

Transpersonal Leadership Series: *White Paper Two*

# Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century

GREG YOUNG



# TRANSPERSONAL LEADERSHIP

Routledge and LeaderShape Global in partnership are pleased to announce a series of quarterly White Papers around the subject of Transpersonal Leadership, culminating in the publication of a book entitled "Becoming a Transpersonal Leader" in January 2018.

So what is Transpersonal Leadership? The concept was first published in a report on tomorrow's leadership, based on a leadership development journey developed by LeaderShape (Knights, 2011). The word "transpersonal" was inspired by the use of the word in "transpersonal psychology" (Bynum, 2010). "Transpersonal" is defined as "extending or going beyond the personal or individual, beyond the usual limits of ego and personality".

**A Transpersonal Leader** is defined as:

*They operate beyond the ego while continuing personal development and learning. They are radical, ethical, and authentic while emotionally intelligent and caring.*

*They are able to:*

- *embed authentic, ethical and emotionally intelligent behaviours into the DNA of the organisation*
- *build strong, collaborative relationships, and*
- *create a Performance Enhancing Culture that is Ethical, Caring and Sustainable*

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# Women, Naturally the Best Leaders for the 21st Century

By Greg Young

**This is our second White Paper, entitled “Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century” and written by Greg Young.** This important and timely topic follows the first very popular White Paper published in this series on the subject of “Ethical Leadership: How to Develop Ethical Leaders” which is a fundamental component of Transpersonal Leadership.

This second White Paper takes a look at the reasons why we have a confluence of women playing a greater role on the world stage in the workplace and the reasons behind some of the cultural barriers that hitherto have kept them from achieving parity at the most senior levels. It goes on to reveal new data built around Emotional Intelligence attributes and comparing strengths of men and women. The areas where women emerge as stronger are those required by leaders of organisations to be most successful in the 21st century. It then goes on to present some practical input on how to develop organisations that recognise those strengths and to help women develop in areas where they are often naturally weaker than their male counterparts.

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## Introduction:

History is awash with examples of famous leaders that when asked one can bring to mind. Ask the question specifically whether one can name a notable woman leader and the task still gets more challenging. The responses might include female monarchs Cleopatra, Elizabeth 1, Victoria, or politicians Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher or Aung San Suu Kyi. Take it a step further and ask the question relating to notable woman business leaders and I am guessing that you will really struggle.

But is it just a coincidence or a real sign of the future that as this paper is published we are probably on the verge of women leading the three most powerful nations in the Western world? Angela “Mutti” Merkel, the leader of Europe, has been the German Chancellor since 2005. A pragmatic leader with a relatively low ego and a strong sense of duty has now been joined by the newly appointed British Prime Minister, Theresa May who had been the UK Home Secretary for 6 years and is known for just getting on with the job and avoiding celebrity, but also having that sense of duty. And in November, the polls suggest the first female president of the USA will be elected. It is said Hillary Clinton would become the most experienced President in history when elected in terms of prior government office. What a trio – and can they change the world for the better?

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For much of the time leading up to the 20th century women had far bigger challenges to overcome like the basic right to vote, a challenge that continues in some parts of the world. In my parent's generation, when a woman married, she was usually expected to give up work because her place was to run the home, bring up a family and attend to the needs of her husband. Generally, this meant that women did not have careers; they had jobs, something that would provide some level of personal income. When married, this also implied that the household could be funded solely based on the income on one earner, the man.

In the latter stages of the 20th century this all began to change, though primarily in Europe, North America and Australasia, beginning with the international woman's liberation movement of the 1960's which campaigned for legal and social equality for women. It continues with both the feminist and post-feminist movements into the 21st century that seek equality in pay, working practices and financial self-reliance. Along the way, social norms changed and even became a requirement that in any partnership, both parties need to work in order to generate income for a desired lifestyle. The price of housing has been a major factor.

Since the 1980s, around the world more and more women have entered the workplace, in Australia according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it has increased over 27% since 1978, in Canada women in 2016 represent 47.2% of the total labour force, compared to 37.1% in 1976. Many of these have careers in mind, ones that will provide pathways to promotion, to increased income and parity with male colleagues.

