

Women's Leadership ~ The door that opens everyone's talents

Camille Smith, Work In Progress Coaching

Summary

- Women are the greatest untapped natural resource on the planet... (Inspire yourself – watch a 30-second video of this resource at www.care.org)
- A world view that limits women's participation limits the contribution both women and men can and must make to the world as global citizens.
- Women's leadership is not about women replacing men. De-valuing one-half of the world's population has been done and it's failed. It's time for authentic partnerships between men and women.
- If an organization doesn't value the contribution of women as leaders, what other talents and contributions are they leaving untapped and unrealized? When women can authentically show up in organizational work cultures, so will men, even those who set the very rules that currently exclude women.
- Companies with a significant number of women in the upper ranks demonstrate excellent financial and organizational success. Why are women still not welcome at the leadership table? Paradigm blindness.
- Merely having a diverse workforce or women leaders isn't sufficient. People need to learn how to work together and the leader is responsible for making that happen.

Note: This paper was presented at the 2nd Annual Conference of the South Bay Organizational Development Network (www.sbodn.com) held at Sun Microsystems, 9/2006. Slides are available at Work In Progress Coaching, www.wipcoaching.com/resources and www.sbodn.com

Good afternoon. I have a hunch that you, the Human Resource and Organizational Development professionals, know a good deal about how having women as leaders opens the door to everyone's talent. Please share what you see by finishing this statement: Women's leadership opens the door to everyone's talent because ... *"...they embrace diversity ... look for partnerships ... focus on both relationships and results ... they collaborate ... seek to include ..."* Keep these in mind as we explore what's wanted and needed in the realm of leadership in today's global economy.

In the short time we have together, my three goals are to stimulate new thinking, yours and mine, to share a tool that could support your commitment to effectively develop people, and to encourage you to act boldly on your commitment.

In a global, professional context, women's leadership is not only about women. It is about what's needed for humanity to sustain itself at all levels: family, communal, organizational and cultural. In an organizational context, it is about the having the capacity to include, appreciate and learn from different views, ways of thinking and being, value sets, and problem solving and decision making approaches offered by everyone.

Women don't have leadership all figured out. What they do have is a perspective – a perspective which, if it were present and valued, would benefit the organization in its quest for success and sustainability – a sustainability that now requires leaders with a world view that is in synch with, not at odds with, what's possible for the world.

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The paradigm of command-and-control, force and domination, power over another, might-makes-right may have never really worked. On today's diverse, global stage, it is clearly bankrupt.

If an organization can't open the door to women who want leadership roles, it has cut itself off from one-half of the talent and potential in the world. If leaders in organizations turn a blind eye to contributions are they not seeing? Valuing women's contribution opens our eyes to see the possibility in others who have also been historically unseen and under valued, and that opens the door to everyone's talents being recognized, developed and rewarded.



If you leave this session remembering only one thing, it is this: A world view that limits women's participation limits the contribution both women and men can and must make to the world as global citizens.

For some of you, it may seem a big leap from women's leadership to global citizenship. I assure you, it isn't. In my work with the Global Women's Leadership Network (Santa Clara University) I've met women from around the world who are in action resolving local inequities – they are ending domestic violence, securing land ownership for women, transforming a country's educational system. When I ask them why they are doing this, to a person, they say how it will benefit their neighbors and the children of their communities and that it has the possibility to benefit men, women and children around the world they will never meet. They are inventing themselves as global citizens.

**Social Entrepreneur
Lydia Bakaki, Uganda**

"It's time for equality between men and women in Uganda. I am committed that within 1 year, 250 Ugandan women each receive 1 acre of land and break the chains of economic poverty for themselves and their families."

Women Leaders for the World, 2005

www.gwln.org

It's time for organizational leadership to be seen in a larger-than-business context, in a context called organization as a global citizen.

Just how flat is the world today?

Thomas Friedman poetically captured the new world view in the title of his book, The World is Flat. U.S. organizations aren't in Kansas anymore, Dorothy. They aren't even in the U.S. anymore. They are *of* the globe and must now be *for* the globe, as well.

In the not-too-distant-past, thinking globally occurred to me as a bumper sticker phenomenon – something I could consider until the light changed and the concept drove out of sight. Today, global thinking permeates my day. The information highway circumvents the world, skipping wirelessly over mountains and deserts, magically connecting me with distant people and cultures via blogs, emails, and cell-phone videos.

