

WOMEN NEED TO STOP SINGING 'IT'S MY PARTY AND I'LL CRY IF I WANT TO'

7 Reasons Why Men Aren't Responsible for Failing Gender Initiatives



By PAT HEIM, PH.D., and TAMMY HUGHES

Ashley has been a manager for four years. She leads a highly motivated team that produces great results and has high morale to boot. But she has recently started thinking about leaving the organization.

The men that were hired at the same time as she have speedily moved up one or two ranks above her, and Ashley feels stuck. She talked to her boss about her future. He said that her former colleagues have moved up more quickly because they have targeted line positions, and she has never indicated a desire to move out of her staff function.

Her director seemed rather surprised that she was interested in the executive ranks since she had never mentioned it to him before. He also indicated that she didn't bring the ambition he would expect because she often opted out of meetings scheduled later in the day.

Ashley walked away from this interaction with her director perplexed as to whether this was another case of men not promoting women, or if she needed to look inside herself and figure out if she should do things differently.

From her perspective, she has always

enjoyed her staff function, and no one ever mentioned to her that having line experience is important in career mobility.

The comment about her non-interest in becoming an executive was shocking because Ashley thought her top performance was evidence of her desire to be promoted.

Ashley has two children and must leave to pick them up from childcare on time. She had no idea her director was

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viewing this need to opt out of meetings that ran late as lack of ambition and willingness to put in effort.

She knows that most of the leadership team also has children, so this comment surprised her.

Ashley isn't alone in this predicament. Many women don't understand the unwritten road map to promotion in most organizations.

1. Men are not the problem.

The business culture is typically male; men are just behaving in ways that are "normal" for them. For the most part, men are clueless that women have a different culture.

If Ashley wants to succeed, she needs to learn the rules of the male culture and understand how those rules play out in organizational life.

2. Women can't expect something they do not ask for.

Research indicates women don't negotiate for salaries, annual increases, or promotions as aggressively as men.

They need to stop blaming men when they make less for the same task. Ashley needs to verbalize her expectations on both pay and promotion. She can't expect her manager to read her mind regarding desired career trajectory.

3. Men simply must be included in the discussion of gender differences; stop excluding them.

Gender issues are interaction issues. You can't solve the problem with only one gender in the room.

It would be helpful if Ashley and her organization could learn about the invisible rules of both gender cultures so they understand the differences in male and female communication.

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4. Don't believe the woman left for "family reasons."

In exit interviews, women say they are quitting for family reasons. Research indicates that, in fact, they were fed up playing the male game but give "family" as a reason so they don't damage relationships or burn a bridge with their organization.

If Ashley chooses to leave, it is important that she be honest about the reasons. Organizations frequently don't have an accurate picture of why women choose to leave because those departing often give the "family excuse."

5. Women take the second shift.

Research shows that women do 16.5 hours a week of domestic duties at home, while male partners only account for seven hours. This makes the face-time

requirement more difficult for women.

Organizations need to understand this and be careful that much of the meeting time isn't selected during later hours in the day when a segment of the population may not be able to participate. When opportunities for informal influence are scheduled at times when Ashley can't be present, she will feel excluded.

6. Women don't aim for the line.

Women often find themselves in staff positions, while line positions lead to the top.

Although Ashley might be quite comfortable and enjoy her staff position, she needs to understand that in most organizations, unless you have line experience, your future is limited.

7. Women have mentors; men have sponsors.

Sponsors look for ways to promote and pull people up through the organization; mentors give thoughtful advice.

Research is clear that women are over-mentored and under-sponsored. Ashley would benefit from having a sponsor who would help her identify line positions she could thrive in and guide her to the top-level positions. ^{BN}

Pat Heim, Ph.D., is the CEO of The Heim Group, LLC, and Tammy Hughes is its president. A global leader in the gender diversity arena, Heim and Hughes deliver keynotes, executive sessions, and workshops to help organizations understand, value, and tap into the unique strengths that both gender cultures bring. It isn't about good or bad, right or wrong ... it's about differences. Check out their recently released, updated version of *Hardball for Women: Winning at the Game of Business*. www.heimgroup.com