

Do Women Change Cultures?

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Questions

- Does presence of women in executive positions have any impact?
- Are there changes to cultures when women are in executive positions?

A Warning:

- Expectations of how women and men managed were understood in deeply gendered ways by both men and women
- Many saw all women as ‘innately’ more caring, cooperative, nurturing and so on.
- In fact because many women do have different life experiences, education, expectations to men, they MAY have alternative views about their work and how best to accomplish their goals in life.

Stereotypes of Male Management Styles

- Traditional management is defined as male
- Seen as hierarchical, “decisions from on high”.
- Working long hours.
- Competitive and aggressive.
- Limited emotional engagement with staff.

Stereotypes of Female Management Styles

- Collaborative.
- Consultative.
- Working towards consensus.
- Discouraging competitive behaviours.
- Creating friendly and co-operative working environment.
- Developing and nurturing staff.
- 'Emotional intelligence'.

Collaboration

- Women and men saw women as collaborative, “breaking down silos”.
- Decisions made with team “as a cabinet”.
- Success and praise were shared – but question-mark about failure.
- Women seen as having less ego to preserve, hence able to work in teams.

Consultation

- Female executives committed to getting views from a number of people before making final decisions
- Able to work in areas where communities are brought in to give opinions.
- Prepared to listen before putting forward own opinion.

Consensus

- Women were seen as committed to getting results.
- Prepared to compromise: “let’s try to work it out”.
- Not as ready to blame others or to make stands on points of principle.

Discouraging Competitive Behaviours

- Women talked about ethos of cooperation and politeness – “we don’t behave like that here”.
- Women seen as less competitive, with “less testosterone”.
- Seeking the ‘Queen Bees’: at other times or in other organisations.

Friendly & Cooperative Environment

- Women seen as concerned with establishing friendly relations; importance of welcome to organisation; women appreciated “eating” cultures – open social occasions for staff.
- Women open, approachable, able to take criticism, with a sense of humour.
- Women emphasised transparency.
- Stereotypes apply – men criticised for focus on sport, yet they criticised women for harping on “clothes”, “pearls”.

Developing & Nurturing Staff

Women

- Committed to staff development – yet men also see importance of this.
- Value mentoring and networking.
- Show staff are valued.
- Notice “people issues”.

BUT danger of emotional over-commitment to staff or issues.

Changes in Cultures?

- Women are seen by both men and women to have created culture-change.
- Most likely if they are in positions of power and in a 'critical mass'.

Cultures Converging

- Many men interviewed appreciated cultures that were more collaborative, client-focused, consultative.
- Types of changes described are those advocated by contemporary management theorists.
- Have women executives changed cultures, or been beneficiaries of current changes in cultures?

Challenges to creating culture change

- Pressures on organisations – financial, management.
- Pressures of work – globalisation, long hours, technology.
- Difficulties of getting balance between work/personal life – flexibility still in the future.
- 2 organisations involved had faced financial crises – and women executives were cut.