

“WHAT MEN THINK”



The Proposition

Do all men think the same regarding the changing culture at work today as increasing numbers of women enter the workplace? Is there an unspoken conversation that can open the doors to better collaboration between men and women?

Research designed by CORPORATE HEART

Led by Pauline Crawford CEO and Founder Corporate Heart

Survey conducted Sept 2010/March 2011

Report published Nov 1st 2011 – This is the Executive Summary.

RESEARCH REPORT – Executive Summary

Introduction to this research proposition

Over the past 20 years, Pauline Crawford, CEO of Corporate Heart, has been working in and studying the evolving nature of work cultures as more pressures and challenges push the economic stability and future sustainable growth of business into new arenas. One critical factor, much discussed today, is the advance and increase of women in the workplace, and the consequences for men as they recognize women can add great value not only to the boardroom, but potentially for the sustainability of organizations and future profitable success. Her belief is that there is the potential to evolve a new blueprint for how organizations work best together, and opening up the conversation with men is key.

Are women a threat or an opportunity to men?

Today, more than half of the workforce are female, and 60% of graduates are women. In the wake of this influx, it has become increasingly evident, anecdotally, that men are finding that the impact of women at all levels affects the whole culture and the demands on men and on business. This impacts on men and their potential to work with - or not - a more equally balanced mix of men and women, and with women in top roles. They also know that they must address gender diversity for economic reasons as well as ethical, personal and professional reasons. The growing status of women - in business as employees, as leaders and entrepreneurs, and as consumers across the world - impacts on men's view of the traditional "male" business arenas they have been used to maintaining. Yet there is a largely unspoken conversation amongst men as to whether women are a threat or an opportunity. Is it because men are inhibited to talk openly in case they are judged as politically incorrect?

Studying the current dilemma - Lord Davies' Report*

Lord Davies' independent review on Women on Boards*, published this February, has set out a challenge to FTSE 100 companies to bring about a minimum of 25% female board member representation by 2015 - and for FTSE 350 companies to challenge themselves to set their own targets in line with the report.

Lord Davies' Report* comments that the nature of the change in overall numbers of women at work has not filtered through to the boardrooms of the UK yet, even though we have undeniable facts which indicate that companies that have more women directors achieve:

- 42% higher return in sales
- 66% higher return on invested capital
- 53% higher return on equity

The report also states a "radical need to make change", rejects quotas at present, but requires the percentage of women to significantly increase at board level by 2015.

*<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf>

(There is also a six month review report on progress delivered Oct 12th 2011 at No 10 Downing Street.)

“The missing conversation”

The changing nature of business today - *“It is not just about women, it’s about “MEN and WOMEN” over many generations, many diverse issues and a major economic crisis!”*

Given the current situation where females are rising in numbers overall in the workplace, and their desire for careers and wealth independence, there would appear to be something blocking or slowing down entry level to the top. Women in the boardroom have not increased in great numbers. Many are cited as opting out of the management layer as they look upwards and decide that the male blueprint will not suit their lifestyle needs.

Where there is now much focus is on “getting women into the boardroom”, there seems no challenge to transform the very rules and principles that might stop women wanting to be there or being able to enter the game. Has the core “male business playing field” changed shape fundamentally to embrace female players? If the answer is that it is staying the same and women are expected to join in, is this sustainable? Could there be a change of heart in men now that embraces a much broader and deeper change to the way business works, given that more and more women are moving up the career pipeline?

In Corporate Heart client conversations over the past year, it appeared that there is an “unspoken conversation” within male circles. This conversation could help change the progress of regarding female contribution in business as a new measurable dynamic. It could open up a meaningful and valuable use of feminine principles at work, and ultimately the overall reconstruction of a new business blueprint by both men and women to suit both players and markets.

Seeking clarity, this Corporate Heart survey gathers data about what men think, with the aim of opening up a wider conversation for a more “diversity-gender-friendly” playing field for business. This playing field will ideally suit men *and* women in a wide range of ways; acknowledging each gender’s professional requirements and personal family criteria; simultaneously maximizing all talents – those naturally gifted and those learned from study and experience; i.e. covering both the “masculine” task-focused, operational expertise *and* “feminine” creative-intuitive, relationship expertise, these being found in both genders.

Why study *“Is what men think really what MOST men think?”*

Pauline and her team at Corporate Heart work in the field of people development and culture transformation, and have experience across a wide range of sectors. They have observed, studied and designed new ways to look at Wellness Cultures and Gender Dynamics, and the communication and relationships in the cultural mix that create healthy, high-performance results.