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**"Men on the other hand have been accustomed to an almost exclusive male environment for centuries."**  
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Men on the other hand have been accustomed to an almost exclusive male environment for centuries. Where women were present it was to fulfil a supporting function such as that of secretary or assistant. Men who began their careers in the 1980s are not only still in the workplace, having progressed up the career ladder, they now occupy the top jobs. Their attitudes carry weight and power and inform their inbuilt or unconscious bias.

The business environment is materially changing from the economics of the '80s and '90s. 20th Century methods are beginning to struggle in this 21st century world. Reviewing the content of MBAs, leadership development programmes and philosophies right up to the end of the last century shows that the fundamentals of accepted business practice was based on competition. This informed vision, strategy, strength, power and decision-making. Companies were built like machines with each part fulfilling its own function, mechanical raw material in, product out; a true reflection of the Industrial Revolution. The business environment in the 21st century requires businesses to be nimble and agile, both responding to rapid change and capable of anticipating what the next shift will be. They need to respond to complex, wicked problems with systemic solutions. Business leaders who will be successful will be those who can ride the wave of this increasingly changing world, harnessing the benefits of globalisation, technology and new societal attitudes to ethics and fairness. They will embrace collaborative relationships and be prepared to be radical in their thinking to build organisations that are fleet of foot and thrive on uncertainty and ambiguity. These leaders will operate beyond their ego, continuing personal development and learning. They will be able to:

- *Embed authentic, ethical and emotionally intelligent behaviours into the DNA of the organisation*
- *Build strong, empathetic and collaborative relationships within the organisation and with all stakeholders*
- *Develop a performance-enhancing culture that provides sustainability*

We call people that can do this *Transpersonal Leaders*.

What relevance has this to Women in Leadership? A preliminary review of LeaderShape's research data (Knights, 2013) - see section "Where are the Differences in Leadership between Men and Women?" later in this document - indicated that women are naturally better leaders for the 21st Century. This view is supported by a broad ranging global study by Mercer (2015 Preliminary) entitled 'When Women Thrive'.

More and more companies now recognise that collaborative, rather than competitive behaviour creates more success and as such women are well placed to lead in this century. The data show women have all the right attributes including empathy, change catalyst and inspirational leadership. More than that, there are a number of reports (Cranfield, 2016) that demonstrate that companies with women on the Board perform better. There are now women on the Board of every UK FTSE 100 company. This sounds great, but the 2016 Female FTSE Board Report (Cranfield, 2016) is typical in showing that out of 279 female held directorships, only 26, that's a mere 9.7% are executive roles so one could argue the real power is still being controlled by the men. An update of the report, fresh off the press in July 2016 shows that the percentage of women on the Boards of FTSE 100 companies has risen to 26%, significantly more than the 23.5% recorded in March 2015 but virtually the same as that which the Davies closing report (Davies, 2015) noted in October 2015. More worrying is that the percentage of women in executive directorships on FTSE 100 Boards has stalled at 9.7% since October 2015 when it was 9.6%.

**"More and more companies now recognise that collaborative, rather than competitive behaviour creates more success and as such women are well placed to lead in this century."**

Representation of women on Boards in the USA is 19.9% of Board seats in the S&P 500 which compares to 19.6% on UK FTSE 250 boards. In India, data from Deloitte (Deloitte, 2015), shows women only hold 7.7% of Board seats in India compared to 12% globally. In contrast the share of women on Boards in Norway stands at 37% (World Economic Report, 2013), edging closer to their statutory target of 40%.

Clearly, men play a big part in women getting the real power in companies. The enlightened ones recognise and embrace the strength and diversity of qualities and opinion women bring. Yet others steadfastly cling on to the old ways harking back to when they were successful – but in a different context, on another day. Some sectors are worse than others; a recent report (Zarya, 2016) showed that 1 in 3 Technology CEOs don't think gender diversity is important. Congratulations to the 38% of those that do but the remainder do not. According to the report, most Tech CEOs rate a specific expertise very or extremely important. Fact is, they're just not getting it. Technical expertise is ROI positive, potentially mission critical – necessary but insufficient. What will keep the company ahead is thought diversity. So, having women on your Board and exploiting that thought diversity is what will give you a company that will be around in the longer term. Having women on the Board as tokenism merely adds talking ballast to the payroll.

