

*Tom Peters' Manifestos 2002: The BRAWL WITH NO RULES Series*

Women

The New Economy's Hidden Imperative

Roar

Tom Peters

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**“We are in a brawl with no rules.”**

**– Paul Allaire, former CEO, Xerox**

**MANIFESTO.** The word suggests a pointed view. (Rodale’s *Synonym Finder*: Manifesto ... Proclamation. Declaration. Pronunciamento. Broadcast. Airing. Broadside.) And “Pointed View” is precisely the idea of this series of “booklets” – in what we call **The BRAWL WITH NO RULES Series**. Each booklet is an expanded chapter of my cornerstone day-long seminars. But I have chosen these topics for two particular reasons. First, I think they (1) are important and (2) present enormous opportunities and (3) are grossly neglected by most organizations. Second, I have a Radical Point of View about each one; you will find no half-way suggestions here!

## *Dedication*

To nine million American women business owners. To tens of millions of women workers ... putting in 50-hour weeks, raising two or three kids, running a family, running the husband's family, still cooking, still cleaning ... and in general, working 25-hour days.

To Susan Sargent, spouse, Chief Executive Officer of a thriving business, community leader, mom, doyenne of a large family ... and graceful multi-tasker.

# Women Roar

*In the beginning ...*

**December 18, 1996**

9:00 a.m. December 18, 1996. Boston, Massachusetts. Offices of Wordworks, one of America's nine *million* women-owned businesses.

Thirty women are gathered. *And me*. They own businesses. They've written books. Their combined net worth – not a penny from family or spouse – runs to the tens of millions. *I am here to listen*.

I listen. I am staggered. My life takes, if not a 90-degree turn, at least a 70-degree turn.

I am a “with it” guy. I “get it.” I marched in the giant pro-choice rally in Washington in 1989. I put the toilet seat down after I pee. I even do my own laundry.

And yet I learn, in three short hours, that I ***don't*** get it. **Haven't gotten it. Never had it. Can't get it.**

I listen to these powerful women tell stories of having been held in contempt. Of having been invisible. Of having been treated as brainless. By bankers and banks. By doctors and hospitals. By car salesmen and car dealers. By hotel clerks and waiters and hotel general managers. By airline clerks and managers. By auctioneers.

I admit it. Reluctantly. *I didn't know what I didn't know*. (Didn't have a clue, actually.) Hence, the last four+ years have been penance ... an effort to figure “it” out (which I can do pretty well intellectually, but never emotionally), and become a noisy champion.

Not a champion for “women's rights.” Many others have done that much better than I. But a champion for ... OPPORTUNITY. The opportunity that exists ... ***if*** still-male-dominated management took advantage of the leadership skills of under-valued women in their ranks. The opportunity that exists – amounting to trillions of dollars in the U.S. alone – ***if*** bankers and car makers and hoteliers and health care providers “got it” ... started to develop the products that women wanted, started to deliver them in ways that women would appreciate.

*Fast forward. Four years.* Hundreds of stories in my kit. (I've only included the smallest handful here.) I walk into the convention center in Long Beach, California, early on the morning of October 12, 2000. I notice immediately that most of the men's room signs are taped over. Now they say "Women." Why? Because I am here attending – and keynoting – the 2000 California Governor's Conference for Women. Invited, and *thank you so much*, by California's first lady, Sharon Davis.

**Ten thousand women** ... screaming and shouting and raving, as a female friend put it ... **are surging into the hall.** (That's why the restroom designations have been changed.) Men present? The governor's wife's husband will be here soon. Then there is me. And a handful of others ... all of us males bowing, scraping, and remarking on the matchless energy in the hall.

**It was a hoot! And a wonder!**

## *Statement of Philosophy*

I worked hard on my 40-minute speech to the Gov's Conference. I spent hours, literally, on the PowerPoint opening slide. I called it "Statement of Philosophy," and I revised it until a few minutes before leaving for the hall.

