Toolkit 3 – Learn About Gender Bias

Overview

Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People includes this one, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." According to Covey, once people understand through perceptive observation and empathetic listening, they are able to courageously state their own needs and wants. This toolkit is about seeking to understand gender bias and stereotyping which play a significant role in limiting women's access to senior leadership positions in the workplace. Engaging in open dialogue[1] about gender stereotypes and the effects of those stereotypes helps correct them.

Understanding Diversity, Stereotyping & Gender Bias

Key Terms

- Diversity: difference
- Stereotype: simplified, flawed generalization
- Gender Bias: a preference, conscious or subconscious, for one gender over another
- Gender Intelligence: understanding and appreciating the natural talents that men and women bring to the table[2]
- The Double Bind: a no win situation for women at work

Video – A Level Playing Field

In this LeanIn.org video, Shelley Correll, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University, explains how stereotypes act as a shortcut in information processing. She suggests solutions to address the ways individuals and organizations make decisions in order to reduce errors.
http://leanin.org/education/creating-a-level-playing-field/

Effects of Gender Bias[3]

Everyone naturally use stereotypes in daily life, consciously and unconsciously. But when it comes to stereotypes about people, especially unconsciously at work, there can be unintended consequences to generalizing.

People are complex and behavior varies. Judging people by stereotypes is likely to produce wrong conclusions.

We apply stereotypes automatically and unconsciously. Since they could be wrong in a given set of circumstances, we can arrive at wrong conclusions automatically.

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[1] Catalyst, Anatomy of Change: How Inclusive Cultures Evolve. Debate is arguing about the "right" viewpoint. Discussion is a back and forth exchange to reach a conclusion. Dialogue is an open-ended conversation where each party's viewpoint is explored as a point of learning.

[2] Barbara Annis; http://baainc.com/gender-intelligence/what-is-gender-intelligence/

[3] Paragraphs on effects and recognition of gender bias are adapted from Catalyst, Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge," Stereotypes of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed.

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Gender stereotyping creates false perceptions that women leaders don't measure up to men. Women are misjudged regardless of how competent or prepared they are for senior leadership roles.

How to Recognize Gender Bias[4]

We unintentionally interact with people in ways that create the very behaviors that conform to our stereotypes. For example, to prove an unconscious bias that a woman can't handle a particular situation, she might be tested with a harder problem than required and when she can't solve it, she is judged to have shown she can't handle it. That's why it's critical to define clear, specific, unbiased criteria for success before it's ever used to judge performance.

Video – Labels Against Women

This one-minute video from Pantene, "Labels against women" http://www.ispot.tv/ad/7fLH/pantene-labels-against-women illustrates the double bind. Can you recognize it? Have you experienced it? Do you receive coaching while men receive admiration for a similar style or approach?

How Gender Bias Affects Companies and Women Leaders

Gender stereotypes can become a powerful yet invisible threat to women leaders and the organizations in which they work and lead. The impact of stereotypic bias is often underestimated. Some argue that stereotypes must reflect real differences in the behavior of men and women, or else they would not exist. But research shows that stereotypes do not accurately represent reality; they misrepresent it.[5]

In today's globally competitive marketplace, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool, nor place constraints on what counts as effective behaviors. To ensure that vital leadership talent is effectively assessed and deployed, companies must address stereotypic bias head on. Organizations can help change how women leaders in their organizations are perceived.

Ultimately, it is not women's leadership styles that need to change, it's the structures and perceptions that must keep up with today's changing times.

The Woman's Dilemma - The Double Bind[6]

Double bind (1) A psychological impasse created when contradictory demands are made of an individual...so that no matter which directive is followed, the response will be construed as incorrect. (2) A situation in which a person must choose between equally unsatisfactory alternatives; a punishing and inescapable dilemma.[7]

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[4] *adapted from Catalyst, Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge," Stereotypes of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed.*

[5] *Through the extensive research on gender differences and similarities, we learn that women and men are actually more similar than different and that there is more variation within each group (women and men) than there is between women and men. See, for example, Janet S. Hyde, "The Gender Similarity Hypothesis," American Psychologist, vol. 60, no. 6 (September 2005): p. 581-592; Elisabeth Aries, Men and Women in Interaction: Reconsidering the Differences (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).*

[6] *Paragraphs on the Double Bind are adapted from Catalyst, 2007, The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't*

[7] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000)*

Research confirms, despite the numerous business contributions of women leaders, men are still largely seen as the leaders by default. It's what researchers call the "think-leader-think-male" mindset.[8] As "atypical leaders," women are often perceived as going against the norms of leadership or those of femininity. Caught between impossible choices, those who try to conform to traditional—i.e., masculine—leadership behaviors are damned if they do, doomed if they don't.