**"Technical expertise is ROI positive, potentially mission critical – necessary but insufficient. What will keep the company ahead is thought diversity."**

It's no secret then that there is resistance from some men to welcome women into the powerful positions in senior leadership, but actually that's not all. Women themselves can be their own worst enemy. LeaderShape's data (explained in the next section of this document) show that two areas where women don't score as well as men are self-confidence and emotional self-control. The LEIPA tool, which is based on a 360° format really shows this well. The instrument compares observed behaviour against ideal, so the closer to ideal you are observed, the better



you are performing. We find that women consistently mark themselves poorly, so their self rating shows them to be pretty poor performers across all the EI competencies. But being a 360° format, when they see the scores that colleagues have given them, their hidden strengths (determined by the difference between their own scores and that of their colleagues) shine out and are usually manifold. This in itself can be incredibly reaffirming, but it seems to be a real issue that women will naturally undermine their own achievements, are afraid of being found out and suffer from imposter syndrome.

**“It seems to be a real issue that women will naturally undermine their own achievements, are afraid of being found out and suffer from imposter syndrome.”**

## Where are the differences in leadership between men and women?

Between the years 2006 and 2013, LeaderShape undertook some original research using its executive development tool LEIPA (Leadership and Emotional Intelligence Performance Accelerator). Based on a 360° assessment format, LEIPA collects anonymous input from individuals, their managers, peers, reports and others with whom they have a meaningful working relationship. The questionnaire compared observed against desired frequency of exhibited behaviours for all the Emotional Intelligence (EI) competencies set out in Goleman’s model of EI and leadership styles (Goleman, 2002). Data from 161 individuals were assessed, 40% of which included women as the subjects. Ethnicity was not recorded, but all subjects were UK based at the time of the assessment and the leaders were drawn from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

Although LeaderShape did not set out to focus on gender as a leadership issue, subsequent analysis of the data comparing results from men with that of women indicated some interesting similarities and differences.

The four EI Competencies of Self Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Management, were broken down into a number of EI Capabilities.

Three other capabilities (Trustworthiness, Communication, and Conscientiousness) were also assessed which are considered EI capabilities by some authors but not others but are considered to be fundamental to good leadership performance.

## Data and analysis

The LEIPA survey comprises 92 statements which describe granular behaviours such as “Behaves calmly under stress” or “Identifies opportunities and stimulates individuals to develop to their full potential”. They were asked to rate to which level they currently observe the behaviour (“how often does this occur now and in the recent past?”) and at which level they would desire the behaviour (How often would you like this to occur?) to occur.

