

Female enemy number one - other women?

February 1, 2013

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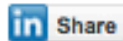
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Are you being sabotaged by colleagues of the same gender?

It's often said that if the gender imbalance were reversed so that women rather than men held a majority of leadership roles, that workplaces would be different. They'd be kinder, gentler, more empathetic. There'd be a greater focus on relationships, connections, teamwork, and support. So what's stopping women from getting ahead? In many cases, other women.

In a British poll published in *HR Magazine's* December issue, women were asked whether they'd prefer their boss to be male or female. Those who preferred a bloke outnumbered those who wanted a woman by six to one. Another survey, conducted last year by the Workplace Bullying Institute in the US, found most of the bullying that females experience is inflicted not by men but by other women.

And a couple of years ago, a report produced by the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia, revealed that women at work who didn't reflect the traditional female stereotype were intensely disliked by other women (as well as by men). The report used the word "rage" to describe the emotional reaction that colleagues felt upon being confronted by an unladylike female leader. In her new book *Liberate Leadership*, Suzanne Mercier writes that some of the difficulties faced by women in the workplace can be attributed to the different criteria by which they're judged. So much

is expected of them – both at home and at work – and this creates a fear of failure or, conversely, a fear of success.

There are several ways that women react to this pressure. Some of them don't bother applying for promotions. Others adopt male characteristics as a way of getting ahead. And then there are those who instead choose to undermine other women by bullying, withholding support, and engaging in covert behaviour.

Mercier tells me there are several causes to explain this trend. One can be attributed to a lack of female role models who can mentor colleagues and provide a reliable blueprint on how to progress. This problem is perpetuated by an unconscious bias that prevents people from associating leadership with women, viewing females more as nurturers than as strong leaders.

Then there's the scarcity mentality. "There are currently only a few jobs for women compared with men," says Mercier. "Women already in positions of leadership may worry that if they support another woman to move up the ladder, she might lose her job to her later on."

If you're a woman striving to get ahead in business but are sabotaged by colleagues of the same gender, Mercier shares the following 10 suggestions:

- Develop your confidence by understanding your strengths and successes
- Acknowledge your weaknesses but don't be ashamed by them
- Identify the barriers standing in the way of becoming a great leader and create a plan to overcome them
- "Develop a strong internal compass" by recognising who you really are and by being clear on your values
- Stop comparing yourself to others because that undermines your self-esteem
- "Question your own biases" by challenging any unfair generalisations of the female gender that you may have personally formed
- Take responsibility by admitting you can't change what happens to you, but you can change how you respond to it
- Learn to have crucial and honest conversations
- Rather than becoming defensive or aggressive, choose instead to embrace vulnerability as part of the process of being authentic
- Be the kind of boss that inspires other women to work for you by being fair, consistent, collaborative, informed, caring, and "capable of tough love in order to help others reach their potential"
-

Surely, someday soon, the issue of gender will be irrelevant in the modern workplace, right?

What are your experiences and observations? Are women holding women back?

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/small-business/blogs/work-in-progress/female-enemy-number-one--other-women-20130131-2do2k.html#ixzz2JgwnQ13z>

A handful of comments

Totally agree! As a lawyer and mother of 2 I much prefer to work with other guys especially if they are my managers. I think there is a lot of competition between women out there, especially in my area (business law). We tend to compare to each other on everything, career, marriage, family etc...it is a tough competition! Over the past 4 years, I have been reporting to female managers who are 100% focused on their career and have no personal life, no partner/husband, and no children. My previous female boss made me redundant a few months after I came back from maternity leave...and my new manager is a single 45 yr old woman with no partner and no family. Although she has given a great opportunity/career progression I can feel that she gets annoyed when I talk about my kids. Weird.

Lawyer

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 10:52AM

Come on, there are very few people with "no family". What you mean is that she has no kids. Why don't you take an interest in the people she does have in her life, like her friends and siblings and parents. Trust me, they're just as interesting to her as your kids are to you. If she still gets annoyed with you talking about your kids, stop talking about yourself and just talk about work. You are at work after all.

Alice

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:45AM

Here's a clue for you on why you might be actually creating the problem: referring to women who have no partner and no kids as having "no life". People can derive a lot of pleasure out of life without having a family you know.

Guess what? Having kids and being paired up isn't everyone's cup of tea. Thinking people who make different choices as people who have nothing in their life is both rude and utterly without foundation.

