

Executive **EDGE**

DO WOMEN MAKE THE BEST CEOs?

A growing body of evidence indicates that companies recruit their leaders from the wrong gender. Women, not men, make better CEOs, these studies say.

"Women are scoring higher on almost everything we look at," says Shirley Ross, a psychologist who helped supervise a study run by the Hagberg Consulting Group of Foster City, CA. Hagberg evaluates senior managers for client corporations, including health care companies. Of the 425 executives it examined, women did better than men on 42 of the 52 skills measured.

Janet Irwin, a California management consultant, conducted studies in which women outperformed men in producing high-quality work, recognizing trends, and generating new ideas and acting on them. What's more, says Irwin, "women's strengths are stronger than men's and their weaknesses are not as pronounced."

Why, then, do so few women run big corporations? Among the reasons are these:

- Traditionally, women have been shunted into "people skills" jobs—such as human resources or public relations—that companies view as relatively unimportant. Only recently have such skills come to be seen as vital in, for example, inspiring productivity and resolving conflict.

- Because women tend to be less egoistic and more collegial than men, they are also less likely to stand out in a field of CEO candidates.

- Women are less likely than men to have company mentors and informal communications networks.

- Because women tend to focus on results rather than process, they often spend too little time thinking about strategy and vision.

But the traditional role of women in business is changing. Given a choice between equally qualified male and female job candidates, executives increasingly say that they frequently pick the latter. "I would rather hire a woman," maintains Ann Shukla, the



founder of a software company. "I know I'm going to get a certain quality of work; I know I'm going to get a certain dedication."

From Rochelle Sharpe, "As Leaders, Women Rule," Business Week, November 20, 2000, pp. 75-84.

APPLYING "EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE" TO GROUPS

"Emotional intelligence," the concept Daniel Goleman developed in the early 1990s to make business executives more effective, can help teams increase their effectiveness too.

To improve its functioning, a team must learn to channel emotion effectively at three levels.

- *From the Group to Individual Members* Above all, team members must learn to trust each other. To achieve mutual trust, teams should be willing, when discussing a particular issue, to consider each member's feelings about it. In some cases, teams will have to actively elicit individual members' feelings.

Balky members must sometimes be confronted; sensitive members must

sometimes be comforted. The trust-building process can be time consuming, but teams should remember that simple majority votes solve nothing. Genuine consensus is vital.

- *From the Group to Itself* An effective team will maintain norms of self-awareness—of its emotional states, strengths and weaknesses, modes of interaction, and task processes. Such self-evaluation can be done either as a formal event—perhaps with the help of a consultant—or as a constant, spontaneous activity.

Many groups often make conscious efforts to build team spirit. They may, for example, try to develop a common team vocabulary and customs or organize team social activities and outings.

Solving problems together is an especially powerful way to build team spirit.

- *From the Group to Outside Entities* Teams must take care not to turn themselves into cliques, however. They should not become so focused on their own emotional comfort that they inspire jealousy, resentment, or other bad feelings in the other parts of the larger organization.

To prevent such from occurring, a team might, for example, appoint its various members to serve as liaisons to other groups. Whatever method it chooses, the team should use its newly learned social skills to improve efficiency throughout the entire organization.

From Vanessa Urch Druskat and Steven B. Wolff, "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups," Harvard Business Review, March 2001, pp. 81-90.

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