### Absolute Level of Observed & Desired

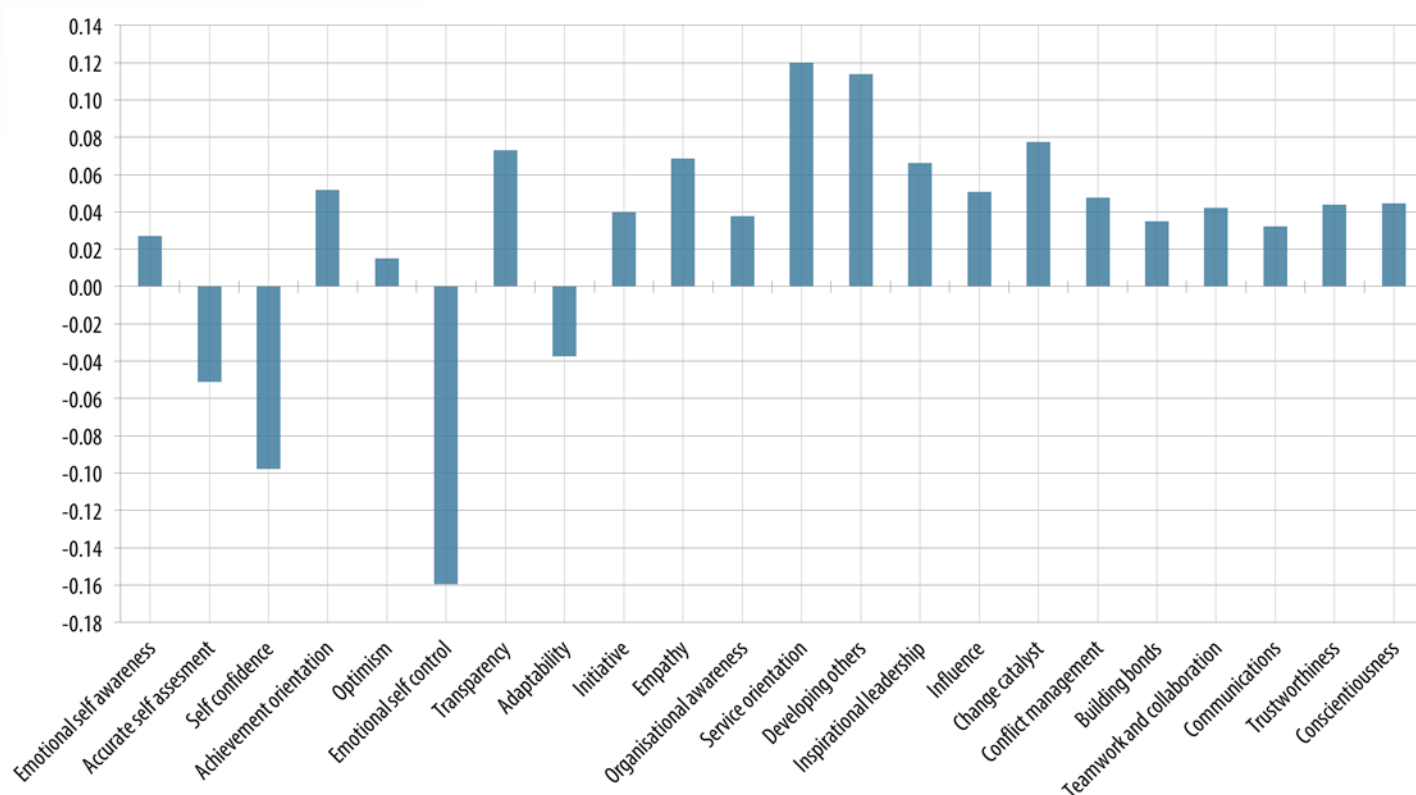
<b>1</b>	<i>Never or Almost Never</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>Occasionally</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>Quite Often</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>Usually</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>Always</i>

The difference between observed and desired (The Difference Index) was measured for each individual behaviour which were grouped into 19 EI Capabilities. As shown in the table to the right, a "Difference Index" score of greater than 0.5 suggested the individual might need to improve that particular behaviour and the greater the Difference Index the greater the need for improvement and development.

Comparing the mean Difference Index scores of men against those of women showed that women fared better in 15 of the 19 Capabilities as shown on the chart below.

Difference Between Observed and Desired	
Performing beyond expectation	<0
Performing at expectation	0
Performing close to expectation	>0 but <0.5
May need improvement	From 0.5 but <1.0
Indicates need for change	Between 1.0 and 1.5
Significant shortfall	>1.5

Emotional Intelligence Capabilities Differences between Women & Men  
+ve difference = Women stronger



In the four Capabilities where men scored better were Emotional Self-control, Self-confidence, Accurate Self-Assessment and Adaptability (although the last one is not statistically significant).

The key EI Capabilities where women scored best included Service Orientation and Developing Others but also Change Catalyst, Transparency, Empathy and Inspirational Leadership.

Although women scored better than men in other capabilities too, the results were not significant.

**"Women fared better in 15 of the 19 Capabilities."**

Difference Index Scores			
<i><b>E.I. COMPETENCIES / Capabilities</b></i>	<i><b>MALE</b></i>	<i><b>FEMALE</b></i>	<i><b>Difference</b></i>
Sorted According to WOMEN's Strengths			
SOCIAL AWARENESS	0.59	0.52	0.07
RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	0.69	0.62	0.07
SELF MANAGEMENT	0.49	0.49	0
SELF AWARENESS	0.58	0.62	-0.04
Service orientation	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.38</b>	0.12
Developing others	0.82	0.71	0.11
Change Catalyst	0.73	0.65	0.08
Transparency	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.41</b>	0.07
Empathy	0.83	0.76	0.07
Inspirational Leadership	0.69	0.63	0.07
Achievement orientation	0.52	<b>0.47</b>	0.05
Influence	0.63	0.58	0.05
Conflict Management	0.76	0.72	0.05
Conscientiousness:	0.54	<b>0.5</b>	0.04
Trustworthiness:	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.31</b>	0.04
Team work and Collaboration	0.64	0.6	0.04
Initiative	0.66	0.62	0.04
organisational awareness	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.41</b>	0.04
Building bonds	0.53	<b>0.49</b>	0.04
Communications:	0.65	0.62	0.03
Emotional Self Awareness	0.63	0.6	0.03
Optimism	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.46</b>	0.02
Adaptability	<b>0.5</b>	0.53	-0.04
Accurate Self-Assessment	0.6	0.66	-0.05
Self Confidence	<b>0.5</b>	0.6	-0.1
Emotional Self control	<b>0.41</b>	0.57	-0.16

