



Four P's - Developing Women for Leadership

What are the essential elements for women who are rising to top levels in their organizations or who are starting their own business? Can we shift our mindset - from compromising who we are for an antiquated definition of leadership to engaging fully as humans and women as the only viable avenue for empowered leadership? How can organizations be inclusive of a new leadership paradigm that applies equally to men as to women?

Leadership styles are evolving as much out of necessity as out of the refusal to compromise our humanity for the sake of numbers and profits. Elements of generational and cultural diversity, commitment to sustainability and stewardship, the effects of a global economy and competition for world talent reflect the shifts driving a new inclusive leadership paradigm. The perspective of leadership is more and more holistic and inclusive.

As women preparing to shape our world we need to learn the ***four "P's" of Leadership: Presence, Paradox, Power, and Potential.***

Leadership moves from position to ***Presence***. Modeling behaviors that encourage trust and empowerment is essential in an environment of corporate betrayals. *Who you are* matters as much if not more than *what you are doing*. True leaders are currently "wobbling" or "shifting their WOB" (Way Of Being) – in ways that model honesty, authenticity, courageous conversations and listening. True leaders walk their talk. Ultimately, this allows for a deeper engagement by employees and more immediate execution of ideas and concepts in this fast-paced knowledge-based environment.

The ability to thrive within ***Paradox*** [defined as "an assertion that is essentially self-contradictory"] is crucial to success in uncertain times that demand a leader hold opposing and seemingly contradictory elements within the same space. For example: to be concerned with people as much as with financial results, to stay focused on a vision while allowing for fluidity required in the face of ambiguity. In the ancient text, the Tao Te Ching, the 28th passage on integrity speaks to the issue of Paradox: "Retain the mind like that of a child, which flows like running water. When considering any thing, do not lose its opposite... By retaining the integrity of the inner and external worlds, true selfhood is maintained, and the inner world made fertile." This ability to hold the inner and external or one thing and its opposite is essential to our future as leaders.

Women often struggle with the concept of ***Power***. We see this struggle imbedded in our notions of what it means to be powerful, and how power can often be abused. What works for men - aggression, decisiveness, and directness – is apt to be fodder for critique of women. As a recent example, Hillary Clinton is as much admired for her political acumen and vision as she is condemned for her aggressive tactics and

direct style. True power begins internally, when one trusts oneself first and foremost and this begins with authenticity and integrity.

At stake is the possibility of who we may become, our **Potential**. Are you willing to risk the now for the greater potential of tomorrow? Can you mentor others in a way that expands their sense of self to be more than what they may have conceived possible? In the 80's we coined the term "empowerment" but subtract the cliché and we get a practice that allows individuals and companies to be empowered to redefine and truly attain their potential. Peter Koestenbaum, a philosopher and management consultant, describes the leader's role as "demonstrating courage" and "enlarge(ing) the capacity for responsible freedom." The true leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they eventually surpass her in knowledge and ability. Leadership becomes less about one's individual ego and more about affecting our world as a collective.

There will come a day when women will be evaluated based on merit and performance without the shadow of gender and its cultural implications. What internal process must occur within us that will allow for a shift in mindset for women and for the world at large? What can we now offer our daughters, and in many ways our sons, in the way of paving the road? We can offer our authenticity, inclusive of what has been devalued as "feminine traits" as a powerful example of **Presence, Paradox, Power** and **Potential**. Both men and women need to stop polarizing our attributes and bring the best of who we are to the game. We can offer a helping hand through mentoring and advocacy, building confidence and leadership. We must engage life and work, relationships and results, holistically and inclusively in order to thrive in this diverse and fluid world in which we find ourselves. A systemic approach to advancing women and diverse populations into leadership roles, combined with mentoring and supportive business opportunities, shifts in organizations and culture and the elimination of stereotypes are the requirements for harnessing the talent and potential of women in leadership, in organizations and as business owners themselves. The statistics show that women are an economical force that is growing and thriving and that the next iteration will include a younger generation of savvy and empowered women. Being prepared will allow you to take advantage of the tide and ride it to success.

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