
THE AUSTRALIAN
Pulse of Women
IN LEADERSHIP.

MEGAN DALLA-CAMINA & MICHELLE MCQUAID © MAY 2014.

POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

for Aspiring Women

Real Women. Real Leadership. Real Change.

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You only have to look at the statistics around women in leadership to get smacked in the face with the stark reality for women trying to crawl up the corporate lattice in this country. To say there is a scarcity of upward movement happening would be an understatement of epic proportions.

The conversation in CEO, HR and diversity circles remains much the same as it has been for many years – set targets, develop more programs, remove the seen obstacles and address the unconscious bias. This is important work, no doubt. But while we have made some inroads, we have not made traction in changing the trajectory. Clearly, it's time for a new conversation. And time for a bold new approach so we can finally make some giant leaps forward, instead of the slow creep that has been crawling on for decades.

In April 2014 internationally acclaimed women, leadership and wellbeing experts Megan Dalla-Camina and Michelle McQuaid, commissioned an independent online survey of 1,000 full-time Australian employees – half men and half women from metropolitan and rural areas aged 18 – 65 years - to better understand why despite the well-intentioned strategies resounding in our corporate boardrooms women don't appear to be progressing.

It's time for a new conversation

Unlike their global counterparts who believe the world would be a better place if men thought more like women, it appears Australian men would rather see more women in leadership roles. In fact 62% of Australian men believe it would be good for business in this country if there were more women in leadership positions.

Shockingly however, six out of ten Australian businessmen believe the reason there aren't more female leaders is because women are holding themselves back. They suggest work/life juggle, a lack of qualifications and experience and a lack of ambition are the main barriers for women reaching leadership roles.

Less surprising is that only 35% of Australian women believe they have the same career opportunities as men. To be more successful in their careers 61% of women want more flexibility at work and close to 75% wish they had more help and support from men at work and at home. Men agree these changes would help, but significantly underestimate the impact this could have on women's careers.

The only thing it seems Australian men and women are in complete agreement on is that targets and quotas to ensure women get offered roles are the least effective approach to help women be more successful in their careers.

Clearly the time has come to stop talking at cross-purposes about "fixing the women" or "stamping out bias in men". Instead if you listen carefully to these results, you can hear a ripple of unrest amongst aspiring women and good men who long to talk less about equity, and more about the unique talents all people bring to the table and how we can collectively harness these for the greater good.

The time has come to turn the conversation in government policies, boardroom papers, leadership training and at water coolers in offices around Australia towards the united goal of gender intelligence.

The roadmap forward

What the market is seeking in terms of leadership is changing. In 2013 extensive research by John Gerzema and Pulitzer Prize winner Michael D'Antonio was released which shed light on the real differences between how men and women lead, and as importantly, people's expectations of leaders in a world that's increasingly transparent, social and interdependent.

In the new economy where winning is becoming a group construct, masculine traits – as identified by their research - like "aggression" and "independence", trail the feminine traits of "collaboration" and "sharing credit". The more masculine qualities like "decisiveness" and "resilience" are important, but so are the feminine qualities of being "open" and "flexible" in order to build consensus and get things done.¹

There is a growing awakening around the world of the bottom-line value of feminine traits in business, and the Pulse results suggest Australia is no different.

As our workplaces continue to struggle with engagement and productivity levels, Australian employees are telling us they want a more expressive, intuitive style of leader, who can demonstrate kindness and empathy (89%), use influence rather than control to exercise their power (83%), collaborate and share credit (65%), and share their feelings more openly and be more flexible (60%).

It is time we wake up and realize the current models

of leadership behavior pervasive in our organizations are not serving us as well as they could be, and that we need to embrace and enhance the value in true feminine traits, which can show up in men as well as women, and finally serve us all.

It is time women embrace their inherently unique and authentic qualities, rather than trying to dumb them down, stamp them out, or repress them in order to fit the required leadership mold. It's time for women to fully step into their power, for all that they are and all that they can be. And it's time for business leaders and organizations to recognize the qualities that have long been seen to be weaknesses, are actually the strengths that can help address many of the issues that business, government and the economy are facing today.

Getting to gender parity within our organizations is going to take a radical openness and willingness to embrace new thinking and progressive strategies. Three steps we believe Australian businesses need to prioritize are:

- Boardrooms need to educate themselves on how gender intelligence delivers bottom line value.
- Managers need an evidence-based roadmap to change leader behaviors so they consistently bring out the best in themselves and others.
- Women need to give themselves permission to value their feminine traits and have the confidence to show up authentically and sustainably at work, and be supported to do so.