*It read like this:*

***I am a business person. An analyst. A pragmatist. The enormous social good of increased women's power is clear to me; but that is not my shtick. My "business" is haranguing business leaders ... about my fact-based conviction that women's increasing power – leadership skills and purchasing power – is the strongest and most dynamic force at work in the American economy today. Dare I say it as a long-time resident of Palo Alto and Silicon Valley ... this is even bigger than the Internet!***

The theme of the conference was "**Celebrate the Past, Create the Future.**" And, yes, you have come a long way, baby! "Greater opportunity for women," Andrew Sullivan recently wrote in *The New Republic*, "is probably the most significant gain for human freedom in the last century."

That's all well and good. In fact, it's great. Speaking as a 58-year-old, I believe that the advances that we have made in the name of African-Americans and women, in particular, are the most important things that have happened to our nation during my half-century-plus lifetime.

And yet there is a long (long, long) way to go. But, I reiterate, that's not the point of my four-year journey. Not the point of my keynote speech to the California's Governor's Conference, and not the point of this essay. My point is best captured by somebody else. Four simple words from Helen Fisher, author of *The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World*. She wrote:

## ***“TOMORROW BELONGS TO WOMEN.”***

And that's exactly what I want to talk about. I think that what's happening in the marketplace, led by the Internet and other technology changes, plays into the hands of women. Women with an enormous leadership role in enterprise and government relative to the past. A marketplace that recognizes that women-as-purchasers are the predominant source of purchasing power and wealth.

## **Yikes!**

### ***Sober people are saying un-sober things.***

PricewaterhouseCoopers senior consultants David Schneider and Grady Means, in an excellent book entitled *MetaCapitalism*, say “The period 2000-2002 will bring the single biggest change in world-wide economic and business conditions since we came down from the trees.” (As I said ... *YIKES*.) Peter Drucker, hardly known for overstatement, told *Business 2.0*, “The corporation as we know it, which is now 120 years old, is not likely to survive the next 25 years.” Rumors, a while back and before recessionary pressure mounted, suggested that GE would soon announce the layoff of 80,000 people. Those layoffs would be a result of Old Economy GE's headlong plunge into running every aspect of its gargantuan business via the Internet. Which means: bye-bye to most middle managers and administrative staffers. In fact, I said last year in a *Time* cover story that I fully expected that **90% of white collar staff and middle management jobs will disappear or be reconfigured beyond recognition in the course of the next 10 to 15 years**. I went on at length (*which I don't have the space to do here*) to demonstrate why.

But already the change has reached tsunami level. In *Free Agent Nation*, Daniel Pink suggests that, already, between **30 million** and **50 million** of us Americans are **working as freelancers, temps, micro-business employees** ... while less than one in 10 of us works for a fabled Fortune 500 company. MIT, in a study released in August of 2000, estimates that full-time employees will be in the minority as early as 2010.

### **My dad worked for the same company for 41 years.**

The same company.  
The same door.  
9:00 a.m.  
Day after day.  
Decade after decade.

*That's gone: One will no longer survive as "Occupant, desk 63, Finance Department, 43rd floor, Tall Tower, Manhattan or Los Angeles or Chicago or Miami or Omaha."*

**It's been paradoxical, hasn't it?** The labor market has been tighter than at any time in the last 30 or 40 years. And yet major layoffs continue to be announced. Not of blue collar union dudes, but mostly in the senior ranks. In July 2000, for instance, *The New York Times* ran a headline that read "**Bank of America to Cut 10,000 Jobs.**" The first sentence: "Middle-level and senior managers are expected to be the principle targets of the job cutbacks." The administrators are being tossed off the boat. By the millions. Around the developed world. And we're shipping the rote white collar jobs to the likes of India ... by the hundreds of thousands now ... by the millions (**or tens of millions**) in just a few years. Those who would survive and thrive will – **MUST** – stand out. As Michael Goldhaber put it ever so bluntly in *Wired* a while back, "*If there is nothing very special about your work, no matter how hard you apply yourself, you will not get noticed, and that increasingly means you won't get paid much either.*"

Not all of us will become independent contractors. But it's my contention that all of us must learn to *act* like independent contractors. To take charge of our own lives, understanding that the corporation won't. (*I wrote a book on this topic, and coined the phrase "Brand You."*) **I am in charge. You are in charge.** As the great fiction writer Isabel Allende put it, "You are the storyteller of your own life, and you can create your own legend or not."

