

LEAD TOGETHER AND LEAD ToGetHer!



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Our practice of leadership is at a tipping point. Perceptions of leadership are tired, dated and/or confused, so we are in need of new conversations around gender and leadership. While advocating a recalibrated approach, Dr Jackie Freiberg drives home the need to get beyond the 'he or she' paradigm.

When it comes to leadership, the future is not out there, it is here! So our approach to preparing men and women for leadership must change. Both men and women need to re-examine their perspective on gender dynamics and leadership. Why is this so important?

Women are 51% of the population. Yet, they presently hold only 4.0% (20) of the CEO positions at S&P 500 companies.* And of the 5,415 board seats on America's largest corporations, only 20% (1,057) are currently held by women. If your company is not equal, or close to equal, female led, you are missing the boat, and if you do not figure this out, your business is doomed.

I am confident in saying businesses that ignore, misunderstand, misrepresent, or undervalue her are at great risk.

So, if you—hire women, market to women, sell to women, work with women, live with women and/or love women, it is time to understand her, value her, and lead with her.

While the media tends to highlight only women in prestigious positions, there are many great examples of female leadership in our communities at large. Consider just a few examples such as Mother Teresa, Malala Yousafzai, Melinda Gates, and Rosa Parks—all are examples of women who have witnessed a problem, created a disruption, and inspired a movement toward transformation and positive change. Everyday, women are taking risks, balancing work and home, educating themselves, practicing leadership, enhancing the lives of others, and thriving.

Before looking ahead, a glance back reminds us of limited yet no longer relevant models. In business and politics, we started out 'he for he', it was a competitive, survival of the fittest model, onward to 'she for she', the feminist movement, and most recently 'he for she', based on the United Nations 'He for She Campaign', a solidarity movement for gender equality.

Is 'he for she' really where 'we' should be headed? Does not 'he for she' still has an air of inequality attached to it? Although I applaud the overall mission of the UN's solidarity movement, may I suggest a more forward thinking vision: what if we blaze ahead in the spirit of 'we for we'?

Men and women, we are not called to be subservient, superior, or to compete. We are called to complement, strengthen, and complete one another.

I suggest we lead collectively, collaboratively, 'together' for a better future in boardrooms, executive suites, in government, at home, and in our communities. I suggest we think, act, and lead by embracing and role modeling a 'we for we' approach to gender equality in life and at work. 'We for we' means we lead together, we collaborate, lock arms, unify, support, and 'gain' strength in our differences.

It is time to put to rest the stereotype that women are soft-hearted and gentler leaders—some are and some are not! Leadership is not only about style. Today, leadership does not mean you have 'all' the answers or 'the' right style. Leadership today is about being a social architect of the work environment, to gain great ideas, and draw the best out of everyone. Leadership is about creating the best place, where the best people can do their best work to make the world better. Leadership is about creating a 'we for we' culture at home and at work.

'We for we' is timely and timeless. As multidimensional people who live real, full lives that do not always go according to plan, the question becomes how are we leading and structuring our organizations to handle life unscripted? Life happens, people get sick, injuries take us out, children and aging parents require attention, etc., you name it, life happens. And life unscripted does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, title, or position. Both he and she, in business and in life, must deal with the scripts we are dealt. Are our leaders creating corporate cultures that empower men and women from the boardroom to the backroom, to handle life when it blindsides us, or when it redirects or changes course?

One of the executive teams I have been working with for four years on culture transformation had three members of their executive team experience unexpected family emergencies that disrupted both life and work within a one-week period. An aging father passed away after a long string of medical issues, an adult son went in



for emergency surgery, and an aging mother went in for a biopsy. Or consider this, when a colleague is expecting a new child, is there a stigma attached to an extended paternity leave, yet an extended maternity leave is bit more acceptable? When people leave midday to attend an afternoon athletic event for a child, is that frowned upon even though it is likely that person will spend an evening online catching up and even getting ahead? Does your corporate culture and do your leaders give you the freedom to handle a multidimensional life, life redirected, or life unplanned? Or is there a stigma attached to how long you are out dealing with life?

On the bright side, a 'we for we' culture has your blindside? A 'we for we' culture is not about growing percentages for percentages sake. A 'we for we' culture is about hiring the right people (he and she) who are forward thinking in their vision of creating a supportive culture filled with leaders who are engaging in leadership

to strengthen, complement, and complete, not to criticize, control, and compete.

What is your business doing to create a We for We culture that earns her talent, time, attention, money, and loyalty?

Beyond creating a 'we for we' company culture that attracts her as a high potential leader, are you attracting her as a loyal brand advocate? If not, it is time. Not only is she 51% of the population, she is worth trillions of untapped dollars. She is... global, multidimensional, multigenerational, business savvy, CAUSE driven, wired and inheriting, investing, and buying... like crazy.

She represents a \$20 trillion global economy, and she will be the beneficiary of 70% of inherited wealth over the next two generations in the US. As an economy, she is larger than China and India combined. She controls close to 90% of US spending and 65% of global spending, her influence is deep and broad.

In the past, it may have been 'his' money she was 'influencing,' but not any more. Today, she controls 'their' money. And more so than ever, 'her' own money as well.