Bek

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:56AM

I have had 23 years of managers of both sexes and it really comes down to the person and not what's between their legs.

J

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:21PM

"marks" (11:46AM) clearly has no perception of irony if he can describe someone he's never met as "probably some loser who hates men and children", and then use the word "bitter" in the very next sentence.

As a man, I'd like to apologise on behalf of my gender for the existence of this atrocious excuse for a human being.

Dave S

Location Brunswick, Melbourne

Date and time

Women & men think differently, with their own + & - and working together sometimes might mean that they can complement each other. That's why some women prefer to work with men, vice versa. Thinking about 12mo maternity leave, being honest, if the business isn't good & employment termination is required - if the company can afford to have someone "off" for that long, logically, she/he should be on the "list". Nothing personal - just business. And I think, I read an article somewhere about how to have a great conversation with others: it's better to pick a topic which the other person can share her/his story too or at least has the same interest e.g. it's not a good thing to keep talking about your awesome job to someone who's jobless, talking about your favorite hobby to someone who's not really into that, etc.

Vicky

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:27PM

I have been in law for 24 years and have 2 children. Childless women in the profession do seem to be hostile to women with family, the attitude is "I had to choose, so you can't have both", even though they mostly made no choice of career over family, they just haven't had the opportunity to have a family/partner yet.

Far worse, however, and holding far more women back, are the male partners with stay-at-home wives, who think (& sometimes say) that you should be home with your kids. I always said "Like you are with yours???". They mentor young men, and are uncomfortable with women in general, and professional women in particular, maybe because they all attended private boys' schools. Have you ever heard a woman say "I don't like working with male superiors", or "I would never brief a male barrister"??? I hear this all the time about female bosses/barristers.

The other problem is male partners who say all the right things about equality in a relationship until a child arrives, then revert to 1950s stereotypes & leave it all to their professional wife, who gives up due to exhaustion at trying to do all the domestic stuff as well. Choose very wisely, ladies! And at performance review time, do what the men do: tell them you're great & want to be rewarded, stop waiting to be recognised, the men are never shy to promote themselves!

And this is not sour grapes, I was a partner in a law firm and am now a barrister.

LLB

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:30PM

Well said @Alice. A colleague of mine (male) spends a lot of time talking about his family and kids while in the office, and any conversation with him inevitably circles back to his kids.

It gets even more annoying as he often comes in late and goes home early with a cheery, "Well, off to pick up the kids!", ignoring the fact that he is leaving others to pick up his slack.

trippy

Location sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:47PM

Wow. I am glad I don't work with you, Lawyer. How do you know your manager 'with no life' hasn't really really wanted children but is unable to have them? Not everyone is as fortunate as you seem to be, with a loving partner and children, no matter how much they want them. TBH if I were her I would find you irritating as well.

Were you one of those mums who bangs on about their kids endlessly, arrives late and leaves early and has loads of sick days? Maybe that is why your previous manager made you redundant - because you weren't doing your job well after your maternity leave.

Kate

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:00PM

@Trippy ... like your colleague, I too used to leave the office at 3:30 to pickup the kids from care and got glaring looks probably from people such as yourself. What you may not know, and my colleagues didn't seem to care about is that while they were out at the pub having a drink or out having dinner, I was still working at home until 11pm. So, no, they did not have to pick up the slack and in fact, it was I who had to pick up the slack from them because they were 9 to 5ers on the dot. Thankfully now I work from home so I have the flexibility to drop off and pick up kids from school and still am productive. Many of my colleagues are also in the same boat and we respect each other. It's a win win and much better dealing with the adolescents in my previous role.

CeePee

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:00PM

"the men are never shy to promote themselves!"

Some men find the povert of the performance-driven-review process and the necessary self-promotion that's expected from it to be reprehensible. We're not all self-promoters! :) But yeah, good advice if you want to get ahead.

Whoever was blaming male partners for the state of affairs in modern law firms might have missed reading the article? Plenty of female partners in the last 3 firms I've been at incidentally.

And finally, "Others adopt male characteristics as a way of getting ahead." What like Maggie Thatcher making war not love? For the avoidance of doubt, can someone list what these "male" characteristics are?

heh

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:07PM

Its interesting as i agree that when i've had a female boss she has kept the females in the team in place and been nice to the males (straight and gay female bosses). However when i've had male bosses they tend to either buddy up to other males or keep them in their place, they are usuall nice to female employees. I know that other females are put down because i've read several blogs here before stating this issue however i'm just explaining my experience. Its a pretty regular occurrence that my female colleagues are dealt more harshly by female bosses and i don't understand it.

