

## Managing The Female Way!

Energising Organisations through Wholesome Leadership

The world is in a state of transition right now. Globally there is chaos... environmental degradation, corruption at all levels, erosion of basic human values, corporations hungry for more profit, the poor getting poorer and the rich richer. The isolation between Developed and Less Developed countries has increased and so has the North-South Divide. Economies all over the world are fragile and susceptible to any form of imbalance. Organizations are too in a state of turmoil, looking for newer ways of retaining people, motivating people and inspiring people. Job-skipping seems to be the Management Principle of the decade with ambitious and money driven youngsters moving from one job to another in a never ending quest for material possessions. Power, Money, Influence are the key buzz words in any yuppie crowd. If we speak to any HRD Manager, they express despair at the work culture in their organizations. Hierarchies, ego, poor communication, mind and intellect centered approaches, and competition have led to a work culture that creates disharmony and competition.

### Why Is This So?

Management as we see it today is highly action centered and focuses on planning, organizing and control as its main features. The emphasis is on "using" people to make profits happen. This perhaps has to do with the way the male mind works i.e. highly action oriented and focusing on results. In fact, the very word 'Man' agement has a gender bias. Till now, the approach to management has been based on:

1. **Intellect:** The intellect which is mind-based focuses on only a minute aspect of the whole. It is rational, systematic, logical, and judgmental.
2. **Rationality:** Management Principles are based on logic and a rationality of approach. They focus on what is right and what is wrong. They focus on the obvious. This sometimes is imbalanced.
3. **Competition:** The bottom line is profits and the only way to achieve profits is by competition. Competition between organizations, competition between departments, competition between colleagues, Competition creates mistrust, animosity and at worse dishonesty.
4. **Profit centered:** Profits is not a dirty word but when the entire game plan is only to go for profits and production, the net result is human alienation.

Male dominated Management Organizations invariably are based on these above mentioned structures, It is not to say that these are not required or relevant. What I would like to emphasize is that when certain systems of managing don't seem to work, it is time to give another set of systems to try. The balance has tilted to one side namely the male, masculine, doing side of management. As Lawrence, G. Boldt in his book "Zen and the Art of Making a Living" say the female aspect of self management has been underplayed, leading to an imbalance between 'doing' and 'being'. An organization with pre-dominantly male values will be high on technology, control and solutions. We might ask with Anne Morrow Lindbergh, "Why have we been seduced into abandoning this timeless inner strength of woman (the feminine values) for the temporal outer strength of man (the masculine values)?"

Women in Management Cadres mostly act like men at work. They do not create and forge a separate style of management for many reasons, chief among these being:

- Women have yet to be fully accepted at par with their men colleagues. They have to constantly prove themselves to be better,
- It is not easy to forge a new style of management in places where decades old established and set ways of managing are in place and are considered sacro sanct.
- Women are still only a minuscule number in organizations to create an impact. The "critical mass" of women who can create and forge a new style of management yet has not been created.

The result is that women managers feel that they have to act and behave and manage as "men" in order to be accepted in the organization. Any signs of "femininity" is frowned upon or seen as not professional.

In a recent interaction with over 25 women managers, when they were asked to list down what being a women means to them, the group came out with adjectives such as shy, caring, sensitive, tolerant, emotional, thoughtful, colorful, compassionate"..., all qualities that they felt they couldn't use in their work.

The common slogan used in women groups is "Women holding up half the world". The theme in Beijing was "Look at the World through Women's Eyes". If we do really constitute 50% of the world's population and have our own different ways of emotions, feeling and managing, then we should use them in our work and not shy away from talking about them.

Women centered ways of managing are based on emotions, harmony, process orientation and are based on qualitative change. In any organization, where a large number of women work, the work environment is more colorful, more aesthetic and more comfortable because women "value" these aspects, This is because women rely (in their thinking styles) more on the right side of the brain i.e. the creative, colorful side.

It may be important to point out that this does not mean negating aspects of management's such as planning, scheduling etc. The focus is more on creating a balance in the management aspects by bringing in the feminine dimensions or the soft aspects of management such as emotions, feelings, counseling, nurturing. This would result in a balance between the polarity of masculine and feminine principles in management and lead to a harmony between mind & body, rationality & emotion, competition and harmony, profit and production vs. qualitative change, target vs. process. The resulting style of management would be a more "wholistic" way of managing.

## **What Are Feminine Values In Management?**

The feminist styles of management have to do with "humanizing" management, of seeing management as a process rather than as an end. This includes:

1. **Collective Functioning:** People work as teammates rather than as solo individuals seeking glory, power, position and increments for you alone. Collective functioning reinforces the strengths in a group and gives a feeling of unity & one oneness.
2. **Shared Leadership:** Leadership not the prerogative of only the CEO, but of each person in the organization whether male or female. Leadership is taking initiative, empowering people and working towards creating a powerful impact for the community. When Leadership is shared across functions, departments and not left to one individual only there is organizational learning and enhancement of capabilities.
3. **Shared Responsibilities:** Responsibilities also need to be shared around the organization so that each member of the organization is accountable for what is happening around. In the absence of shared responsibilities, there are creations of caucuses of power brokers and slaves.
4. **Decentralization:** Decentralization means creating empowerment, quicker decision making and no hierarchies. Decentralization also refers to decentralization of decisions - with individuals having the power of making their own decisions without

waiting for a hierarchical structure. It also means a shared control of assets in an organization.

5. **Eliminating Gender Bias:** Work and responsibilities should be shared between all members in an organization without any gender bias. Irrespective of hierarchies for e.g. women need not be the ones to make tea, receive telephone calls, bouquets. Men can do this as effectively. Rotation of responsibilities will help the sexes to appreciate each other more and avoid any kind of discrimination.
6. **Development of Human Potential:** People should be given ample opportunities for growth and for their nurturance. This would help them to become fully "developed" and more capable both as individuals and on the professional front.

The feminine values in management focus on helping both men and women to be more caring and nurturing. Focusing on promoting and nurturing feminine values in management would lead to rebalancing of the entire way of management. It is not 'anti-men' but pro-balance. It would not be the end of management but a creation of a managerial style of a new order which is more harmonious, whole and progressive.

By Anu Wakhlu, Director,

Pragati Leadership Institute Pvt. Ltd., Pune, India