

Toward a Partnership of Women and Men in Business

A Condensation

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This 7,000 word document summarizes a much more comprehensive original 23,500 word publication of the same title. The full text can be purchased from George Ronald at www.grbooks.com/index.php.

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*The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and **mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy.** Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental values of the European Union.

European Commission

Introduction

When the European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF) was created in 1990, its first elected Governing Board defined seven core values. One of these values, or principles, was 'the partnership of women and men'. In the EBBF publication, *Emerging Values for a Global Economy*, first published in 1996, this core value was explained as follows :

Humanity can be viewed as a bird, with men representing one wing and women the other. Harmonious flight requires equal development of both wings. Similarly in organizations, those that encourage the development and inclusion of such qualities characteristic of women as developing relationships, teamwork, caring, compassion, intuition and sensitivity are moving closer to the new paradigm of management practices needed to compete on quality, service and timeliness. Diversity of gender as well as of race and ethnicity enhances a creative environment and brings new ways of thinking to companies as well as individuals. Since enterprises in developed countries rely on innovation for survival, it is crucial for them to harness human potential. Fostering the growth and development of women by welcoming their special capabilities and recognizing their contributions will thus enhance a company's prosperity.

Convincing as it may seem, this core value evoked less resonance in business circles than other values such as corporate social responsibility, sustainable development and business ethics. Since then, increasing attention has been drawn to women and their emergence as capable leaders in all walks of life: politics, government, civil society organizations, NGOs, legal and accounting professions, and, yes, also as leaders of companies of all sizes. As presidents and prime ministers, as managing partners of multinational law firms, as entrepreneurs, as CEOs of 15 of the Fortune 500 companies – women have demonstrated their capacity to lead and manage.

It is therefore timely for EBBF to add to its collection of publications and its web site convincing evidence that a true partnership of women and men leaders, and the blending of feminine and masculine values and qualities, will enhance competitiveness and prosperity. This condensation summarizes some of the forces at work, their implications for management, how women excel in all fields of endeavour, some best practices, the business case for gender balance, and the partnership paradigm.

Forces at Work

There are several trends shaping a new and emerging paradigm of management or business model. These forces are profoundly changing the nature of work, and they are increasing opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in companies, professional firms and organizations of all kinds and sizes.

Societal trend to partnership. In several recent books and articles, the noted

anthropologist Riane Eisler described a major societal transformation from a domination model characterized by male values toward a partnership model which draws upon and blends both male and female traits, values and practices. EBBF joins a growing number of other associations in building a convincing business case for this emerging partnership paradigm.

Globalization. The pervasive effects of the globalization need little explanation.

Intensity of competition. One obvious consequence of globalization is the increasing intensity of competition in many sectors of the economy.

Increasing turbulence and instability. Managers are experiencing an increase in the pace, complexity and unpredictability of work life.

Technological innovation. Technology is changing profoundly the nature of work and the capabilities required to manage.

A shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge, service, and information and communications technology (ICT) based economy. With this shift, human and social capital are replacing financial capital as the most important strategic resources to be developed. Traditional concepts of work, of jobs, and of motivation are being challenged, as are the values underlying the management of human, social and financial resources.

Changing value systems are finding expression in different life style and work style expectations on the part of employees, managers, customers, and communities as a whole. Generations X and Y are insisting on better work/life balance, greater flexibility in work and careers, and greater gender equality.

Societal expectations of business are increasing and broadening. To create long-term shareholder value executives are obliged to understand and respond to the changing value expectations and demands from society.

Spiritualization. According to Pat Aburdene, author of *Megatrends 2010*, 'The power of spirituality is arguably the greatest megatrend of our era.' In a recent book (*Spiritual Enterprise: Building Your Business in the Spirit of Service*, 2007) EBBF member Larry Miller shows how basic moral and spiritual principles or values can be applied to management and leadership.

