Introducing Integrated Leadership and Gender Intelligence

Having both served as an executive for three Fortune 500 companies and run my own leadership development company for the past 20 years, I’ve worked with many talented executives and profitable organizations that have achieved tremendous success. Unfortunately, these same clients are suddenly losing market share or, at best, are growing at a much slower pace. Although many variables are at play, the primary cause for this shift in fortune is that these leaders and organizations continue to rely on the same leadership approach that garnered them success in the past. And why shouldn’t they? If it’s not broken, don’t fix it, right?

Although current leadership models aren’t necessarily “broken,” the reality is that they won’t drive success in today’s ever-changing and always challenging global business environment. Shifting market conditions, higher customer expectations, evolving workforce demographics, constant advances in technology, and rapid social changes require us to rethink the kind of leadership that is needed to be successful now and in the future. Over the past two years, I’ve interviewed more than 50 successful senior executives on this topic and discovered I’m not the only one who recognizes the urgency for a new approach to leadership. The truth is that 20th-century leadership models won’t work for 21st-century organizations and 21st-century problems.

I firmly believe that successful organizations, now and in the future, will be led by fully engaged, balanced teams of men and women working together synergistically to produce extraordinary results. I call this integrated leadership, and it is based on the concept of...
gender intelligence. In my latest book, Make Room for Her: Why Companies Need an Integrated Leadership Model to Achieve Extraordinary Results (McGraw-Hill), I explain why gender intelligence and integrated leadership represent the new competitive advantage.

Leaders who value and leverage gender intelligence realize that there are unique strengths in each gender, just as there are strengths in a diversity of life experiences, age experiences, racial experiences, and cultural experiences. Integrated leadership harnesses this collective human intelligence on gender-balanced leadership teams. And while many know intuitively that this makes sense, the integrated leadership model is backed by brain science.

**The Brain Science Behind Integrated Leadership**

Brain research shows the specific ways male and female brains are inherently different. The unique structure of each gender’s brain determines how that gender thinks, what they value, and how they communicate. Studies indicate that men and women produce the same intellectual performance, but their brains do it differently.

Brain research essentially shows that men tend to use primarily the left hemisphere of the brain, whereas women tend to use both the left and right hemispheres. Because a man’s brain functions are dominant in the left hemisphere, he is more likely to rely on logic-based thinking and fact-based approaches and have a more detailed orientation. Women, who use both hemispheres, are more likely to have a broader perspective and big-picture orientation, to tap into their intuition, and to more easily pick up on sensory cues (such as facial cues). Certainly, both men and women can and do possess the traits of both genders, but because of their brain structure, each gender is naturally geared toward certain tendencies.

These differences between men’s and women’s brains explain the considerable differences in how they operate and lead in the workplace—how they communicate, act, react, solve problems, make decisions, and work together. (See chart for more on how men’s and women’s leadership styles differ.)

**The Integration Quotient**

Integrated leadership leverages the broad spectrum of gender intelligence, and when organizations adopt this approach, there is a significant positive effect. I call this the *integration quotient*:

\[
\text{Male Traits} + \text{Female Traits} = \text{Better Business Outcomes}
\]

For example, attaining great customer loyalty requires us to research trends around customer buying patterns, analyze market data, and determine competitive pricing (typically male traits), while also building meaningful relationships and using emotional intelligence to demonstrate the benefits of doing business together (typically female traits). Together, these male and female traits create a whole-brain approach that produces better results than either could alone. A lack of gender balance means that organizations are only using half of their “brain” or leadership capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Factor</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem Solving</strong></td>
<td>Focus on ultimate goal</td>
<td>See how pieces interconnect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>Deductive and logical</td>
<td>Inductive and intuitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Promotion</strong></td>
<td>Promote own strengths and accomplishments</td>
<td>Promote strengths and accomplishments of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation</strong></td>
<td>Listen for information</td>
<td>Listen and read social cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Stress</strong></td>
<td>Deal with it alone</td>
<td>Reach out to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Leadership Style</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchal and directive</td>
<td>Participatory and collaborative</td>
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Multiple studies have proven the value of gender-diverse leadership teams.
Women often can’t envision themselves as senior leaders.

In order to take a seat at the executive leadership table and create a truly integrated leadership team, women must assume responsibility for their own career advancement. They must look within and determine what they are doing (or not doing) to hold themselves back and then map out a plan to achieve success in their careers. Here are some specific things women can do to address their sticky floors, advance into senior leadership roles, and help build balanced leadership teams:

- **Recognize their greatness.** Women often can’t envision themselves as senior leaders. If women will first see themselves as CEOs or executives, the rest will follow. Of course, they have to work hard and prepare. But in many cases, women are already doing the job of an executive but without the title. Women need to realize that their natural strengths and style are valued in today’s business environment and dream big!

- **Get on the right escalator.** “Getting on the right escalator,” a term coined by Kathleen Matthews, Executive Vice President of Global Communications at Marriott International, simply means moving in the right direction. There are several factors that keep women from moving in the right direction with respect to their careers, such as being too entrenched in their comfort zone, allowing others to determine their career path, and being reluctant to get off the wrong escalator (that is, change course if they’re headed in the wrong direction). In order to get and stay on the right elevator, women need to know what is important to them and how their career fits into their life goals. It’s also crucial that they bring to a conscious level the negative assumptions and fears that keep them from moving on when their intuition is telling them it’s time for a change.

- **Leverage their power.** Many women have misconceptions about power and therefore are less likely than men to recognize and use their ability to influence others. It is essential for women to understand and use both their personal and organizational power. Personal power comes from four sources: knowledge, leadership persona, resiliency, and ability to effectively communicate. Organizational power also comes from four sources: position/title, control and allocation of resources, breadth and depth of one’s network, and reputation.