Don't Know

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:32PM

Lawyer, maybe the solution is to be a little more accepting of your managers choices in life and perhaps they'll do the same back....you'll be amazed at how much time it will free up for work!

Alao a lawyer

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:32PM

@Lawyer,

I know the type of female lawyer you are describing. It is real. I have worked for 1 and known another. Both extremely hardworking, sucessful career women. Totally devoid of personality. No partners. Probably never had one ever and bitter, really bitter. Made life hell for anyone in their path. Misery loves company!

Mind you having kids doesn't always help either. I also worked for another female lawyer. Again, complete corporate psychopath working up the corporate ladder. Legal departments descended in to hell on her arrival. Lawyers hospitalised from stress, lawsuits, the works. The rub, her own kids (aged 5-10) shunned her and kept their distance from her. They much preferred time with their dad. Having said that these are exceptions. Most female managers are cool. As are most male manager.

another lawyer

Location sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:38PM

Agree with Bek and Alice. This may come as a shock, but your kids might not be as interesting to other people as they are to you. Perhaps she just wants you to do the work she clearly values, given she's given you a great opportunity.

A woman

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 4:21PM

@Lawyer - Maybe your current boss, (and previous bosses), are a little more professional than you, and think work is for work, not social banter. Maybe your current boss is only interested in the work you produce and is doing exactly what she gets paid to do - be your boss, not your friend, sounding board, or, therapist. Maybe you have no life because all you want to talk about, and can talk about, is your kids and banal family existence. Maybe you should see life from someone else's perspective. We don't all want or need what you want or need. Weird? I think not.

Peter

Location Melbourne

Date and time February 02, 2013, 7:30AM

In my experience female bosses are far more ruthless than males. Men will tend to discuss things openly and you know where you stand. Don't fit into the dynamic and you're out like a light with a female boss, no warning or explanation. Generally someone else does the dirty work as well. Teamwork different. On major teams I've found female co workers do their share and help with problems and are reliable and on their game. Some men are too busy sucking up to the boss or white anting you to jump you in the hierarchy. Always palm stuff off and seek to dominate the limelight. All different people thou and everyone is different. Far more important dynamics than gender which is really a 50% factor. Just my experience and generalizations. .

Dale

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:27AM

I think it comes down to how men and women differently handle conflict.

As a teacher, you can normally tell when boys are having a blue, because they'll have a dust-up in the playground. You can then sort out their issues, and they're on their way.

With girls it is extremely difficult - They exclude and belittle, sometimes over long periods of time. The end result can be much more damaging.

When it comes to workplace conflict, sorting things out clearly and directly is often required. This comes naturally to men more often than for women, and they generally do it as soon as issues arise. My experience is that women will often avoid those situations until it becomes much worse, and they finally come out like a bull at a gate.

Obviously there is individual variation - But there are definite gender differences in handling these situations.

Steve

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:04PM

This is divisive and hateful towards women. I think what it comes down to is competitive fields draw competitive people, and competitive people are generally pretty nasty and self interested. As a social worker I've never had a male boss; I wouldn't necessarily mind one, it's just never come up. The female bosses aren't the infighting, mannish bitches that you refer to, they're just people.

Because most social workers and others in this field are women, it's a family friendly field by necessity, and because you'll never get rich doing it, people aren't bitchily competitive about promotions and pay raises. We get paid what our funding body pays us. Some of the most supportive, caring, intelligent and hard working people work in this industry, and most of them are women. I think the takeaway from articles like this is that the workplaces you describe are broken,

Alice

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:32AM

I'm with Alice here. I work with a lot of women in the film industry and they are usually quite amazing. I don't think I could generalize using gender - you seem to get both competitive and supporting people with both sexes.

@sarajane you should really look at getting another job. That place sounds nasty and that's not because of gender.

pixelstuff

Location mel

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:14PM

It depends on the industry. Most corporate departments have female team leaders. From HR to customer service, it's a nightmare. Most of these women have insecurities and try to be men (which they have no idea about) in order to get ahead. They'll pull all sorts of tricks to maintain their control as well.

As for social work, I could never do it. It's not bad enough that the government are incompetent with social work, the large percentage of women would make me crazy and I am not fully convinced when you say that none of you are competitive (because of your jobs not being high paying or exec level). In government related jobs, there are always grades that are also reflected by pay standards, so there's always competition to get a high paying job.

