

Be Your Best Self

I have just completed a book about the urgent need for male executives in Corporate America to share leadership with women. Women are driving profits and motivating our teams to strive for continuous improvement. Our people and our companies deserve the very best leadership that combines the strengths of men and women.

Men and women have different leadership strengths.

Women's strengths include:

- Engaging conversations
- Maintaining meaningful relationships
- Readiness to ask questions
- Openness to opinions, advice and help from others
- Listening to understand and learn
- Recognition of people's strengths over weaknesses
- Inclusiveness in decision making when appropriate

Men's strengths include:

- Confidence
- Decisiveness
- Risk taking
- Drive for results
- Boldness

In order to maximize the financial success and ongoing vitality of our companies we must utilize all of these leadership competencies, with men learning from women and women learning from men.

We can only create winning organizational cultures when women are involved in key positions.

We need women and men in leadership teams developing winning organizational cultures where people are aligned, loyal, share a passion for their work, help and encourage colleagues, and have great respect for their senior leaders. This kind of organization culture is too rare. Just about every company's culture can be improved, and the specific strengths that women bring to the table are much more powerful in improving company culture than those more typical of men.

Winning culture comes from internal relationships founded on trust and feelings of being appreciated, valued, heard, and helped to succeed. These qualities come more naturally from women.

Women do not need to act like men.

We've all heard stories about women in the past who have had to fight against the odds to succeed to high-level positions, and, as a result, have become "hardened." These stories likely hold some truth because of the limited number of leadership positions available to women and the tenacity required to obtain them. Times are changing. The male executives I work with tell me that the strongest female leaders show their leadership naturally, often with quiet confidence.

I have known many women who are very intelligent, dedicated to their companies, committed to their clients and to meeting and exceeding financial goals who, at the same time, use their soft skills to help people feel appreciated and important. In fact, the single best leaders I have ever known are both women — Christine LaSala in business and Julie Foudy in sports.

Further, Norean Sharpe, Dean of the undergraduate program of Georgetown's McDonough School of Business, says that women are more apt to say thank you to their colleagues, to show appreciation. That is huge.

Finally, Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and hero to businesswomen across the country, will share her hopes and fears, that her work is professional and personal at the same time, and her conclusion that this is natural and fine. Men can learn from Sandberg.

So, my message to women — we need you, and we need you to use your natural leadership competencies.

My message to men — we need you to continue to lead boldly: share leadership with women!

About The Author



John Keyser is the founder and principal of Common Sense Leadership, www.commonsenseleadership.com. He works with executives helping them develop organizational cultures that will produce outstanding financial results year after year, and a striving for continuous improvement, theirs and their team's. His contact information is john@johnkeysercoach.com and 202-236-2800.