- **Show up strategic.** My experience coaching hundreds of women tells me that they are in fact strategic, but they often don’t appear that way to others. When it comes to showing up strategic, there are two key areas most women should consider.

  1. **Enhancing their executive presence.** Executive presence has to do with the way one carries oneself, including traits such as poise, confidence, the ability to make decisions, the image one conveys, and having a broad perspective. At SHAMBAUGH, we use a tool that breaks down presence into four areas: physical/nonverbal, communications,
relational, and results. This framework helps women (and men for that matter) think of executive presence in tangible terms.

2. **Reframing their conversations.** Women need to find their voice—be willing to speak up, to contribute, and to play an active role in leadership. Speaking strategically means demonstrating an understanding of the entire enterprise and its intricate interconnectivity. Women leaders must have a solid understanding of all the major business functions as well as a working knowledge of finance, the official language of business, in order to be viewed as being strategic.

- **Leverage sponsorship for advancement.** Many women resist the idea that who you know makes a difference. Yet what propels women to the top of an organization is ultimately sponsorship. Many surveys indicate that high-potential women are overmentored and undersponsored relative to their male peers, and this is a key reason why they are not advancing. As women move through the leadership pipeline, it’s important that they have a sponsor who has the positional power to help influence a promotion and that they know how to leverage that sponsor appropriately.

**Men’s Role**

I believe many organizations have missed the mark because they have not invited men to be cocreators of balanced leadership teams. And because men have been pushed to the sidelines, they have perhaps become apathetic about supporting women. Yet men, who represent over 80 percent of senior leadership and corporate boards, are in the best position to mentor and sponsor women. We need to tap into men’s knowledge, experience, insights, and mentoring, as well as their good will.

It’s time for men to actively participate in the process of advancing more women to the leadership ranks. Here are some things they can do to create integrated leadership teams:

- **Examine their blind spots about women.** I believe most male executives have good intentions and want to help more women advance. The main obstacle is something many men aren’t even aware of. It’s their biases and preconceived notions about women. We all have blind spots and it’s difficult for us to recognize them because they reside in our subconscious mind. Some common blind spots men have about women are that they are too emotional, aren’t strategic enough, aren’t good negotiators, aren’t risk takers, and can’t make tough decisions. Needless to say, these statements are not true for many women. The more men can recognize and address their blind spots with intentionality, the better we can leverage gender intelligence.

- **Coach women off their sticky floors.** Many men are not as comfortable mentoring women as they are other men. However, when 51 percent of the workforce is women, mentoring them represents a huge opportunity to grow the talent of the company. Understanding women’s sticky floors is extremely helpful in coaching them. For example, networking and asking for what one wants are both ideal topics for men to coach women on since men seem to naturally excel in these areas.

- **Be proactive about sponsoring talented women and bringing them into the fold.** Make it a personal goal to help talented women in your company gain the visibility and credibility they deserve and advance to the senior ranks. Seek out high-performing women who can work on projects...
It’s time for a leadership model that reflects the realities of the 21st century.

2. Create a corporate culture that promotes inclusion, risk taking, and flexibility. Develop and implement a framework for advancing women and minorities, and encourage accountability by linking it to business outcomes. It’s also crucial to reward people for taking prudent risks, even if they aren’t 100 percent successful in their efforts. And finally, nurture an environment of flexibility that allows people to integrate work demands with personal priorities.

3. Leverage gender intelligence. Raise awareness about the different ways that men and women think, make decisions, negotiate, communicate, and resolve conflicts through programs that get to the core of stereotyping and help people explore their unconscious biases.

4. Engage men and work to change their mind-set. Help men recognize the value of their roles as mentors, coaches, and sponsors and invite them to participate in panels and roundtable discussions that revolve around women’s issues and aspirations.

5. Adopt best practices for advancing women, including sponsorship. Many organizations have initiatives to identify high-potential women and pair them with executives who become sponsors and advocates, creating connections and visibility for them. Ensure these women have meaningful development plans, excellent coaching, and targeted learning programs.
Conclusion

The world is changing at an ever-increasing pace. This has created the urgent need for leadership models to adapt to the new world in which we work and live. It’s time for a leadership model that reflects the realities of the 21st century. The Integrated Leadership Model is the catalyst for men and women to come together and leverage whole-brain thinking and gender intelligence for success now and in the future. It all comes down to the business case: better balance means better business results!

Rebecca Shambaugh is an internationally recognized leadership expert, keynote speaker, and author of three books, including her newest, Make Room for Her: Why Companies Need an Integrated Leadership Model to Achieve Extraordinary Results (McGraw-Hill). As president of SHAMBAUGH, a global leadership development organization, Rebecca consults with Fortune 150 firms, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. She also founded Women In Leadership and Learning (WILL), one of the first executive development programs in the country. Rebecca has been featured on PBS, Fox News, and NPR, and in Business Week, Fortune, TIME, USA Today, and The New York Times. www.shambaughleadership.com.
These leadership strengths require a good understanding of human behavior and dynamics in different situations, as well as a high level of self-awareness. Mastering these leadership traits will prepare you to confidently face any situation, including ones totally new to you.

4 Business Leadership Strengths You Should Improve Today.

- Strong cross-functional knowledge of the company.
- Being able to see the "big picture".

You'll see the results in your enhanced capacity to drive real business impact through the more effective use of your personal leadership strengths.

Still looking for Ways to Strengthen Your Leadership? Discover how IMD's Transition to Business Leadership program can prepare you for more senior positions.