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**Why Care About  
Gender Balance  
at Work?**

**We don't care about diversity  
because it's in vogue. We  
care about it because we like  
winning.<sup>1</sup>**

*—Mike Gamson,  
SVP Global Solutions, LinkedIn*

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## You Can't Win Without Women

The way I see it, you have three choices. Each comes with an associated risk. The question is, which risks are you willing to take?

**YOU** can continue to operate in a work environment that is not fully inclusive of the talents and needs of women. Some men think this means less competition for them and more opportunity. The risk with this course of action is, at minimum, twofold. On one hand, women drive 70–85% of all consumer purchasing decisions through a combination of their buying power and influence. They have control of more than \$20 trillion in global spending. In the United States alone, the purchasing power of women ranges from \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion annually. Women purchase more than 50% of goods that were formerly considered “male” products, including automobiles, home improvement tools, and consumer electronics. Women make 70% of all travel decisions. Women make 90% of household healthcare decisions. And, here’s one that totally surprised me, female gamers who are age 55 and older, spend more time online gaming than males ages 15–24!<sup>2</sup>

Without women on your team and in leadership and decision-making positions, you will have less

understanding of your clients' needs. With this first approach, you risk not having the talent that your business needs. There's fierce competition for the best people. Your competitors who are doing a better job of recruiting, retaining, and advancing women will have an edge.

**YOU** could choose not to advance the careers of anyone on your team, male or female. Instead, you could look out for yourself exclusively. Through the years, I've known some managers and leaders whose behavior falls into this category, and you've likely also encountered them. They hire weak players, don't develop or delegate to them, hog the spotlight for themselves, and steal their people's ideas. It never works out. In the end, they shoot themselves in the foot, don't succeed, and are sometimes even fired.

**YOU** could build a high-performing team, which by definition is a diverse team. Under this scenario, you understand that when you work with or lead a high-performing team and team members have opportunities and do their best work, the team wins, each individual member wins, and you win.

The first two approaches are fear-based strategies. The last is based on confidence in your abilities and

the abilities of others to collectively lead, manage, and excel. It's your choice which strategy you adopt.

But don't misunderstand me. The success of women does not rest only on your shoulders.

## What I Tell Women

I assure you that, for all the actions that I recommend you take in this short book, I have a much longer list of career, business, and workplace actions that women can use to work more effectively with men. *Undeterred: The Six Success Habits of Women in Emerging Economies*, my career-advice book for women, is four times longer than this one. This is one indication that I'm not picking on men or suggesting that the burden for achieving a new type of workplace is entirely on their shoulders.

Men and women are engaged in a mutual transformation. I advise women to work well with men and to encourage and support men who are taking positive steps to advance women: to invite them to participate in women's initiatives, to give them a chance when they try new approaches, to give them some leeway if what they say or do is imperfect, to catch and acknowledge men when they do the right things, and not be too quick to criticize them for minor infractions of company or social rules.

I don't think it's your sole responsibility to create a work environment that is conducive to women's success. It also takes executive leadership commitment, organizational structure, practices, and benefits, and women themselves understanding, advocating, and producing results in order for all of us to achieve optimal work environments. But I also know that you are the missing and integral key to transforming the current work environment as we know it.

## Addressing Possible Objections

Discussions about the advancement of women often stir up people's feelings. Objections to the approaches I advocate may come up when you're reading, so I'd like to proactively address a few you might have.

**“I don't want to stereotype women.”** I imagine I'll be criticized by some men and women for “stereotyping” women and their needs. That is certainly not my intent, nor do I wish to oversimplify female behavior or needs. I am aware of how every woman (in fact, every person) is different based on his or her life experiences, age, national origin, personality, where he or she grew up, where he or she lives, career stage, and occupation ... the list goes on and on.

My goal is to convey, as accurately as possible, some of the most common workplace needs that I've heard

women express throughout my 33-year career in business, what women on every continent have personally told me, and what I've read in innumerable research papers and studies.

My approach is to present what women want, not what women are or are not. Like every man, every woman is different and has a unique personality, set of strengths, ways of interacting, motivations, goals, and so on.

**“Why should I have to treat women differently?”**

Some readers will question why this book is even needed. Their objections may be worded something like this: “Why do women need special treatment? Why should I have to treat them differently?”

During the more than two decades that I've coached and developed managers and leaders, what's been true 100% of the time is that every management situation and every individual is different and should therefore be treated differently. The best form of management is situational in nature, an approach wherein the skills and interests of an employee are evaluated within the context of the situation, task, and goal at hand.