Implications for Management

The implications of these forces at work are very clear: companies of all sizes must win the war for talent, redefine their fundamental purpose, recognize the increasing importance of women at all levels, and move toward a more holistic concept of organization as a social community.

The war for talent. Human and social talent is becoming the world's most sought after commodity. In the knowledge economy of the 21st century, talent will remain the scarcest of scarce resources.'

Increasing importance of women. Professional firms and companies in growth markets are vying for talent. They recognize increasingly that their inability to recruit, motivate and retain women is a major constraint on their capacity to compete and grow.

Redefining corporate purpose. To begin with, there is a need to redefine the purpose of the corporation in a manner that reflects the real needs of all stakeholders. In her recent publication *Purpose before Profit* Professor Marjo Lips-Wiersma defines the spiritual purpose of an enterprise as 'to provide products and services to meet the real needs of humankind'. This redefinition of purpose from maximizing profit to meeting *real needs* must be reflected in the vision and mission of the organization.

Toward a more holistic organization. Another implication of these forces at work is that companies of all sizes must move toward a more holistic or web-like framework of organization. Structures must become more decentralized, connected and relational, and less hierarchical. Systems of communication and interaction must allow for more dialogue and consultative approaches to decision making. At the same time, the 'softer' elements such as purpose, culture, shared values, and people must be aligned. This represents a revolution and necessary shift in the way companies will be led and managed tomorrow.

Moving toward a partnership paradigm. One of the concepts supporting more holistic organizations is that of partnership. As companies become increasingly global, workforces become more diverse; the role of business in society broadens. New forms of partnership are emerging and proving to be challenging but more effective solutions.

Women Excel in All Fields of Endeavour

In the following paragraphs we explore several propositions concerning women as leaders: first, that women *are* good leaders; second that women *are* different from men; third that women tend to lead differently from men.

Women *are* good leaders. That women can and do make effective leaders is incontestable. Whether in government, NGO/civil society organizations, in academia, or in professional firms, women have proven to be equal to men in leadership roles and in capability if not in numbers. And what about the world of business? Here again we find women moving into and succeeding at all levels of management and leadership.

Women are demonstrating their talents as entrepreneurs. In many countries more than one-third of new companies are started by women. A number of studies have shown that women's ways of leading these small and medium-size enterprises are often better suited than those of many men.

Are women different from men? Men and women in large organizations share many values and traits. By and large both women and men are committed to their work and careers, which they consider as core to their meaning and purpose in life and to their personal and social identities, status and standing. Yet, women are not male clones; they are not merely 'men in skirts'. Many highly qualified women in business have different needs and wants from men and find it difficult and even counterproductive to replicate the 'male dominator' model. They interactively partner with others outside work and generally have greater responsibilities for child and elder care. Furthermore, they often have somewhat different professional values and aspirations. Money is often less important, more flexible work options are more important, and they show stronger guilt feelings in attempting to balance work and family well-being (Hewett, 2007).

Of course, not all women are alike, nor are all men. They all have differing talents, motivations and priorities. According to Helen Fisher, an American anthropologist from Rutgers University, men are more analytical; women are better long-term planners. She bases her findings on archaeological evidence, MRI brain scans, genetics and large-scale surveys of how men and women behave. Men and women, she says, think differently and therefore behave differently because their brains develop differently. Brain scans prove it, as does plenty of other research. On average, women gather more data, consider the context, are more intuitive, have a sympathizing mind and think more long-term. Ms Fisher calls it 'web thinking'.

Jim Andrews, the Diversity Manager for Schlumberger, finds that diversity encourages creativity and innovation and that his company has seen the benefits of having more women in the workforce over the past few years (Maitland, 2008). Men, on the other hand, are more focused, think linear, focus on rules and the short-term – 'step thinking'. Male doctors focus on the specific illness and its treatment, while female doctors tend to take a more holistic approach to health. When men get older and their testosterone levels sink, their brains start to work differently – they become more sympathetic to the plight of others. Women however become more decisive and, yes, more 'male-like', as their estrogen diminishes. So if women are so different, do they lead differently?