But still, the fact that you say that there is a high percentage of women, I can't imagine the wretched about of 'female' chatter: relationships, clothes, men, etc. Women even compete on this level when they ask each other questions or interrogate each other.

Anastasia

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:08PM

@Alice

Alice wrote: "I think the takeaway from articles like this is that the workplaces you describe are broken, not the workers."

Mostly agree with this. There can be workplaces that become toxic because of one or two individuals with personality issues, but I've found that it's the hierarchical and competitive nature of workplaces in general that's the problem. Those workplaces that are healthier and more pleasant minimize the hierarchy, are more consensual, cooperative and egalitarian.

Availability of resources is also a factor. A work environment stressed by lack of resources encourages toxic competitive behaviour: backstabbing, Machiavellian behaviour.

Mythbuster

Location

Date and time February 02, 2013, 9:43AM

Having worked across workplaces that were entirely male (laboring) or female (nursing), I'll take a male dominated workplace every time. Men generally will let you know where you stand and are generally more blunt and honest, the women held grudges for years and more often than not resorted to bully like behavior, while acting like they're all best friends. But, best boss I have ever

had by a long margin was a female. SO boss wise I don't care, workplace wise, I prefer male dominated.

Warren

Location Burwood

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:35AM

In all workplaces I've worked at. Women always bring their personal lives and, by extension, problems to work with them.

If they have relationship issues, then everyone has to hear about it. If they're on the dating merry go around, everyone has to hear their progress. If they're on a diet, everyone will know details of every new year resolution and what not. It's just goddamn annoying.

When you join a workplace, it's not just the work that they're competitive about, but the drawn out Q & A, the silent competition as they size up a new female employee (if she has a husband, boyfriend, etc what job he does, etc) and if she doesn't fit in, then there'll be some collusion in the works to induce behavioural unpleasantry (subtle bullying) to push the employee toward other employment. I've seen it all and once you unsee it, or experience it, there's no going back to these type of environments. These days, when I apply for a job, I always assess the ratio of males to females and each panel interview, if there are more than 2 females, I'll always be guaranteed a latent 'bitch' who'll ask me the absurd questions, the type of questions that are self explanatory and unnecessary. This will be the alpha female, so I don't bother going further with the interview.

Anna2

Location Sydney

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:14PM

Do you talk to your male managers / colleagues that don't have children about your children? Are they particularly interested? Why do you expect a different reaction from a woman who doesn't have children to a man who doesn't have children?

lala

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:41AM

I've had amazing female bosses, both single career women and those married with kids. I've also had a really bad one. Similarly, I've had male bosses that were good, and a couple that were completely, completely awful. I really don't see why this has to be a male/female thing? It's a human nature problem. Some people are a***holes to get ahead, some aren't. It was a male colleague that I confided in only to have him hang onto the information and use it against me with my male bosses. That behaviour is not confined to women.

BTVS

Location Melbourne

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:40AM

I have been mercilessly micromanaged and bullied many times in my career and it's unfortunately always been women. I as a policy analyst for government and consultancies, I work in a male dominated field and the few women I encounter I have now had to assume will work against rather than with me, after so many bad experiences. I recently left a job where I was on contract, I am 36 and returned from the UK at 30 and have not seen a full-time job since as every interview I am asked, mainly by female HR reps. about my 'future plans' ie. I'm a maternity leave liability and am desirable enough to offer a 12 month contract then 'we'll see'. After accepting the incredible short-

termism of the employment marketplace, After putting off pregnancy to gain a secure job got pregnant and had a miscarriage during my time there, I had planned the pregnancy so that I was 7 months when the contract was up, so at no expense to the organisation. I was bullied so badly I during my time there I didn't dare take off more than 2 days for my operation and went back to work with my three male colleagues. During the next week during a team meeting, it was mentioned that as my two male colleagues had had paternity leave during that year the organisation 'didn't have the budget' for 'any more of that'. I had a female team leader, department manager, director and CEO, and this chain of command had made that decision. Each worked completely to their own agenda and viewed any pregnancy (except their own) as a irritation to the work program, all my referees are male as I do not trust what other females will say about me to perspective employers.

Totally bullied by other women

Location Clifton Hill

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:46AM

I am a woman and a feminist and I would say the biggest problem with women is the two faced passive aggressive act many carry out. ..

