

Is it Better to do Business the 'Masculine' or the 'Feminine' way?

It could be interpreted that both men and women have a distinct, different way of doing business. This can be separated into the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' way. However, men and women are not confined to these roles and can take on more masculine or feminine characteristics. Something I am regularly asked is; which way of doing business is the most successful? I think that both the masculine and feminine need to be utilised to be successful in business.

Firstly, what could be classed as masculine characteristics? And what are feminine characteristics?

Men typically-

- Like to compete.
- Have focus.
- Are systemic thinkers.
- See more/bigger opportunities.
- Are not afraid to take risks.
- Are more goal-oriented.
- Keep a good overview of the whole process.
- Love the speed of implementation.
- Dare to promote themselves if this helps the business.
- Say yes before they know how to do it.
- Like to negotiate.

The research I did amongst 400 businesswomen shows that many women do not like some of the above characteristics.

I asked: What are, according to you, the three biggest pitfalls from men in business? (see fig. 1)

This is in comparison to women who stereotypically-

- Are creative.
- Like to work together.
- Prepare thoroughly.
- Have faith and trust.
- Are precise.
- Have intuition.
- Can take inspired action.
- Work with flow.
- Have good communication skills.

I also asked the businesswomen why they believed they were good at business: (see fig. 2)

What is success?

Returning to the overarching question; if the definition of success in business is related to speed, money and size, you could say that doing business the masculine way is much more successful.

From my experience, in the business world the dominant business style is stereotypically masculine. This is to be expected as businessmen are in the majority and for decades, men were almost the only business owners out there, so they created the rules and the way business is still being conducted.

When we think of success in business, we also need to include the following aspects:

- Are all staff happy in the business?
- Are you delivering an outstanding service?
- Do you give back to others?
- Are you making a profit?

If you define business success by only it's size and turnover, you will not be aware of these equally important elements.

Women are venturing into the business world more and more. In The Netherlands, 30% of registered businesses are female-owned. Things are changing but women are still struggling to create a successful business if we stick to the established definition of success.

Does this mean their businesses are automatically less successful? Are the women who adopt the masculine strategies and characteristics more successful as they adhere to what is expected in business?

Some women are not money-driven, and neither are they big goal chasers or are looking for fame

and glory. They have a big vision of the change they want to make in the world. That's their drive and motivation and I believe things will need to change for these individuals to find their way in the business arena.

I can tell you from my own experience and with the knowledge I have now, that it was wearing me down trying to conform with the male ideal in business. I was continuously trying to prove myself to others in business. I was not in harmony with myself by behaving 'masculine'. I was ignoring my intuition because I had no idea that this was a trustful guideline to become successful, just in a different, but equally valuable, way.

So what is best way to do business? It depends on your definition of success. For me, both a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics will give your business the best chance of success. This widens your definition of success as other areas become important too, not just money and size.

Businesswomen need to find their own way of being successful that does not compromise who they are, but tries to change the rules on how business has been run for centuries. This will allow for anyone to step into the business world and prosper. When a business thrives for not only the owners, but the stakeholders and customers too, everyone wins.

About the Author

Tineke Rensen has been in business for 28 years. She sold her business in favour of educating and motivating fellow women internationally. She is a keynote speaker, founded the Powerful Business Women's Network and is a co-author of Transformation Lessons as part of ATL Europe. www.PowerfulBusinessAcademy.com



Fig. 1
 What are the biggest pitfalls of men in business according to business women?

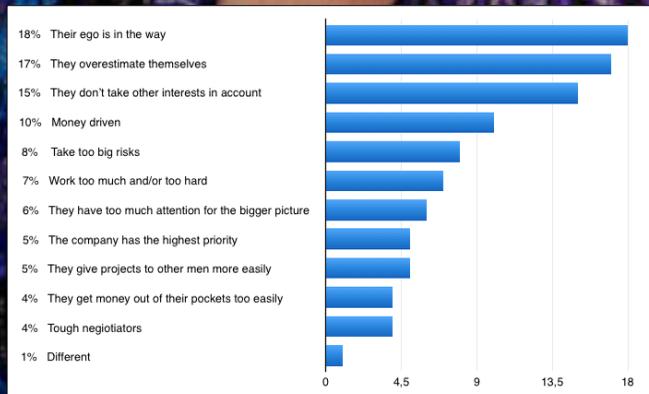


Fig. 2
 What are the best qualities of female entrepreneurs according to business women?