Our recent white paper “Unleashing the Butterfly Effect for Women, Leadership and Work” documents fully how these approaches can be applied.

The Pulse results leave us in no doubt, it is these changes that will improve the economic and social trajectory of this country through increased workforce participation and enhanced business performance, with a potential productivity gain of \$26,300 per employee.²

The bottom line

For so long we have been telling women to change who they inherently are in order to find their seat at the boardroom table. Step up, be more assertive, and in recent times, lean in. The message has invariably been about ‘fixing the women’. Make women more like men so they can seamlessly fit into patriarchal

organizational structures. Blend in, don't make a fuss, suppress your femininity, don't be too special or have different needs, and god forbid, don't let anyone actually notice that you are, you know, a woman.

This has been the dialogue whether we want to admit it or not. And this has been the umbrella that millions of women have travelled under in their daily existence of trying to rise to the top, or in many cases, to just get by.

And it has been an exhausting journey, clearly evidenced by the 85% of Australian businesswomen who describe themselves as just functioning over the past six months at work, with more than 15% flat out languishing. Is it any wonder women are opting out of corporate careers, sidelining themselves or starting their own businesses when they feel demoralized from trying to fit a model that doesn't serve them well?

Having more women in leadership roles is not just about offering child-care friendly workplaces, part time work, job sharing, or paid maternity schemes, although these things are certainly required and valuable. And it's not just about perceived ambition gaps, sitting at the table and getting the right mentor. It's about what actually happens when you show up for work. How you show up. And how it feels to you when you do.

We know from decades of research that when people get to do what they do best everyday, they thrive, and as a result, the business thrives. Engagement goes up, collaboration improves, innovation flourishes, productivity lifts and so does the bottom line.³

Improving the structures, cultures and what is valued within our organizations is absolutely needed to help women and men of this new age thrive and succeed.

Women don't need to be fixed, molded or modified in order to fit into the ready-made boxes and cubicles in our workplaces, as we have been led to believe. But they do need to be supported in order to flourish. And they need to support themselves.

Perhaps one of the most important changes that needs to be made, is for women to grant themselves a new permission to thrive on their own terms, and to embrace the practices they truly need to do so.

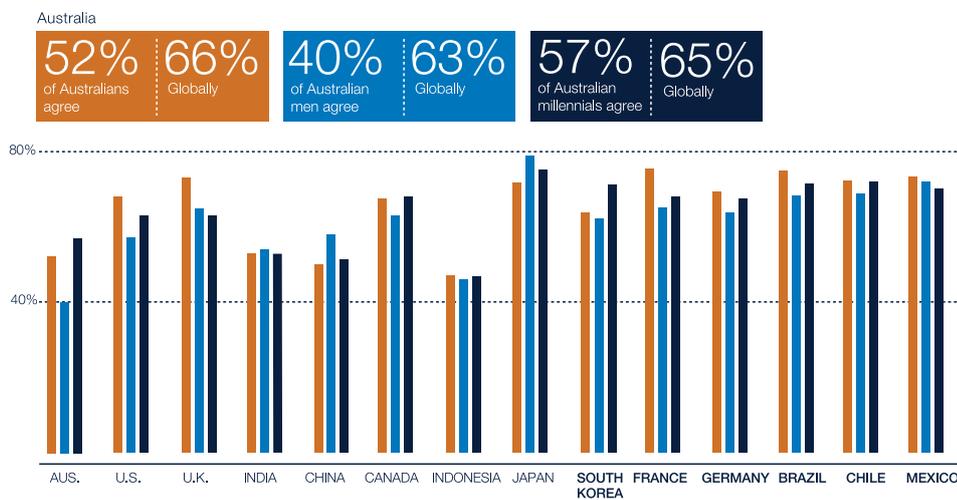
The Pulse suggests Australia may finally be ready. Are you?