We are beginning to understand at the individual level that we are profoundly connected to other individuals on the planet and that our social and economic well-being is interdependent

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and interconnected. It's time for us at the organizational level to understand our connection and be responsible for how others are touched by our global reach.

We have a local address and we live and work in a global conversation. Workforces are culturally diverse, multi-generational, mobile and virtual. Eastern Indians sit next to Polish immigrants next to California natives of Japanese heritage. We see a health epidemic in Kenya or an outsourcing offer from India and know it will impact communities and economies locally and worldwide. We see philanthropists sharing financial resources, from the millions of dollars donated by Bill and Melinda Gates to eradicate AIDS to the hundreds of pennies raised by children selling lemonade to buy books for a school library in Venezuela. We watch social entrepreneurs, without infrastructure or funding, educate orphans at Indian train stations, return sight to the poor by removing cataracts, bring electricity, clean water and cottage industries— and hope – to their communities. See: *New Heroes*, DVD, www.skollfoundation.org)

The opportunity knocking on every organization's door, especially the multinational corporations, is to proactively create opportunities to be connected, to engage with others we have historically not seen and form partnerships that transform us as individuals and our organizations. To create this shift, we need global leaders who think from the whole, who encourage diversity of perspective and who understand that talent and commitment are not gender-based, but are human-based.

An organization is a network of conversations. To change the organization, change the conversations.

Global Leader Organizational Competencies

So what are the organizational competences of a global leader? Marian Stetson-Rodriguez, president of Charis Intercultural Training Corporation (www.chariscorp.com) shared this list of competences with me. She adapted them from *Global Leadership*, authored by Marshall Goldsmith, Warren Bennis and others. Marian and her Charis team, train leaders in cultural intelligence, so they are more effective in doing business with other cultures and can leverage the diverse strengths of global workforces.

Global Leader Organizational Competencies

1. Thinks Globally
2. Anticipates Opportunity
3. Creates Shared Vision
4. Develops, Empowers People
5. Appreciates Cultural Diversity
6. Builds Teamwork, Partnerships
7. Embraces, Leads Change
8. Shows Technological Savvy
9. Encourages Constructive Challenge
10. Ensures Customer Satisfaction
11. Achieves Competitive Advantage
12. Demonstrates Personal Mastery
13. Shares Leadership
14. Lives Values, Demonstrates Integrity

If you add this list to the list generated earlier, you'll begin to see that women tend to bring with them ways of thinking and being that result and express themselves in these competencies. Just in case some of you may be wondering, I am not advocating that women summarily replace men. As Jim Collins (author, *Good to Great*) emphasizes, great organizations have the right people in the right role at the right time.

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Distinguishing qualities of women leaders

In 2005, Caliper Corporation found four qualities that distinguished women leaders:

1. Women are more persuasive than male counterparts.
2. Learning from adversity, women carry on with an "I'll show you" attitude.
3. Women demonstrate an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem-solving and decision-making.
4. Women leaders are more likely to ignore rules and take risks.

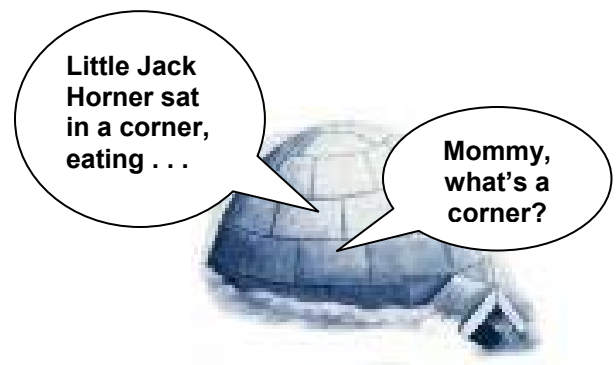
(Any surprises?) Caliper found male leaders started from their own point of view, were not as willing to interact with others, and tended to force their view on others and to convince others through the strength of position. Women took in information from all sides. They were able to bring others into their point of view or alter theirs depending on information uncovered.

Women's leadership is to a corporation as corner is to ... igloo

If I say *What's the world coming to?*, it is likely you would hear a poor-me tone in my voice. I want to challenge our thinking by asking a different question: *Who am I, coming to the world?*

We humans operate as if the world we see is the world everyone sees. This is an unconscious, inherited assumption. As French author Anais Nin eloquently stated: We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.

I think organizations suffer from "leadership blindness" – they literally can't see women as leaders. Why? Because of the unexamined assumptions the current leaders and followers are looking through.