Big smile.. what do you mean darling... we love you! Then big time exclusion and much bitching behind backs. I have seen women do this to each other over and over... from school right up to now- and I'm in my 50's. Finding a woman that doesn't bitch about her friends behind their backs, can bring up problems and nip them in the bud, and be open to the fact that we are all flawed... those women are like rare and precious jewels.

Men are generally more upfront and find it easier to tell each other when they are being idiots. I think maybe because we are brought up to be 'nice' it's easier to go behind someones back while maintaining a phoney smile. men are brought up being able to give each other good natured abuse. I am not saying this is all men, or all women... but

Women... I am tired of women tearing each other down and their gutless approach to it.

lou

Location Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:48AM

Don't you get it, it's inherent Insecurity and Envy. This was there even before the time of Female Liberation Movement and will remain ever present no matter how much science or laws you can bring in. Envy the toughest defect in humans to do away with. By the way Men can't claim to be free of these too, just the degrees of it.

Scientific

Location Mel

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:54AM

I've had good and bad male and female bosses, and one particular male boss was so bitchy it took my breath away. I've noticed how we tend to excuse male bitchiness and backstabbing, but focus on the behaviour if shown by females. The only issue I have had with fellow female workers is that women seem to focus too much on detail, ruminating about every "he said, she said", which I think is due to how we are socialised as small girls. Sometimes we just need to brush off the stupid remarks or thoughtlessness of others and just get on with the job, rather than obsessing about it. As for males at work, I tend to get along with them also because I don't mind dumb jokes. I've found that to be the bonding glue. Women are a little more subtle.

Jojo

Location Melbourne

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:54AM

The truth is - we are all human - behaviour in the workplace reflects society/community. So therefore there are the good, the bad, the ugly etc pretty much everywhere we go. The choice we all have is to understand what is going on and understand that the only person we can change is ourselves. If a situation is not working for you, try a few different approaches. If it still doesn't work for you consider accepting it for what it is (ie work and not ALL of our life) or leave (as life is too short).

By the way, I have worked in financial services for ~20 years - there have been great, good and no-so good people leaders - male and female. I also truly believe my roles/promotions have been gained by merit not by gender. I also try to speak to people about common interests ie most people that I work with know I could care less about football - thankfully there are so many other things to discuss in the world!

Amused and Bored at the same time

Location Melbourne

Date and time February 01, 2013, 11:58AM

I think the issue of bullying requires separation from the notion of competition in the work place. Bullying is a separate issue and not mutually exclusive to competition. Competition is natural and in a fair work place, people should be rewarded in terms of them meeting performance objectives and I guess in terms of the value the organisation places upon ones skills and abilities to contribute to the organisations objectives. That said, bullying can be influenced by the nature and tone of the competitive work environment.

An unfair workplace does not in itself translate to bullying, however can have a detrimental impact on employees and the organisations overall performance, as can bullying. That said, they are separate issues, that might have some crossover aspects to them. Aspiring to a so called level playing field can probably help organisations achieve their best results overall.

A level playing field would perhaps reflect strong anti-bullying policy, whilst also providing opportunity for all employees to achieve their best, through providing opportunities for them, t

Davo

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:07PM

I worked under a high ranking female boss. I'm by no means sexist, as far as I'm concerned it's about the right person for the job. The simple fact is though that a bad female 'boss' can be just as bad as a bad male boss just in different ways.

I found in this work place that rather than outright bullying emotional & psychological manipulation were the order of the day. While I was there at least 3 good people were pushed to nervous breakdowns.

Rex

Location Turrumurra

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:11PM

Girls, boys c'mon get to the point. Male is male, and female, female, and it will never be any different. In life there are activities women do best, simply because they are female. And like-wise men. Stop trying to jump the fence, confuse the issue and cloud the water.

Men love and admire females who act and behave like women, and vice versa. Leave it the way it is and get on with life.

And just to wind you all up - I worked with a world wide beverage company and always said I'd resign the day a female was appointed my "Boss". They did, I did, and my wife loved me for

it.....and I've never regretted it.

Oh dear why all the fuss ??????

Glen

Location Yea

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:26PM

After 30 years of professional success, with both male and female managers, I took an executive job in a large conservative traditionally hierarchical organisation where 3/4 of the employees were women but only 12% of the managers. Even though every single person there used a PC all day long, I had to constantly tell people I was not a PA but a professional. And the PAs in the organisation who I had to work with were openly rude to me, and deliberately withheld information I needed to do my job without correction from the men they worked for. I expected this behaviour when I started out in the 80s but not in 2012. I am now in self employment where of course my boss is perfect!