Another interesting theory is that men and women may have different career cycles. According to Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland (2008, pp. 242-56), both women and men during their 20s are 'career-first': dedicated to having the best education and challenging work experience possible. Then, in their 30s, there emerges a fork in the road. Men and 'career-first' or 'alpha women' continue to commit heavily to professional advancement, development of networks and personal reputation building. But many women enter a stage in which they may need or call for more flexibility,

some for maternity or elder care, others simply being less comfortable with issues of networks, visibility, travel and long hours. After 40, if they have survived the issues, these same women are ready to reinvest professionally and to assume more challenging leadership roles. This renewal, which may well become a major source of new talent, may well continue on into the 60s, long after many of their male counterparts have retired to their clubs and other personal passions. While the above differences need to be accommodated, one commonality is clear: like men, women spend many decades in the workforce.

Do women and men lead differently? Now that we have seen that women can and do become good leaders in all forms of organizations and that women do differ from men in some respects, we turn to the interesting and more relevant question of whether women and men in large companies lead differently. This is the subject of an ongoing and inconclusive debate. Numerous studies have concluded that their leadership styles do differ. One research project found that male and female entrepreneurs think similarly but that their leadership styles differ and that gender differences do show up in decision-making: men strongly emphasize logic or left-brain thinking; women balance logic with right-brain thinking, that is, feelings, intuition, relationships, sensitivity and values.

Similar differences showed up from a Catalyst survey in the UK:

Women managers see and do things differently from male managers. They are more sensitive, more intuitive, committed, and multi-tasked. They are more focused *on the process* of getting things done, whereas men tend to be focused *on the task* at hand. We need both. Also women can cope more easily as structures change from hierarchical to matrix and web styles of management. (Catalyst, 2002)

The survey, sponsored by Women's International Forum, concluded that on the whole there are notable differences in leadership styles. Taking care of others is perceived by women and men alike in all European countries to be *the* defining quality of women leaders. On the other hand, taking charge of people and situations was perceived to be *the* defining quality of men leaders. Men are perceived as outperforming women in being more action-oriented, in taking charge, in influencing upward, and in manipulating their environment.

Rosener, in another study, found that men are more likely than women to describe their leadership as being 'transactional' or a series of transactions with subordinates. They are also more likely to use power that comes from their positions and formal authority. In contrast, women tend to describe themselves as 'transformational' leaders and ascribe their 'power' more to their personal characteristics. Women more often mention such aspects of leadership as encouraging participation and inclusion, sharing power and information, enhancing the self-worth of others, and energizing others. Women also differ in seeking to contribute to a higher purpose.

These and other studies conclude that there are certain traits or qualities that tend to apply to women, which are called feminine traits, and other qualities (masculine traits) that apply more to men. They can be summarized in the table below.

Table 1
Values, Traits, and Leadership Styles Attributed to Women and Men

	Masculine	Masculine-Feminine	Feminine
Values	Authority over others Advancement, compensation Authority, ends justify means Bravery Victory, competitiveness Self-reliance, retaining information, logic, keeping career information (power) Focus short term, on task and bottom line Job, achievement, competence, efficiency. Ends count most	Trustworthiness Excellence Integrity Commitment to job and	Serving others, Authenticity/sincerity Contributing to a better world Cooperation, means as important as ends Compassion Caring, empathetic Sharing, supportive, open communications Attention to process, long term, people focus Relationships count Ends and means count equally
Leadership Style	Command & control, on-top Competitive, exclusive, aggressive Decisive, risk-taking Hierarchical structures Task first, focus on completion Telling/speaking Transactional	Assertive	Consultative, participative, in the middle Collaborative, inclusive-expansive Intuitive, interactive Web- like, matrix, democratic Multi-tasked, focus on process Listening-speaking, sharing voice Transformational
Negotiations	Win-lose		Win-win

Nevertheless, the answers to the question posed for this section, ‘Do women and men lead and manage differently?’ are neither clear nor convincing. Some recent studies have concluded that there are no significant differences in the ways women and men lead in large corporations. Catalyst reported (2006) for example, that an analysis of 40 studies found very little difference between men’s and women’s leadership styles.