What unexamined assumptions are shaping your personal view of women as leaders? What views and values does your organization espouse and what views and values are tacit, deeply held and running the show, shaping policies, promotions and opportunities? What will it take for your organization to see that the possibility of "women's leadership" is missing? Can "corner" show up for someone who only knows igloo?

Iceland's former President Vigdis Finbogadottir likes to tell of boys who asked their mothers after her long term of 16 years in office (1980-1996), if men could be president of Iceland.
Closing the Leadership Gap, Marie Wilson, Founder, The White House Project

Consider that each human being is comprised of a set of conversations influenced by our culture, heritage, race, gender, successes, failures, doubts, etc. These conversations tell us what we know, believe, like/don't like, agree/disagree with, etc. These conversations filter what we experience and how we react and respond to the world.

Like elevator music in the background, we don't pay attention to these conversations. We should. They tell us the right actions to take and the wrong actions to avoid. Of course, these

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actions are a perfect match to our world view. (This isn't bad; it's the design of human being.) If we want to alter our results, from a few women leaders to an abundance of them, alter the conversation what tells us what action to take that produce the results.

Let's look at the conversations organizations have historically been listening to in the area of workforce diversity.

What is diversity from a global perspective?

Ten years ago, Thomas and Ely wrote an article for the Harvard Business Review called *Making differences matter: A new paradigm for managing diversity*. They distinguished the paradigms that have shaped our organizational views of what to do with diversity. Notice how the conversation has shifted over time.

	Discrimination & Fairness 1970's	Access & Legitimacy 1980's	Learning & Effectiveness 1990's
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assimilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration
What the paradigm would say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We accept and celebrate differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We value and internalize our differences. We are on same team with our differences, not despite them.
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunity • Compliance with EEO • Train others to respect cultural differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place people where their different demographic characteristics match customers' demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes equal opportunity • Incorporate diverse perspectives into main work of organization
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes 'fair' treatment • Increases demographic diversity • Career development for women, people of color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More managerial opportunities for people of color, women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational learning, growth
Limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes that differences do not count • Relevant debates misinterpreted • Idealized assimilation, conformism; subvert difference, prefer harmony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes role of cultural differences without seeing how they affect work being done • Pigeon-hole staff • No learning from differences • Employees feel exploited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be revealed)

Now, ten years later, I would label the emerging paradigm "Learning & Effectiveness as a Global Citizen." The paradigm would say, "We commit to being responsible global citizens in partnerships with others, for the benefit of all."

Evidence, tendencies and strengths

As I wrote this talk, I was struck by the large amount of evidence that said women are effective corporate leaders. Sidebar: While I will share some of what I found, I have a disclaimer regarding the evidence. Evidence is gathered to prove or disprove a point. It usually has a right/wrong aspect to it. It is not my intention to make someone or something wrong. My

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intention is to distinguish something as "missing" and to articulate what would be possible if it were present and to have you see that possibility for your organization.

While gathering evidence should not be discarded, another way to go is to take a stand for women as leaders and act from that commitment, not waiting for any more evidence.

As you see these statistics, notice the conversation that jumps up in you. If it says, "See, I knew women were better!! Those guys really messed up!!", don't believe it and stop thinking. Stay open and see what is at play so that your next actions can be in line with your conscious commitments, not a replay of the past.

Professor Michael Kimmel's Harvard Business Review article in the early 90's (*What Men Want*) reported that 25% of men wanted work/life balance. In 2003, Catalyst asked men and women in corporations to agree or disagree with this statement: "I find it difficult to balance the demands of my work with the demands of my personal life." In the Financial Services sector, the percent agreeing was 58% women, 56% men. In the participants who were law graduates, 68% women agreed, 66% men agreed. The dissatisfaction is shared. Are you surprised? I was.

Do you suppose this dissatisfaction is not being voiced, or that the people to whom it is being said can't hear it or won't deal with it because it doesn't fit the current paradigm? Catalyst found that the paradox is that men feel reduced work arrangements are not socially acceptable for them, yet women who work part-time believe their career prospects are diminished because men do not utilize [work hour] flexibility. It's a catch-22.

"In investment banking, it's hard to be a middle-level vice president and not spend 90 hours a week at firm. That just doesn't fit with trying to raise a family."
Catalyst survey, Business man

An expert in Unmasking the Gender Effect™, Bonita Banducci offers the following chart that distinguishes tendencies of men and women. She emphasizes that while men *tend to be* individualistic in their views and approach, some men are more relational in the way they operate. Likewise, while women *tend to be* relational in their views and approach, some women are more individualistic. Each person has some of both. It's like being right- or left-handed – we have a preference and strength.