Rubylou

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:33PM

Well done on your moves to employ yourself Rubylou. I've offered wondered why some women spend so much effort breaking the "glass ceiling" when it may well just be easier to build your own building. Props...

hehe

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:32PM

A few comments here are missing the point of the article. Its not a men vs women thing. Its not a gender equality opinion being expressed. Its saying that women are their own worst enemies in the work place. Yes, its a generalisation and more prevalent in some industries than others. I work in the consulting industry and I have to say, I agree with this article in the context of my industry. The successful women are the ones who behave like GREAT managers/team members, nothing specific to their gender. The ones that struggle get too caught up in the bitchiness, especially with other women. I don't think its the men who hold them back, its each other. There are some terrific women I work with and, in the workplace, they don't give a rats about the fact that they are women. My two cents.

Llama Farma

Location Canberra

Date and time February 01, 2013, 12:58PM

I've been bullied by both male and female managers, but the experience of being a female bullied by another female is far more insidious. We already know from the playground that males and females bully differently. Female bullying targets victims in a much more personal way which has a far greater detrimental impact on self-esteem.

I have one tip to add to those in the article - if you are being bullied by anyone, male or female, you owe it to your mental wellbeing to get out as quickly as you can. In the meantime, focus on activities outside work which make you feel good about yourself and which help you to see that others value you. You also have a good opportunity to observe the bully at work and see how management should never be done. If you resolve to do the exact opposite when you get to manage people in the future, you will be the sort of boss that people want to go and work for, who can get the best out of people. Good luck.

Melbourne Girl

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:03PM

Did you people not read these points?

- Stop comparing yourself to others because that undermines your self-esteem
- “Question your own biases” by challenging any unfair generalisations of the female gender that you may have personally formed

Marylou

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:05PM

Agreed, though the ability to “Question your own biases by challenging any unfair generalisations that you may have personally formed”, requires an ability for self-reflection...

Gery

Location

Date and time February 01, 2013, 1:25PM

This blog was not intended to be a male vs.. female gender debate. It was intended to examine one of the many complex issues that impact the number of women in senior positions. In addition to an external corporate environment that supports the male status quo and an external social environment that places childcare and elder care mostly in the female court, there are factors that women themselves contribute.

One of factors is that many of us are driven by perfection and will not put ourselves forward for opportunities we don't feel FULLY qualified for. In my experience, that doesn't hold back men. If we are promoted inspite of not feeling ready, we may sabotage our own career efforts.

Another is the way we interact with other women. I operate outside the corporate environment and was staggered by the numbers of women who admitted to having been bullied by another woman. Whatever the cause, it does not support us to bring down other women.

Some women believe the only way to succeed is to become like the men. That doesn't serve them or the organisation which needs female leadership qualities, alongside the men.

Others sit under the radar thinking their good work will be recognised. Sadly that rarely happens unless we let others know of them.

The key message I wanted to get across is that while we may not have choice around what others do, we can choose our response. When we stop trying to be perfect, enhance our resilience, take responsibility for our own behaviours and reactions, reduce the tendency to take things personally and strengthen our confidence by recognising our strengths and successes, we are less likely to be negatively affected by the judgements of others. No-one else can do that for us.

SuzLeoMer

Location sydney

Date and time February 02, 2013, 4:00PM

One issue I have encountered is women who 'work from home' one or two days a week, but are really not! Supporting women at work has gone too far where there are now women taking advantage of the system, they collect the pay but don't do the work and it is the single females and the males back at work who pick up there slack. No one dares say anything due to political correctness and these women will claim bullying. The advent of careers leave is in fact

discrimination against the child free people. For all those days parents are absent, again it is the child free who are picking up their slack. I see many men taking 'carers leave' where they have a stay at home mother! A great book that covers this topic is 'The Baby Boon'.

Aiko

Location

Date and time February 02, 2013, 4:40PM

Those who preferred a bloke outnumbered those who wanted a woman by six to one".

Never a truer word spoken. My sister works for the public service and continually complains about female managers who are psychotic. I recall a boss at a place I worked at who was hated, and my current boss - a woman - can be good some days and hideous on others.

This doesn't auger well for those politically correct do-gooders who want 50% of management positions to go to women. It is a disaster waiting to happen.

