

The Future is Feminine.

The qualities of great leadership have evolved. Now that soft skills are power skills, how do we reimagine leadership for all genders?

Soft skills; people skills, now often referred to as power skills, have always been a part of what employers look for in their new recruits. And it's no wonder - businesses need individuals to have good communication and interpersonal skills in order to work together and cultivate a cohesive working environment. But these traits are now forming a blueprint for the future of leadership. 'Soft' and 'leader' may not have been commonly associated in the past, but in today's VUCA world, the qualities of great leadership have evolved.

Whilst historically leadership has been associated with the more masculine traits of assertiveness, dominance and competitiveness, it seems our next chapter will celebrate traditionally feminine qualities. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2023* found that the top skills needed to be a successful future leader are empathy, emotional intelligence, listening skills, coaching and mentoring, innovation, and creativity. Currently women surpass males in 11 of 12 major emotional intelligence characteristics including emotional self-awareness, empathy, conflict management, flexibility and teamwork. But these insights shouldn't serve to pit men against women, but rather foster a future where leadership is not bound by gender, but by the ability to inspire, unite, and bring about positive change.

61% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL MORE INNOVATIVE UNDER EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP

We have a lot to learn from women. But it's not just women who can possess and capitalise on these traits. A study published in the Journal of Organisational Behaviour found that men who exhibited high levels of traditionally feminine traits, such as empathy, were perceived as more effective leaders. And women who exhibited traditionally masculine traits, such as assertiveness, were perceived as more effective leaders. If we can disrupt and reimagine what gender norms look like in the workplace, we can empower all genders to be the best leaders they can be. In other words, we need to learn from each other and use this to shape the leaders of the future.

Traditional masculine leadership traits - being assertive, competitive, independent, for example - can still play a part to some extent. But this fixed model simply doesn't fit with the demands of the modern workplace. It's this model that leads us to a culture lacking in diversity; that values hierarchy over inclusion, and sacrifices the huge business potential of collaboration in favour of dogged competition. A changing business landscape where factors like social responsibility and environmental sustainability matter, both ethically and financially, demands a new approach.

This is what inspired Alliance to launch a new and revolutionary programme as part of their offering to businesses looking to optimise through the power of gender equity. *Reimagining Leadership* is a course for all genders to come together and nurture the traits that will make them great leaders for the modern day. Over the course of 16 weeks, participants get hands on with the skills and competencies that support high performing, innovative teams that drive ethical and sustainable growth.

For years, women have been trying to fit themselves into a man-made mould in order to progress as leaders, but now is the time for women to reclaim a more authentic approach that encapsulates the feminine. And for years men have conformed to expectation, whether this reflected their authentic selves or not. In today's interconnected and complex world, leaders must navigate diverse perspectives and foster inclusive decision-making. The traditional top-down leadership approach is no longer sufficient. Collaborative leadership - characterised by active listening, empathy and consensus-building - is what is needed to drive long-term success.