Colour Coding

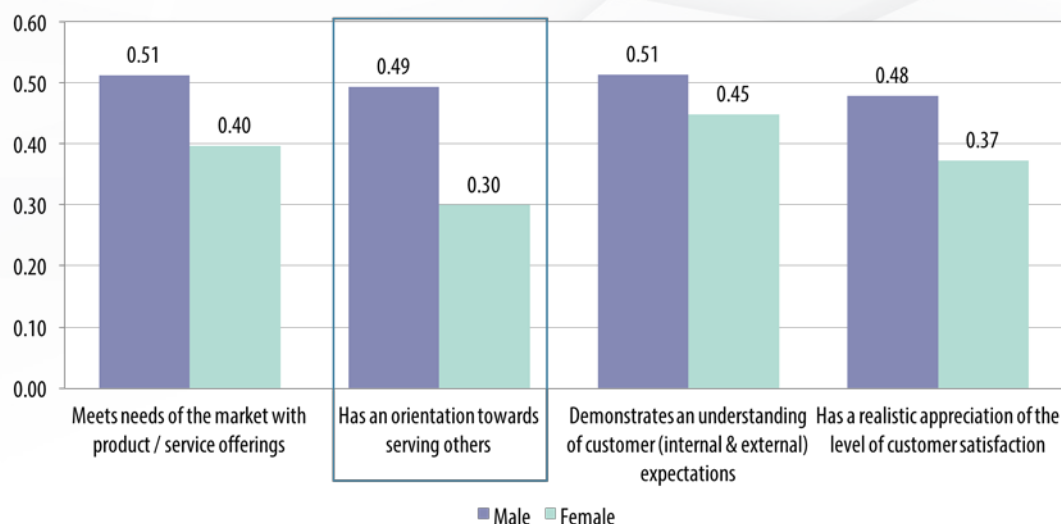
	< -0.10
	0.05 to 0.09
	0.01 to 0.04
	0
	-0.01 to -0.04
	-0.05 to 0.09
	>0.1

The table above shows the four EI Competencies and the 19 EI capabilities and the three other capabilities. It shows the EI Competencies and Capabilities in the order of female strengths. The biggest differences can be seen to be with Service Orientation and Developing Others with Change Catalyst, Transparency, Empathy Inspirational Leadership, Achievement Orientation and Influence following behind in close order. Women fare less well than men in four EI Capabilities being, Adaptability, Accurate Self-Assessment, Self-Confidence and Emotional Self-control.



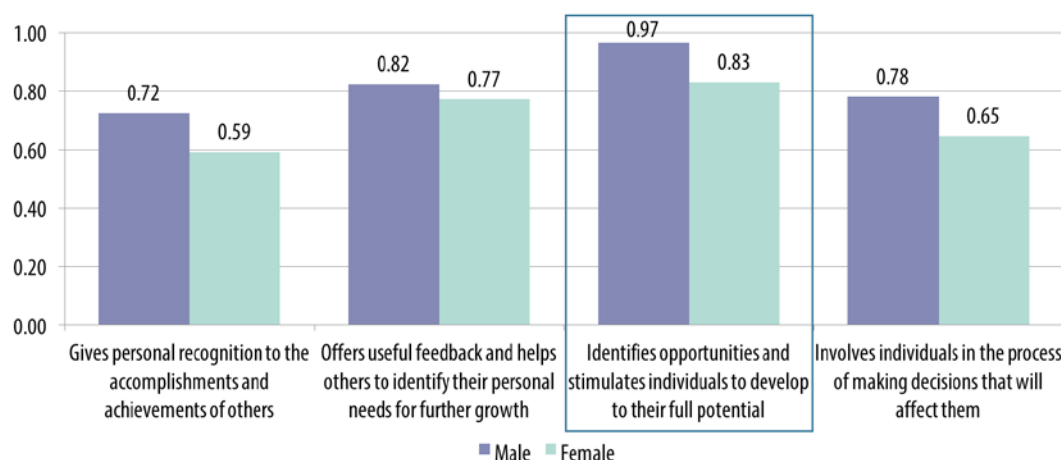
We explored the data at the level of individual behaviours; in particular, we looked at the behaviours associated with the best two Capabilities for women compared to men, Service Orientation and Developing Others, and the two worst Emotional Self-control and Self-confidence.

