

Gender Gap Myth #3 – Women Choose Not To or Have Less Ambition



Ambition

Gender gaps myths 1 and 2 addressed the challenges women MBA graduates have in entering the corporate pipeline to success by already handicapped in advancing by levels and pay. They are also more likely than men to lose positions they've attained during a recession or changes implemented by new CEOs.

Myth buster #3 is that gender gap differences reflect personal choices and level of ambition women make known as their careers progress. The most common suppositions are that the gender gap is not about "unfairness" but the choices career women make to interrupt their careers for family and children, or they are less ambitious when it comes to seeking eventual CEO positions.

Silva and Carter, in their tracking study of male and female MBA high-potential graduates into the workplace, found **when women and men were compared who did not have children, women still lagged behind in accomplishing their high-end executive and corporate goals.**

Apparently, another aspect of this is reported by James S. Turley, Chairman and CEO of Ernst & Young. Turley claims **there is a problem with the accuracy of determining the ambition levels women see for themselves.** According to Turley, it appears there a lot of second guessing going on. He raises **the issue of how corporate ambitions are discussed with women.**

In some cases, the question of corporate ambitions is never raised, or without being consulted another executive may describe her as not being interested in that promotion. There is also the problem that arises when the question is phrased in such a way as to dissuade advancement by saying "...you don't really want that job, do you?" This being substantially different than asking "do you want this job?"

Both issues – career interruption due to family and/or children without out corporate flexibility and not accurately determining career ambitions and what sacrifices or accommodations women are willing to make – can no longer be taken for granted as part of the so-called gender gap.

Source:

New Research Busts Myths About the Gender Gap by Christine Silva and
Nancy Carter

http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/10/new_research_busts_myths_about.html