The Predicaments of Women's Double Bind[9]

Predicament	How it Leaves Women in a Double Bind
Extreme and equally undesirable perceptions	When women leaders act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes (i.e., focus on work relationships and express concern for other people's perspectives), women are viewed as less competent leaders, as too soft. When women act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, however (i.e., act assertively, focus on work task, display ambition), their behavior is judged as too tough, even unfeminine[10].
Higher standards but lower rewards	When it comes to proving leadership capabilities, women are subjected to higher standards than men. They have to work harder to show the same level of competence and have to confront additional trade-offs than their men counterparts in order to lead effectively.
Competent but not liked	Women who adopt a "masculine" leadership style are viewed more negatively. Although they might be viewed as competent because of their leadership style, they also receive more negative evaluations of their interpersonal skills than women who adopt a "feminine" style.[11] Hence, even acting in counter-stereotypical ways has potential harmful consequences for women leaders, and may negatively impact their work relationships and access to social networks.

Summary - How Gender Bias Affects Advancement Opportunities for Women[12]

There is growing evidence that gender bias[13] in the workplace negatively affects advancement opportunities for women, contributes to gender gaps at executive levels, and limits strategies for leveraging talent.[14]

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[8] Crystal Hoyt, "Women Leaders: The Role of Stereotype Activation and Leadership Self-Efficacy," Kravis Leadership Institute Leadership Review (Fall 2002) http://www.leadershipreview.org/2002fall/article2_fall_2002.asp; Virginia E. Schein, "A Global Look at Psychological Barriers to Women's Progress in Management,"Journal of Social Issues, vol. 27, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 4-13; Sabine Sczesny, "A Closer Look beneath the Surface:Various Facets of the Think-Manager-Think-Male Stereotype," Sex Roles, vol. 49, no. 7/8 (October 2003): p. 353-363

[9] Table is from Catalyst, 2007, The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't

[10] Alice H Eagly and Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, "The Leadership Styles of Women and Men," Journal of Social Issues, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 781-797

[11] Janice D. Yoder and Arnold S. Kahn, "Making Gender Comparisons More Meaningful: A Call for More Attention to Social Context," Psychology of Women Quarterly, vol. 27, no. 4 (December 2003): p. 281-290; Janice D. Yoder, "Making Leadership Work More Effectively for Women," Journal of Social Issues, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 815-828; Laurie A. Rudman and Peter Glick, "Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash toward Agentic Women," Journal of Social Issues, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 743-762.

[12] This section adapted from Catalyst, 2009, Cascading Gender biases, compounding effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems

[13] Bias refers to preference toward a particular perspective, ideology, or result. Gender bias refers to preferring or favoring one sex over the other. Pro-male bias is a form of gender bias that prefers or prioritizes stereotypically masculine characteristics and behaviors over stereotypically feminine characteristics and behaviors.

[14] Dean Elmuti, Judith Lehman, Brandon Harmon, Xiaoyan Lu, Andrea Pape, Ren Zhang, and Terad Zimmerle, "Inequality Between Genders in the Executive Suite in Corporate America: Moral and Ethical Issues," Equal Opportunities International, vol. 22, no. 8 (2003): p. 4

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In their study for the report, *Cascading Gender biases, compounding effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems,* Catalyst undertook steps to investigate gender bias in talent management and the resulting effects on gender gaps in senior leadership. Overall, data revealed that the pervasive effect of senior leaders on the talent management process can create new senior leaders who mirror the traits and biases of the senior leadership team that promoted them.

Catalyst found that core components of talent management are linked in ways that disadvantage women, creating a vicious cycle in which men continually dominate executive positions:

• <u>The senior leadership effect</u>. While all employees play a role in the effectiveness of talent management, senior leadership teams have a significant effect on talent management programs and practices, as well as leadership competencies and criteria. This ultimately affects who gets promoted.

• <u>Institutionalizing bias</u>. Most participating organizations described their talent management system as formalized, customized, and centralized. Still, analysis revealed that many companies and industries fell short when it came to implementing appropriate checks and balances that minimize gender biases and level the playing field for women and men.

• <u>Compounding bias</u>. Gaps between the design and execution of talent management programs compound the disadvantages faced by women, especially those seeking professional development and advancement.

While HR departments and talent managers across each organization are responsible for many aspects of talent management, Catalyst found that gender bias in tools and procedures can inhibit the establishment of inclusive and effective talent management programs. When organizations fail to integrate checks and balances that guard against the introduction of gender bias into their talent management systems, they open the process to the negative effects of gender stereotyping and hinder opportunities for women's advancement, especially women in male-dominated positions and industries.[15]

The charts below provide another illustration of the experiences of women trying to ascend to VP and above positions.

