

Part I

Historical and Current Contexts for Women's Leadership

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Chapter 1

Introduction

Women's leadership invites questions and requires answers. As you have been observing the changes occurring in the world today, many of you may be asking some of the following questions:

- Why aren't there more women leaders?
- What has happened to the numbers of women who have entered the workforce in the past thirty years?
- Why aren't more of them in senior leadership roles?
- Why have women been leaving organizations to become entrepreneurs?
- What is important for men to know about women's leadership and vice versa?
- What insights will enable men and women to work more effectively together?
- If there were more women leaders, would the world be a better place?
- How can men and women work together to co-create organizations that serve all stakeholders well?
- How can men and women use their combined strengths to arrive at creative solutions to meet the challenges facing the world?

It is clear that we must examine women's leadership in conjunction with that of men. This book is aimed at helping readers, especially employers, gain a deeper understanding of the gender-related issues

4 Historical and Current Contexts for Women's Leadership

that affect the behaviors of both women and men at work. It's aimed at women, men, their bosses, CEOs, Human Resource (HR) executives and professionals, coaches and their clients, and researchers.

We already know a fair amount about how to develop leaders. A large percentage of what we know about leadership development applies equally to women as to men. How can we use this knowledge to increase the pool of women leaders? Demographic changes are bringing shortages of talent. This book offers some practical suggestions to assist you in growing the leadership of people you care about, developing women successors, and building the pipeline of talent for your organization. This book is meant to be a practical guide, one that is grounded in research from the social sciences, particularly psychology. It will help you to make changes in jobs and workplaces that foster fairness, productivity, and innovation. Individual men and women cannot wait for organizations to change, and organizations cannot wait for society to change. It will require courage on the part of individual men and women to take on the task of assisting each other in co-creating organizations that will serve them well in the twenty-first century. Many of you who read this book are more than ready for the challenge. This book intends to "arm" you with knowledge, strategies, and skills to accelerate your efforts.

Demographic trends tell us that when the large number of so-called Baby Boomers in the United States begins to retire in the next several years, there will be an even greater shortage of trained, experienced people who can fill key positions. Because the smaller Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) will serve as the replacement group, an urgent task for many organizations is to fill the pipeline of executive talent with individuals who are ready to move into leadership roles. With the challenges posed by the dearth of leadership, global organizations need to better understand how to develop talented people, regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity. For a variety of reasons, the attraction and retention of talented individuals, particularly women, have already become an important issue for many American corporations. Frustrated by what they view as limited options in a corporate setting, many women choose to leave large organizations. The retention of talented women in corporations has become even more critical in light of recent research by *Catalyst*¹ which shows that companies with large representations of women have better financial performance.

As a result of the increased awareness concerning the importance of leadership, it is time to examine the information from both practice and research to answer the questions:

- How do we best develop women leaders?
- What can men and women in organizations do to develop talented women?
- Are there leadership development approaches that are especially effective for women?
- What can managers and organizations do to develop talented women?

A strong case can be made that this book is overdue because of the growing recognition of the need for talent management in organizations, the growth of leadership development methodologies in the marketplace, and the demographic imperatives to develop talented women executives.

Isn't it a bit presumptuous, if not foolhardy, to expect that any changes can be wrought at the individual or organizational level when cultural and societal forces reinforce traditional gender role patterns? Well, we need to start somewhere. Rather than wait for things to change, you may want to be proactive in effecting change in whatever role or level you are now. Whatever your role in your organization, you may want to do whatever it takes. Depending on where you sit in an organization, you have the opportunity to change what you do every day as an individual contributor, local supervisor, divisional head, a member of the top leadership team, or the CEO. These changes may range from something as seemingly simple as selecting people to serve on a team to creating the policies and practices affecting the entire corporate body.

Even with the progress that has been made, women seeking leadership positions face persistent barriers to their success. These include gender bias in leadership opportunities, gender inequalities in family responsibilities, inflexibility in workplace structures, and inadequacies in social policies. The costs of the lack of diversity in leadership are borne by individual women and men, their families, the organizations that employ them, and, of course, by the society that permits the inequality to occur. Strategies for improvement are therefore required at the organizational, individual, and societal level – all of

which are interdependent. This book hopes to give you some ideas and strategies for improvement at the individual and organizational levels; and, in so doing, also give you the courage to do what you can to move forward with change. In the future, more attention may be placed on changing the institutional and societal structures and policies to better enable the emergence of leaders who reflect the diversity of the society.