Why so few women leaders? Women are not advancing into higher executive positions in large public corporations in proportion to the increasing number of women in the ‘talent pool’ and to the critical need for executive talent. Part of the reason is that company policies, practices and structures fail to meet the needs and expectations of high-talent females. Women are finding other opportunities in which

to contribute their many talents – opportunities that meet their needs and expectations better. This may mean running a smaller company ‘their way’, finding more meaningful ways to make a difference in the social sector and NGO worlds, or in sharing their time and energy differently between work and family. Meanwhile, companies are facing increasing competition in attracting and retaining needed talent or human capital with social capabilities.

Barriers Confronting Women Leaders

This chapter explores further some of the reasons why women are not advancing into more senior positions of leadership in large corporations.

Hostile organization cultures Often, corporate cultures further reinforce the handicaps many women feel in striving for equal opportunities for development and advancement. The ways of corporate socialization, the internal language and vocabulary, the working hours, the ways that managers get value recognition, the corporate role models to emulate – in general, ‘the way we do things around here’ are all heavily influenced by male-created and perpetuated dominator traditions. Unquestionably, respecting and promoting feminine values and needs in the workplace will require serious changes in many corporate cultures.

Cultural stereotypes: Will they ever die? Cultural stereotyping and preconceptions about women’s roles and capabilities are among the major barriers to the advancement of women. What are stereotypes? They can be defined as prejudged or prejudiced perceptions about the qualities that distinguish groups or categories of people. Many senior women leaders feel that stereotyping occurs frequently in organizations and creates prejudiced and therefore flawed impressions of their leadership capabilities. These false impressions are a major reason why women are not chosen for top leadership positions, and why a gender leadership gap exists.

The heart of the dilemma has two components. The first is the stereotype of the male leader: i.e. good leaders must be ‘agentive’, that is, aggressive, decisive, rational, objective, ambitious, competitive . . . because leaders have traditionally been men and they valued such characteristics in their leaders. This preconception often makes women appear ill-suited to be leaders. Second, those women who display some or all of these attributes themselves are often perceived by men and many women to be overly aggressive, instead of assertive, and therefore are not well-liked. As one study (Heilman et al.) found :

Many mainstream organizations equate stereotypical masculine traits with images of competence and leadership, and women pay a price . . . The result is that women who are tough, confident, and decisive are demonized as bitchy, strident, and insensitive. By the same token, women who are sensitive, relational, and warm are discounted as weak, passive, and too nice. Either way, women are seen by some as unfit for leadership roles.

The glass ceiling is cracking. Closely related to stereotypes, the glass ceiling is another significant barrier to gender diversity. While the phrase is metaphorical, many women who find themselves bumping their heads on it find the glass ceiling to be very real indeed. Catalyst defines it as a complex of intra-organizational mechanisms and invisible barriers that make career advancement difficult for women and block vertical access to the top. The word ‘ceiling’ implies that there is a limit to how high someone can climb in an organization structure. Along with this implied barrier is the idea that it is glass, meaning that while it is very real, it is transparent and not obvious to the observer. The term is most often applied to business situations in which women feel, whether accurately or not, that men are deeply entrenched in the upper echelons of power, and that women, try as they might, find it nearly impossible to break through.

These findings seem to support the conclusions of another study by Eagly and Carli (2007) that found that ‘when you put all the pieces together, a new picture emerges for why women don’t make it into the C-suite – that is, the key corporate positions reporting to the CEO. It’s not the glass ceiling, but the sum of many obstacles along the way.’ They go on to say that times have changed and that the metaphor of the glass ceiling is now more wrong than right. They reason that the glass ceiling fails to incorporate the complexity and variety of challenges that women can and do face in their leadership journeys. Women, they argue, are not turned away only as they reach the penultimate stage of a distinguished career; they disappear in various numbers at many points leading up to that stage, hence the suggested metaphor of the labyrinth.

