



The Qualities That Distinguish Women Leaders

Women leaders are more persuasive, assertive and willing to take more risks than male leaders.

Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders, according to a new study conducted by Caliper, a Princeton-based management consulting firm, which has assessed the potential of more than two million applicants and employees for over 25,000 companies around the world, and Aurora, a London-based organization which advances women and comprises a 20,000 member businesswomen's network.

Women leaders also were found to be more empathic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts. ***"These qualities combine to create a leadership style that is inclusive, open, consensus building, collaborative and collegial," according to Herb Greenberg, Ph.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of Caliper.***

"We should emphasize that the male leaders in this study were also exceptional in these areas. But the women leaders set a new standard," adds Dr. Greenberg.

As a footnote, the women leaders in the United Kingdom and the United States share very similar, very strong profiles.

While scores of executives and academicians have weighed in on what it takes to be an effective leader, a participant in the study, Connie Jackson, Chief Executive of St. Bartholomew's & the Royal London Charitable Foundation, provides an excellent working definition: ***"Strong leadership starts with being able to pull together a group of people – who may not have anything in common – and getting them to buy into a vision of themselves as a collective group who can achieve uncommon results."***

*Mara Swan,
Chief People Officer for
Molson Coors, points out,
"I believe this study
shows that for a
woman to become
a leader today,
she has to fight
harder against
the status quo,
which requires her
to be more focused
and determined."*

Methodology

While much research has been published comparing the leadership styles of women and men, this study specifically focused on the personality qualities and motivational factors which are at the core of the underlying gender differences.

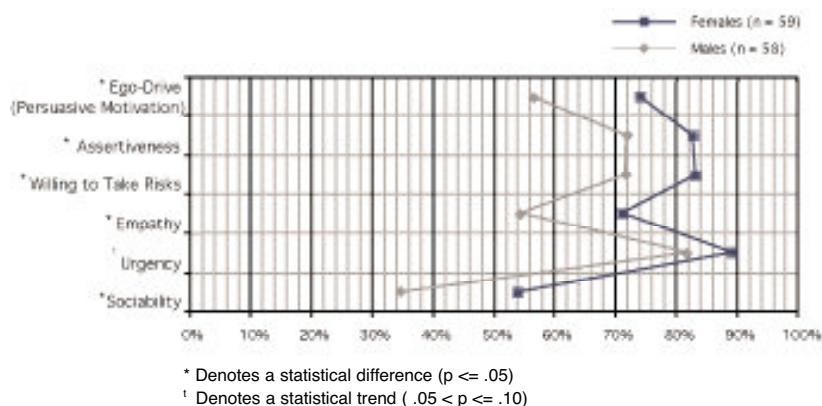
This study included a valid and reliable personality assessment, the Caliper Profile, as well as a demographic analysis and in-depth interviews with 59 women leaders from some of the top companies in the United Kingdom and the United States, including: Accenture, Bank of America, Deloitte & Touche, Deutsche Bank, The Economist Group, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Ernst & Young, IBM, International Paper, Johnson & Johnson, Kohler, Lloyds TSB, Molson Coors and Morgan Stanley.

These women came from 19 different business sectors; the highest representation was Finance (26%), followed by 7% each in Computer, Education & Consulting, Health Products & Services and Real Estate. Age break-outs of the women leaders included: 30-39 years (24%), 40-49 years (49%) and 50+ years (27%). The majority (69%) of the women were married, 5% lived with a domestic partner and 26% were single. Forty-one percent had dependent children living with them in the home.

For comparison purposes, the women leaders in this study were matched to a representative sample of male leaders drawn from Caliper's database, representing similar job titles.

Finding 1:

Women leaders are more persuasive than their male counterparts.



The women leaders scored significantly higher than male leaders in ego-drive (persuasive motivation), assertiveness, willingness to risk, empathy, urgency, flexibility and sociability.

The strong people skills possessed by women leaders enable them to read situations accurately and take in information from all sides. This willingness to see all sides of a situation enhances their persuasive ability.