Their observations over the past decade are that the views of men and women are evolving differently, and that there are distinct ranges of men and of women, that act and think in different ways, within the ever advancing technology, local and global mix that work is today. It would appear that work environments, social and emotional conditions at work, and many family issues (maternity, childcare, elderly care), become more important as numbers of women and female careers increase in the workplace. There has been policy and legislation to support flexibility, family and dependency issues (elderly care, etc) for both women and men. Much attention has been paid to how policy and law help women keep their careers on track. This does not get to the heart of attitudinal variables unspoken between men and women in a whole range of situations that occur for any individual.

This survey sets out to study **“what men think MOST men think”** and assess the **gap** between that cultural mindset (what most people think) and what an individual male might respond to personally (how they see the situation differently or the same as most men). The proposition is that when the main focus of “gender diversity” in business is on “women only”, that men are not often asked about their own views on the threat or opportunity this presents. After decades of focus on “gender equality”, maybe men feel they can’t say how they really feel?

In asking the questions, this survey seeks to quantify the gap between “what men think MOST men think” and “their own view”. It is that gap and the freeform comments that bring richness to this research.

The vision

The vision behind this work is not about women or men, but it is about “women and men together” and the impact that “working together” can achieve in optimum benefits both for the business and for the individuals.

The ongoing goal is to open up the unspoken conversation between men, which can influence the way business evolves. With women as equal partners in both creation and execution of a future workplace, it is hoped that all needs are met - personal and professional, health and wealth, at the same time. This could be one of the keys to a solution for future collaboration and healthy, high-performance teams of men and women combined, both in the boardroom and throughout an organization. The aim is to use this test sample to gather the views of a range of businessmen, and to understand the possible shift in how men would like the work culture to be as the number of women desiring and needing to work increases.

Survey demographics

The survey was carried out between September 2010 and March 2011 and is a random sample of 114 business men, 61% senior management, 26% middle management, 13% junior management; mostly and evenly spread between 35-64, with 18% spread of nationalities outside the UK from Australia, South Africa, USA, France, Uganda, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany and Spain; and a totally diverse range of sectors covering corporate, professional, entrepreneurial; 30% from major organizations over 10,000+, 15% 500+, and 55% SMEs. The sample is evenly spread in terms of being “parents” or having no children, and in terms of having sons and daughters. This is a robust test sample giving a picture of “how men think”.

The survey proposition as stated:

This survey seeks to understand the male perspective and start a conversation for mutual understanding and collaboration for success. Much focus is on “women in business” and the advantages that occur as more women enter the workplace. But how do men really feel about this change and the impact on them? This survey looks at men's perspectives from three standpoints:

- current work attitudes/old ways are best, or new blueprint?
- working with emotions, feelings, pressure and decision making
- relationships between men and women/mixed teams/seniority

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REVIEW – The Results

For full data graphs of all questions and freeform comments, please request the FULL REPORT info@corporateheart.co.uk

Preparation observations

The observations during the period of conducting this survey was that men were either fascinated or totally dis-interested. Many reported that they never “thought about what MOST men think”. Some reported it was too difficult even though there are only 11 question sets and a space for 3 freeform commentary boxes; many commented they were highly intrigued and looking forward to the results as they did want to start a new conversation with men at the top.

In parallel, Pauline and her team held face-to-face conversations with various organizations, many of which have attempted to bring groups of senior men together to discuss topics about women’s progression. Many have been thwarted in their attempts as often senior men did not deem it necessary, or would not prioritize time for such an event; “surely this is a women’s issue, not ours”, was a typical response.

This is not a criticism of men, but another indicator that the right approach has not been made and this survey aims to shine light on a pragmatic approach so that men do not feel either threatened or bored with the topic. It may be that the right invitation is critical in order to get all men engaged to attend.

SUMMARY SCORES

In overview, the “most men’s views” are quite traditional in terms of the options offered in each set of paired statements. However, from this sample of men, it would appear that there is a great desire to present a sensitive, more relationships-style collaborative leadership manner (83.3%), with around 40% of the sample having a *consistently different viewpoint* to that which they scored their MOST MEN views. At least 57% of the sample said they would seek to change their ways of working when required to work with women, yet 77% said they thought most wanted to stay as they are. This in itself opens up the possibility of a gap within men that can be explored.