## Components of SERVICE ORIENTATION



We can see the relative Difference Indices of men (dark blue) and women (turquoise) for the four behaviours that make up the EI Capability of Service Orientation. We can see the behaviour with the largest difference (shown by the blue box) "Has an orientation towards serving others" is the largest single difference between men and women.

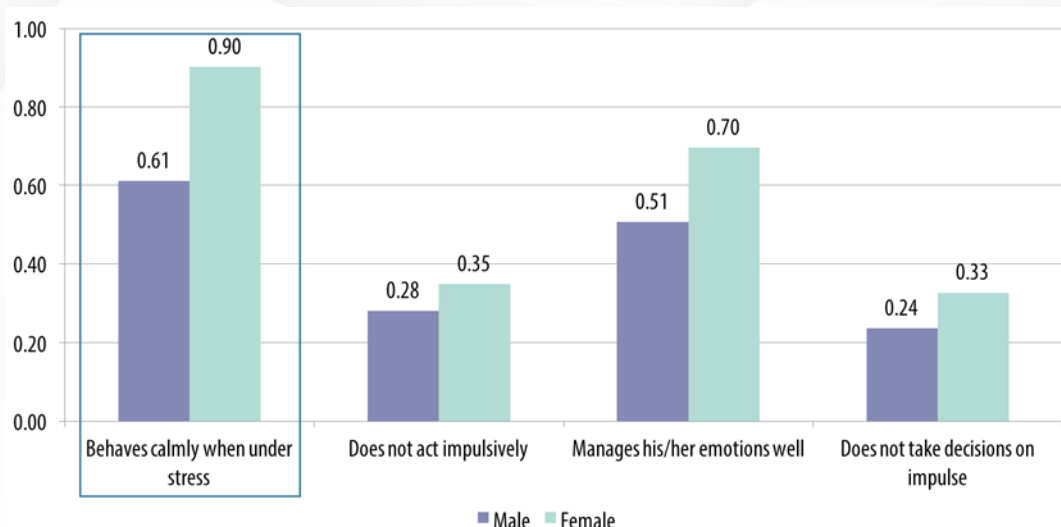
## Components of DEVELOPING OTHERS



Looking more closely at the behaviours associated with Developing Others we can see the relative Difference Indices of men (dark blue) and women (turquoise) for the four behaviours associated with the EI Capability of Developing Others. We can see the behaviour with the largest difference (shown by the blue box) "Identifies opportunities and stimulates individuals to develop to their full potential" is the largest single difference between men and women within this EI Capability.

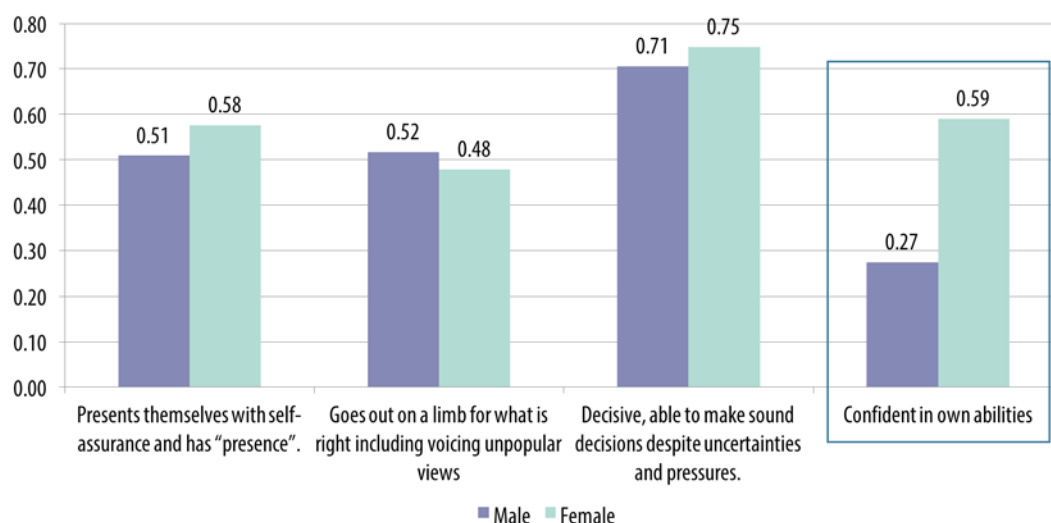
These are strengths that women can build on and where men should perhaps focus their own development.

