

Chapter 14

Women's Leadership and Workplace Culture

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ABSTRACT

From business boardrooms to senate chambers, universities to the courts, philanthropic groups to religious institutes, men are far more likely than women to be leaders. Society has determined that only men make good leaders, and this notion has denied easy access for women seeking leadership roles as they do not fit in the norm. Women with leadership aspirations continue to struggle for leadership positions in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sector however, the journey is never easy. Such bias against women is detrimental to the survival of all kinds of organisations in the growing digital era. For this reason, the chapter will specifically focus on women leadership and the challenges they face due to masculine workplace culture. It will also highlight the necessity of hiring women as leaders in the growing digital world. Recommendations will be stated that can assist the organisations in redesigning their workplace culture to support the initiative of providing opportunities to women and take up leadership positions for the future survival of organisations.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is about more than just technology and business concepts. Aside from technological challenges, there are other impediments along its path, the most significant of which is leadership and workplace culture. Workplace culture is equally important in successfully moving a company into the digital transformation; therefore, the success of a digital transformation is dependent on a thorough knowledge of the complexities of culture. To lead the change in the business environment of digitalization, a distinct leadership style than the popular leadership styles of yesterday is required, such transformational leader-

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ship qualities have been found to be feminine. Workplace culture dominated by men, require women to “manage their own leadership choices (e.g., collaboration) within a world of hierarchical and top-down organisations and structures” (Kezar 2014, p. 126), despite women’s significant achievements over the previous 50 years, males outnumber women in positions of power, particularly at the top. A shortage of competent women in leadership posts contributes to a gender disparity not only in one, but in many areas of the workplace. Some gender bias is extremely subliminal, but overt and illegal job bias against women remains a problem. Other than that, companies may continue to express a strong gender preference for some jobs without hesitation, but the leadership divide isn’t just a corporate problem; women are more likely to assume top roles in the nonprofit sphere, though they still remain underrepresented.

Leaders enjoy tremendous respect and luxury; leadership in one sector opens doors to other options, thereby multiplying the rewards of leadership. Most companies top leaders are also the highly paid, and managers and directors often make more than non-leadership staff. Women are significantly less likely to be considered as rulers than men. In 2015, just 5% of the companies in the standard & Poor’s 500 index had female CEOs (Catalyst, 2015a). Leaders carry tremendous power, so when women are excluded from positions of authority, they are denied all of the privileges and every opportunity to make a positive change. In almost every case, male leaders outweigh female leaders.

In terms of educational credentials, the pipeline for female leaders has grown dramatically during the previous half-century. Apart from professional degrees, women now hold the majority of university degrees at all levels. Significant changes in women’s educational achievement and labor-force involvement have provided millions of women with the expertise and abilities needed to become leaders, filling jobs formerly designated for men and giving organisations a bigger and more varied pool of aspiring leaders. In other words, educated and determined women are abundant, many of these women are skilled professionals with extended length of service in the workforce, despite the fact that women are still relatively less likely than males to be in the workplace. Additionally, anti-female leadership attitudes and regulations may be found throughout history, most notably in all major world religion (Christ, 2014).

Despite the fact that the idea of leadership has been integrated with traditionally masculine attributes such as aggressive behavior, decision making, engaging in conflicts, physical power, and so on. Leadership is not inherently or blatantly masculine, both men and women strive to continuously improve the skills necessary for advancement to key leadership positions. According to research, workplace culture and women leadership are inextricably related since leadership is defined by decisiveness, intelligence, and honesty rather than masculinity. The chapter discusses women’s leadership in particular, and workplace culture and leadership in general, and analyzes their relationship to digitalization. It also identifies gender inequalities in leadership and suggests recommendations to achieve gender parity in leadership.

Background

Studies (e.g., Ayman & Korabik 2010; O’Neill et al. 2008) have found that organizational cultures (and even staffing arrangement) are gendered, which means that preconceptions about leaders and the major drivers to strong and successful leadership are often male-normed. Very often, diversity training, targets and women’s development initiatives do not result in the transformative transformation that businesses seek. This is because existing organisational culture, which is frequently unconscious, is stifling any efforts to achieve better gender parity. If a firm intends to modify its customary behavior, it must first identify the beliefs and assumptions that support such conduct in its workplace culture, then they can modify their work habits to support a new approach of doing things. As a renowned scholar of organisa-

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