

WAYS WOMEN LEAD

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“Women managers are succeeding today, but they are not adopting the command-and-control style of leadership traditionally practiced by men. Instead, they are drawing on the skills and attitudes they have developed from their experience as women.”

Judy Rosener

Abstract

Women managers who have broken the glass ceiling in medium-sized, nontraditional organizations have proven that effective leaders don't come from one mold. They have demonstrated that using the command-and-control style of managing others, a style generally associated with men in large, traditional organizations, is not the only way to succeed.

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The role of women worldwide is undergoing a dramatic change. Women today share the podium with men in almost all the fields, be it in kitchen or in defence. Workingwomen are no longer a rarity and are now accepted as an integral part of the working force. Indian organization has experienced a steady increase in the number of women employees and this pattern is bound to continue in the future as well. Women recently began to join the ranks of managers in large number

The first female executives, because they were breaking new ground, adhered to many of the “rules of conduct” that spelled success for men. Now a second wave of women is making its way into top management, not by adopting the style and habits that have proved succesful for men but by drawing on the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women.

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In a survey sponsored by the International Women's Forum⁸⁶, I found a number of unexpected similarities between men and women leaders along with some important differences. Among these similarities are characteristics related to money and children. I found that men and women respondents earned the same amount of money. This finding is contrary to most studies, which find a considerable wage gap between men and women, even at the executive level. Both married men and women experience moderate levels of conflict between work and family domains.

But the similarities end when men and women describe their leadership performance and how they usually influence those with whom they work. The men are more likely to use power that comes from their organizational position and formal authority. The women respondents, on the other hand, described themselves in ways that characterize "transformational" leadership- getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal.

The Stereotype of Female Managers

The existence of actual differences between male and female managers has been challenged for some time in the research literature, but strongly held stereotypes are resistant to change. Just how are female managers regarded differently than their male counterparts? In a study by Heilman et al. (1989), researchers asked male managers to characterize both male and female managers. The results indicated a tendency to describe female managers as less self-confident, less emotionally stable, less analytical, less consistent, and having poorer leadership abilities than male managers. Beliefs of this sort contribute to a variety of assumptions about female managers, which in turn form the basis for negative stereotypes about them. Some assumptions typical of a negative stereotype are:

- * Women tend to place family demands above work considerations. They have children to care for; thus, they lose time for, and interest in, their jobs.

- * Women work for supplemental income; as a result, they lack the necessary drive to succeed in business.

- * Women take negative feedback personally rather than professionally. They may run from the room in tears if criticized.

- * Women are unsuitable for top management positions because they are too emotional and lack aggressiveness.

To some extent, these assumptions may be true for many women in the work force. However, it is questionable whether this negative stereotype accurately

⁸⁶ The International Women Forum was founded in 1982 to give prominent women leaders in diverse professions around the world a way to share their knowledge with each other and with their communities and countries.

describes women who have made the decision to pursue a managerial career. For example, the assumption of family priorities for female executives simply does not apply to many of these women. In a survey of the nation's highest ranked female executives (Baum 1987), nearly half had never married or were divorced, and of those who were married, almost one-third did not have children. Granted, some well-qualified professionals who are mothers may not want the pressure of corporate jobs, but this preference is not true of all or even most female professionals.

The Impact of Stereotypes

Negative stereotypes about women as managers lead to a form of discrimination that is subtle and thus hard to define. Discrimination is seen by many as the "simple-minded sexism of dirty jokes and references to 'girls'," born of hatred and ill will (Fraker 1984). This form of discrimination is blatant and easy to define, and most managers can honestly say they do not discriminate when it is defined in this fashion. However, discrimination also occurs simply by treating women differently from men. People who perceive female managers as different from males often do not realize that they are guilty of discrimination. Instead, differential treatment is seen as logical and rational by those who hold negative stereotypes about women managers.