Work/life imbalance This brings us to the third barrier to the advancement of women to senior executive positions: the pressure of family responsibilities. Decision-makers often assume that mothers have domestic responsibilities that make it inappropriate to promote them to demanding positions. But even more important about the impact of family care is that it leaves women much less time for socializing with colleagues and building and maintaining professional and company networks. Studies of career paths of fast-track managers show that time and effort devoted to building social capital – that is, to socializing, politicking, and interacting with outsiders – can be important to their advancement. Unfortunately for women, the influential networks are composed mainly of men and their activities are more often than not based on male themes.

Outdated human resource policies and practices Like so many other factors that impede the advancement of women, HR policies and practices often have been developed and administered by men for men without due consideration of the needs of women. The processes for career planning, management of high-potential people, task force assignments, compensation, flexible schedules, and provision of adequate and affordable childcare facilities do not respond adequately in most large companies to the needs of women with families or other compelling needs. Furthermore, men are often favoured for key line positions and overseas assignments as well as for highly visible task forces. Management development and education programmes usually ignore the study of issues more specific to women. Of particular significance are the linear career path practices that leave limited career flexibility.

Best Practices

We have seen in the preceding chapters that the gender gap is increasingly prevalent as one moves up the ladder in responsibility; at the same time, executive talent is becoming scarce. Most CEOs realize that there really is a global war for talent and a shortage of potential leaders. But women, perhaps the largest source of untapped talent, are leaving the corporate sector at twice the rate of men, seeking more satisfying and compatible careers in other sectors or starting up their own companies. Few are leaving for family reasons. This is the so-called 'leaking pipeline' problem. Substantial numbers of women enter large companies and financial institutions and professional service firms upon graduation. They work hard, prove they are equally qualified and represent around 40 % of managers. But then their numbers decrease and fewer advance to senior roles than men do. So what is being done to attract, develop, retain, and motivate women to fill this talent gap?

Women are reacting. First of all, women themselves are 'taking the bull by the horns' and shattering the glass ceiling. They are insisting on more compatible work styles that permit them to better balance careers with their personal lives and families. They are seeking mentors and greater internal visibility. They are building relationships with executives who may suggest, when positions are to be filled, 'Well, what about . . .?' They are being more proactive about defining and communicating their goals and priorities. They are asking for honest feedback on their performance and potential. And they are asking for challenging assignments that are visible to upper management and are documenting the positive impact of their efforts. They are participating actively in one or more professional women's associations as well as in local internal and external support groups, and they are asking for equal access to internal and external leadership development programmes.

Governments are supporting equality of women and men. Legislative and non-legislative measures are being adopted at the European and national levels to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination, particularly with regard to gender balance. Beginning with the Lisbon Strategy (1990), the European Commission (EC) has made it clear that it sees gender balance as an integral part of the European strategy to promote jobs and growth. It aims to reduce gender gaps and improve work/life balance. In 2006 the EC announced a 'Roadmap for equality between women and men' and in 2008 published a paper encouraging all national governments to increase full-time employment of women to 60%. Furthermore, initiatives of the EC and their support for CSREurope and the European Academy for Business in Society (EABIS) have encouraged companies to implement more forward-looking policies and practices to achieve greater gender balance. But the results have been mixed. While the overall percentage of women managers has increased in Europe (27 countries of the EU), in nearly half of these countries the percentage declined between 2001 and 2006.

On a more positive note, national governments, particularly in the Nordic countries and France, are showing how strong public policy can create conditions favourable to women working full-time and raising families. An example is the Norwegian law requiring state-owned and large publicly-owned companies with more than ten directors to have at least 40% of each gender represented on boards of directors by the end of 2007. When the law passed in 2003 only 16% of board members were women; in February 2007 the percentage had increased to 36%. Company compliance measures include boardroom competence training and networking, programmes conducted by CEOs and the development of lists of 'board-ready' women *in Leadership Positions*.