There seems to be some consistency that when asked about **decision making, tough deadlines, and pressures** in combination with “**emotions**” and “**feelings**”, then the MOST MEN view is more likely to be their own view too. There are fewer men thinking differently. However, there are enough (around 40%) who do have different views, and so we suggest to open this discussion around the topics of decision making. Men and women are known to approach this activity differently. For example, women are often reported as being more questioning, flexible, and inquiring of options and possibilities when it comes to decision making, and this can be seen as “indecisiveness” by men.

Specific points are as follows:

1. Asking men whether they actually **want to change the blueprint** for business is a critical start point for this survey. While 77% of the sample think that most men “**prefer to maintain the status quo of their normal working style when required to work with women**”,

57% actually differed in their views when offered the choice that “men might want to seek to change their ways of workingand explore a new blueprint with women ...”.

2. This first score is fascinating when we check in on **Question 11** where **83.3%** of the sample stated they were personally the kind of male leader who:

“Leads in a more sensitive transformational leadership style, building teams through personal relationships and using intuition and feelings on a regular basis; tends to bring others on board and spreads responsible autonomy among team members, seeing teamwork as a proactive way to win business.”

This was a choice between the above statement and the following leadership style:

“Leads in a direct authoritative transactional leadership style, operationally focused; is tough, logical, task focused, and good at controlling emotions at work; tends to work in a direct action mode, uses strong competitive energy, high-risk strategies, quick decisions and tangible measures to secure business.”

These two choices are deliberately described as polar opposites, and in practice many men will act in a combination of these traits. However, the survey seeks to find out the main preference in style. Given this choice, this sample chose the “softer” leadership style that embraces many of the known traits called “feminine” and “female”, i.e. intuition, relationship focused, feelings, teamwork and sharing responsibility.

Given that these two questions indicate a possible desire to work in less traditional, more flexible, friendly, team ways, we might assume that the sample show a willingness to change.

3. The survey continues to explore how men value “**emotions**” and “**feelings**” around business, and the ability to make decisions and get work done when under pressure and deadlines when working with women.

The following questions seek to understand how men react under pressure and with tough deadlines, even when they may desire to be engaged in a gentler emotional and feeling manner, and how they score these situations, i.e. is there a different gap between what they think most men think and how they see themselves - or do they mainly agree with their own gender view?

4. **Question 2** **87.5%** said “Under **tough deadlines**, most men prefer tasks” and only **40%** disagreed and thought “under tough deadlines, most men prefer to focus on people performing the task.”
5. **Question 3** **90%** said “Most men believe that using **feelings** to make **business decisions** is **highly inappropriate...**”, and just over half (**52%**) agreed.

6. **Question 4** 87.5% said “Most men **do not value emotions that are openly displayed in the workplace**”, and 52% agreed.
7. **Question 5** 67% said “Most men **recognize differences between the way men and women work**”, and 70% agreed. There is a third who think “most men don’t believe there is any difference”. Any disbelief that there are differences may occur due to the interpretation that “gender equality” makes men and women equal in all senses; here we are studying the percentages in order to open a conversation and explore natural differences and experiences in the workplace.

NB Of those who recognize differences, the list of traits provides a view on those commonly attributed to men and women. The scores present a dilution of polar opposites commonly ascribed to each gender, which may show us that there are percentages of men and women who do not fall into stereotypical types. This supports the observations Pauline and her team have noticed in mixed teams.

8. **Question 6** 86.7% said “Most men **find decision-making difficult when women bring their feelings into the process**”, and 58% agreed.
9. **The conundrum about “mixed teams”**
Question 7 60% say “most men prefer **mixed teams...**” and 64% agree with that. There were, however, some 40% who said “most men prefer single gender teams.”

This is countered in **Question 8**, where 68% say “most men find that **decisions take longer in mixed gender teams.**”

Where **decision making** is a focus in the questions as a key activity in business, especially under pressure or tough deadlines, men seem to alter their views about having women and “emotions/feelings” around. There is deliberately no definition of “emotions” and “feelings” in this survey, and an assumption is put forward that women bring more emotionality into the workplace.

NB Although there may appear to be some “tough women” who display less emotion, it is widely written about that women are more likely, biologically, to display emotions overtly and/or have feelings that interrupt their performance under pressure than men do naturally.

- 10 **Question 9** 74% said “most men find difficulty in communicating with women when under pressure themselves”, and 63% agree.

Question 10 63% said “Most men find it difficult to build working relationships with women more senior than them”, and 63% agree.