Subtle discrimination occurs, for example, when a decision is made to offer an important assignment to a man rather than to a woman, based on the assumption that women are not free to take on time-consuming tasks because of family commitments. A related example was provided in a study conducted by Wentling (1992), in which one woman was denied promotion in spite of excellent performance evaluations because her boss felt she would not be with the company very long; he assumed she would probably leave the company to have children. Beliefs about degree of fit also form the basis for subtle discrimination. Women may be excluded from senior management positions because of perceptions that they will somehow change the management process by virtue of their gender. Consider the experience of Barbara Roberts as reported in the Wall Street Journal (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986): In the five years Ms. Roberts spent at Dean Witter, she advanced from vice president and coordinator of research services to senior vice president and a member of the securities firm's board Then the annual promotions stopped. Instead of being considered for what seemed like the next logical post-executive vice president and director for marketing or research--Ms. Roberts was offered posts she judged to be lateral moves. The explanations she got often sounded blatantly sexist, she says. One man above her in the hierarchy told her "it was his problem, but he couldn't make serious decisions if a woman was in the room."

Across time women have walked the path of traditions. However, in walking these paths, they have made slow but steady departures. As and when the opportunities have come their way and as and when there are challenges thrown their way women, men and organizations have believed that women will not respond. Many women have surprised the world by taking those challenges and working against the odds. In times of crises and in times of immense emotional stress women have risen to the call to take charge of their families, home and destined to give shape to it and move forward. Entering the organizations has been a formidable challenge. Moving from infrastructural roles of the sixties and rising to managerial roles and responsibilities which is almost a Herculean task, and rising into senior management position is an uphill struggle. For women to occupy the position of CEO's in the present scenario, which was a rarity and almost impossibility, today is a reality.

External environment

The external environment has created the universalisation of education and the government has formulated policies to encourage the girl child for higher education. The educational institutions facilitated women to discover their competencies and achieve and succeed.

The external environment provides women the awareness and opportunities of career and occupation. Men simultaneously compete for these opportunities. In a fair for all arenas of job markets, women bring to the organization their education, their achievements and competence their determination and resilience. With this they also bring their doubts, emotional vulnerabilities and fragilities, which become the hallmark for women. Caught between competence and doubts, achievements and roadblocks of guilt and success and anxieties, women carry a unique juxtaposition of determination and ambivalence about breaking new paths and taking new roles.

Internal environment

The internal environment of women consists of parental home and their own home, the society, neighborhood and community as well as the internal dynamics of the work place.

Having entered the organization and having successfully competed with the male world, women encounter the labels of preferred treatment, having a godfather or using femininity as a means of entry. Having entered the organization in managerial positions with responsibility and authority, there are allegations of women entering the position through quota system and not merit. Women respond to these with some defiance, some defensiveness and some selfprotection only to be labeled as insecured, unprofessional. By and large, the women are undervalued

by the system. If her capabilities and competencies are accepted, respected and translated into operational roles, she creates anxieties, hostilities and aggression in others⁸⁷.

Similarly, in the home setting women are propelled to be educated, pulled to stay at home, pushed to take jobs to enhance the quality of life and condemned and accused for not playing their social roles. At another level, there is recognition of their achievements, supported to excel and encouraged to be professionals.

Women themselves accept that they have other meanings in life besides only the social roles and they have an internal evocation to enlarge their life space through commitment to growth.

Put together, the external and internal environment create opportunities and challenges as well as roadblocks to growth. These are present in varied intensities and it is up to the women to carve out a road map and niche for themselves.

Major roadblocks for women who aspire to achieve and succeed in organizations are the presence of social and role of constraints imposed upon them by society, the family and women themselves. These constraints, are referred as myths fostered and sustained with preconceived ideas and unsupported evidence, which generate guilt in women.

Another spectrum of women not gaining the managerial position is because of three categories of behavior habits and styles of operating

- ✚ Women managers are not given high risk, high profile assignment necessary for promotions, because on the way up the ladder they are cautious and avoid taking risks. Women are more cautious and more likely than men to reflect rather than to act.

- ✚ Women concern for others and sense of responsibilities for the team can make them too detail oriented 'moving them into a rescuing and mothering mode and not leaving time for managing the broader challenges.

- ✚ Women who had to be tough and even righteous about their agendas in mid-level positions find these characteristics are hard to shake when they reach to the top level. They become defensive about challenges to their ideas or agendas and too insecure to think and interact with creative flexibility.

