

# Women leadership

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP Leadership: A simple definition of leadership is that leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. Put even more simply, the leader is the inspiration and director of the action. He or she is the person in the group that possesses the combination of personality and skills that makes others want to follow his or her direction. In business, leadership is welded to performance. Effective leaders are those who increase their companies' bottom lines.

To further confuse the issue, we tend to use the terms " leadership" and " management" interchangeably, referring to a company's management structure as its leadership, or to individuals who are actually managers as the " leaders" of various management teams. Is a leader born or made? While there are people who seem to be naturally endowed with more leadership abilities than others, all believe that people can learn to become leaders by concentrating on improving particular leadership skills. 1. A leader plans. 2. A leader has a vision. 3. A leader takes charge . A leader shares her vision 5. A leader inspires through example. Women Leadership: When modern feminists movement emerged it didnt feature much discussion of leadership. There was virtually no analysis of what feminist leadership might entail. Because leadership has been largely a privilege of men, and feminism focused on women. It is understandable that study of leadership didnt have much salience. Feminists wanted to understand the women' s experiences and routes of women' s oppression. Psychologists is particular have neglected study of women.

Therefore, new topics emerged – sexual harassment, rape, math anxiety, family violence and the politics of reproductive rights, to name just a few. To

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study leadership is it in organizations or in politics would have meant focusing on men. The discovery and development of women focus topics made a good sense. Much has changed. Women are now far more common in ranks of leaders. For example, women occupy 24% of chief executive positions in United States (U. S Bureau of Labor Statistics- 2006). They constitute 44% of school principals (U. S National

Center for Education Statistics, 2005) and 21% of college and University presidents (Corrigan, 2002). It makes sense that feminists find the study of leadership appropriate now that it addresses the experiences of women as well as men. Although women remain rare in the corporate leadership and greatly under presented in politics, women' s increasing presence in these and other leadership roles raises many questions about their functioning as leaders. When it comes to leadership, does gender matter? Is there a difference between women leaders and men who lead?

Characteristics that distinguish women leaders from men in leadership: ?

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. ?

Women leaders were also found to be more empathetic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts enabling them to read situations accurately and take information in from all sides. ?

These women leaders are able to bring others around to their point of view because they are leading feel more understood, supported and valued.

Four specific statements about women's leadership qualities: ? ? ? ? Women leaders are more persuasive than their male counterparts. When feeling the

sting of rejection, women leaders learn from adversity and carry on with an "I'll show you" attitude. Women leaders demonstrate an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making. Women leaders are more likely to ignore rules and take risks. This evidence - that the leadership style of women is not simply unique but possibly at odds with what men practice - begs the question: Do these qualities have value in the marketplace?

Is this type of leadership welcomed by society and by the public and private sector? Differences between women and men leadership: There are several key ways in which people respond differently to women and men who are leaders. Conflicting, sets of expectations, high-profile women leaders in the United States are relentlessly held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. ? Different Responses to Women and Men in Leadership Roles Researchers have identified four key ways in which female and male leaders elicit different responses from those around them.

These different responses appear to be due, not so much to different leadership behaviors by women and men, as to the stimulus value of women or men in these roles. A woman leader stimulates a different reaction than a male leader because of learned expectations, shaped and supported by the surrounding social structure, that invalidate and undercut women's attempts to be effective, influential, and powerful. ? Women are expected to combine Leadership with Compassion—and are disliked when they don't Researchers have long found that people think ? male? when they think ? leader?.

Because of perceived incompatibility between the requirements of femininity and those of leadership, women are often required to “soften” their leadership styles to gain the approval of their constituents. Women who do not temper their agency and competence with warmth and friendliness risk being disliked and less influential. Women who lead with an autocratic style are the targets of more disapproval than those who enact a more democratic style; men may choose the autocratic style with relative impunity, if they are effective leaders. Often requires the application of a “harder” leadership style, they are disliked and disparaged. “People do not listen to or take direction from women as comfortably as from men. The stereotype that women are more talkative than men is unsupported by evidence. Women report that they do not feel listened to, that when they speak in meetings their comments and suggestions are ignored or belittled—and that the same comments or suggestions from men have more impact. Field studies of small group meetings in organizations show that women leaders are targets of more displays of negative emotion than men leaders, even when both sets of leaders are viewed as equally competent. Women who promote themselves and their abilities reap disapproval. Women who act more confident and assertive than is normative for women run the risk of disapproval. Research demonstrates that when women promote their own accomplishments it can cause their audience to view them as more competent—but at the cost of viewing them as less likeable. Men who promote their own accomplishments do not reap the same mixed outcomes: as long as they do not overdo it, self-promotion brings them both higher evaluations of competence and

likeability. ? Women require more external validation than men do to be accepted as leaders in some contexts