So, to this objection, I say: Every manager, male or female, should seek to understand as much as he or she can about the motivations, needs, and preferred

communication styles of all his/her employees. My goal is to give you insights into the best-practice approaches preferred by women. You will likely encounter several women who are exceptions to these guidelines, but as a manager of women, you'll want to know how to best utilize the valuable, untapped talent pool of women.

I think about it like this: Coaches of teams want to win. As the coach of your team, I assume you want to win. Coaches of winning teams, first and foremost, get to know their players as individuals and athletes. They also rely on research about players' motivations, which may include understanding differences between how girls/women and boys/men learn and are motivated. Here's what two coaches have to say.

Julia West, PhD, a professor whose thesis dealt with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sports and who coaches both boys' and girls' teams, shared this insight: Boys tend to want to start playing by doing just that, starting. By contrast, girls are typically more concerned with whether they have the skills and abilities to play and want to develop those skills before they start.<sup>3</sup> Wade Gilbert, PhD, whose areas of expertise include athletic motivation, says: "Male athletes may be more motivated to practice and learn new skills when their performances are compared to teammates. Conversely, female



athletes may respond best when their progress is charted against their own performance standards.”<sup>4</sup>

I spoke with Dennis Casey, a senior leader at a technology company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who on the side, has coached 14–18-year-old girls in basketball and volleyball on a competitive level for 20 years. I asked him if he uses any coaching techniques for girls that he wouldn’t likely use with boys. He immediately relayed that because the girls who he coaches attend different schools, they don’t get a chance to connect during the day. So he and his assistant coaches allocate 10–15 minutes at the start of every practice for them to talk to each other in the group. He explained why. “If I did that with a group of 14-year-old boys, I’d get a bunch of perplexed faces and grunts. But for the girls, that 10 to 15 minutes helps them to feel more connected to their teammates, which is critical to *winning* a volleyball game.” The point is, giving the girls those 15 minutes helps them win. When I relayed this story to a male attorney who coached boys’ hockey teams for many years, he said, “Of course, it is called ‘knowing what buttons to push so you can win.’”

**“Some women don’t want or need to be treated differently.”** I’ve heard men say that they know women who (1) tell them that they don’t want to be treated differently from men, and (2) use foul language, tell

raunchy jokes, and don't seem to mind when others do. Just because a woman curses or tells jokes doesn't mean she is okay with jokes that put down women or other groups of people. It is simply not appropriate to objectify women or make sexist comments. It may seem that a woman doesn't mind locker-room banter, but it may be that she is not objecting because she desperately wants to fit in or is ambitious and afraid to say anything that will hurt her prospects. The only way to know for sure that she does not object is to pointedly ask her. With regard to your perception that she does not want to be treated differently, that may be the case, but everyone wants to be valued and treated with respect.

**“I already treat everyone fairly.”** We prefer to believe that everyone has the same opportunities. We don't like to admit that we are biased or that we treat anyone unfairly.

Likely, you are already supportive of equality for men and women. But sometimes our self-perceptions are inflated. We don't recognize or understand the experiences of people who are not like us. What we think is a meritocracy is, in fact, not. And even with the best intentions, sometimes we don't say or do the right things. Most of us have not been taught how to work collaboratively and on equal footing with the

opposite gender. If you objectively look at the numbers of women in key decision-making roles, you cannot help but conclude that although we might wish to believe that it is a level playing field, the data proves that it is not.

At a conference, a male investor shared with me how he has always thought of himself as fair, unbiased, and willing to invest in a business regardless of the gender, race, and age of the entrepreneur. As long as the entrepreneur had a strong business case and model, he'd consider them without reservation. But, after hearing me talk about how both men and women evaluate and describe female entrepreneurs differently from the way we describe male-led ventures, and reflecting back on the investments he'd made to date, he recognized that perhaps his approach was not as open and unbiased as he'd believed. The reality is that we all can improve. Be on the look out for the details of the study I shared in Chapter 3.

## **The Business Case (In Case You Don't Already Know It)**

When companies hire me to speak on how they can better recruit, retain, advance, and manage women, I am always asked to make the business case for why the workplace needs more women and more women leaders, and I do make this case.

Fundamentally,  
men need to  
understand that  
**progression for  
women is not  
a problem for  
women, it's an  
opportunity for  
business.**<sup>5</sup>

*–Andy Woodfield, PwC partner*

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But truth be told, I resent the request. There are no requests to prove the business case for why men should be hired and promoted – although, with the advent of artificial intelligence and spread of robotics, maybe someday there will be. And further, the business case I am making is not about “more women.” It’s about men and women working equally and in concert with each other.

