

Gender Bias Revisited

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"I don't like to do administrative work. It's not my bailiwick, so I'll just delegate that piece."

Such were the perspectives of a couple of men inquiring about a job opportunity. Never mind that limited staffing and budget constraints required the woman who left the position to perform *all* duties – from office tasks to the higher profile management duties. Their collective tone indicated that these gentlemen were not qualified to handle administrative tasks - which they seemed to regard as beneath them anyway.

Was gender bias a factor? Maybe so. Research shows that even degreed women, including lawyers and engineers, are routinely expected to perform "office housekeeping" chores like organizing social events, taking notes and setting up conference calls. These time-consuming tasks are important, but can limit career progression.

Gender bias is destructive for men, too. While many have stretched beyond stereotypical traps to enjoy and successfully perform administrative responsibilities, expectations still persist that compel them to "man up." For instance, male employees can feel forced into sacrificing family time rather than jeopardize advancement opportunities by requesting lighter workloads or travel schedules.

While there are countless other examples of pervasive discrimination including those affecting LGBTQ, the intent of this short column is to spotlight persistent cultural trends specifically related to traditional gender biases. Consider these facts:

- Only 4.9% of Fortune 500 CEOs and 2% of S&P 500 CEOs are women and those numbers are declining globally.
- Yet, women are typically viewed as having greater leadership capabilities than men in several categories. According to Zenger/Folkman 360-degree feedback, women are rated excellent in initiative, resiliency, self-development, driving for results, honesty and integrity.

Unaddressed issues continue to permeate the workplace:

- Four in ten working women say they're still experiencing gender discrimination at work. (Pew Research)
- Gender-based discrimination charges filed with the EEOC have hovered around 30-32% since 1997.

Want to change the trend? Go online for limitless ideas on how to eliminate systemic bias in hiring and other employment actions. (See <https://www.shrm.org/>) Next, take the simple first step of making a list of office housekeeping tasks such as cleaning up after meetings. Are these duties disproportionately assumed by women? Are male associates inadvertently getting the best assignments?

Eliminating bias in the workplace takes courageous examination of the organization's practices and how these may unintentionally perpetuate unfair treatment preventing companies from realizing their workforce's full talent.

Shannon Warren is the founder of www.okethics.org