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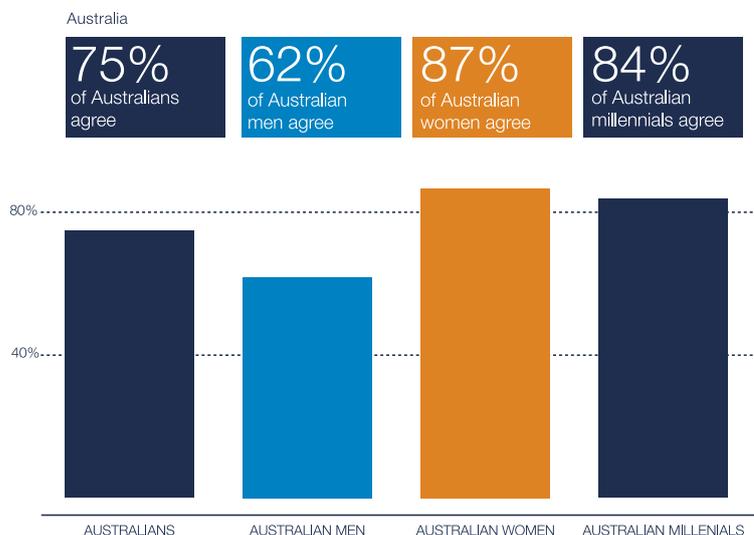
It's time for a new conversation... Australian men disagree with their counterparts around the globe that the world would be a better place if men thought more like women. Instead, 62% of Australian men believe it would be good for business in this country if there were more women in leadership positions.

A. "THE WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE IF MEN THOUGHT MORE LIKE WOMEN."

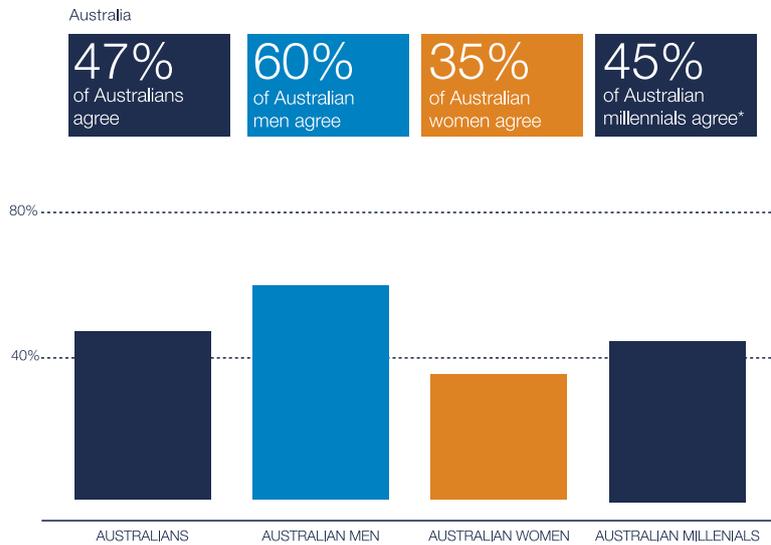


¹ Gerzema, J. (2013). *The Athena Doctrine: How Women and Then Men Who Think Like Them Will Rule the Future*. Retrieved 20 January, 2014 from www.johngerzema.com/books/athena-doctrine.

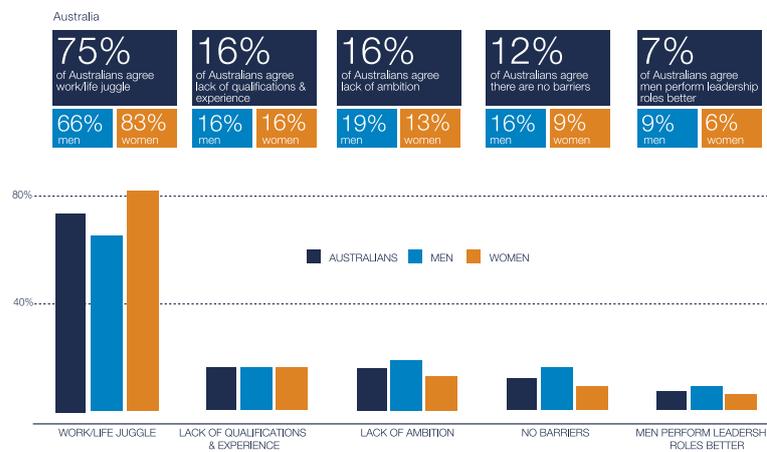
B. "IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR BUSINESS IF THERE WERE MORE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN AUSTRALIA."



