

Should women in leadership roles trust their instincts?



Women expecting to advance their careers quickly learn to expunge the words “I sense” or “I feel” from the decision making process. Decision making is at the top of the list when it comes to leadership skills. Business leaders are expected to make their decisions based on the facts coming from a dominant male left-brain, which thrives on the logical, concrete, sequential and statistical. Business has had very little room for instincts or the intuitive

Any idea suggesting that instincts and intuition have a role in the decision making process certainly generates a lot of eye rolling. The belief being that there is **no validity and no proof that this is a brain function that produces credible results** the same way as factual information and statistics.

Instincts and intuition are part of the more creative side of right-brain processing. While men and women have equal access to this creative side, men are more likely to rely on the logical left brain while **women, in general, appear to pay greater attention to information coming from their right brain.**

Other than knowing that each brain hemisphere processes information differently, little else is understood about how this happens.

But, can women business leaders trust their instincts?

Yes, according to **Laura Henderson**, former CEO and president of Prospect Associates. Henderson left her employer to form her own company after being undervalued when her department was generating most of the company's revenue.

In 9 years, Prospect Associates went from 45 employees to 200 and from \$1.5 million in sales to \$20 million. After merging her company, she left

to continue her passion for advocating for women business owners and became a founder of the Center for Women's Business Research. She is also the recipient of numerous business awards and a recognized leader by the National Woman Business Owners.

Henderson's years of corporate experience says more about instincts than any scientific research. Here's how she describes the process and the value.

"My instinct is really my hard drive of experience, knowledge, and insights collected throughout my lifetime. When faced with a situation that requires a decision or a judgment call, all of the factors present in the current situation go through this hard drive as fast as the brain can process."

"The speed of the brain may make it appear that it is a hunch but it is not, ..."

"It is based on millions or perhaps trillions of bytes of information, providing me with a life-learned understanding of what I am facing." When something feels right, it usually IS right; and conversely, when it feels wrong, it usually IS wrong.

Instincts and intuition can be valuable business tools and women leaders may be more trusting and more adept at utilizing them. But, eyes will only stop rolling when they become an accepted part of the decision making process.

Source:

Top Ten Characteristics of Successful Women Business Owners **by Sharon Hadary**

<http://www.womensleadershipexchange.com/index.php?pagename=resourceinfo&resourcekey=493>

http://top100mbe.com/pdf/business_legend2009.pdf