## Components of EMOTIONAL SELF CONTROL



Looking at the behaviours associated with those EI Capabilities where women score less well than men, we note they are Emotional Self-Control and Self Confidence. We can see the behaviour with the largest difference (shown by the blue box) "Behaves calmly when under stress" is the largest single difference between men and women.

## Components of SELF CONFIDENCE



Looking at the behaviours associated with the EI Capability of Self-confidence, the behaviour with the largest difference (shown by the blue box), "Confident in own abilities", was the largest single difference between men and women within this EI Capability.

These are strengths that men can build on and which indicates an area of personal development where women might focus for improvement.

The final analysis looked at how men and women rated themselves (self-analysis) compared to how their raters evaluated them. On average, both men and women rated themselves to have a greater difference between "observed" and "desired" than do their raters, however, the gap was larger (0.29 against 0.15) for women. Although this could be attributed to poor self-assessment,

it may also be associated with low self-confidence. During the feedback process, it is not uncommon for this picture to be a revelation to the candidate in understanding how others see her in contrast to how she sees herself. This mirrors the commonly felt imposter syndrome. In contrast, being presented with anonymous and therefore less biased data on her own performance that is considerably better than her own assessment provides a very positive and reaffirming boost to self confidence that often equates to a mandate to do more of the same.

Self (Difference) Male Vs Female		
Male	Female	Difference
0.15	0.29	-0.15

## Ensuring women reach the top:

There are many strong and valid societal and organisational reasons why fewer women reach senior positions and the very top of organisations than would be expected and justified by demographics. What this research study identifies is that women are actually better than men as leaders in many of the EI capabilities that make up the leadership styles that leaders need in the 21st century.

“During the feedback process, it is not uncommon for this picture to be a revelation to the candidate in understanding how others see her in contrast to how she sees herself.”

However, the study also shows that there are a few areas, especially around emotional self-control and self-confidence where women could and should focus to make themselves as good as they can be as leaders in this fast changing world.

## Strategies for building a strong pipeline of women leaders

This study shows that woman have natural attributes that when realised make them ideal leaders for organisations in the 21st century. The challenge however, is to get more women into leadership positions where they can deliver maximum advantage.

These strategies fall into broad categories of:

1. *Setting targets based upon sound data*
2. *Creating the right HR policies that enable the talent to be present in the work environment*
3. *Developing Organisation Development (OD) policies that recognise the difference in requirements between genders.*
4. *Building a culture that recognises and encourages leverage of the difference that woman can make to strategic thinking and performance.*

### Setting targets

While the debate about gender quotas continues, and 15 countries globally have adopted them (Terjesen, 2016), others, including the UK have adopted a voluntary business-led approach. Targets provide clarity of goals and a disciplined approach to change. They should be set in the

context of a clear action plan, with a specific timeline and a robust measurement process to identify progress. Target setting in this way is a manifestation of vision and a clear communication both internally and externally that the organisation seeks to shift. However, targets should not be set only for the highest level, say at Board level, they should be set to build a strong succession pipeline of talented women. This might include setting proportionality in the promotions process, processes that are designed to minimise unconscious bias. So say if 40% of the available talent pool comprises women, then it would be expected that roughly 40% of staff promoted to senior positions from that pool would be women, reflecting the available pipeline.