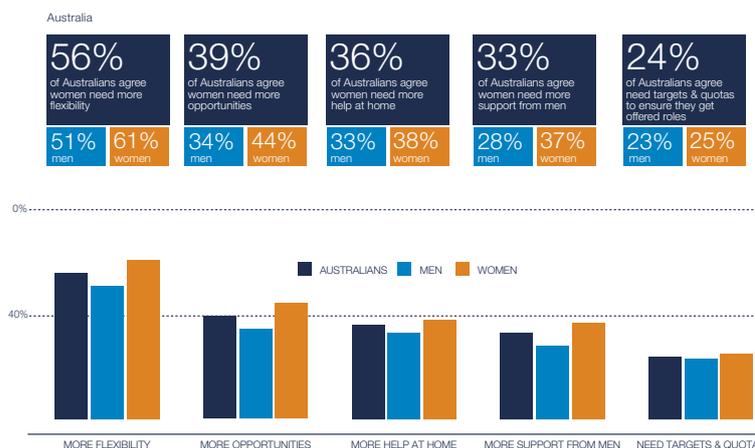
C. "WOMEN HAVE THE SAME CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AS MEN."



D. "WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO CAREER PROGRESSION/ LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA?"



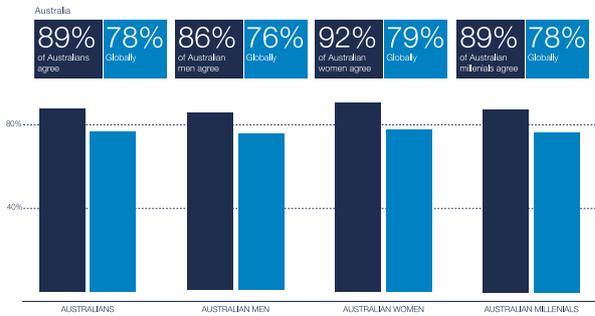
E. "WHAT DO WOMEN NEED TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR CAREERS?"



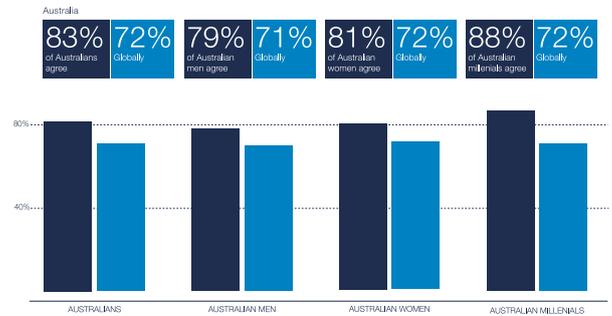
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The roadmap forward ... Australian employees are telling us they want a more expressive, intuitive style of leader, who can demonstrate the feminine traits – as identified by research - of kindness and empathy, use influence rather than control to exercise their power, collaborate and share credit and share their feelings more openly and be flexible in their approach.

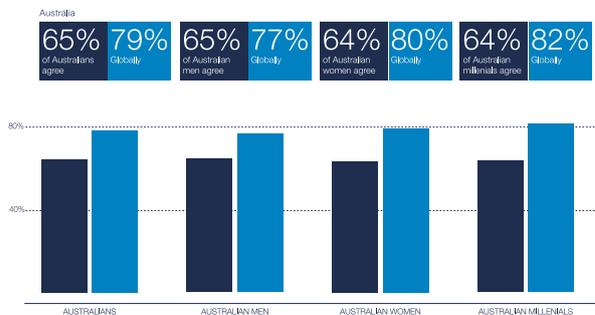
F. “TODAY’S TIMES REQUIRE WE BE MORE KIND AND EMPATHETIC TO OTHERS.”



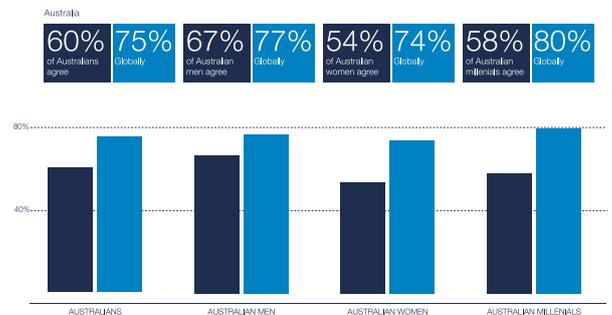
G. “POWER IS ABOUT INFLUENCE RATHER THAN CONTROL.”



