

## Women and Men Working Together Creates More Effective Leadership

Do you want to sustain outstanding results in business?

**Of course—we all do! However, sustainability is not easy these days.**

On top of trying to do more with fewer people, information overload keeps us attached to our computers and smart phones answering an endless flow of emails, texts, and other information. We must also make time for frequent meetings, conference calls, financial projections, and on and on.

### **We need powerful organizational culture**

A powerful organizational culture in which people are highly energized, aligned, and loyal, can help us achieve the results we want year after year. Specifically, we need to cultivate a group of people aligned with our mission, purpose, and strategy with a strong sense of “ownership” in our work.

### **We need more conversations**

We can only establish and maintain this kind of powerful organizational culture—which is really our organizational spirit—through trusting relationships, which we create with real conversations, not via email, newsletters, or team meetings. Yes, we’re busy, but short conversations are better than no conversations because conversations create relationships, and relationships create teams.

### **We need strong teams for men and women**

To maximize our company’s leadership, we need to think about how we can build the most powerful teams. Let’s think about the natural leadership skills of women and men. We must generalize, as there certainly are many, many exceptions, yet there are some fairly accurate observations we can make about the both genders: For example,

Men tend to be:

Decisive:	“I say let’s go for it, we’ll make it work”
Bold:	“I’ll be the go to guy”
Confident	“I want this assignment and will figure it out”
Risk takers	“Just think of the payoff if we get it right”

Women, on the other hand, tend to:

Ask questions:	“What do you think is best for us?”
Listen to learn:	“I believe I understand why you think that”
Have good instincts:	“My heart and my gut tell me...”
Be risk aware:	“Let’s be sure we weigh our alternatives, pick the best”
Seek conversations:	“I want to know you, who you are”
Value relationships:	“I care about you, and we’ll work well together”
Be inclusive:	“Your opinion is important to me”

### **Women are key to improved leadership**

Recognizing that outstanding financial results and consistently hitting our targets are critical in this crazy competitive world, as is delivering service to the standard of what our clients expect and need from us, we must appreciate how very important are our collective spirit and pride in our company. That is our organizational culture, and it is the fuel that drives our company. As my wise friend, Al Ritter, states in his book, *The 100/0 Principle*, cultures are built on relationships, and relationships are built with conversations!

Now look up above at the natural leadership skills of men and women. Which do you feel have the greater effect on building meaningful relationships, on helping our people feel appreciated, valued, and that they are heard and are important members of our team? That's right, it's the women, and thus we need to make sure that we consider their value in leadership.

In fact, many studies validate that companies with significant female leadership presence have improved financials. Here at Common Sense Leadership, we have an extremely bright intern who is currently conducting research around companies with a proportionate share of women in key leadership roles, e.g. from a third to two thirds, and the very positive effect the presence of those women have on their financial results.

### **Shared leadership requires creativity and flexibility**

However, we also know that creating shared leadership in organizations is easier said than done, as often women take time off from their careers, for example, for child raising responsibilities, (as men sometimes do, but not nearly as frequently as women.) Offering a flexible work environment that can make room for female leaders to leave and then return to the workforce is complicated, yet, where there is a will, there is a way, especially with the available technology today. Women who want to stay engaged can, and organizations can arrange for team work-sharing. My friend, Lisa Loehr, an insightful and caring HR consultant, points out that even starting with baby steps, excuse the pun, is appreciated and has a positive impact.

By the way, offering flexibility in our work environment and being focused on results, not hours, will help improve our financial results by creating pathways to leadership for women and, thus, giving our people the benefit of women's critically important leadership competencies, and it will also position us as progressive. That is vitally important to the new generation of workers, the Millennials. We can be progressive and flexible and still require accountability, and we encourage business leadership to address this now, as the demand is right around the corner.

Young men are used to working with women as equals. Today's college graduation population is 60% female, and our business schools are nearly 40% female. And guess what? Women are getting higher grades. In our personal experience, Amy as a graduate of Georgetown's Masters in Executive Leadership and John as a graduate of Georgetown's Leadership Coaching program and in his work with the business school and in the business world, is that women come together to learn and grow their competencies, are eager to share with one another, to become their best selves so they may help their companies succeed as well as be successful themselves.

Leadership is all about helping people do the right things well, helping others succeed. What is really needed in our companies today is to provide the full array of leadership skills and competencies to our people—not just those primarily offered by men. Is it not important to genuinely care about how our people feel and think, and to listen, and to show our appreciation? Yes it is!

**Men can be leaders and women can be leaders—and together they can offer their companies even more highly effective leadership.**

### **About The Authors**



Amy Gregg is a Senior Associate with Langley Innovations. She is an exceptional development officer, dedicated to the success of her clients, which are important not-for-profit organizations. As a leading innovator in the design and implementation of successful fundraising initiatives for educational institutions as well as national and international nonprofits, she helped organizations of all sizes from all sectors establish relationships and build a foundation for long-term sustainable growth.



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