In competitive, highly-masculinized contexts, simply having leadership training or task-related expertise does not guarantee a woman's success unless accompanied by legitimating by another established leader. Gender stereotypes interfere with observers' ability to see women's competence; it is sometimes necessary for a high-status other to provide them with credibility. Qualities of Women Leader: ? Committed. ? Outspoken. ? Enthusing. ? Vivacious. ? Happy. ? Creator. ? Charismatic. ? Lively. ? Talented. ? Friendly. ? Free-Spirited. ? Outgoing. ? Measured. ? Reflective. ? Spirited. ? Open and Honest. ? Determined. ? Cheerful. Altruistic. ? Keeping my interests ? Feisty. ? Inspirational. ? Trustworthy. ? Positive. ? Forthright. ? Energetic. ? Passion. ? Inspiring. ? Supportive. ? Optimistic. ? Cosmopolitan. ? Impressive. ? Eclectic. ? Fair. ? Hardworking. ? Confident. ? Assertive. ? Caring. ? Articulate. ? Humorous. to my self. ? Complex. ? Resilient. ? Calm. ? Sparkling Women Empowerment: 'Women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'.

The last decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of women in our society. There has been shift in policy approaches from the concept of 'welfare' in the seventies to 'development' in the eighties and now to 'empowerment' in the nineties. The Constitution of India grants equality to

women in various fields of life. Yet a large number of women are either ill equipped or not in a position to propel themselves out of their traditionally unsatisfactory socio-economic conditions. Leaving a meager number of urban and sub-urban women, Indian women are still crying for social justice.

A review of government's various programmes for women empowerment such as Swashakti, Swayamsidha, Streesakti, Balika samrudhi yojana and another two thousand projects reveal that little has been done or achieved through these programmes. The discrepancy in the ideology and practice of the empowerment policy of women in India constitutes its continued social, economic and social backwardness. Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong, alert and aware of their equal status in the society. The need of the hour is to improve female literacy as education holds the key to development.

Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. The greatest challenge is to recognize the obstacles that stand in the way of their right to good health. To be useful to the family, community and the society, women must be provided with health care facilities. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation. The Women's reservation policy bill is however a very sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in parliament.

In the Panchayati Raj system, however, women have been given representation as a sign of political empowerment. There are many elected

women representatives at the village council level. However their power is restricted, as it the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can catalyst change in their villages regarding women. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go and may even have become more difficult in the recent years.

The main reason for the contradiction is that, targeted schemes tend to have only limited impact when the basic thrust of development is not reaching an average woman, making her life more fragile and vulnerable. To make a positive change basic infrastructure should be provided in every village and city. To begin with, providing safe drinking water supply and better sanitation not only directly improved the lives and health of women but also reduces their workload in terms of provisioning and ensuring such facilities. An access to affordable cooking fuel reduces the need to travel long distances in search of fuel wood.

Improved transport connecting villages with each other and with towns can also directly improve living conditions as well as unpaid labour time spent in transporting household items. It can also lead to access to a wider range of goods and services plus a better access to health facilities. Expenditure on food subsidy and better provisions for public distribution services directly affects the lives of women and girl children in terms of adequate nutrition. The patterns of resource mobilization by government also have significant effects on women that are usually not recognized.



When taxes are regressive and fall disproportionately on items of mass consumption, once again these tend to affect women more. This is not only because the consumption of such items may be curtailed but also because the provisioning of such items is frequently considered to be the responsibility of the women of the household. Also credit policies reduce the flow of credit to small-scale enterprises thus reducing the employment opportunities for women. There is a need to have womenfriendly economic policies that can enhance their social and economic position and make them self-reliant.

There is no doubt about the fact that development of women has always been the central focus of planning since Independence. Empowerment is a major step in this direction but it has to be seen in a relational context. A clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of women's emancipation both from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be directed towards all round development of each and every section of Indian women by giving them their due share. Impact women leaders contribute to business: ? There are three key drivers why businesses are interested in women today: leadership, talent and markets.

There is now data and studies to prove that more women in leadership means better bottom-line performance. Fortune 500 companies with the most women at the top have a 35 percent higher return on shareholder return to equity, and a Catalyst study showed boards with more than three women on them have an 83 percent higher return to shareholder value than boards without women. It's not about women taking over everything, it's

about having gender balance because that really does seem to tie into much greater profitability and striking performance financially. ?