H. “ A SUCCESSFUL CAREER TODAY REQUIRES COLLABORATING AND SHARING CREDIT WITH OTHERS.”



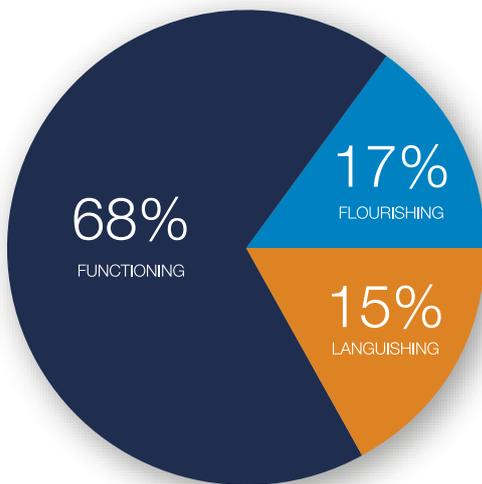
I. “TODAY’S FAST-MOVING ECONOMY FAVORS PEOPLE WHO ARE OPEN AND FLEXIBLE.”



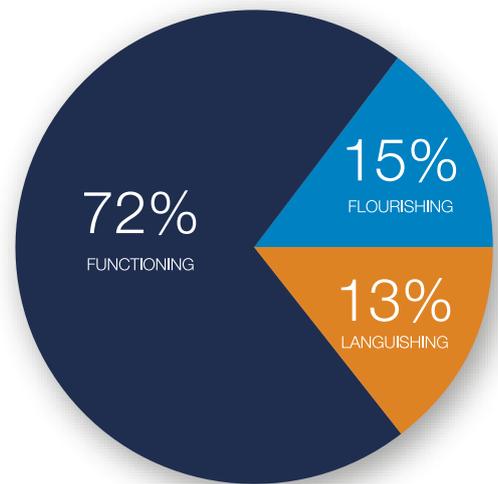
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The bottom line... 85% of Australian businesswomen describe themselves as just functioning over the past six months at work, with more than 15% flat out languishing. Men are faring almost as badly, suggesting new approaches to leadership are required that allow people to show up authentically and flourish.

J. “WHEN YOU THINK BACK OVER YOUR PAST SIX MONTHS AT WORK WHICH WORD BEST DESCRIBES YOUR STATE OF WELLBEING.”



MEN



WOMEN



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michelle McQuaid is a workplace well-being teacher, best-selling author and playful change activator. She streams her knowledge of cutting-edge research from positive psychology and neuroscience, into your brain to create practical strategies for health, happiness and business success that will make your soul hum. It may even hurt a little. But it will be a good pain. Seriously.

With more than a decade of senior leadership experience in organizations around the world, Michelle's work has been featured in Forbes, the Harvard Business Review, the Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, Boss Magazine, The Age, Women's Agenda, Wellbeing Magazine and more.

An honorary fellow at Melbourne University, she holds a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania with the field's founder Martin Seligman. Committed to finding positive ways to drive lasting organizational changes Michelle is currently completing her PhD with Professor David Cooperrider.

Megan Dalla-Camina is a strategist, coach, author and speaker on women, leadership and wellbeing. With more than 20 years experience as a senior corporate executive, she builds billion dollar business strategies, creates new leaders for a new world and blazes trails for women everywhere. She shares her depth of knowledge and insight in humorous and engaging ways, and she always keeps it real.

A leading advocate for women, she works with government and organizations to create environments where women can thrive. With Masters degrees in both Business Management, and in Wellness (Positive Psychology), she blends science with experience to drive results that matter. And with a Phd underway in gender studies on women, leadership and power, she is sparking a wave of feminine leadership that might just change everything.

Megan's work has been featured in BRW, CIO, Women's Health, Marie Claire, Wellbeing, Human Capital, Womens Agenda, Renegade Collective, television, radio and more. Her book, Getting Real About Having It All, has become the bible for working women who want to create a thriving career and life.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Gerzema, J. & D'Antonio, M. (2013). *The Athena Doctrine: How Women and Then Men Who Think Like Them Will Rule the Future*. San Francisco, CA: Young & Rubicam Brands.
- ² Ernst & Young (2013, May). *The Ernst & Young Australian Productivity Pulse*. Retrieved from [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Reaching_our_305_billion_productivity_potential/\\$FILE/Productivity_Pulse_May_2013.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Reaching_our_305_billion_productivity_potential/$FILE/Productivity_Pulse_May_2013.pdf)
- ² Cameron, K. (2013). *Practicing Positive Leadership: Tools and Techniques That Create Extraordinary Results*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

For more information about the survey and to join the conversation about how we can improve leadership opportunities and experiences for women, visit www.positiveleaders.com.au