

Where is the Female Leadership Brain?



No need to ask Barbara Kellerman, Harvard Business Review author, where's the female brain for leadership.

Ms. Kellerman makes it concisely evident that women are still far from the leadership roles they aspired to from the days of the women's movement almost 50 years ago. She dismisses the banter that women are closing the gap, progressing up the ladder and that there exists a pipeline filled with women waiting to be rewarded for their patience and virtue. **Yes, there have been advancements for women but the advancements are abysmally low.**

While media touts the entrepreneurial success stories of Debbie Fields (Mrs. Fields Cookies), Estee Lauder and Mary Kay Ash (cosmetic giants) or an Oprah Winfrey (media megastar), not every woman wants to be an entrepreneur. Whatever a woman's talents, passions and interests, she should be able to pursue occupational advancement in a workplace environment that values her contributions and rewards her accordingly.

What if you had the talent and ambition and wanted to pursue a leadership role? Ms. Kellerman warns you that you would find as –

- head of a Fortune 500 company, only 3% female colleagues

- an elected congressional office holder, only 16.8% female colleagues
- a statewide office holder, 22.6 % female colleagues, whereas 10 years ago it would have been 27.6%

Programs to date that have tried to foster the advancement of women into leadership roles are far from successful. Ms. Kellerman aptly states [that] *“... for all the politically correct hand-wringing and teeth-gnashing, at the macro-level the problem of women and leadership has so far resisted even the best of intentions.”*

Ms. Kellerman's **solution is the creation of a different mindset, where women and men must begin by taking ownership of the problem.**

Her key points are placed in the context of a manifesto where change would include

- Acknowledging and admitting that inequity has expensive consequences socially, politically and economically
- Addressing issues loudly and publicly with conscious and thoughtful planning
- Stop touting gains when they are of meager consequence
- Aggressively correct issues for individuals as well as within institutions
- Initiating change at the same time from the bottom, middle and top of the ladder
- Finding it unacceptable to tolerate significant imbalances as they apply socially, politically, professionally and personally

Ms. Kellerman is right **a different mindset is needed.** Her manifesto points are directed at creating a stage where the inequities can be publicly viewed and addressed by both men and women. However, creating equality by addressing inequities without understanding the subtle implications of gender brain differences is another best intention.

Rather than trying to have women strive to achieve the male leadership model, let's give women the opportunity to develop a mindset that includes the qualities of female brain leadership.

To read Barbara Kellerman's Harvard Business Review article, click on [The Abiding Tyranny of the Male Leadership Model – A Manifesto](#)

By Joyce Hansen