Women manager needs to establish their career goals and acquire determination to overcome the obstacles that exist to keep women from

accomplishing their goals. However, in order to overcome such insurmountable obstacle, women need to seek support. Success today requires organizations to best utilize the talent available to them irrespective of the gender. To do these, barriers to upward mobility for women needs to be removed. Organizations need to redefine and restructure the organization systems to respond to the dilemmas faced by women managers. Organization has recognized

⁸⁷ Indira J Parkikh, "*Women Managers From Myths To Reality*", Indian Institute of Management, 2003

that female executives offer a wealth of talent. Often women become '*Super Woman*' to respond to being equal. The striking part of women managers is that they are very good at juggling around the tasks. One of the strongest skills is their ability at multi-tasking. Also women managers bring with them a different style and different skills. Research also confirms that women managers see things laterally, intuitively and differently. They can handle more contradictions, can tolerate more and deliver much more than men.

The belief that women managers are uncertain of themselves, look for constant

reassurance and tend to be aggressive are stereotyped responses which feed and multiply on themselves. The reality is that women in general and women managers in particular have a different value system, which they bring to the organization.

Women managers and women in leadership roles are today a reality. The momentum will continue and the chains will break and the shackles will fall. The glass ceiling will shatter and the women will bring a tempering of the masculine organization structure with gentler and softer human processes⁸⁸

Time will come to pass when women will bring creativity and innovativeness and men will join to make it a reality. It is the rhythm of the two polarities that a new order organization would be created. Work will pull the best resource and not the gender specific response or gender stereotypical response.

Situation of women managers in Europe

To understand what the labyrinth involves for working women in Europe, the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey 2005 (4th EWCS) provides empirical evidence. This survey gives a wealth of information on the conditions of work and employment in 31 European countries. The EWCS is based in a multi-stage stratified random sample, representative of the EU working population (Eurofound, 2007). For the purposes of this report, we will use a subsample including only employees working in establishments with at least two employees and we limit the description to workers in EU27 countries; this accounts for more than 21,200 cases.

The data on female managers in the European countries can be looked at from two perspectives. On the one hand, we will describe those women who state that they have a supervisory position, while on the other hand, we will also look at it from the other angle, using information on the employees who say they have a female boss. The 4th EWCS allows this two-pronged approach, since the

⁸⁸ Voros, Sharon; Woman Managers must meet high expectation; Career Journal from the Wall Street Journal; 2003.

respondents are asked both if they are in a supervisory position and if they have a female or male boss.

The two approaches complement each other, as the descriptive analysis of women managers and subordinates of female bosses interact with each other. The relationship also reflects the gendered division of labour in the European Union.

Just to give one example, women managers tend to work in health and education sectors and their subordinates tend to be women. To obtain the full picture, we will first describe female managers themselves and then turn our attention to the characteristics of the subordinates of female bosses, i.e. those that indicate in the survey that 'their immediate boss' is a woman.

Female managers

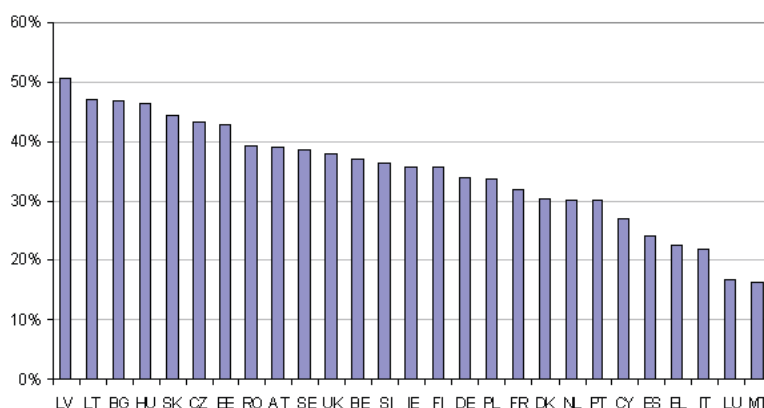
In Europe, 33% of managers were women in 2005. The figure describes the proportion of women among the employees who state that they have people working directly under their supervision. Numbers drawn from the survey are in line with the statistics provided by the ILO (2004) stating that in the period 2000 to 2002, the proportion of women in managerial jobs was 20% to 40% in 48 countries.