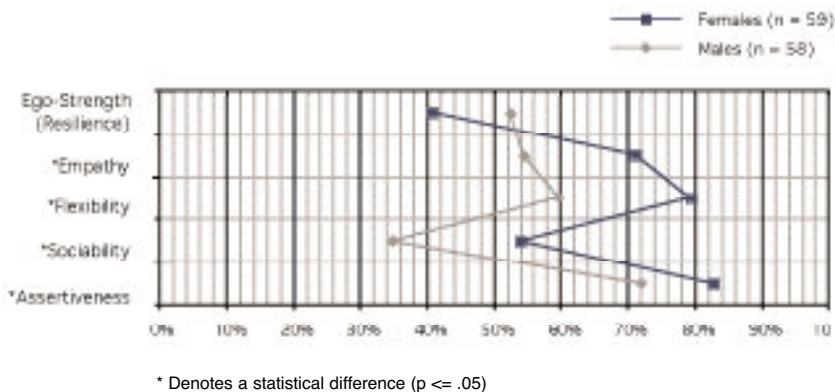
They can zero in on someone's objections or concerns, weigh them appropriately, address them effectively and

incorporate them into the grander scheme of things when appropriate. These women leaders are able to bring others around to their point of view or alter their own point of view—depending upon the circumstances and information they uncover. They can do this because they genuinely understand and care about where others are coming from. This allows them to come at a subject from their audience's perspective, so that the people they are leading feel more understood, supported and valued.

"The male leaders we've studied, on the other hand, have a tendency to start from their own point of view," explains Dr. Greenberg. "And because they are not as flexible or willing to interact with others, the male leaders may tend to force their perspective and convince through the strength of their position...rather than actually persuading. The male leaders we studied run the risk of not necessarily convincing people to agree with them so much as pushing for their point of view."

Finding 2:

Feeling the sting of rejection, learning from adversity and carrying on with an "I'll show you" attitude.



The women leaders were in the mid-range on ego-strength (resilience), which was lower, though not significantly, than male leaders. But they possess stronger interpersonal skills (empathy, flexibility and sociability) and are more assertive than their male counterparts.

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 explains, "They will feel the sting of being set back. They may even dwell on it, and tend to be a little self-critical. But then they will muster their assertiveness, shake off any negative feelings, learn what they need to carry on and a voice in the back of their heads will say, 'I'll show you.'"

"With women, it's all about confidence and helping them believe that they can do whatever they want to do. And they don't have to change themselves in order to be successful. I find myself mentoring aspiring young women and giving them that push to get over being so hard on themselves,"

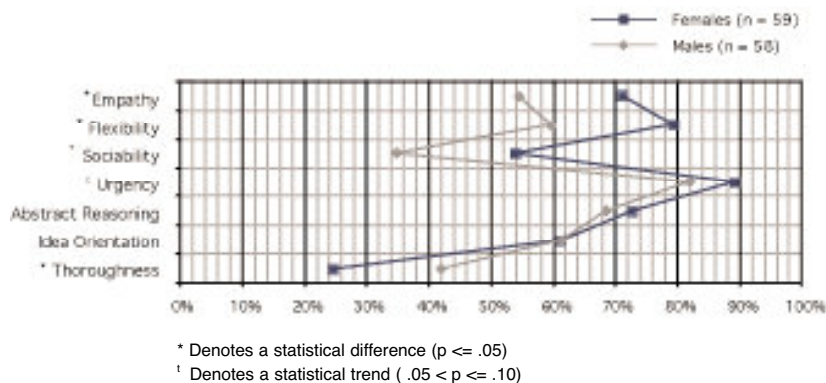
says Kate Rutherford, Partner at Accenture.

Libby Sartain, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at Yahoo! Inc., says, "If I make a mistake, I may be hard on myself initially, but then I quickly shake it off and figure out how to get beyond the situation. I don't let it undermine my confidence. In fact, sometimes when my back is against the wall, the best in me comes out."

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."

Finding 3:

An inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making.



While the male leaders demonstrate fine levels of empathy, flexibility, sociability, and urgency (a need to get things done immediately), the women leaders scored significantly higher in these areas. Leaders of both genders shared well above average levels of abstract reasoning and idea orientation. Interestingly, the women leaders were lower than their male counterparts in thoroughness.

“Women do have a more inclusive way of leading,” affirms U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, who took part in the study. “We try to bring more people along with us.”

The women leaders we studied were more interested in hearing all points of view, then making the best possible decision. The final decision did not necessarily have to be their initial point of view. They were able to read situations accurately and take in information from all sides, then make the most informed decision possible.