*Why this riff ... in this essay?* Well, as I see it, all of these organizational and work-life changes play directly into the hands of women. We will fundamentally reinvent the basic idea of the organization in the next 10 to 20 years. The old rules and procedures, and the old hierarchies and power structures, are out. A new way of doing business – based on **high-power, high-energy, highly collegial teams, made up of 100% Brand Yous** – will create value. *Hint: They are already doing it in Silicon Valley, Silicon Gulch, on Madison Avenue, in Hollywood.*

# PART I

## Inside the Organization: Women Should Re-write the Rules

### *Untapped Leadership Resource #1*

*And women shall lead us to this promised, and promising, New Economy land. I believe it ... with every fiber of my 58-year-old, male being.*

“It’s time for U.S. organizations to act,” writes Judy B. Rosener, in *America’s Competitive Secret*. “No other country in the world has a comparable supply of professional women waiting to be called into action. This is America’s competitive secret.

“American women possess leadership abilities that are particularly effective in today’s organizations, yet their abilities remain undervalued and underutilized. In the future, what will distinguish one organization and one country from another will be its use of human resources. Today human resource utilization is not only a matter of social justice but a bottom-line issue.”

Helen Fisher, in *The First Sex*, adds, “On average, women and men possess a number of different innate skills. And current trends suggest that many sectors of the twenty-first-century economic community are going to need the natural talents of women.”

*I agree.* Wholeheartedly. Yes, dot-com hiccups and recessionary forces notwithstanding, it decidedly *is* a New Economy. And all the rules *are* being changed. At a breathtaking pace. Perhaps the main new economy dicta could be summarized this way: “**Shout goodbye to command and control. Shout goodbye to hierarchy. Shout goodbye to knowing one’s place.**” Which, I guess, means that the next sentence ought to read something like ... ***Shout goodbye to guys.***

*Well maybe that’s a bit strong.* But I have put together a list of skills that match the requirements for this new organizational world. And, it turns out, that newly requisite skill set matches, rather perfectly, women’s inherent strengths.

*To wit:*

**Improv skills.** Women can do ten things at a time ... effortlessly. For guys that number is ... *well ... one.*

**Relationship-centric.** A relationship-based and collaborative orientation is natural to women. Not so for men, on the whole. (*We like rules far better. Spell it out, please.*)

**Less “rank consciousness.”** Women are less likely to count the number of stripes on the sleeve, and instead pay more attention to the essence of the individual.

**Self-determined.** Guys evaluate their position in the pecking order very carefully. Pecking orders have typically not been kind to women; hence, they are more used to making their own way and relying on their inner strength.

**Trust sensitive.** The “connection thing,” based on trust, is as instinctive as it gets for women. Less so for men, who (*again*) depend on more formal, impersonal rules. (Which works pretty well in a stable organization with fat policy manuals ... not so well in a virtual organization, where relationships are changing every ... *literally* ... hour.

**Intuitive.** I’ve believed it for 30 years. Intuition is a good thing. No, make that a great thing. And yet the guy-driven, hyper-rational “MBA mentality” has denigrated intuition in favor of “just the facts, ma’am.” (McNamara’s body count “logic” in Vietnam.) Well that’s fine ... until now ... when the ambiguity and change in the world means that the facts are always floating ... and trusting one’s gut has never been so important.

**Natural “Empowerment Freaks.”** As, by and large, the nurturers in society, it has long been women’s role to develop and mentor others, starting with children. Men buy the “empowerment shtick,” mostly, only when they have to (“VE VILL EMPOWER HERE AT NATIONAL WIDGETS”).

**Oriented towards “intrinsic” motivation.** Women are more likely to pay attention to the inherent rewards in a task (a big deal, where only those who are engaged in WOW Projects will survive); men tend to treat it all like a football game or a baseball game ... where only the official scorer’s word matters.