However, when asked how they “**make relationships in general**” there was a high percentage who said that relationships of all types, with men and women, are **easy** or **extremely easy**.

Overview

There is a general sense throughout this report that there is desirability within men to become more aware and to engage in new conversations i.e. a growing percentage of men enjoy the changes that are coming into the workplace due to the increasing numbers of women. Potentially a more feminine, emotional, nurturing, flexible approach to working styles brings benefits. This may be particularly true for predominantly male sectors to be more ‘service’ focused. However without understanding fully the differentials men and women bring together, and exploring gender bias and experiences within each gender set, under pressure men tend to revert to more extreme ‘male’ behaviour.

Recommendations

We believe that the future success for all businesses lies in men and women understanding each other. This is a starting point and not a fixed point of view.

The questions were designed to open the topic up and allow more complexity as conversations grow. The open questions were designed to reveal the personal views. The following verbatim responses from the men interviewed via the survey show us the extremes of views from positive to negative, and to the mid-point of ‘there’s no issues’ between men and women. In some work situations the latter may well be true and this is also an awareness to know where gender dynamics work seamlessly and to the collective good.

There is much to explore and “Conversations with Men” are a starting point to more collaborative conversations between men and women in business and in life.

We hope you will all join us for more conversations to explore the data. We provide a Master Class format to deliver the key findings in depth to your senior management and leadership teams. The lessons learned from this sample group forms a baseline on which to benchmark your own culture; to discuss the impact men’s conversations may have on building a balanced yet diverse workforce; and finally it will give men permission to discuss issues about their own needs and the changing workplace bow influenced by the increasing presence of women yet in a safe environment.

The Master Class

- **explores the full results of our research**
- **assists you to implement highly effective ways to communicate**
- **helps you to apply the results to improve financial performance**

For more information and the FULL REPORT with all freeform comments and data graphs; contact Corporate Heart on +44 7976 512117 or email sonia@corporateheart.co.uk to discuss your immediate questions.

Fact file on Corporate Heart

Corporate Heart Ltd is a UK based Performance Consultancy, that has a proven track record developing people, teams and whole cultures of healthy high performance and sustainable success. Research is one of Corporate Heart's building blocks when seeking to present and construct a new conversation that creates a paradigm shift for people to work at their best.

History of Wellness Research

Corporate Heart, established in 1999, underpins their transformative approach with specific and targeted research starting with a major piece of Wellness Research, conducted in 2003/4 to test and validate the measurement and analysis of collective 'wellness' in behaviour at work and the influence of healthy high performance on productivity and sustainable success. This research is based on an online 84 question Culture Survey, and provides a benchmark for 'Wellness' from data collected from 12 organisations in 2003/4. This covered public and private sectors. The research studies the attitudinal factors which identify healthy work cultures, positive attitudes and 'good' behaviour to underpin and build the best healthy high performance. The sample was presented at the DTI in 2004 and was well received. There then followed a quarterly Wellness Debate throughout 2005, attended by business leaders, academics, professionals and industrialists, government bodies and consultants. ***Review of all debates and press available on request.***

Wellness Research Partners

For the Wellness Research programme, we worked with Metropolitan Police, MOD, South West Trains, Total Oil, Chubb Insurance, Whitehall & Industry Group, National Chemical Holdings, Royal Orthopedic NHS Trust, Fareham College, Alexander Mann and The Directory of Social Change. This research has been delivered in technical partnership with Creighton Hooper Ltd (Assessment Psychologists). Clients can now audit progress and improvements year to year, measuring human capital and ensuring Return on Investment through less attrition, more customer satisfaction, more employee loyalty, greater innovation and more energized productivity.

Latest Research in Gender Dynamics arena

Recent requirements in corporate environments to implement diversity, CSR and in particular, have drawn attention to gender diversity and equality, and this has led Corporate Heart to look at a new view of men and women and *Gender Dynamics* at work. Seeking to understand how Men are reacting to the impact of gender at work, "**What Men really think**" researches how men are responding to the current workplace changes regarding the increase in women at work and the focus on Women on Board. ***Full Report available on request.***

"The mere fact of running the wellness survey, and having to discuss the results, has provided our management team with a dialogue between ourselves that is open, supportive and which has brought about an 'ownership' by the team as a whole. The immediate influence of this survey has been to enable managers to speak to staff about specific personal views previously undefined; the staff feel noticed and taken seriously, and the managers now have a tool to ask the necessary questions without fear of offending anyone." Debra Allcock Tyler CEO The Directory of Social Change, Voluntary Sector