## Creating the right HR policies

Mercer's global study 'When Women Thrive' (Mercer, 2015) demonstrates that policies such as pay equity and health and benefit programmes impact firms' long term ability to engage and retain female talent. According to the World Economic Forum (2015), women today earn what men were earning ten years ago with global average earnings for women being \$11k compared to \$21k for men. This is sometimes a matter of unintended consequences, for example, an organisation whose culture is equally supportive of men having time off options for family and paternity leave are better situated to improve the representation of women. When men take time off for family reasons, this can release the woman to be in work and participate in the talent pool and improve chances of promotion. In Sweden, parents are entitled to 480 days leave (until the child is 8 years old) of which the father must take at least 90 days. In fact, the fathers take closer to 120 days (Swedish Gov., 2016) pay equity means that men's roles are less likely to be prioritised over women's for those families required to maximise income to support a burdensome mortgage.

**"Women today earn what men were earning ten years ago with global average earnings for women being \$11k compared to \$21k for men."**

## Reframing OD policy

Most organisations' Organisation Development (OD) policies are remnants of the 20th century, naturally favouring a male approach to job application and promotion. Women often approach matters in a different way; it often being said that a man will look at a job application and think 'I can do 20% of that, I think I will apply' and a woman will think 'I cannot do 20% of that; I don't think I can apply'.

## Case study:

In the '90s I was on a panel of employees asked to undertake some research by a particularly enlightened General Manager. The context was a Pharmaceutical company, in particular the sales function. It was noted that at the Sales Representative level, the majority of the employees were women, around 75%. At Territory Management level, this proportion went down to 50% women; at Regional Management level, the percentage of women was 25%. The National Sales Manager was, and has always been a man, neither had there ever been a woman on the Executive Team. The task was to find out why this was so and to create an environment where women could be better represented at higher levels in the organisation.

We undertook a series of interviews and observed:

1. Women made successful sales representatives, at least as good as the men.
2. Where women were in leadership and management roles, their teams performed as well as those reporting to male managers.
3. Some women eliminated themselves from career progression because they left on maternity leave and elected not to return (within the period of the study).
4. Some women had no ambition to seek promotion, this number was similar to that of men.
5. Some women had a desire for promotion but did not put themselves forward.
6. Some women sought promotion, but were unsuccessful.
7. A small number of women sought promotion and were successful.

Digging a little deeper we found that of those in the last three observations:

1. Some women did not feel they had the skills to make effective managers from the point of promotion or the self-confidence to put themselves forward,
2. There was a bias, conscious or unconscious for promoting in the image of the promoter. Both men and women who were promoted shared similar preferences in their Myers Briggs Type Indicator profiles with those of their boss. There was also a strong emphasis on stereotypical male social interaction, e.g. sales meetings at golfing venues, a drinking culture, etc.

That led us to action two things aimed at a bottom up and a top down approach.

- We reviewed OD policy and built in to each appraisal a conversation that asked the appraisee what development the organisation could provide that would make them feel capable of being successfully promoted.
  - The uptake was greater among women than men and included things like Managing a Budget or P&L, Leadership and Management development, Appraisal Skills, Presentation Skills.
  - We also offered a 360° assessment which provided anonymised feedback based upon capabilities, it also recorded verbatim comments. The biggest impact was seen in women who received feedback from raters that was more positive than they had awarded themselves. Being anonymous, there was no agenda and the reaffirmation that the feedback provided was extremely positive in building the self-confidence that someone needed to seek promotion.
- Senior management in the sales function underwent a series of development workshops to develop Emotional Intelligence – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Leadership styles changed and the emerging culture was less hierarchical. In particular was the realisation that diverse teams were strong teams and that a high degree of homogeneity led to a shared mode of failure.

With a shift in OD policy and development for those in positions of promoting others we saw rapid change, the number of regional managers reached parity and although the male National Sales Manager remained in post, within a year, we had a woman on the executive team.



## Building the right culture

Culture is the factor that determines performance; it is shaped by the leader(s) in the organisation through the climate they create coupled with the leadership styles they use. Importantly, leaders need to model the behaviours they expect to see in others. This quote from Tolstoy is very apt:

**“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”**

Data from reports presented earlier in this white paper indicate that women are finding their way onto Boards, but the number of those women in executive roles remains stubbornly low and appears in the UK at least to have stalled. This may indicate a sense of tokenism; we have a woman on the Board so the pressure to appoint another is off and we will go back to our old ways.

**The best leaders are recognising that diversity itself is not the point; it is the exploitation of the difference in thinking and performance that the diversity presents that is the key to 21st century success.**

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