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[15] *Cara C. Bauer and Boris B. Baltes, "Reducing the Effects of Gender Stereotypes on Performance Evaluations," Sex Roles; vol. 47, no. 9/10 (November 2002): p. 465-476; Lyness and Heilman, p. 782-784.*

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Susan, John and Gender Bias in Action

Behavioral examples. Susan and John both:	Susan		John	
	Reaction to Behavior	Career Outcome	Reaction to Behavior	Career Outcome
• Are highly organized • Come to meetings with an agenda and drive hard to work through it • Participate with confidence and strength and challenge others to draw out a resolution and action • Put in a lot of hours • Communicate in a direct style	She's too detail oriented	She has the technical skills but…. • She needs to develop more leadership • We need to get her some executive coaching • She needs another assignment, maybe she'll be ready for the promotion in another 3-5 years • Can we find her a mentor?	He's laser focused, knows what he wants	He has the technical skills and…. • He's a little rough around the edges but we can work on that in his next job • We need to keep him moving up, he'll be great for this challenging position, let's give him a shot and promote him
	She needs to be "more executive" and learn "organizational awareness"		He's not afraid to speak out, defend his position and get people's attention	
	She is too intense, she needs to be more conversational		He's direct and confident	
	She needs to find more work-life balance so she isn't so impatient about her career		He's hard driving and does what it takes to get it done- work sessions early and late	

Gender Bias Impacted Susan's and John's Early Careers Too

Dimensions	Susan's Experience		John's Experience	
	In the Office	After Hours	In the Office	After Hours
• Relationships • Activities • Assignments	Company leaders didn't appreciate differences in leadership styles	• Susan's responsibilities at home limited her ability and interest in attending after hour events but that's where informal mentoring and coaching relationships developed and projects were informally moved along without Susan • Susan had limited interest in sports	John and company leaders, mostly male, were comfortable with each other's leadership styles	• John had more flexibility, worked a traditional schedule and socialized after work • Deeply interested in sports, John's personal passion outside the office ended up consuming a lot of in-office conversations which he enjoyed having with his male peers and leaders
	Men weren't as comfortable with Susan's style and invited people to problem-solve who they were comfortable with (typically men), leaving Susan out of important learning experiences		John was invited to lots of formal and informal meetings to problem-solve and strategize to get initiatives moving along within the political landscape	
	Male leaders didn't have as much in common with her and naturally socialized with their buddies, leaving Susan out of important networking experiences		John and his work buddies constantly talked about sports and gravitated toward each other due to their common interests	
	When it came time to make senior manager selections (which were not posted and are made behind closed doors with few decision makers), hiring managers chose people they were comfortable with or that were recommended by their like-minded colleagues		When it came time to make senior manager selections (which were not posted and are made behind closed doors with few decision makers), hiring managers chose people they were comfortable with or that were recommended by their like-minded colleagues	

Success Stories. Examples of Companies Getting it Right.

ShowMe50™ believes that transparency in talent management systems is critical. We love the Scotiabank best practices example (excerpt below) that Catalyst provided in a 2009 report[16]. When we checked Scotiabank's 2013 Annual Report we found that of the 16 Business Lines and Corporate Functions Executive Vice-Presidents, 50% were women.

Scotiabank's Strategy

In 2002, a diverse, cross-functional group of the most senior-level women at Scotiabank formed the Advancement of Women Steering Committee (AoW SC) because they realized that, in order to make change, the process for advancing women needed to become *institutionalized*. The AoW SC designed a holistic, replicable change strategy as a roadmap to advance women. A combination of communication, rigorous accountability mechanisms, and programmatic elements is woven into the strategy and has shaped the culture at the bank.

Transparency

In response to research suggesting that women often didn't know how to navigate the bank's advancement system, Scotiabank adopted a completely transparent career advancement process, which is visible and accessible on a level playing field. Employees can now self-evaluate, gauge where they are on the career continuum, and determine what steps need to be taken in order to develop the requisite skills and experiences to be promoted to the next level. Additionally, all employees in the bank have access to overall goal statistics. This level of transparency is consistent with the bank's mandate to provide a consistent, high-quality employment experience for all employees, wherever they work. Transparency, ensuring a broad candidate pool and conducting objective evaluations of candidates are three fundamental principles aligned with the AoW initiative.

Other Examples

Visit the ShowMe50™ website to view one-page *ShowMe50™ Best in Class Snapshots* of companies who are talking loudly about increasing the percentages of women in senior leadership positions and showing results.

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[16] *Catalyst, 2009, Cascading Gender biases, compounding effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems*

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Reflection Questions

- Diversity is broader than what initially comes to mind. The diagram below, *Four Layers of Diversity*, summarizes diversity using a framework developed by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener[17].

- Examine the wheel and think about your personal and work experiences.

- Have you experienced bias personally?

- After reading about the various types of gender bias in the workplace, what are your thoughts?

- How do you think men and women see the issues similarly and differently?

FOUR LAYERS OF DIVERSITY

*Internal Dimensions and External Dimensions are adapted from
Marilyn Loden and
Judy Rosener, *Workforce America!*
(Business One Irwin, 1991)
From *Diverse Teams at Work,*
Gardenswartz & Rowe (2nd Edition, SHRM, 2003)

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[17] *Image acquired from Gardenswartz and Rowe; http://www.gardenswartzrowe.com/about.html*

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

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CLOSING THE GENDER GAP
ONE CORPORATION AT A TIME