INDIVIDUALISTIC Men		RELATIONAL Women
Emphasizing Status, Independence	RELATIONSHIPS	Emphasizing Connection, Interdependence
Giving Information Only As Needed	INFORMATION	Sharing Information
Doing One Thing At A Time	ACTIVITY / TIME	Doing Many Things At Once
Step-thinking, Linear, Compartmentalize	THINKING PATTERN	Web-thinking, Organic, System, Integrate

Bonita wisely cautions us to not use this information to draw conclusions and put people in a box. Rather, to use these interpretations as a place from which to listen to each other and to

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better understand different perceptions. In this way, we can consciously bring the appropriate view or strength to a situation and create the best solution or response.

Making the business case for gender diversity

Scottsdale National Gender Institute (www.gendertraining.com) compiled statistics from variety of organizations on the results of companies with more women in upper management and leadership roles.

- **Better financial results.** In a study of 353 Fortune 500 companies, those with the most women in top leadership had the following financial results when compared to companies with men in top leadership roles: 35% higher Return On Equity, 34% higher Total Shareholder Return. (Source: Catalyst, 2004. www.catalyst.org)
- **Improved access to growing segment of workforce.** The number of women-owned employer firms grew 37% between 1997 and 2002 -- four times the growth of all employer firms. (Source: Center for Women's business research, 2003. www.cfwbr.org)
- **Improved market share.** Women are responsible for 83% of all consumer purchases. Add purchasing officers who are women and it is an American women's economy that accounts for over one-half of the Gross Domestic Product.
- **Better management.** Of 425 high-level executives studied, female managers rated higher than male counterparts in 42 of 52 skills measured. (Hagberg Consulting Group, www.leader-values.com)

What's being called out here is the difference in results when women are in leadership roles. Consider that the reason these results are showing up is due to the *how* women work, the way they work with and through others. It is how women see the world –from the whole, connected, interdependent – that gives them particular ways to act – collaborate, listening openly – that opens the door for others to produce great results.

The data seems compelling, doesn't it? If women leaders produce as good as or better results, why isn't there a rush from corporations to open the doors to women as corporate leaders? And if the doors are open, why aren't women rushing in? What's going on?

Compelling data isn't enough

What's going on is this: The prevailing corporate culture and paradigm historically designed by men, with rules of engagement that match men's view of the world (compartmentalize, linear thinking, compete to beat, etc.) does not allow for women's way of working (interdependence, connection, integration, web-thinking) to show up as a viable "how" to get work done.

Any paradigm survives by allowing what agrees with it and negating what doesn't. What fits is rewarded and praised: working 65++ hours per week, no break in employment, guarding information, win-lose deals. What doesn't is discouraged: flexible work hours, taking breaks from employment, openly sharing information, win-win deals.

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The current paradigm which promotes exclusion, entitlement, and power over another is out of synch with what businesses and the world need for sustainability. It's also out of synch with how women prefer to get work done, with inclusion, egalitarianism, and empowerment. The current paradigm is not wrong, it is bankrupt.

There are thousands of male leaders who recognize that the "kill or be killed" approach to business no longer works (and perhaps never did). Likewise, some women who've been successful in the prevailing corporate paradigm have done so without selling their souls. Shifting the paradigm to include women and their style of leadership will empower men, as well.

It is "how" the work gets done that is the competitive advantage in producing the results cited above (and hundreds like them), and it is the "how" that women operate from that can not be seen or appreciated – it doesn't fit with the rules of the prevailing culture of corporate business, historically designed by men, with rules of engagement that match men's view of the world (compartmentalize, linear thinking, compete to beat, etc.). Likewise, it can be difficult for women to see, understand and appreciate "how" men get work done. A major aspect of how we get work done, both as individuals and as organizations, can be revealed by exploring values.