The most provocative view I’ve read challenging the need to continue to have to make the business case for women comes from Adam Quinton, the founder and CEO of Lucas Ventures and an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University. He wrote:

“In my view, the ‘business case’ argument is an answer to the WRONG question. Rather, we should be trying to challenge the start point – namely, the assumption that men “deserve to be there.” Rather than asking what the rationale is to let outsiders in, the business case question(s) should be:

- What is the business case for corporate leadership dominated by mediocre white men?
- Why does that produce better results?
- Why is that meritocratic?”<sup>6</sup>

No matter how we  
torture the data  
we get the same  
result: **women  
in the C-suite  
are associated  
with higher  
profitability.**<sup>7</sup>

*–Marcus Noland, Director of Studies  
at the Peterson Institute*

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Today, just as we have a great deal of data about the productivity of men, we also have a significant body of evidence about the economic value of women in the workforce and in leadership positions. I could fill pages and pages with studies, research findings, and statistics that demonstrate the contributions of the full engagement and leadership of women (and indeed, I've based this book on a great deal of that research), but I'll spare you the deep dive into the weeds and share only a few highlights.

Here's the bottom line:

**Just as we calculate a return on equity in business, we can also calculate a return on equality.**

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**Diversity = Dollars.<sup>8</sup>**

*—Christopher Mims, technology columnist  
for The Wall Street Journal*

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## The Data in Dollars and Sense

### **The \$12 Trillion Business Opportunity.**

According to McKinsey & Company, a “best in region” gender equality scenario—if all countries match the rate of improvement of the fastest-improving country in their region, in terms of gender equality—as much as *\$12 trillion*, or 11%, in global annual gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025 could be added. In a “full potential” scenario, in which women play an identical role in labor markets to that of men, as much as *\$28 trillion*, or 26%, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.<sup>9</sup>

**More equality leads to higher GDP.** If we had female labor-force participation rates that were equal to male participation rates, we would have a positive net impact on GDP in both developing and developed countries. For example, India’s GDP would rise an estimated 27%.

### **Higher gender equality rates in the workforce results in more productivity.**

More women working will directly increase overall productivity and indirectly lead to more investment in women’s priorities, such as children’s health, education, and welfare.

**Gender-balanced leadership leads to better all-around performance.** Companies with more women executives have greater focus on corporate governance, corporate responsibility, and talent.<sup>10</sup>

**Companies with more women leaders have higher net revenue margins and a higher return on equity.** For profitable companies, a move from 0% to 3% female leaders is associated with a 15% increase in net revenue margin. Companies with 50% women in senior operating roles show a 19% higher rate of return on equity on average.<sup>11</sup>

**Improved gender balance on boards of directors results in better share prices and financial performance.** This finding was further confirmed in the International Finance Corporation's April 2017 Investing in Women Study, which concluded that companies with diverse boards generate a higher return on equity and in terms of share price, and that higher performing companies are 50% more likely to give both men and women equal influence on strategy.<sup>12</sup>

The benefits of diversity are not one-sided. They don't flow only to the group of people being included (in this case, women). For example, some of the ways that gender parity benefits men are: removing the burden for men to be the sole economic providers for their families; providing opportunities for men to pursue all types of jobs, not just jobs that were traditionally considered appropriate for men; raising family income levels; allowing men to more fully engage with their families and children; and creating equal opportunity for their daughters, spouses, mothers, and sisters. A more diverse workforce benefits *you*.

We don't need more studies and data to support why we need more women in leadership roles and in the workforce. What we need is more action to achieve an egalitarian workplace and gender-balanced leadership. What we need is a novel new approach that includes your proactive, personal engagement.

An engineering company executive recently attended a meeting at the offices of a key client. He brought an all-male team to the meeting. The engineering firm specializes in infrastructure development in power, oil and gas, water, and telecommunications, and has projects around the world. Being awarded projects of the magnitude delivered by this firm requires a very long sales cycle and a tremendous amount of

expertise and experience. Connecting and building relationships with potential clients during this long sales and project-delivery period is imperative to their success. The executive has a proven history of developing these types of relationships. But this time he noticed something different.

When he and his team walked into the meeting, the client team seated around the table was diverse in terms of age, gender, and race. He realized then and there that his company was not going to be able to use the same tactics nor rely solely on the same people it had in the past to develop the type of rapport and relationship needed to be awarded proposals in the future. That's the bottom line and the business case.