Still, the numbers are worth looking at in more detail, since there are very large differences in the incidence of women managers according to country (Figure 1). In Latvia, gender equality, as measured by the number of female bosses, seems to have been reached, as the proportion of women managers is 51%. Other Eastern European countries are also close to achieving gender equality in respect of numbers of women managers, with the proportions above 40% in most of the Eastern European countries.

As for Romania, it is interesting to notice that one of the most important businessmen, Ion Tiriac, has chosen Anca Ioan last year, to run his businesses which exceed 1 billion Euros yearly. Ted Lattimore, ex COO of Connex, who was taken by Vodafone in 2006, declared when he took his position in 2000, that he was surprised by the large number of women working for Connex, many of them in higher positions. Not as irony, he was replaced in 2005, by a Romanian woman, Liliana Simion.

In Continental Europe and Scandinavia, the proportions of women managers are close to the EU average, with percentages around 30% to 40%. In Southern Europe, the share of female bosses is modest. For example, in Malta, only 16% of bosses are women. Luxembourg has a place among the Southern European countries as regards the proportion of female managers, where only 17% of bosses are women.

Figure 1: *Women managers by country*

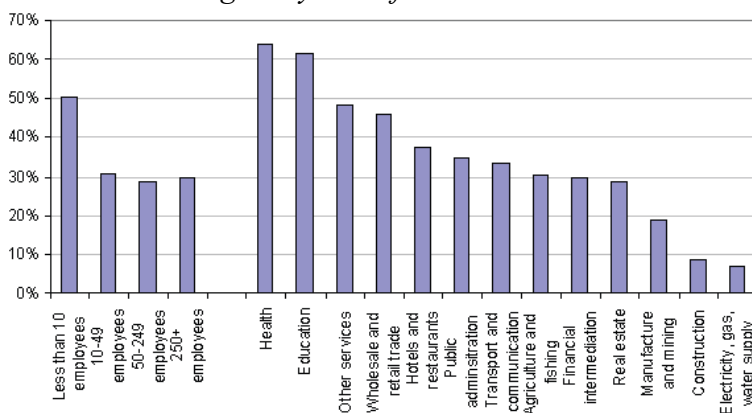


Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

As was suggested before, women managers are concentrated in certain types of establishments and sectors, thereby highlighting the gendered division of labour (Figure 2). In micro enterprises, where the number of employees is fewer than 10, the share of male and female managers is equal: half of the managers in micro enterprises are women. However, in bigger establishments, the share of women in supervisory roles is around 30%.

Gender segregation in the labour market is quite clear as far as managerial positions are concerned. Women managers are overrepresented in the health and education sectors, where the shares of women top are over 60%. Female managers are also often found in other services and wholesale and retail trade sectors, as over 40% of managers working there are women. Unsurprisingly, women managers are only rarely found in traditionally male work environments such as manufacture and mining, construction and electricity, gas and water supply sectors.

Figure 2: *Women managers by size of establishment and sector*

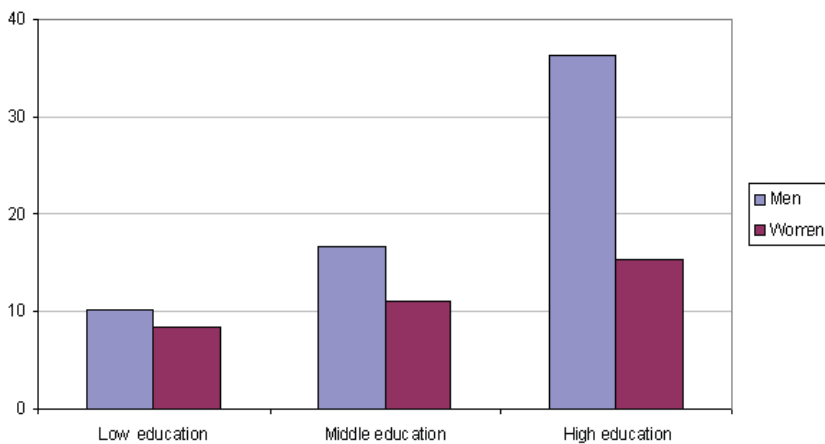


Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

When describing the incidence of female managers, it is also important to pose the question of how men and women become managers. Do they have different kinds of career paths, as the literature suggests, and if they do, where do the differences lie? The answers to these questions shed some light on the process of achieving gender equality.