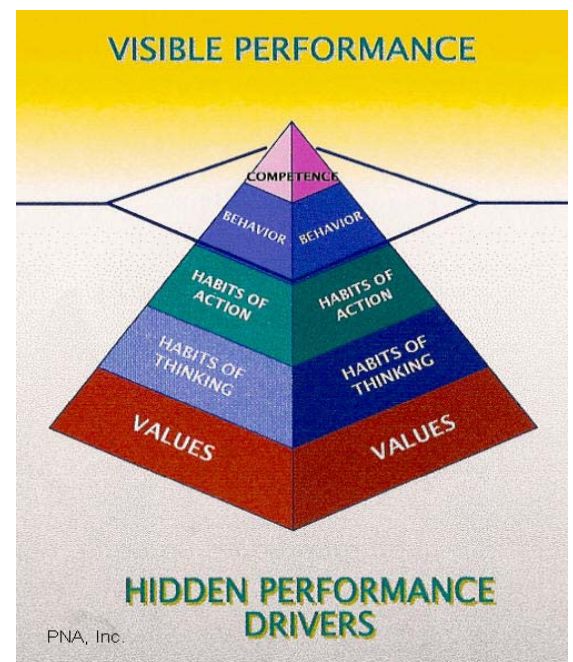
As I coach women and men executives, committed to improving their individual and team results and their level of satisfaction while producing results, we dismantle the myths and interferences that reduce performance and create breakthroughs in thinking. This process must occur with the individual before it occurs at the organizational level. The most effective way to create organizational change is to have the leader have her or his own breakthrough in thinking first.

Values and performance

Our values – what is important to us – provide motivation, direction, and the fuel for our performance. While we know we have values, it's been my experience in working with thousands of people that we don't have access to them in a way that lets alter our performance. That's because our personal prevailing paradigm – our habits of thinking and action – blocks access to them. That's also why trying to change results by forcing ourselves to behave differently doesn't work well or for long. What is effective is revealing the invisible habits of thinking and action that constrict performance and reawakening conscious choice.

Take a look at the picture. As you move from bottom to top, from values to competence/results (top), notice how the layers get smaller. Our hidden, automatic, unconscious habits restrict results. The habits of thinking form the proverbial box that everyone's trying to "think outside of". (I am caught in one of my habits right now. It's taking me much longer to get this paper written than planned because I have to say it perfectly. Too many re-writes.) To expand performance (top), remove unwanted habits.

How does this relate to women's leadership?



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Organizations have habits of thinking and action with formal and informal structures that keep those habits going: policies, procedures, reporting structures, roles, recruiting practices, deciding who goes to the company retreat or golf outing, and on and on. If the organization has been very successful (GM, ATT, Ford, Guinness), those habits are even more entrenched. "It's just how we do it around here." If a VP must rise through the ranks and have no gaps in employment (and a 3 handicap wouldn't hurt), then a woman who takes a leave of absence to raise a child (and prefers scrabble) is not seen as VP material. I am guessing that you have examples of how these corporate habits restrict the result called: women leaders.

In a collaborative survey conducted by Catalyst, The National Foundation for Women Business Owners, the Committee of 200 and Salomon Smith Barney, women cited the following reasons for their exodus from corporate America:

- Their contributions were not recognized or valued
- They were not taken seriously
- They felt isolated as one of few women or minorities
- They were excluded from informal networks
- They were excluded from training opportunities
- They faced inhospitable corporate cultures

PNA, Inc., (www.pnaincorporated.com) surveyed 600 women and men at the Director level and above regarding their values. Approximately 60% were from the U.S., 35% from Europe and 5% from Australia and New Zealand. In comparing data, no differences were found between the U.S. and other countries regarding values. Women gave less importance to Power/Authority, more importance to Service/Generosity and the same importance to Achievement/Success. Female executives preferred more collegiate environments and were as motivated by achievement as males.

By revealing what an individual means by "power is less important to me" than other values, often reveals why women exit the corporate workforce, taking their knowledge and expertise home or into their own businesses.

Another way to see the impact of how power traditionally occurs in organizations designed by men shows up as an unwillingness of women to get involved in the power game requiring the use of one's title as clout or leverage. This is a learned response, not inherent to women, but taught by "the way it is" in most corporations. The culture that rewards a "power over" approach has women opt out of corporations and with them goes their contribution, knowledge, and ways of managing and leading.

A client story may help to illustrate the point.

Situation: I worked with a VP of IT in an A+ rated insurance company to create a more productive environment for herself and her team of eight men, some from non-US cultures. More productive meant reducing misunderstandings, having better coordination of code handoffs (they had adequate procedures, but sometimes execution was poor), and increasing the rate at which projects were completed. To the leader, more productivity also meant individuals would initiate more solutions, rather than wait for her to say "do this."

