

Want a Superior Workforce? Hire Women

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It goes without saying that people make the difference in great companies. Author Jim Collins brought this point home in his book: Good to Great. One reason this can be challenging is that people are different and they may not work well with others. So how do you reduce the selection process and find people who can add the highest value across the entire workforce? Well you may have to be somewhat bias in favor of women.

Take for example Alibaba (China's Amazon.com), a landmark company founded by Jack Ma who recently explained that the success of Alibaba has a lot to do with women. According to Ma, women tend to care for others whereas men are too focused on caring for themselves. Women are a natural fit for managing teams, working well with others, and leaving their egos at the door when it comes to driving performance. Alibaba goes out of its way to recruit women including a women CFO and other "C" positions traditionally held by men.

According to Ma, the greatest challenge that Alibaba faced was creating trust. People in China were highly skeptical of paying online. Without trust, it becomes exceedingly difficult to attract and retain customers. For example, most realtors are women since this reduces the level of distrust. Breaking through the trust barrier is incredibly important and women can be instrumental in gaining trust from customers.

But's leave the world of Alibaba and take a look at the science between men and women. Recent studies of the brain indicate that men and women are wired differently. A women's brain is much more active across different sections of the brain while a man's brain has more isolated and concentrated activity. It appears that women can multi-task and handle a wide range of simultaneous challenges whereas men like to start and complete a single challenge with high intensity. This is why women often run the family and make better managers in highly chaotic environments where multi-tasking is required.

And now for the final nail in the coffin: STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Over the last several years, a lot of discussion has been made that if you want to build a workforce for the future, you better have people who are adept in STEM. According to the University of Missouri, in 70 percent of countries where statistics are available girls overwhelmingly outperform their male counterparts in STEM. The study is based on scores of 1.5 million students.

"Even in countries where women's liberties are severely restricted, we found that girls are outperforming boys in reading, mathematics, and science literacy by age 15, regardless of political, economic, social, or gender-equality issues and policies found in those countries," – David Geary, University of Missouri

The fact that women are held back translates into real losses for countries throughout the world. According to the International Monetary Fund, over forty countries lose more than 15% of their gross

domestic product because of how women are denied opportunities in the workforce. For countries, like Iran, where women are severely held back the loss exceeds 30%.

“Board members named John, Robert, James and William outnumber all female board members at S&P 1500 companies.” – Ernst and Young

Regrettably, even some of the best companies in the United States don't get it. This was well described in Newsweek's cover story dated February 6, 2015 titled: [What Silicon Valley Thinks of Women](#). The numbers don't lie: Women comprise a paltry 30% of the workforce for Google, Apple, and Twitter. And these percentages drop dramatically when you consider management positions. So there is a lot of progress to be made everywhere.



Keven O'Leary of Shark Tank is all about the money. Money is the ultimate confirmation of success in business. O'Leary believes women make better CEO's than men. Approximately 55% of the companies that O'Leary invests in are run by women.

If I were running a company, I would absolutely and positively make sure women are fully and completely equal to men in every single position. If you fail to take this approach, then you are ignoring the facts behind what makes a superior workforce and this is going to hold your company back.

“For a long time I was firmly of the view that increasing the number of women leaders was a matter of women's activism, and women working together. Yet while women's activism remains critical to making progress, if you look at the levers of power in nations and in organizations, they rest in the hands of men. And to continue to rely on women alone to disrupt the status quo is really an illogical approach.” – Elizabeth Broderick, Australian Human Rights Commission

Watch Sheryl Sandberg's talk on why women are dropping out of the workforce:

http://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders?language=en