Spike

Location

Date and time February 02, 2013, 11:37PM

I think the myth that women are our own worst enemy is designed to keep women divided from each other and prevent us from acknowledging the more common reasons why so many women are held back in the workplace. I've come across both difficult men and women at work but I've never come across a woman who deliberately went out of her way to hold me back *because I'm a woman*. In contrast I've experienced sexual harassment by men that was clearly designed to hold me back *as a woman*. The reality is that women are more likely to be held back by sexism than by other women.

Kay

Location

Date and time February 03, 2013, 9:21AM

I'm sick of hearing how women hate each other and are our own worst enemies. You'll occasionally hear women say 'oh I prefer to work with men, women are so bitchy' because it makes them feel like they're 'one of the boys' and special or superior to other women, but for the most part I see women supporting and encouraging each other in their education and careers, taking care of each other's children and during illness and age. In my day to day life I just don't see what the author of this article is saying.

Incidentally, two of the bitchiest, backstabbing people I've ever encountered in the workplace were two men who made a point of arriving half an hour early every morning so they could have their smoke, coffee and massive bitch session before they started work. Gender stereotypes and just that - stereotypes.

Emma

Location

Date and time February 03, 2013, 9:28AM

I wonder if it is because men have had a thousand years of experience. Experience of trying to beat the snot out of each other, and then being good mates afterwards. Men have had the battlefield, sports, (boxing, rugby, jousting), and the workplace.

The comment about there being not too many roles at the top for women to progress to is the same for men. Men have had centuries of training those below them to someday supersede them. Universities offer courses on it.

Yes, men can be \$hit bosses. But that is business. It isn't personal.

Farmer

Location

Date and time February 03, 2013, 2:33PM

After over 30 years in the workforce, across a number of sectors, including military, community, and legal, I can tell you the generalization that women managers are " kinder, gentler, more empathetic...(who bring)...a greater focus on relationships, connections, teamwork, and support" is simply laughable.

Especially in my more than 12 years as a lawyer, the vast majority of psychopaths, narcissists, deplorably dishonest self-dealers, aggressive, confrontational and destructive managers have been women.

I am no wall flower. I spent the best part of six years in an infantry brigade. As a former crisis-worker/counsellor of many years, I am also very good at respectfully managing professional relationships. Many of my female managers have had no such clue.

I am also perfectly happy being professionally subordinate to people of either gender.

A very small minority of female managers I have worked under are probably the best managers I have encountered. The men more usually inhabit the middle of the bell curve. But, by far the vast majority of the worst were women.

I have for years been aware of the claims some women like to make regarding the qualities women bring to management. Many feminists I worked with in the community sector were fond of making such claims. My co-workers in the armed forces were overwhelmingly men, and in the community sector, overwhelmingly women. It was only when I became a lawyer that I got to experience workplaces with any gender balance - although all of those legal workplaces had more female lawyers than male. Given the statistics of my own experience, I would choose a male manager over a female manager any day - something I thought I'd never say after my years in the armed forces.

WitnessBearer

Location

Date and time February 03, 2013, 5:20PM

Is the author suggesting that women don't succeed in business as much as men primarily because of other women? Forget about sexism, 'the old boys club', sexual harassment, home responsibilities etc. Of course that has nothing to do with it!

Gemma

Location

Date and time February 03, 2013, 6:28PM

Lawyer, I have been thinking about your post all weekend and have talked it over with other professional women who, like me, haven't children or husbands. We were spending a sunny afternoon in the pool and we were feeling fairly benevolent to the world, I think.

We thought about your complaint. We were candid about the people to whom we compare ourselves and about how we measure our staff. Generally, such reflections go up. We might look to our peers and to our seniors but would generally not think to compare our lives with those of the people who work for us.

If we compare our staff to others then it would be to their peers.

So if your supervisor is irritated by your discussions of your children or if she is short with you, it may be worth looking around you at how the most efficient members of your team are being treated. At how they bring, or don't bring, their work to the office.

I can't speak for your supervisor but I know that if I get to the point of being visibly irritated with a staff member it is because they have consistently underperformed in relation to their peers.

Also - if I have a good worker on my team then I will fight to keep them, including by finding ways to work around breastfeeding et al. If you were let go without a fight then it may be time to ask real questions about why.

Some advice, from a not yet 45 year old female lawyer without children? We don't bite. If you feel something is off, ask her. Make an appointment and take a note pad. It may be an easy fix
far away

Date and time February 04, 2013, 3:01AM

You know, for the last 40 years we have self indulgently interfered with the very basis of our society through issues like this (women in the workplace, abortion, low birth rates) without a single thought as to the effect of these trends on the biggest picture.