Again, she, like he, is multidimensional, multigenerational, and multicultural. Just because you think you understand her in one dimension does not mean you can generalize how to gain her loyalty in all other dimensions. Because she influences trillions of dollars, it is also important to realize that in earning her favor, she can be a powerful brand ambassador and customer advocate. It used to be said that 'the customer is king'; not so any more, today the customer is 'queen'.

Take a look at her spending power, this list shows the breadth and depth of her purchasing power, even in

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categories traditionally considered his space. Today, she controls the majority of the spending and purchasing in each of these categories:

- 93% food
- 91% home
- 65% new cars
- 66% electronics
- 80% healthcare choices
- 91% vacations
- 93% OTC pharmacy
- 89% financial services

Think about the implications of her influence beyond the home purchase. She also controls more than 90% of the purchasing decisions regarding what goes into the homes, she chooses and she buys! And even in categories where you would think men have control, such as sports or athletic apparel, she actually controls 80% of those purchases as well. Even professional fan bases are slightly less than 50% women. So, it is safe to say she influences and controls upwards of 40-45% for all athletic and sports purchases, if not more, based on her passion for health and wellness. She also controls 60% spending on men's clothing too. And let us be crystal clear: she does not just buy stuff; she owns the purchasing power of family experiences (vacations) and services (healthcare and financial) as well.

"If you're marketing and service strategies lean into HIM more heavily than HER, you are making a huge mistake!"

Yet, many marketing, advertising, and sales strategies make traditional mistakes, and in doing so, prove there is

an overall misunderstanding of her purchasing power. Is your business guilty of any of these common mistakes? Do you... ignore her and/or play to her partner, play into dated stereotypes, play the pink card, objectify and sexualize her, misunderstand the values and expectations she brings to the cash register, ignore that she has multigenerational differences and preferences, if so, she will write you off and share her money and loyalty elsewhere.

All the more reason to create a 'we for we' culture that supports real life, and paves the way for growing a talented and gender-rich leadership environment for he and she to unify and collaborate. So what will it take to be more forward thinking and she minded in your sales and marketing efforts? What do you need to know?

In addition to being a valuable hire, and in consideration of all the other responsibilities she has, it is important to realize she is the CHO, Chief Household Officer. As the CHO, she will frequent businesses that cater to helping her help the world, and she will do business with places that respect her time and offer greater convenience. And keep in mind that she is online and wired. Whether a boomer, gen X, or millennial, she will lead with intensity and passion, work harder, and pay more for a cause.

She is highly conscious, environmentally and socially, and she is business savvy. Meaning, she will spend more on products/services that 'give back' to a cause she believes in, or a cause that benefits children, animals, wellness, environment, education, breast cancer, etc. She is most drawn to companies that are mission driven—companies that make a difference while making a profit.

It is time to **reframe** stigmas, tired **stereotypes**, and **create** more 'we for we' gender **equality** in our **organizations** and at home.

If your business is built around a cause, you are golden. Show her the environmental value, show her the safety factor, show her how she can help make something in the world or her world better, and she will lead with intensity and passion, work harder, and buy more.

She is online, wired, and potentially dangerous. She has 'add,' which means she is cunningly and proudly 'addicted to digital devices'. She is connected! She is online more than he is, and she not only owns the blogosphere, she runs it. She asks, shops, 'and' she tells online. Her blogs, tweets, posts, likes, pins, links, and other online connections can be your 'blessing' or your 'blood bath'.

In the US, the boomers were fond of saying, "what happens in Las Vegas stays in Vegas!" Well, welcome to a new breed of wired and powerful leaders and consumers. Now it is more appropriate to say, "what happens in Vegas lands and stays on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest!"

Again, what are you doing to create a We for We culture that paves the way for he and she to strengthen, complement, and complete? To invest their talents and skills collectively to lead and live multidimensional lives now and well into the future?

What stigmas are prevalent and deeply rooted in your organizational culture? What stigmas need to be busted or debunked? Can you become a stigma buster? Think about it, what stigma is attached to flextime, maternity, paternity, job share, going part time? Are these options even offered in your company?

What stigmas are attached to working women who have children? Do they become working moms? What do we call working men who have children? Do they become

working dads? No, and why not? It is just not done. What do we ask women who are expecting? "So how will you manage? Are you returning to work?"

What do we ask men who are expecting? "Boy or girl?" Why do not we ask how they will manage, and if they are returning? What stigmas are pervasive and what questions need to change?

When it comes to marketing and sales, what tired marketing and sales strategies need to be refreshed and updated? Are you leaning on dated stereotypes? How can you better represent, attract, and gain her loyalty, and become her purchase choice?

Is your business cause or mission driven? How can you attract her passion and intensity through a noble worthy cause?

Do not pitch her, enrich her! Are you online, feeding her information that informs, educates, and enriches her?

What if we reframe the reality of life and work, and accept that we are all multidimensional people with full lives. What if we make life unscripted 'our' issue, not a he or she issue? How can we create a 'we for we' culture in which we (men and women) support each other to accelerate our collective aspirations to lead together? And what if we work collaboratively to debunk stigmas that hold us all back? It is time to reframe stigmas, tired stereotypes, and create more 'we for we' gender equality in our organizations and at home.

First step, realize stigmas, stereotypes, and generalizations exist, and are holding us all back.

Next step, lock arms, collaborate, complete, complement, and 'together' lead the change we want to affect in our organization and homes. ■

*S&P list of companies published by Dow Jones, October 2015