The shares of employees in managerial positions increase with education for both men and women. However, the returns of a higher education are greater for men than for women as far as attaining managerial positions is concerned (Figure 3). Some 36% of highly educated men work as managers, whereas the proportion of highly educated women having a managerial position is more than two times smaller, at only 15%.

Figure 3: *Share of male and female managers by level of education (%)*



Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

As it usually takes time to advance in a career, to attain a high level of education as well as to reach a managerial position, it is not surprising that less than 10% of 15–29-year-old employees are managers. Within the cohort of 30–49-year-olds, the share of managers increases significantly for men but not for women: 23% of men in this age group work as managers, compared to 13% of women.

There are still considerably fewer women than men in managerial positions in Europe, even if the findings show that the gender ‘management gap’ is closing at a steady (and slow) pace. Two other significant issues we have identified in this report are a high degree of occupational segregation of female bosses (as much as for female employment in general) and the fact that women in managerial positions tend to be in lower hierarchical levels than men.

Many of the structural barriers women might face on their way to top-level positions have been removed, for example by introducing policies that support

gender equality and combat discriminatory practices. This has shifted the focus onto cultural barriers. The most recent literature discussing male and female leaders pays attention to subjective aspects such as stereotypes and gender roles. In this report, we have tried to find evidence of systematic differences in leadership styles between men and women by looking at the impact these styles would have on psychosocial conditions at the workplace as reported by subordinates of male and female bosses.

The analysis has shown that there are no significant differences between male and female bosses for most areas of human relations at the workplace that we have covered (communication with and support from superiors, autonomy at work,

work intensity). It seems that it is usually the subordinate's gender that makes a difference, rather than the boss's gender, for example, with female workers declaring less communication with the boss and less autonomy at work compared to male workers. The only clear indication that male and female managers might create different working conditions was found at the level of the psychological work environment. The results point out that subordinates of female bosses report slightly higher levels of bullying and harassment and slightly lower levels of job satisfaction than those who are supervised by a man. Not finding a correlation can prove that a causal relation does not exist (it is very unlikely that we would have missed it), but finding a correlation does not prove that a causal relation exists, as there may be other unobserved factors explaining the correlation. This is what happens with the interesting, but difficult to explain, relationship found between the boss's gender and bullying and harassment and satisfaction with working conditions. Furthermore, this relationship is not consistent in all the country clusters, which suggests that there are probably some culturally determined factors behind it. This is definitely an issue that requires further research, probably with a methodology that is more sensitive to the cultural construction of gender and managerial models. With the methods used here, we can only point to some potential explanations to this (still to be consistently proven) finding.

We controlled for occupation and sector in the workplace, which reduces some of the variability resulting from the segregation by gender in the labour market. But we did not control by the supervisory level of male and female bosses, which, as we argued earlier, are quite different. Female bosses are more often in low levels of hierarchy, and this may imply that in their positions, the levels of bullying and harassment may be higher, or that they may have less authority to intervene in cases of bullying (see Hurley and Riso, 2007)

In addition, the psychological work environment may suffer if the manager is not perceived as suitable for her position. This might happen when gender and manager roles are not perceived as fitting, which according to the literature is more likely to happen for women managers (as a result of the double bind). Researchers who have studied bullying and harassment at the workplace suggest

that the manager has a significant impact on the psychological working environment and that bullying often arises in conflict situations and in cases of role conflict and ambiguity (e.g. Ayoko et al., 2003; Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2007)⁸⁹.

Overall, analysis suggests that it is not gender that makes men or women better suited for managerial positions, but rather, subtle conflicts and interactions between stereotypes of men, women and managers make it either easier or more difficult to act successfully as a manager. These stereotypes are culturally constructed and changeable. As it is shown, gender equality in working life has not been reached yet. In Europe, many of the concrete obstacles for women to advance in their career have been successfully removed. A necessary further step is to also acknowledge the possible gender bias when addressing and fulfilling managerial positions, and even when working for a female boss.

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