



An Insight Into Winning the Way Through Feminine Style of Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Gone are the days when women were considered no match for men in power, for, women in the recent past have proved their mettle making rapid strides in every field of entry. The new generation women have proved themselves bold and fearless beyond doubt in all spheres of life. They have overcome all negative notions serving in the roughest and most demanding of professions and achieved results which have taken the whole world by storm. Their unending zeal, incessant desire and willingness to walk the extra mile have broken all myths about their inborn limitations that were supposed to be major roadblocks on their way towards leadership. Women possess leadership skills inherently. These skills are acquired by nature and polished through nurture. This paper aims at making a close observation of feminine style of leadership in Indian women that made them distinctive within the country as well as overseas.

KEYWORDS :

A Study of the Common Traits in Successful Women Leaders

Theories of leadership define leadership ability as a biological factor, an inborn skill of men that is lacking in women. Throughout the history, there have been very few women in positions of leadership, until the women's rights movement of the early 20th century. Significant gains started inroads during the late 20th century. Today's women are no more stereotyped into a few professions. The Harvard School experts feel that the basic quality of efficient leader is futuristic outlook and a capacity to nurture and plan for the future or unknown. This comes naturally to women. And hence no field is unapproachable to the determined modern Indian women.

To support the view point I mention a few of the whole gamut of names who have blazed new trails and set examples for thousands of others to follow.

ChandaKochhar, Managing Director and CEO of ICICI Bank, India's largest private sector bank, could even "command an army", says its Chief Human Resources Officer. Integrity and perfection are the two attributes that made her one of the country's most capable business leaders. For the seemingly conservative Kochhar, the climb to the CEO's office was arduous. Not only did she fight one of the toughest succession battles in corporate India, she also steered the bank through one of the biggest downturns in recent history, taking the helm in May 2009. She was the one who decided that ICICI had to meet clients. She set up, for the first time, client relationships. "She did not lose her composure for even a day," says Kannan, an old timer at the bank. Her decision-making process was democratic, and after the strategy was finalized, it was explained to every employee. In 2000, Kochhar, who was only 36 then, was asked to move out of corporate banking - which she had built into a big revenue earner - to head the fledgling retail division. Kamath, who recommended her for the job says, she barely took a day to make it. "New tasks will be unknown. You learn, grow and evolve" says Kochhar.

RubyAshraf, an IIM Ahmadabad product, is CEO of precious formal, a 10 million dollar company in the fashion clothing business. Precious formal sells prom dresses that got to live up the dream of American teenage girls. So how did an Indian woman with no formal training in fashion design enter this business and quickly make a success of it? She says "Dilmeinchaaah, tonikalegiraah"

KiranMazumdar-Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, India's first biotechnology company has plenty of originality and strong will. As someone who made unconventional choices - brew master, biotechnology pioneer, to personal life choices, she says she admires people who dare to do things differently. Her confidence, and her conviction in her idea at a time when the biotechnology industry barely existed, impressed Narayanan Vaghul, former chairman of ICICI Bank and founder who funded a technology that proved crucial for her business. Mazumdar-Shaw used that technology to develop enzymes for Ocean Spray, an American fruit juice company. "Till today, that enzyme has not been replaced," she says with pride. "It feels so good that we did all that here, in Bangalore." Biocon, today a bil-

lion-dollar company and Asia's largest biopharma concern, started in the garage of Mazumdar-Shaw's rented home in Bangalore, with seed capital of Rs10,000.

She says "My dad always said, People are the most valuable asset in business. Treat them with respect. Everyone has something to contribute." Her ground-level office on Biocon's leafy campus has a relaxed, informal feel, and her door is always open. Her staff is fiercely protective of her. "I got married only at 44; my work was so important that I didn't even think about having a family. I miss having a child. But that's a sacrifice," says Mazumdar-Shaw.