One of the most compelling reasons for an organization to pay attention to the demographic makeup of its workforce is that a diverse employee base can have significant bottom-line impact. Yet, when the issue is workplace gender balance and actualizing women's economic and leadership potential, India trails behind less developing countries. ? Oftentimes when the subject of women in business is discussed, comparisons with men are made as if men are the barometer for business. This is a false perception and false too is the language. Business is not an entity separated from life; it is an entity encompassed by life.

The definitions of a business consists of a line of work, to work, a profession, a job, a trade, a position, a vocation, a field, a calling and a career. Before today, societies around the globe have claimed that women didn' t work and therefore couldn' t understand the parameters of ? formal? business. This misconception rivals some of the largest platitudes in history: the near-sighted earth is flat, the purposeful stork delivers babies and the perforated theory of evolution. The business world has presented itself to women as if it spoke a foreign language on an uncharted map.

But the truth is that the language is fabricated and the world of business operates in a land not unknown to women. By definition, everything women do and have always done is in fact a business. Women have labored the child, harvested the crop, fed the hungry, nursed the needy and educated the willing. All of those are jobs, careers, trades, vocations and callings.

Women aren't new to business; they're only new to the financial rewards. ? Today, more than ever, women are in the workplace and now own the workplace. Women have always been established in business but now they are in business for profit by way of monetary means.

Today over 10 million businesses are owned or controlled by women and those businesses account for over two (2) trillion dollars in sales. That's an astounding number and a resounding accomplishment when all considerations are factored. This doesn't come as a result of women learning anything new. This is a manifestation of which women already are: industrious, innovative, instinctive and intelligent. The traits of women are not to be compared with that of men, just shared in composition of a more productive and progressive society. Every household around the world that houses women, women manage and most commonly manage well.

The interactive and intuitive management style of women is a prerequisite to a thriving business and a productive workplace environment. Women-owned businesses employ almost 20 million people and steadily rising. ? There was a time not long ago when any man in a three-piece suit could qualify for a business loan. Those times are no more, as much money was lost and many laws were circumvented. The measures applied in today's market are far more reasonable and more accessible to female entrepreneurs. Commercial lenders and Venture Capitalists want to see that the company has done its research in that respective field.

It's important for them to know that you have experience in this area of expertise. Another major factor will be how you intend to market the product

and what the infrastructure of the company is. As you design your company, research successful companies already in that industry, introduce yourselves to other women in business and network to assist each other. Those around you that make claims of what you can't do must be excluded from your conversations, so that you may focus on the task at hand. Whether you are single, a single mother or married, taking advantage of free enterprise is the way to independence and interdependence. The success in business that any male has experienced is not because males possess some superior trait over women; it's because men have been the only players. Women can compete in any and every business. It's just a matter of choice and now that choice is ours. For one to operate a successful business, they must first define what success is in their own terms. ? The sole reason why the numbers of women-owned businesses aren't more reflective of the population is because they haven't been encouraged to do and supported when doing so.

It's been a blight on the world community and a recessive gene to societal growth. Today we see women straightening that crooked path and every society will become a more powerful force because of it. Yesterday, we gorged the bitterness of bigotry. Today, we taste the fruits of unity and diversity. Today, we plant the untainted seeds of effortless innovation and boundless meritocracy. Today, little girls and little boys will witness the ubiquitous talents of women in power and exalt their leadership. Young women will know they have a reasonable option before them and no law will disallow their choices.

It's paramount that not only young women see their defined roles as unrestrained but that young men do and work in concert as we brave a new world. It's true: Today is the greatest day in the history of the world and tomorrow will be even better. Challenges for women leadership: In spite of decades of organization and legislative support for gender equality, it appears that there is still very much a glass ceiling facing women in many aspects of leadership. Most women gaining or holding leadership roles – whether in the workplace or in community organizations – Face many challenges and oppositions which can be very hurtful and demoralizing.

Women leaders still face many unique challenges brought on by a combination of social and cultural stereotyping, gender bias, family demands and also their innate female tendencies. Women leaders still earn less in general, receive less recognition and less support especially in the male dominated, competitive corporate world but also in other professional fields, such as medicine. The most common challenges faced by women leaders are: ? The challenge of family responsibility: It is a common lament that women are expected to juggle the demands of career and family, with constant criticism from both sides for failure to achieve perfection.