The difference in leadership styles between men and women starts with listening. Not just listening to form your answer, but really listening, learning, reflecting, then implementing a plan that incorporates the best of everyone’s ideas.

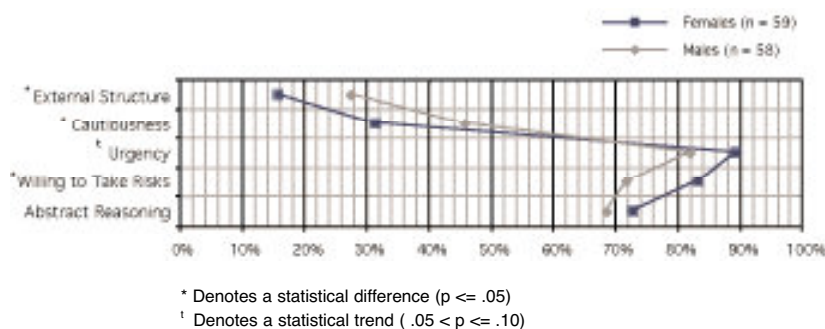
This inclusive style of leadership is based on open lines of communication, according to Susan Rice, Chief Executive of Lloyds TSB Scotland. She says, “To learn you have to keep asking. It’s all about asking questions. The people I work with will say that the process of my asking them questions helps them clarify their own thinking and they actually come out a little sharper. That takes a lot of trust. My job, as I see it, is to set a clear strategy, ask the right questions, and encourage our managers to be the experts in their business.”

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, incorporating facts and perspectives from as many sources as possible, positions women leaders ideally for the future, as the information age continues to evolve.”

Finding 4:

Women leaders are more likely to ignore rules and take risks.



According to Connie Jackson, Chief Executive of St. Bartholomew's & the Royal London Charitable Foundation, "As a leader, there are times you need to risk going in a direction that no one else has ever taken before. You just have to step out there and follow the path you think is right."

Women leaders scored significantly lower than male leaders in external structure (adhering to established procedures) and cautiousness. They were also significantly higher in their levels of urgency and risk taking. And they have very high scores in abstract reasoning.

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 than male leaders and are less likely to hesitate or focus on the small details.

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."

Are women creating a new paradigm of leadership?

The answer may be “yes.”

“So much of what it takes to be a leader has been historically defined by men,” explains Libby Sartain of Yahoo! Inc. “And while I was determined to be a leader, the last thing in the world I was going to do was to try to be like a man so that I could be taken seriously. I had to continue to be myself and create a leadership style that worked for me. I’m just not capable of being anyone other than who I am.”

This study provides preliminary evidence that women bring distinct personality and motivational strengths to leadership. They have an open, consensus-building, collegial approach to leading.

Dr. Greenberg adds, “These women leaders share a strong profile. They are assertive, persuasive, empathic, willing to take risks, outgoing, flexible and have a need to get things done.”

He concludes, “These personality qualities combine to create a leadership profile that is much more conducive to today’s diverse workplace, where information is shared freely, collaboration is vital and teamwork distinguishes the best companies.”

Jeannette Lichner, Managing Director, Bank of America, says, “The strong leadership profile exhibited by these women on both sides of the Atlantic points to the future. The female view that we strengthen ourselves by strengthening others is redefining leadership.”

To find out more about how Caliper can help you identify and develop people who can lead your organization to peak performance, please visit us at www.caliperonline.com or call us at 609-524-1200.



“We’re looking at a different paradigm of leadership, and it plays naturally to the strengths of women,” says Regina Sacha, Vice President of Human Resources for FedEx Custom Critical. “The tide has turned. The leadership skills that come naturally to women are now absolutely necessary for companies to continue to thrive. It certainly is the reverse of how it was when I first started out in the workplace. It seems like poetic justice.”

About Caliper

Caliper is a global consulting firm, which has advised more than 25,000 companies on hiring, developing, team building and organizational concerns. Throughout the past four decades, from offices in twelve countries, Caliper has assessed the potential and performance of over two million employees and applicants. Caliper's consultants provide the insights, expertise and personal approach needed to help organizations achieve their goals.

CALIPER

Solutions for peak performance.

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