

DO WOMEN OUTPERFORM MEN IN ACHIEVING 'SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE'?



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What a difference we could make if more women were in the top of organisations than men. What would the world look like with more women like Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel, Ginni Rometty and Safra Catz¹ in charge? A good start but would we have no more wars, no more hummers, no more fast food, better healthcare for all? The data shows that more women in the board of companies financially significantly outperform male boards². However, what about 'sustainable performance' or triple bottom line performance? Although women are poised to achieve more sustainable big wins³ and long-term health of a company, there is little evidence yet other than CSR and charity. I believe for that we need more 'feminine leadership' in the top and throughout the organisation. What if feminine competencies were more present and encouraged? Among men as well as women. What if competencies⁴ like building collaborative relationships, creativity (life giving), taking care or nurturing, long term focus, empathy, listening, intuition, communicating, humility, inclusiveness, human awareness, global conscience (aware of needs of others) were in the top of organisations, what would your organisation look like? What decisions would be made? What kind of products, services and processes would there be? What would the world look like in 5-10 years' time if this were a level playing field?

Not that all women – especially in the top – are good at these competencies but maybe that's my point, they may not be 'groomed' for these competencies. I have seen in my work as a woman and a professional many women adapt themselves to male behavior developing more male than feminine competencies, like delivering quick wins, solution oriented, decisiveness, competitiveness, visibility. These competencies are often effective on short term results. However, women but also men who finally also develop and demonstrate their feminine qualities at work become more authentic and a more balanced complete happy person and professional. I also see them become more successful and effective in their work when they are grounded in their inner feminine strengths in balance with their masculine strengths. On top of that, I often see them actively contribute more to a better world around them and achieve smarter win-win solutions to get there than before. Why? They bring not only their heads but also their hearts to work.

So if you want more sustainable performance, will women in the top do that for you? Not necessarily. To what extent have women (and men) sacrificed their feminine leadership competencies on the way to the top? How masculine have they become when they are up there? To what extent have they traded in their feminine qualities for working twice as hard to become the kind of (wo)man that the other men want among them? How masculine have they become to keep standing in a male dominated culture? Is this culture going to bring us a more sustainable world? Or as many companies refer, will it bring your company 'sustainability' or 'sustainable performance' or even continuity? By sustainability I mean long lasting results and added value that are good for many stakeholders, the living environment and financial gains on the short- and long-term. That is the 'shared value' Michael Porter⁵ wrote about, which companies should, could and can be achieving.

Organisations could leverage the potential of their people to create sustainable performance more, if they strategically developed feminine leadership more among women and men. They can then individually and collectively, make better, smarter choices, products, services, processes that are good for us now and later, for here and there. Choices and solutions that lead to a positive impact on the 4P's of Person, People, Planet, Prosperity. By empowering women and men to contribute to the sustainable performance and 4P impacts of the organization more, women and men position themselves better within their organization. This way they could get more of what they want and can and what the organisation wants. Win-wins for everyone.

¹. CEOs of IBM and of Oracle.

². <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/bottom-line-corporate-performance-and-womens-representation-boards>.

³. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/gender-and-corporate-social-responsibility-its-matter-sustainability>.

⁴. These are examples of competencies, which can be seen as feminine (not female necessarily) oriented depending on how they are defined and which corresponding behaviours are chosen as demonstrating such a competency.

⁵. <https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-big-idea-creating-shared-value>