For women leaders, the constant struggle to balance their responsibilities in both the professional and personal arena can be overwhelming, especially given the lack of support and the constant fight they have against the obstacles generated from traditional prejudices and gender stereotyping. In the greatest majority of break ups it is the woman who leaves. She leaves because her needs weren't given sufficient weight in the relationship.

However still men around with a 1950' s masculinity are happy for their women to work if they can manage it around all their other commitments at home.

They expect their working wives to do everything that their stay -at-home mothers do. ? The challenges from personal inclinations: For many women, learning to operate and succeed in a male dominated world means having to learn to over ride or ignore their more feminine inclinations. When the women get overwhelmed by the responsibility of looking after everyone and everything, these men offer no support except to tell their wives that they will have to quit their job if they can' t cope. ? Woman has a potential and power to be a leader.

However women often lack opportunities skills and resources for realizing their potential. Much of women' s leadership over the centuries has been invisible because the question of leadership has been viewed through gender – biased lenses. Women have been pulling together to make something happen , but all of these have been viewed as ordinary and domestic work, performed in the private sphere that did not qualify for leadership. So the first challenge is to make women' s leadership visible. ? Gender biased lenses see leadership as happening in the ? public sphere ? hich was for generations and still is to an extent the domain of men. Ironically even women have and still reinforce this bias, which is an indication that the way we are socialized determines how we think and act. a very big challenge is becoming aware that we need new lenses that will make us see thing differently. How to overcome the challenges faced by women in leadership:

When we have seen each other's work we learned the value of different work and further understood the roles of women in disasters and communities and how to strengthen their leadership.

Leadership has no gender does it? May be women are more conscious of themselves, they can lead as well as men. The Leader at home is mostly a woman who have created talented children, built savings, assets and they can built Nation with character 1. The philosophy of Panchayati Raj is deeply steeped in the tradition and culture of rural India and is by no means a new concept. ? The rationale behind the concept is to involve the public in local planning, identification of beneficiaries, decision making and proper implementation of policies and programmes of the people as described by them.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have today the basic commitment towards rural development. 2 . Panchayati Raj, as a system of governance, has had its ebbs and flows in the Indian polity ever since Indian attained independence. Various committees headed by Balwant Rai Mehta, Ashok Mehta, V. P. Naik, P. B. Patil, G. V. R. Rao, L. N. Singhvi overhauled these institutions which gave necessary impetus to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Gender equality and gender equity are emerging as major challenges in the global development debate.

Social scientists and development activists are giving increasing emphasis to these fields in their agenda for research and development. 4 As Noble Prizewinning economist Amartya Sen has pointed out, ? Democracy is not only the goal of development, it is the primary means of development. 5.

Women's participation in political processes is important for strengthening democracy and for their struggle against marginalisation, trivialisation and oppression.

Emergence of women as a strong group would change the prevailing political practices, the nature and content of debates in the legislature and women's issues can be taken care of from the feminist perspective both in policy formulation and implementation. . 6. In fact, right from the days of the freedom struggle the Indian women have been consistently encouraged to take part in active politics. But due to the vitiated political milieu, resulting from increasing politicization and criminalization of politics, the level of political participation of women has been adversely affected despite the fact that there has been a marked increase in the level of literacy and political awareness among women. . India is perhaps the first country to recognize this social fact underlined by Lenin on the International Working Women's Day in 1921, 8 and to have taken concrete measures to draw women into leadership positions and thereby into politics by giving them one-third reservation in what may now be called the third tier of governance—the Panchayati Raj.

The constitutional amendment providing one-third representation to women in elected bodies as well as reserving one-third of the offices of chairpersons for them will have far-reaching consequences in Indian political and social life. Now, some general observations can be made regarding the role of women in grassroots level governance. It has come to the notice that the percentage of women at various levels of political activities has increased



formally. The general trend is that those in politics are women belonging to the younger age-group between 25-45.

It is also revealed that women take up political career as an extension of their domestic role. While women have been active in mass movements, their presence is not felt in decisionmaking. The influence of the husbands and close relatives is quite palpable. This tendency is due to lack of confidence. This dependency is a stumping block in their empowerment. ? Another positive impact of the grassroot level experiment is the increase in the female literacy rate. Studies reveal that after two years of their election to PRIs, many women demanded literacy skills and also felt the need to educate their daughters.

Issues in which women representatives generally take interest are drinking water supply, primary health, child care, public distribution system and environmental protection. One quality observed among women representatives is their patience to hear the problems of the public. They also work in adverse circumstances. It has been observed that women representatives are honest and accurate in presenting issues to the decision-making bodies and authorities. Women would bring new ideas in local governance. They believe in a sustainable development and their emphasis is on natural resources management.

