concerns through negligence, sexism, and sheer inertia. (Nechas and Foley, 1994) The National Women's Health Network (NWHN) has asserted that this results from an absence of women in decision-making roles that affect women's health and well-being. Decisions about women and their health are primarily made by men representing hospitals, physicians' specialty groups and pharmaceutical companies. (Nechas and Foley, 1994)"

- **Diversity is good for business**

We tend to trust products and services more when we see similar people making decisions about the products, selling them and delivering services that appeal to us as individuals. It's important to understand the opinions and needs of all the users of your services and products – particularly the women because they influence many financial decisions. In Tom Peters' book, Re-Imagine, he says, "Women lead in purchases. They are primary purchasers of damn near everything. Women are the 'instigators-in-chief' of

- 83% of all consumer products
- 94% of home furnishing purchases
- 92% of vacations
- 91% of new homes
- 80% of do-it-yourself home projects
- 60% of car purchases
- 51% of consumer electronic purchases."

- **Evidence of the Impact of Unconscious Assumptions by Men and Women**

Johnna G. Torson, senior vice president and chief human-resources officer at Pitney Bowes (Stamford Connecticut) says, "Grooming women for top line jobs remains a challenge. 'There is still an invisible reluctance among men to trust women with the lifeblood of the company,' she says, 'and some women themselves have backed away from these jobs, which are tough and risky.'" Reported in The WallStreetJournal, February 3, 2004, "Women Put Noses to the Grindstone, and Miss Opportunities."

Both men and women tend to make the following assumptions that limit women from seeking and attaining leadership roles:

- They have less experience.
- Women seek positions in public relations and human resources – positions that are unrelated to corporate profit centers.
- They lack experience and abilities in financial-related skills.
- They experience a conflict between work and family (women are still primary care givers for children and elderly parents.)
- Some women have "opted-out" – that raises employers' fears/ assumptions that if they hire women with young children (or if they're of child-bearing age) they will opt-out of their jobs.
- Women don't want top jobs while on the contrary, 55% of women in higher rungs do want to be considered for the Chief Executive post.

Other differences between women and men are stated by Carol Hymowitz in the same WSJ article, "When it comes to landing a corner office or executive title, what counts a lot more than conscientiousness is daring, assertiveness and the ability to promote oneself – all qualities men more typically demonstrated."

Salary disparities continue. In the WallStreetJournal article of 1/23/04, for the last quarter '03 the statistics reveal that the median paycheck of men grew 0.3% a year ago much less than that of women at 1.8% a year. Although, at \$704 a week men still earn 15% more than women

Gender equity issues aren't limited to the United States. For example, in Afghanistan, it has been especially frustrating for female delegates who are interested in leadership positions – they aren't making much progress. They're present but get quickly shouted down. The Chairman of the Grand Council said, "In Islam a woman's word is only worth half of that of a man." He took it back later but women still have to tread very carefully. It will be a long haul to equality in Afghanistan.

In the US national media, we continue to see differential responses to men and women as illustrated by the debacle with Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake. "Did Janet Jackson Get a Raw Deal? Why didn't Timberlake Get the Boot: By Elena Maria Lopez, 2004 DiversityInc.com, February 06, 2004. "Petitions are circulating throughout the Internet calling for mass mailings and phone calls to CBS, and asking for equal treatment of Timberlake and Jackson – either for them to both be axed or both attend Sunday night's ceremonies in Los Angeles."

### CURES

Catherine Heath in her article, "Gender Bias and Women's Health Issues," makes a strong case for the critical impact of male dominance in health care. She claims, "Throughout Western history, male dominance has been perpetuated /supported by government agencies, legal systems, and religious doctrines which have their roots in traditional English law. Inequities in health care coexist with the continuation of male dominance, and as women persevere for equal status, they bring with them many issues centered around their health concerns. Some strides have been made in changing the attitudes of many professionals, however, unless equality is established at the cultural level, continued struggles seem inevitable.

Heath emphasizes the need for changes at the cultural level to overcome "biases and prejudices gathered over a lifetime.... Until such time as both women and men are treated with the dignity and respect deserved, these attitudes will continue to divide us along sexual lines and negatively impact health care - especially for women. To this end, the struggle for equality must continue."

