



SundayReview | WOMEN AT WORK

How Men Can Succeed in the Boardroom and the Bedroom

By SHERYL SANDBERG and ADAM GRANT MARCH 5, 2015

IT'S easy to see how women benefit from equality — more leadership positions, better pay at work and more support at home. Men may fear that as women do better, they will do worse. But the surprising truth is that equality is good for men, too.

If men want to make their work teams successful, one of the best steps they can take is to bring on more women. This fall, the Internet sensation Alibaba went public after achieving years of extraordinary growth as China's largest e-commerce company. The founder, Jack Ma, explained that "one of the secret sauces for Alibaba's success is that we have a lot of women." Women hold 47 percent of all jobs at Alibaba and 33 percent of senior positions.

Research backs him up. Studies reveal that women bring new knowledge, skills and networks to the table, take fewer unnecessary risks, and are more inclined to contribute in ways that make their teams and organizations better. Successful venture-backed start-ups have more than double the median proportion of female executives of failed ones. And an analysis of the 1,500 Standard & Poor's companies over 15 years demonstrated that, when firms pursued innovation, the more women they had in top management, the more market value they generated.

Some men might wonder whether these benefits for the organization, and for women, might come at their individual expense, and ask, will I end up lower on the corporate ladder?

No. Equality is not a zero-sum game. More profits mean more rewards

and promotions to go around. The risk is in not including women. Teams that fail to leverage the skills of a diverse work force fall behind. Two chief executives, John T. Chambers of Cisco, and Carlos Ghosn of the Renault-Nissan Alliance, have said that they can't be competitive in the global economy without increasing their percentage of female executives.

In a previous article, we highlighted why men ought to share the “office housework” — taking notes, planning meetings and helping others. Doing more actual housework matters, too. Research shows that when men do their share of chores, their partners are happier and less depressed, conflicts are fewer, and divorce rates are lower. They live longer, too; studies demonstrate that there's a longevity boost for men (and women) who provide care and emotional support to their partners later in life.

If that isn't exciting enough, try this: Couples who share chores equally have more sex. As the researchers Constance T. Gager and Scott T. Yabiku put it, men and women who work hard play hard. One of us, Sheryl, has advised men that if they want to do something nice for their partners, instead of buying flowers, they should do laundry. A man who heard this was asked by his wife one night to do a load of laundry. He picked up the basket and asked hopefully, “Is this Lean In laundry?” Choreplay is real.

Stepping up as a father also benefits men. Caring for children can make men more patient, empathetic and flexible and lower their rates of substance abuse. At Fortune 500 companies, when fathers spend more time with their children, they're more satisfied with their jobs. And fatherhood itself has also been linked to lower blood pressure and lower rates of cardiovascular disease.

But the greatest positive impact may be on the next generation. Research in numerous countries reveals that children of involved fathers are healthier, happier and less likely to have behavioral problems. They are also more likely to succeed in school and, later, in their careers. A powerful study led by the University of British Columbia psychologist Alyssa Croft showed that when fathers shouldered an equal share of housework, their daughters were less likely to limit their aspirations to stereotypically female occupations. What mattered most was what fathers did, not what they said. For a girl to believe

she has the same opportunities as boys, it makes a big difference to see Dad doing the dishes.

The flip side is true, too — sons reap rewards when their mothers have meaningful roles at work. Years ago, psychologists found that a surprisingly high number of America’s most creative architects were raised by “distinctly autonomous mothers” who were leaders in their communities or accomplished professionals. And in a recent study by the researchers Kathryn H. Dekas of Google and Wayne E. Baker of the University of Michigan, the people who found their jobs most meaningful and enjoyable were those whose fathers and mothers were highly engaged at work.

When children see their mothers pursuing careers and their fathers doing housework, they’re more likely to carry gender equality forward to the next generation. And when we make headway toward gender equality, entire societies prosper. Twenty-five percent of United States gross domestic product growth since 1970 is attributed to the increase in women entering the paid work force. Today, economists estimate that raising women’s participation in the work force to the same level as men could raise G.D.P. by another 5 percent in the United States — and by 9 percent in Japan and 34 percent in Egypt. “We’ve seen what can be accomplished when we use 50 percent of our human capacity,” writes the investor Warren Buffett. “If you visualize what 100 percent can do, you’ll join me as an unbridled optimist about America’s future.”

To make gender parity a reality, we need to change the way we advocate for it. The usual focus is on fairness: To achieve justice, we need to give women equal opportunities. We need to go further and articulate why equality is not just the right thing to do for women but the desirable thing for us all.

The women’s suffrage movement in the late 19th century provides a good case study. States did not grant voting rights when women campaigned for justice; suffrage laws got passed only when women described how having the right to vote would enable them to improve society. Similarly, during the civil rights movement, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was careful to emphasize that racial equality would be good for everyone.

Many men who support equality hold back because they worry it's not their battle to fight. It's time for men and women alike to join forces in championing gender parity. Tell us how you're leaning in for equality in the comments section here or on Facebook using the hashtag #leanintgether.

This is the fourth installment in the series.

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