How This Book Is Organized

The book consists of three sections:

- Part I includes the Introduction and discusses the purpose of the book, its value at this point in time, and the pros and cons of addressing the issue of developing women's leadership as separate from leadership in general. This section sets the stage for understanding the relevance of developing women by providing a historical and a current context for it. Women's leadership is discussed in light of the driving forces for organizational change, relevant demographics related to generational trends in employment and educational attainment, and the current issues in the United States that impact everyone – not just women, such as: gender role expectations, dual careers, and work–life integration. This section also covers what is important to know about leadership and its development. It includes highlights from current research on leadership behaviors and an inventory of options for developing effective leaders
- Part II contains practical suggestions for organizations, managers, and women. It contains ideas for CEOs, HR executives, and their teams to implement in their organizations, using examples from some “best practice” companies. This section includes information on what male and female bosses can do to help develop women leaders, what women can do to develop themselves and other women leaders, and what organizations can do to retain and develop their talented women. Highlights will be presented from pertinent research results on the topic of gender and leadership. Comments from the author's interviews with executive women and men will be used to underscore research findings.
- Part III offers both a present and a future focus on women's leadership. It contains firsthand accounts from highly successful women

of their experience of becoming leaders. They tell their stories of how they managed to get where they are and accomplish what they do. Each woman leader speaks frankly and from the heart about some of her defining moments as a leader, the role played by mentors and others, and lessons learned. The advice that each one imparts to women will also – no surprise here – be relevant for men. A final chapter suggests future directions for women’s leadership, particularly as it relates to the changing demographics of a global workforce. It also includes some potential topic areas for researchers to explore.

How to Use This Book Most Effectively

The discussions in each chapter are short, focused answers to those questions that summarize the pertinent research for that topic sprinkled with examples from the interviews I have been conducting with women and men on the topic of how best to develop women leaders. At the beginning of most chapters there is a list of the “Topics to be Covered in this Chapter” to enable you to see where the chapter is going and to provide an easy reference. Boxes labeled *Tips*, or *Examples*, or *Good to Know* provide user-friendly summaries followed by fuller explanations when necessary.

The book need not be read sequentially. You may choose to go directly to particular topics on an as-needed basis. Or, if you have a specific question about developing women leaders, you can go directly to the relevant chapter to obtain the information quickly.

If you want an overall understanding of the issues associated with developing women leaders, then you may wish to read the book straight through. Chapters 3 and 5 contain many valuable research findings that will provide you with the foundation for understanding the recommendations made throughout the book.

In summary, this book translates research-based best practices, ideas, and concepts into sensible, concrete actions to enable men and women to be more effective in developing women leaders.

Your Role in Developing Women’s Leadership

Every organization has its own approach to talent management. Some organizations use all known available methodologies and have made leadership development a major focus of human resource strategy.

Other organizations have paid little attention to developing diverse slates of candidates for leadership roles and have paid the price in high turnover. It is my hope that, whatever your vantage point, whether as a woman seeking to advance her career, as a CEO of a company who wishes to set an example to others about how to foster diversity, as an HR professional with responsibility for talent management, or as a manager who now finds himself reporting to female bosses or with several female direct reports, this book will help to open up dialogues that can occur between male and female colleagues. Only by having a willingness to learn from each other, to try out new behaviors that may seem strange at first, and to persevere with the intent of working cooperatively together will we arrive at the collective wisdom necessary to create organizations that will enable our culture and economy to thrive. The rewards are many and include the possibility of new markets, products, and solutions that serve the worldwide community of women and men.

This book translates the relevant social science research into some ideas for best practices for men and women, managers and organizations. In so doing, this book offers sensible ideas that you can use every day in the workplace. With the understanding that there is no “one-size-fits-all” strategy, some of these ideas will be appropriate in some settings and not in others. You will need to judge for yourself and select the best strategies that are most likely to be effective for your circumstances.

As a device to help you think about your own individual situation and consider your strategies for effecting change, you may find it helpful to consider three “categories of gender issue concerns” in determining how and when to take action. Suggested for use expressly for the ideas in this volume, these three “categories of gender issue concerns” encompass *absolute*, *transitional*, and *fairness* concerns.

Absolute gender concerns deal with the absolute differences between the genders such as those involving motherhood and physical differences. For example, because females are the ones to nurse infants, there is an absolute or unconditional quality to such issues as whether or not to include lactation room facilities in building designs or renovations. The timeframe for these actions may be longer, that is, they may take more time for consideration or implementation.

Transitional concerns deal with moving from one state or condition to another and require you to focus on “transitioning” from the

present state to a future one. Your actions may accelerate changes. For example, presently there are not enough women leaders as role models. In order to effect change, you are required to figure out how to increase the numbers of women in the pipeline, what actions to take to develop them, and the implications of the increase in numbers for the organization. Transitional concerns may change in the future provided that certain steps are taken in the present.

Fairness concerns deal with more immediate issues of equal opportunity and fairness and can be dealt with more directly or very quickly. This might include policies and practices surrounding equal employment opportunity (EEO) issues, intimacy in the workplace, or how to deal with people's misconceptions and subtle biases. For example, you may see that one of your managers tends to give lower performance ratings to women or avoids giving them the best jobs. You can have a discussion with that manager and monitor results in a short timeframe.

Because this book has a very practical focus for men and women in organizations, and before moving on, I want to note what this book does not attempt to do:

- This book does not try to present a totally comprehensive review of the literature on leadership in general, women's leadership, and gender differences.
- This book does not attempt to explain "how to" set up internal large-scale leadership development programs or to integrate mentoring, women's networks, or coaching with an established leadership development program.
- This book is not a cookbook with recipes of do's and don'ts. For example, there are no magic formulas for how to attract, recruit, or retain talented women. Rather, this book is meant to be a practical guide – grounded in research from the social sciences, particularly psychology – to help managers and organizations understand what processes and practices are likely to be successful in the development of talented women.