The headquarters of Tractors and Farm Equipment, or TAFE, in Chennai, including the office of the Chairman and CEO, **MallikaSrinivasan**, with no carpets reflect her no-frills working style. She reveals she recently got herself a smaller desk. "I didn't need a desk as big as the one I earlier had," she says. Srinivasan has always lived the way she wanted to. Her father - industrialist A. Sivasailam suggested her to study literature. But she had different dreams. She sought and obtained admission into Wharton School in Pennsylvania, US - one of the world's most prestigious business schools. Even the fact that she was married by then and the mother of a newborn, did not deter her. Her infant daughter in tow, she left with her mother. "I would go to the laundry room to study because the hum of the washing machines was a consistent, comfortable noise," she recalls.

On her return she joined TAFE - one of the Amalgamations Group's high-profile companies - as general manager, planning and coordination. The skeptics underestimated her. She promptly got down to business, holding discussions with other employees, trying to see where she could add value. "It was a great induction where only the fittest would survive," she says. "But in a few years, I had a complete grip on the business." Since then she has risen to become India's tractor woman making an indelible impression in a heavily male-dominated industry. TAFE's turnover, a mere Rs86 crore in 1985 - the year she joined - had risen to Rs5,800 crore by 2010/11, making it the second biggest tractor company in India after Mahindra Tractors. It is third biggest in the world.

"Do not get bogged down by the constraints you face. Search for opportunities. But most important, you must be happy doing what you do" She advises young girls. Her days at Wharton remain among her most treasured memories. She is still in touch with many of her friends. When her daughter Lakshmi Venu, whom she had taken to Wharton with her, married Rohan Murthy, son of Infosys founder N.R. Narayana Murthy in a high-profile wedding in June this year, a number of her Wharton friends flew down.

Findings Drawn

Women leaders are more effective in persuading others

The women leaders scored significantly higher than male leaders in persuasive motivation and assertiveness. The strong people skills possessed by women leaders enable them to read situations accurately and take in information from all sides. Their willingness to take risk and to see all sides of a situation enhances their persuasive ability.

They weigh others view point judicially and incorporate them into the grander scheme of things when appropriate. These women leaders are flexible in decision making and value audience's perspective, so that the people they are leading feel more understood, supported and valued.

Women leaders learn from adversity and carry on with an empathetic attitude

Women leaders possess a rare combination of traits that make them unique in approach. They are good at dealing with rejection and disappointment as most of them have experienced this during their saga towards success. So they are more assertive than their male counter parts. This combination of traits enables the women in our study to express a unique approach toward dealing with disappointment, rejection or situations that don't work out their way. Dr. Greenberg adds, "Essentially, when a woman has the talent and the ambition to move ahead, yet she receives signals, subtle or overt, that others think she will not make the grade, this can fuel her ambition further."

Women leaders are good at multitasking and Team - building

The women leaders are more likely to push back when they are overly bound by regulations and rules, engage in more risk taking and come up with innovative solutions. They tend to have a greater need to get things done. Dr. Greenberg says, "Women leaders are venturesome, less interested in what has been than in what can be. They will run the risk of occasionally being wrong in order to get things done. And with their fine abstract reasoning skills, they will learn from any mistakes and carry on."

Women leaders are more intuitive and sensible

The difference in leadership styles between men and women starts with listening. Not just listening to form your answer, but really listening, learning, reflecting, and implementing a plan that incorporates the best of everyone's ideas. This inclusive style of leadership is based on open lines of communication. Because women leaders are more willing to share information; they will also talk decisions through with many more people than their male counterparts. Dr. Greenberg speculates, "This inclusive style of leadership, positions women leaders ideally for the future, as the information age continues to evolve."

Conclusion

Women's attitudes are often based on their traditional socialization to be docile or flexible. The style of leadership traditionally used by men is **Command and Control**. A style of leadership that has often been used by women is an Interactive Leadership Style. The **Interactive Leadership** Style is based on characteristics that have been described as more feminine, such as good communication skills (especially the ability to be good listener & to be empathetic), good intermediary skills (for negotiation & conflict resolution), and well-developed interpersonal skills & a soft approach to handling people. Women's leadership styles, at the moment, do differ from men's but men who are not comfortable with the traditional "command and control" style can learn and use the interactive style; Women's leadership styles are not less effective than men's styles and they can be more effective in team-based consensually-driven organizations that are becoming more common today.

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