Women representatives working at the grassroot level also believe that communal harmony is an important element of development and they strive to achieve this objective. Another promising fact is that they do not indulge in corrupt practices. The elected women have exhibited their leadership in

solving some of the local problems and creating facilities for betterment of the rural society. Women are considered an extremely pivotal point in the process of change in the rural areas. Women's participation in panchayats provided opportunities to women to participate in the decision-making process.

Women's participation proved to be the most effective instrument in bringing about a change in their way of life in terms of economic well-being and adoption of new technology. Women's entry into PRIs, both as members as well as heads of Panchayats, has pushed them into the policy-making and policy-implementation process in a very big way. Whether their husbands, fathers, brothers or other relatives compelled them to take up these roles, or whether they assumed these roles as dummy incumbents, one thing is certain: they crossed the rigid boundaries drawn through their households by the same male relatives. Women are leading in ensuring that families function well and have necessities for development. Women are running the 'Caring Industry,' by managing the well being of the sick, the children and the elderly etc. Women are resolving conflict and finding solutions for issues in communities, whether it is getting clean water in a village or a streetlight fixed to prevent children and pedestrians from being knocked down by cars. Women throughout history have always been making priorities, budgets, and action plans.

Women have as managers of families and communities to the management of our nations, our businesses, religious institutions and our world. This is about making the personal public and the private political. It is about tearing

down the walls of dualism and discrimination. Negotiating to ensure that women are in positions at every level of public governance beginning from kindergarten through parliaments, businesses all the way to the United Nations require strong women-led politically-motivated civil societies to support their leaders and hold them accountable. Advocacy work must show that both women and men must work together for common good. There has to be a critical mass of women in leadership so that they can be companions with each other and allow themselves to be what they want or be allowed to be themselves and not to prove themselves. The first sign of success is when the women pioneers in leadership have space and voice to be visible on their own terms and to practice their leadership in positions commensurate with their skills. Female leadership including the skills that mothers use to manage sibling fights there will be possibilities for new beginnings. We should have more women in politics. Workshops are essential to train potential leaders as well as encourage the ones who are successful at the local governance level to enter the State Assemblies and National Parliament. More women should participate in political system to set an example for the entire world by efficiently working on issues that are close to their heart?. Top 10 women leaders in India: ? Pratibha Patil- Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the current President of India, is the first woman to hold the office.

She was also the first woman Governor of Rajasthan (2004-2007). ?

Vasundhara Raje Scindia- Vasundhara Raje, the daughter of Rajmata Vijayraje Scindia and Jivaji Rao Scindia of Gwalior, entered the politics in 1984. Besides being the first woman Chief Minister of Rajasthan, she was

the Minister of State for External Affairs. ? Uma Bharti- Uma Bharti held various state-level portfolios in India including Youth Affairs & Sports, Human Resource Development, Tourism and Coal & Mines. ? Sushma Swaraj- Sushma Swaraj, a lawyer by profession, was elected as a member of Rajya Sabha in 1990.

Later, she became the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and president of Hindu Sahitya Sammelan for Four years. ? Sonia Gandhi- Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Indian National Congress Party (NCP), was married to Rajeev Gandhi in 1969. Now a widow of former Prime Minister of India, Sonia was named the sixth most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine. ? Mehmooba Mufti- Mehmooba Mufti, the president of the Jammu and Kashmir people Democratic Party, is the daughter of the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. Brinda Karat- Brinda Karat was the first women member of the Communist Party of India. ? Mamta Banerjee- Mamata Banerjee is the founder and chief executive of the All India Trinamool Congress Party. Later, she was also made the Youth Affairs and Sport, Union Minister of State for Human Resources Development and Women and Child Development. ? Sheila Dixit- Sheila Dixit, belonging to the Indian National Congress, is the Chief Minister of Delhi since 1998. ? Mayawati Kumari- Mayawati Naina Kumari, the current Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, is the highest income tax payer among all politicians in India.

Besides these top 10 women leaders in India, Late Indira Gandhi has also been an epitome of leadership in India. References: Women and Leadership – Jean Lau Chin, Bernice Lott, Joy K. Rice <http://www.emergingwomenleaders.com>

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<http://www.emergingwomenleaders.org/2009/11/women-leadership-and-personalityinsights-form-the-myers-briggs-type-indicator/> Team Members: V. Ashwini Reddy Mala Mankotia Manjusha. P Ramya Sree Rashmi Kumari G. Swetha Reddy R. Swathi Sree Usha Kiran