A very important form of government support is the provision of child and elder support facilities that permit women to work as managers full-time. France and the Scandinavian countries have been models in this area. The high percentage of women in these countries working full-time is considered to be directly related to these facilities. Governments can also legislate flexible work approaches, more equitable remuneration for women, and lower tax rates for second earners, who are usually women.

Best company practices Companies are responding positively to these pressures from women's initiatives, from governments, and from society at large. First and foremost, leading edge companies have recognized the strategic interest of promoting gender balance and of having a workforce that mirrors their markets. Companies such as Proctor & Gamble (P&G), IBM, Deloitte, General Electric (GE), Coca Cola, Philips, Nissan, and British Telecom recognize that a large percentage of buying decisions are made or are heavily influenced by women and to a lesser extent by minority groups either of nationalities, ethnic groups or sexual orientation. So these companies have implemented policies to ensure that such customer groups are well represented in all functions of the business: sales and marketing, product development, production, engineering, and research and development, as well as human resources and finance.

1. Achieving work/life balance. This is among the other areas in which companies are implementing policies and practices to allow women (and men) to combine successful careers and harmonious personal and family lives. These practices are quite common and include:

- Flexible work options (part-time, work at home, telecommuting, compressed work weeks) and, to a lesser extent, job-sharing and sabbaticals
- More liberal maternity and paternity leaves and re-entry programmes
- Childcare, assistance, and lactation facilities

2. Choosing and using indicators, setting targets and monitoring progress. As the old saying goes, 'Anything that gets measured usually gets done.' Gender balance is no exception to this rule. Companies that have recognized the strategic importance of gender balance and diversity have integrated it into their management systems by

identifying key indicators, setting goals and objectives, measuring results, and rewarding good performance appropriately.

3. *Managing senior womens' talent.* Among the most important 'best practices' is the management of careers of high-potential women to ensure that they have been identified and that they receive opportunities to demonstrate the capabilities considered essential for access to the most senior positions. Examples of job experience considered most relevant to judging potential include line positions with profit and loss responsibility, selected overseas experience, and participation in significant and visible task forces.

4. *Mentoring and coaching.* These have proven to be an effective and low-cost method of engaging high-potential executives and a critical tool in the career of women. They increase motivation, accelerate learning, and reduce turnover. Use of mentors and coaches is simple, not excessively time-consuming, and has shown to accelerate development of future executive talent. It also responds to one of the most often heard complaints from women – in fact 42% of women in one survey mentioned lack of mentoring as one of the major reasons for leaving.

5. *Managing company alumni networks.* An increasing number of professional firms manage alumni networks of women and men who have left but with whom these companies wish to nurture and retain contact in the hope that they might be attracted back to the firm. Some like Booz Allen Hamilton offer part-time assignments to take advantage of the part-time availability of some former staff. But managing alumni networks is not limited to professional firms: 30 percent of blue chip companies (in the USA) manage alumni networks and 20 percent more plan to do so.

6. *Education and training.* An increasing number of companies are using a variety of education and training efforts, both internal and external, to support gender policies and practices. Some internal diversity workshops are aimed at improving the understanding of both women and men of the origin and consequences of biases and stereotyping, inconsistencies between values and practices, and the causes of gender inequality.

7. *Managing the culture.* As mentioned previously, another significant reason for the high turnover of women managers and a roadblock for potential female leaders is the biased corporate culture. How often have women found it difficult, and in the end impossible, to remain in a masculine-dominator corporate culture in which long working hours and excessive travel, often combined with late evening socializing, vulgar vocabulary, and authoritarian decision-making are prevalent. Many of the best practices and actions presented above will contribute to creating a better understanding of the importance of this cultural dimension. But cultural change is a difficult challenge in the best of all worlds, and next to impossible when the structures, strategies, people, values and behaviours, management systems and even purpose have been developed by and for men.