Following is a collection of recommendations gathered from a variety of sources:

1. **Include both men AND women in leadership positions.** For example, YWCA Chapters are bringing in men to lead. The Tucson, Arizona and Olympia, Washington chapters are admitting men as directors who are allies with the women and bring additional skills to the decision-making table. This strategy also puts them into compliance with non-discrimination policies of funders.
2. **Identify women and men for leadership development programs.** Recruit women, in particular, for leadership training. Create professional training programs targeted to their needs such as financial management, negotiating skills and public speaking. Identify a "pool" of talented women.
3. **Improve executive recruitment and selection** – provide a level playing field on search committees with a balance of women and men - be wary of unconscious biases regarding

selection decisions based on assumptions about women's abilities as well as balancing work and family demands.

4. **Enhance flexibility and work-life balance.** Efforts are needed to structure work to support employees (male and female) with a full spectrum of responsibilities on the job and at home. Need to generate improvement in organization's overall effectiveness through job shares, flexible work hours, telecommuters. Both men and women need and expect greater work flexibility.

**How can you assess receptiveness to working together?**  
Scroll down to see questions for discussion and an assessment tool.  
AND, go to [www.Diversity-Matters.net](http://www.Diversity-Matters.net), click on *measurement* to learn about  
*The Maturity Model & Discovering Diversity Profile.*

Questions for Group Discussion based on the article

- Q. What are men's and women's unconscious biases regarding women?
- Q. How do you select your personal services, especial medical professionals?
- Q. Would you rather work for a man or woman? Either? Neither? Why?
- Q. What have you observed about the similarities and differences between men and women as leaders?
- Q. What, if any, are the differences between men's and women's skills, abilities and personalities?
- Q. Do you/ we still use terms such as male nurse, female secretary or female president? Why or why not?
- Q. What does your organization or group do to foster professional partnerships between men and women to enhance the success of your organization?
- Q. What is your personal role in fostering professional partnerships between men and women to enhance the success of your organization?

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## ASSESSMENT

Women and men are partners in leadership. What's your score for fostering productive synergetic relationships between men and women? Have you ever wondered what your organization or immediate work group could do to become even more successful? Once you and your associates focus carefully on your interpersonal dynamics, you will find strategies and skills for smoothing out the "bumps" and using everyone's skills to maximum capacity.

Completing the assessment below will only take 3-5 minutes to learn what makes you connect or conflict.

### Directions for Responding to the Partners in Leadership Assessment

1. You may complete the organizational Partners assessment individually OR as a group.
2. Assess the effectiveness of your partnerships on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Insert the score for each part – your organization and yourself. Add the score in each part and then total all scores at the end.
3. For assistance in interpreting and taking action steps, contact [SusanSays@Diversity-Matters.net](mailto:SusanSays@Diversity-Matters.net) or call 614/864-5111.

### Part One: Organizational Assessment

**How effectively does my organization foster professional partnerships between men and women from 1 (low) to 5 (high)?**

(1) \_\_\_ My organization encourages both men and women to become high-performance contributors by making best use of their abilities. (2) \_\_\_ We set expectations that treat both women and men with respect and consideration by avoiding offensive comments and jokes; encouraging each other to speak up and listening with an open mind. (3) \_\_\_ We include men and women at the decision-making table as well as in operations. (4) \_\_\_ During meetings and conversations, we focus on problem-solving and our primary purpose while avoiding personal criticisms or "put-downs." (5) \_\_\_ We have articulated values on fairness, equity and respect for everyone. (6) \_\_\_ We provide training and information about legal requirements. (7) \_\_\_ Our managers and supervisors role-mode appropriate behavior and address disrespectful behaviors.

*Total score for Part One: Organizational Assessment* \_\_\_

### Part Two: Personal Assessment

**How effectively am I fostering professional partnerships between men and women from 1 (low) to 5 (high)?** (1) \_\_\_ I encourage both men and women to become high-performance contributors by making best use of their abilities. (2) \_\_\_ I treat both women and men with respect and consideration by avoiding offensive comments and jokes; encouraging others to speak up and listening with an open mind. (3) \_\_\_ When making decisions, I seek input from both men and women. (4) \_\_\_ During business meetings and discussions I focus the conversation on our primary purpose and avoid personal criticisms or "put-downs." (5) \_\_\_ I have personal values that include

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treating other with fairness, equity and respect. (6) \_\_\_ I have taken the responsibility for obtaining information about legal requirements. (7) \_\_\_ If I observe others being disrespectful, I speak up and suggest alternative forms of communication.

*Total score for Part Two: Personal Assessment* \_\_\_

**Total score for both parts:**

**Organization \_\_\_ + Personal \_\_\_ = \_\_\_**