

PEEPLCOACH TIPSHEET NO.52

WHAT WOMEN LEADERS WANT AND NEED TO THRIVE IN BUSINESS.

We know not all employees are motivated the same way. It is dangerous to assume that what inspires one person will inspire another. Accepting these differences, though, we can still find some common themes across different demographics. Peepcoach has worked with hundreds of organisations and thousands of individuals, and our insights are based on these coaching sessions and industry research.

1. Action and Advocacy.

In the past, there was a lot of focus on mentoring women in business. But mentoring often turned into storytelling or “you should do this” advice. The responsibility was put on the woman to learn and advocate for herself. And while many do this, they often get nowhere.

What women really need are **advocates**—people actively in their corner, recommending, referring, pushing, and challenging on their behalf, not just telling them what to do.

2. Stop tokenism – Invest in consistent development at scale.

Enough with organisations boasting about Diversity & Inclusion programs that are underfunded and run by volunteers. Real change comes from **consistent investment in development at scale**. While gender equality and pay gap issues are on most companies’ agendas, the gap is growing. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency in November 2023, women make up only 22% of CEOs and 42% of managers in Australia. Why the drop from manager to CEO?



WHAT WOMEN LEADERS WANT

One critical reason is the lack of consistent leadership development and executive coaching for emerging talent. If we truly want to make a difference, organisations need to stop with the token efforts and start supporting the development of women **at scale**.

3. Trust me to do my job well.

Since COVID, we all want and need more flexibility to manage home, life, and work. Women, who often carry more of the family load, need flexibility without being penalised for it. Organisations must embrace this to keep female talent thriving. Excluding women from promotions or development opportunities when on parental leave is shortsighted and costly for everyone.

4. See me, not my gender.

We all know bias—conscious and unconscious—exists at work. Research shows women and men are described very differently in performance reviews. Men are labeled analytical or competent, while women are often called indecisive or compassionate. Women deserve to be judged on their **actions**, not stereotypes.

5. Be given an opportunity.

The excuse, “We couldn’t find a qualified woman, so we had to hire a man,” is tired. If women aren’t given opportunities to develop their skills, or they’re left behind during parental leave, or not encouraged to apply because they’re seen as “too compassionate” or “too indecisive,” how can they get the experience needed for senior roles? Quotas aren’t the enemy—they can be a **necessary tool** to ensure women are given the opportunities they deserve.

6. Listen to me.

In the book *The Female Brain* by Louann Brizendine, MD, it was claimed that women speak approximately 20,000 words per day versus men, who use 7,000 words per day. While the common perception is that “women talk too much,” feedback from many middle managers suggests that perhaps our male leaders are not talking enough.

With the constant chaos and change in organisations, it is often the case that employees and middle managers “don’t know what is going on” because no one has spoken to them or updated them.

Women speak differently, typically characterised by being softer in tone, less direct, a little more nuanced, and generally more collaborative. Male speech is typically more concise, direct, competitive, and tonally louder.

Simply put, just because someone does not raise their voice as loudly or does not cut off a colleague mid-sentence to rebut does not mean they are not passionate, insightful, or right! The same applies to ensuring that time and space are created for leaders from other backgrounds and with different personalities to be heard.

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT AND NEED?

Stop talking over women and start listening. You might learn something useful.

Ask for women’s opinions and give them the opportunity to answer.

To learn how Peepcoach supports women leaders, contact us at hello@peepcoach.com or call 1800 PEEPLC. www.peepcoach.com