The Business Case for Gender Balance

Woman's lack of progress and proficiency has been due to her need of equal education and opportunity. Had she been allowed this equality, there is no doubt she would be the counterpart of man in ability and capacity. The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and help meet of the other.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

While some authors have focused on the moral case for equality of women and men, it is clear that without a convincing business case focus, little progress can be expected in bringing many more women into the leadership of major corporations. It is significant that several recent studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between corporate financial performance and gender balance and diversity.

In 2005 the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities sponsored *The Business Case for Diversity: Good Practices in the Workplace*. This study covered 16 Member States in Europe, though the representation from new Member States and southern Europe was quite small. So what were the conclusions of this study?

1. Fewer than one-half of the participating companies had diversity policies and practices in place. And among those that did, only 21% had policies and practices ‘well embedded’, that is, in place for more than five years. So implementing gender and diversity practices is a very recent trend.
2. The major areas covered by the gender and diversity initiatives in place were organizational factors, recruitment-selection-retention, employee development and promotion, and leadership development and talent management. To a slightly smaller extent came strategy implementation, policies and practices, employee networks, and community outreach and engagement.
3. Most of the companies in the survey (83% of the 495 responding) agreed that gender and diversity initiatives have a positive impact on business.
4. The perceived benefits of diversity to these 495 respondents varied widely:
 - a. Access to new labour pool (350)
 - b. Benefits from enhanced reputation (310)
 - c. Commitment to equality and diversity as company values (280)
 - d. Innovation and creativity (220)
 - e. Improved retention and motivation (190)
 - f. Legal compliance (180)
 - g. Competitive advantage (140)
 - h. Economic effectiveness (140)
 - i. Marketing opportunities (130)

These conclusions are quite consistent with a broader view of the major benefits of gender initiatives and the more generally considered major benefits recognized by companies. These benefits fall into four areas: access to a new talent pool for recruitment and retention of potential managers, enhanced marketing opportunities,

enhanced corporate image and reputation and standing in the country and the communities in which they operate, and greater innovation.

Women in Corporate Governance

Repeated studies have shown that representation of women on boards of directors is shockingly small and is changing very slowly, even regressing in some places. Women account for 7% of directors in the world's corporate boards. In the USA, 15.7% of directors are women, a significant increase from 9.6% in 1995 and 13.6% in 2003. Female representation on boards in Europe seems to have stagnated at 8.5% with the notable exception of Scandinavian countries. These figures for large public corporations vary a great deal from country to country: from an average of 36% in Norway to fewer than 1% in Japan, Portugal and Luxembourg. A number of benefits have been cited by CEOs who have brought women onto their boards. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. Women tend to reason differently and offer complementary points of view on many issues. They are more likely than men to ask tough questions and demand direct answers.
- b. Women tend to bring a stronger emotional intelligence to bear in consultation, stronger social intelligence and work well in teams, and are effective facilitators of change.
- c. Women, as major purchasers and investors, bring a better understanding of the marketplace, as well as new perspectives and issues to the table.
- d. Diversity increases creativity and innovation and contributes to more effective problem solving.

It is a well-known fact that women are also making very significant contributions to the governance of many not-for-profit organizations, to health care bodies, and to family-owned companies. Why not to publicly-owned corporations as well?

Toward a Partnership Paradigm

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.

The Universal House of Justice

In the previous sections we have attempted to highlight a number of forces at work, or changes, that are shaping the global economy and their implications for business leaders. One of these challenges is the war for talent, which many CEOs have rated as their major constraint on growth and competitiveness. One of the logical responses is to recognize that the pool of women managers and leaders is underutilized. Women

are recognized to be good leaders, though they may lead differently. However, there are differing views on whether those few women who trickle through to senior executive positions really manage differently from men in similar positions. What is surprising is that there are so few women in senior management positions and on executive committees and corporate boards. A number of barriers seem to confront women executives, but leading edge companies are finding ways to leap over these hurdles to attract and retain female talent. These companies are convinced that diversity pays and that women are equally competent in top management and corporate governance.