Dark Lord of Terror

Date and time February 04, 2013, 7:42AM

@Lawyer and others who criticise women professionals who don't fit into the working mother stereotype... I can't believe how narrow-minded you all are! I am a married professional female who is unable to have kids, so I've focused on my career, charity work, and enjoying all that life has to offer with a great circle of friends. Like a lot of other childless working women, I am sick to death of being judged by working mothers who, in my experience, often look down on us with disdain (and spread nasty rumours behind our backs) when we don't take pleasure in talking incessantly about their children or other child-related matters! I hate to put it so bluntly, but the world does not revolve around you or your precious little kids, and pardon me if I have better things to do with my time than listen to continuous chatter that interrupts productive workflow. And, with your said unprofessional behaviour, together with your attitude towards working women (and men) who don't fit the out-dated paradigms you are accustomed to, you wonder why you haven't progressed further in your care... go figure! Welcome to the 21st century people ;-

Kat

Date and time February 04, 2013, 9:45AM

My own personal experience was horrendous. Not long after returning to Australia I took a role in a boutique recruitment agency employing two males (non management) and 25+ females.

The toxicity was palpable from the start as though there was a tall poppy thresher on automatic circulation. At first I thought it was the competitive nature of recruitment but it became clear that the CEO herself was the most toxic of all, albeit well-masked to those with a less honed EQ.

Consider workplace culture and this was terminal.

Needless to say, I expect much potential revenue was lost with the amount of time and angst involved with little spats and blowups running the typical conflict course at least three times a week. These spats were a lucky dip as to who the protagonists might be, as every body had a beef with somebody.

There weren't even any real cliques apart from the smokers (funny that) - it was just all out divide and conquer, from the top down. Often it wasn't even to do with one's professional capabilities but more like who ate onions in the pool car.

It was a right, royal 'bitch-fest' that imploded within 4 months and the business came close to closing its doors. From what I can glean, 4 years later the business has still to recover.

As with many aspects of life, balance is the key and an evenly mixed-gender environment seems the most amiable and cooperative (and productive).

Of course all this can be avoided by becoming your own boss.

MsCosmopolitan

Location Brisbane

Date and time February 04, 2013, 10:12AM

Comments on same article posted on Diversity Network:

[Stella King](#) • True that women can be their own harshest critics. Women who want to succeed are constantly struggling to be recognised for the great work they do. Is that because they are competing for fewer management opportunities? I believe that what we need is more professional women mentoring other professional women and strong role models.

[Kathleen Mackay](#) • Excellent point Stella. I agree that mentoring opportunities need to be more available, and that organisations should consider setting up formal mentoring schemes for both men and women. Mentoring and coaching of talented individuals is important in building a succession strategy.

[Mark McLeish](#) • Where is the link to the article? Even before I read it I can tell you from my own (male) perspective that it still astounds me how evil some women can be to one another in the workplace. On a more positive note, in HK my social network is filled with strong women who are a variety of CEO's, Global Heads of HR/Talent Management, and Brokers etc. and what they all had in common was siblings! It may sound weird but the general consensus was that they believed that by negotiation there way though family life with older/younger brothers and (mainly) sisters and building strong bonds they learned priceless life/relationship skills that have all helped them deal with mainly difficult women they have encountered. I agree with Stella and Kathleen re: female mentors and strong role models.....the devil doesn't always wear Prada Lol!

[Hamid Shah](#) • Where is the article? I will agree with the statement though that (from my own experiences) women can be pretty downright wicked to one another at the workplace. I've worked with quite a few very competent women and have noticed that the rivalry doesn't change even with age. In more conservative cultures women are particularly mean to the men they work with as well.

[Sahar Andrade, MB.BCh](#) • I have to say that I always worked with women and faced that problem only once throughout my whole career when I was still a junior manager

I worked in 3 continents and most of my dealings and working with women - it was great I was assigned overseas for 3 years all directors/ executives were women and we empowered each other they called us the "squad" and this was in a culture where women are not treated equal

Even now we are a big group of women entrepreneurs having their own successful businesses in consulting- we swap knowledge and recommend each other for our respective specialties we even subcontract each other if needed

I think making such broad comment is part of what we as diversity people should try to narrow or at least show how it depends on the women involved which is no less than the competition existing between men - my 3 cents