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WHY WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS

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AVIVAH WITTENBERG-COX
& ALISON MAITLAND

Why Women Mean Business

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox
and
Alison Maitland



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Praise for the hardback edition

"Makes lively reading ... reading it will make male executives smarter about the women they manage, report to, sell to and buy from. And that's how it will help women in the workplace."

Harvard Business Review

"This book lays out the importance of retaining women in senior leadership positions, and the danger of ignoring half the talent pool."

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Director

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Management Today

"This book ably illustrates that the companies which survive in the 21st century will be those that realise the full potential of women."

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Gerald Lema, President, Asia Pacific, Baxter International

"An important contribution to a serious business and political issue. It reframes the gender debate, providing pragmatic and realistic tools to harness the potential of women globally."

Vivienne Cox, Executive Vice President and CEO of Gas, Power & Renewables and Shipping, BP

"This excellent book asks every leader in the public or private sector to act on Gender as a Strategic Business Imperative ... The emerging force of women in the 21st century is part of a major social and economic change which has to be acknowledged by any organisation looking for a competitive edge."

Larry Hirst CBE, Chief Executive, IBM UK

"A brilliant, entirely new perspective that puts women squarely where they belong, at the centre of the economy, and society."

Aude Zieseniss de Thuin, Founder and President, Women's Forum for the Economy and Society

"Avivah Wittenberg-Cox and Alison Maitland know what they are talking about. They're realistic, practical and determined not to let anyone – corporate managements or executive women – do less than their best."

Margaret Heffernan, author of *The Naked Truth*

"This book is a compelling read for those who want to win the war for talent."

Peta Payne, Managing Director, International Women of Excellence

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"This book sharply articulates the inevitability of the future of business – in women's hands."

Rhodora Palomar-Fresnedi, Former Global Head of Diversity, Unilever

"Wow! What the authors are doing here is extraordinarily valuable. Why Women Mean Business establishes an inarguable, last-word-on-the-subject business case for why organizations absolutely must get better at attracting, retaining, inspiring and promoting talented women."

Sally Hegelsen, Author of *The Female Advantage*

"Stop reading the quotes on the back of this book and buy it now. Your employees, customers and shareholders will thank you."

Joanne Thomas Yaccato, Author of *The 80% Minority*

Why Women Mean Business

FOREWORD

The issue of women in business is one that has preoccupied me for many years. Alison and Avivah's book is a timely contribution to the increasingly vocal debate about the economic importance of women. It is refreshing to read their comprehensive analysis of gender as a business issue, not a women's issue.

I strongly believe that women leaders are critical for business, and not only because they are 50% of available talent! Women have different ways of achieving results, and leadership qualities that are becoming more important as our organizations become less hierarchical and more loosely organized around matrix structures.

There is a feminine approach to leadership, which is not of course confined to women. It is about being intuitive as well as rational. It is about multi-tasking and being sensitive to people's needs and emotions, as well as relationship building and generous listening.

To transform organizations, drive change, challenge conventions, leaders need to inspire people and that is only possible

if you connect emotionally with your followers; that you show self awareness and openness; integrity and authenticity.

Women have an inherent advantage in the softer aspects of leadership. These are also the areas where business is changing most rapidly. I feel that women are in a unique position today, and over the next few years, to make a step change in filling leadership roles.

I also believe it is increasingly important that women should stop feeling they have to be like men to succeed like men. This is going in the wrong direction. My advice is: do not seek to develop male strengths, just when female strengths may be in the ascent. Remain yourselves and encourage new patterns of male behaviour. We can't make the future happen unless women help the men adjust. All our leaders, female and male, need to be skilled and confident in drawing on all aspects of their persona to be effective leaders.

The near destruction of the world's largest financial Institutions is forcing renewed questioning of Boardroom behaviour. I have no doubt that Boards which have the benefit of greater diversity will deliver a more balanced and sustainable corporate performance.

Niall FitzGerald KBE, Deputy Chairman, Thomson Reuters

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This book grew out of our parallel work on women and leadership in the business world over the past decade. In our respective professions as a consultant and a journalist, we have advised on or written about the huge changes that are taking place in the labour force and in the way people work, and spent much time examining why these changes have not been reflected in the executive suite and the boardroom.

Among the many people we have worked with and consulted for the book, we have encountered a combination of frustration at women's lack of progress into leadership and of eagerness for new solutions. Both have reinforced our belief that there is an urgent need for a fresh perspective.

We are grateful to the business people and professionals we spoke to, both on and off the record, for giving us their time and their views. In particular, we would like to thank:

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We don't have room on this page to include all the names of the many people, men and women, members of associations as well as members of boardrooms, who helped organize and participated in events that have so greatly contributed to enhancing the impact of our ideas. We do have room for them in our thoughts, and our gratitude is deep and ongoing. We look forward to combining our efforts with you in the years to come.

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The project has been hard work and immensely fulfilling. Some authors retreat to solitary beach huts or rural hideaways to complete their books. On reflection, we're glad we did not have this option. The bustle of family and work lives has helped to keep things in perspective during the most intense periods of writing and editing.

We have sought to be as accurate as possible, checking and re-checking our facts. We are grateful to our many interlocutors for their patience and support in all our conversations.

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox

Alison Maitland

June 2009

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox is CEO of 20-First, a leading gender consultancy, and a global expert on how businesses can manage difference more effectively. She is also the founder and honorary president of the European Professional Women's Network, and a certified executive coach. Elle Magazine recognised her as one of the top 40 women leading change. She lives in France with her husband and gender balanced children (a son and a daughter).

Alison Maitland is an independent journalist and commentator. She spent 20 years with the Financial Times, including eight years as Management Writer. She has been writing about women and business for over a decade. She is also a regular conference speaker and moderator on issues relating to women, leadership and corporate responsibility. Alison is a Senior Visiting Fellow at Cass Business School. She lives in the UK with her husband and two daughters.

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