In this concluding section we focus not on women as such but rather on the partnership of women and men. Our concept of partnership leadership involves equal access of women and men to all levels of management, to all functions and to all career paths. Whether it is being the CEO or CFO, or responsible for a team on an oil rig in the North Sea, or supervisor of an automotive assembly line, women are practising equality in all fields of endeavour. We at EBBF view this increasing recognition of the leadership and management capabilities of women as but one of a series of steps in accelerating a much broader transformation in the business world. As Willis Harman (1919–1997, founder of the World Business Academy) said nearly 25 years ago,

the modern world is undergoing a period of fundamental transformation, the extent and meaning of which we who are living through it are only beginning to grasp . . . The role of business in that transformation is absolutely critical.

He went on to say:

Business has become, in this last half century, the most powerful institution on the planet. The dominant institution in any society needs to take responsibility for the whole – as the church did in the days of the Holy Roman Empire.

Peter Drucker’s penetrating analysis of this transformation was very much in line with that of Willis Harman. In *Post Capitalist Society* he wrote:

Every few hundred years in Western history, there occurs a sharp transformation. Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself – its world view, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions. We are currently living through just such a transformation.

It is not simply a matter of equal numbers of men and women in the workforce or in management or on boards of directors, but rather a revolution in the basic values in society and in the enterprise. Progressively the values of service to others, compassion, and cooperation will blend with or reduce the effect of such dominant masculine traits as achievement and competition. These values will permeate the organization in its very purpose, its strategies, its policies and practices, in its structures and management systems, and in its decision-making processes . . . and in so doing encourage greater diversity and equal opportunity.

And further to this, Fritjof Capra adds (1982):

The shift of paradigms requires not only an expansion of our perceptions and ways of thinking, but also of our values . . . as far as values are concerned, we are observing a shift from competition to cooperation, from expansion to conservation, from quantity to quality, from domination to partnership.

Another brilliant and insightful writer on the need for fundamental systemic change and the partnership of women and men is Riane Eisler. Eisler and Corral (2006) define two underlying models: first, the **domination model** which is characterized by male dominance and masculine values such as toughness, strength, conquest. In sharp contrast the **partnership model** implies the exercise of many feminine qualities, whether in women or in men, such as caring (for people, for the environment . . .), compassion, empathy, and intuition. Today, the authors say, there are strong trends worldwide towards the partnership model in all aspects of our lives, and ‘a key aspect of the movement toward partnership is a redefinition of power and leadership in more stereotypically feminine ways’.

This concept of ‘partnership leadership’ provides for equal access of women and men to all levels of management, to all functions and career paths. It is the basis for one of the core values of EBBF: the partnership of women and men in all fields of endeavour. It is important to clarify that in the partnership model, women will share more in leadership roles but they will not replace men. In fact, some men are very caring and empathetic just as some women are coercive and authoritarian. Rather, there will be a blending of feminine and masculine values in both women and men. Many – but not all – characteristics considered masculine are positive and necessary for effective leadership: logical thinking, courage, decisiveness, and many softer feminine values are much more effective in managing in a knowledge-based post-industrial economy and in smaller growing enterprises. One important aspect of the partnership model is that it allows for the use of ‘contextual intelligence’ and offers the flexibility to adjust management style to the needs of the situation and of the various stakeholders. As one Harvard professor noted (Nye, 2008), understanding context is crucial to effective leadership. Some situations call for autocratic decisions while others can benefit from more participative approaches. Women, it is said, tend to be more intuitive, as concerned with the process as the content, and thus more contextually and emotionally intelligent. These skills or characteristics are becoming even more important in the growing number of high-tech and services companies, like Google, in which structures are more fluid, authority is being devolved to teams, rewards are more related to team than individual performance, and other management practices are designed to meet the needs of the Generations X and Y workforce.

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The world of humanity has two wings – one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