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Solution: The exploration of values revealed those which were important to each person and the team, as a whole, and those that were not. Immediately our dialogue focused on the value “power/authority” (feeling in control and able to make things happen). The leader rated it not important at all and added her avoidance of using her authority which to her meant pulling rank on others and saying “do it because I said so” and the team’s interpretation (paraphrased) along the lines of “why wouldn’t you use your title? Isn’t that what a leader is supposed to do?”

Once the hidden assumptions (the Krazy® Glue of paradigms) were revealed inside a commitment to be more productive and reduce misunderstandings, the men saw that their view of “power over” (domination and force) was different from the woman leader’s “power with” (collaboration and cooperation). Focus could then be turned from criticizing the “how” to achieving the desired results. (By the way, the leader was selected by CIO magazine as one of the top IT leaders that year.)

The leader of an organization must insist that the people learn how to work together effectively. The insistence comes in the form of modeling the way, putting money in the budget for training and development and being willing to hear when they aren’t working well together. Only when the leader is willing to hear when team work is missing can authentic teamwork be present.

It’s not only about gender; it’s about diversity of thinking

Remember, this conversation is about organizations having environments where everyone’s talents are released, recognized and rewarded. Where people aren’t hired or promoted because they fit a compliance checkbox (female, white, black, Asian), but because their strengths, skills, knowledge, ways of thinking and commitments are the best fit for the role.

Another client story illustrates the importance of finding the best person-to-role match which takes into account how (there’s that word again!) a role is to be executed by the manager and the “how I like to work” preferences of the person in the role.

Situation: A product manager at an international publishing house was not achieving expected results. He worked extra hours, plus weekends and still wasn’t successful. His manager, a woman, committed to both results and retaining a talented employee, asked the question: What’s preventing his success?

Solution: Data from RoleScript™ (a web-based, 360-degree tool) revealed key differences in expectations of how the role was to be performed. The manager expected the role to be accomplished without direct reports and by “getting work done through others” (collaboration built not by title, but by aligned goals). The role holder explicitly agreed with the expectation, however, his habits of thinking and action showed a low preference and a lack of comfort in building relationships. He acknowledged he didn’t have the skills nor the commitment to build relationships at the level required. He was moved to a role that better suited his strengths.

When people value others for their different world views and perspectives, diversity will no longer be about gender or race or culture but about learning how to be effective. Then diversity will no longer be an obligation, but an opportunity and be a true competitive advantage.

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Where to start

There's nothing wrong. There is a new paradigm to create. It begins with your commitment. If you are looking for one, try this one on: Creating the possibility of your organization as a global citizen. Standing there, you'll see what to do...

- Create the possibility of women as leaders (Now what does your talent pool look like?)
- Examine prevailing paradigm – tell the truth about what it will/won't allow for, then create a paradigm that excites everyone and ignites their contribution
- Redefine leadership as a possibility, not a membership into an exclusive club
- Redefine diversity as different ways of thinking and acting
- Create a culture of accountability that honors people
- Design metrics that measure possibility and innovation, not compliance
- Embrace failure as the route to learning
- Have compassion for yourself and others as you bring humanity to work

Leadership from the whole and for the whole

As organizational leaders see themselves and invent their organizations as global citizens, I see the possibility that they will naturally be caretakers of the world's resources – land, water, air and people. I see the possibility of leaders, thinking from the whole, taking actions and producing results that will sustain their one business and our one world.

My colleague, Linda Alepin, reminds me about two games: one that is finite, one that is infinite. The goal of the finite game is to play until a winner and loser are declared and then to stop. The goal of the infinite game is to have the opportunity to continue to play.

I see you, the HR and OD professionals, as the stewards of the people's well-being who are playing the game called global leadership. How healthy and alive our leaders are will determine whether the game we all get to play is finite or infinite.

When women lead from their authentic, whole selves, I predict that the door to everyone's talents will fling wide open ushering in a new possibility of understanding, profitability, innovation, freedom and justice for our communities, our organizations and our countries. Thank you for your commitment to opening that door.

About the author

Camille Smith teaches managers and leaders to increase performance and satisfaction for themselves and their teams. Her expertise with RoleScript™, a methodology that pinpoints the exact demand of any management, staff or professional role, allows organizations to create the best person-to-role match resulting in increased productivity and employee satisfaction. She dedicates herself to designing and delivering conversations that dramatically shift what's possible, is an adjunct professor in the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, and serves as a founder of the Global Women's Leadership Network, www.gwln.org. Camille lives with her family in Aptos, California, where she writes poetry and learns from the ocean. Please read more of her commitments and approach at www.wipcoaching.com.