*(I am, of course, not being entirely fair here. It’s not a matter of men not having these skills, and women having them. I well know that. On the other hand, there is what the statisticians call a “central tendency.” And the central tendency is such that women, by and large, and to be sure with many exceptions, bring more of the skills listed above to the fray than do their male counterparts.)*

**That’s the Tom Peters list.** And it is matched by similar lists developed by the likes of Judy B. Rosener and Helen Fisher, cited above. Rosener, for example, on women’s strengths: Link [rather than rank] workers. Favor interactive-collaborative leadership style; empowerment is more effective than top-down decision making. Sustain fruitful collaborations. Comfortable with sharing information. See redistribution of power as victory, not surrender. Favor multi-dimensional feedback. Value interpersonal and technical skills, and group and individual contributions, equally. Readily accept ambiguity. Honor intuition as well as “pure” rationality. Inherently flexible. Appreciate cultural diversity.

And Fisher: “Women have many exceptional faculties bred in deep history: a talent with words; a capacity to read non-verbal cues; emotional sensitivity; empathy; patience; an ability to do and think several things simultaneously; a gift for networking and negotiating; an ability to take the long view; and a preference for cooperating, reaching consensus and leading via egalitarian teams.”

Add those two lists up – and place them alongside my own – and you have a pretty damned impressive case for the match between women’s leadership skills (from project-team leader to CEO) and the needs of the rapidly emerging New Economy.

Which, I guess, is finally beginning to be demonstrated. **What a headline!** That is, the title of a Special Report that appeared in *Business Week* in November 2000:

**“As leaders, women rule.** New studies find that female managers outshine their male counterparts in almost every measure.”

*Business Week* went on to offer a bushel of hard, statistical evidence to support their hypothesis. I’ve come across other studies that say much the same thing. Frankly, in terms of the new economy-women’s leadership skills match ... it ain’t even close.

Speaking of “*ain’t even close*,” I admit that I have been stabbing the needle deep into my male counterparts’ hides for the last several months, ever since coming across a swell little book. “*You want ‘take homes’?*” I rage at my seminar participants. “Well here’s one: **GO HOME AND FIRE A-L-L YOUR MALE SALESPEOPLE!**” *I don’t really believe that, obviously.* But I do think there is an awful lot to say for the fundamental logic that underpins Nicki Joy and Susan Kane-Benson’s *Selling is a Woman’s Game: 15 Powerful Reasons Why Women Can Outsell Men*.

On the back cover the authors urge us to **“TAKE THIS QUICK QUIZ.”** It consists of 13 questions:

- Who manages more things at once?**
- Who puts more effort into their appearance?**
- Who usually takes care of details?**
- Who finds it easier to meet new people?**
- Who asks more questions in a conversation?**
- Who is a better listener?**
- Who has more interest in communication skills?**
- Who is more inclined to get involved?**
- Who encourages harmony and agreement?**
- Who has better intuition?**
- Who works with a longer “to do” list?**
- Who enjoys a recap of the day’s events?**
- Who is better at keeping in touch with others?**

And the score? **Women: 13. Men: well ... uh ... zero.**

No, I don’t really think we should fire all male salespeople. But I do think that this list is a prescription for sales success ... and encompasses a series of traits that, once again, in terms of the statistician’s “central tendency,” are more likely to be found among women. Hardwick Simmons would seem to agree. “Investors are looking more and more for a relationship with their financial advisors,” the former CEO of Prudential Securities argues. “They want someone they can trust, someone who listens. In my experience, in general, women may be better at these relationship-building skills than are men.”

I remember years ago that a senior executive attending one of my seminars explained his remarkable success in systems sales at a big high tech company. "It's simple, Tom," he said. "I hired women." He said that his male salespeople were invariably rank conscious. They only wanted "top to top" meetings with the corporate executive on the customer side. The women, on the other hand, were willing to invest an exceptional amount of time building bridges. Getting to know the customer's people in various departments, and all through the organization. Women painstakingly wired the joint for action ... and when the time came to meet with the Big Dude (almost invariably, **a Dude**), the sale had, in effect, already been made.

I've got a dozen other stories of the same sort. Which makes me wonder when time and time again I come across evidence of the following sort: A large financial advisory services firm has about 90% women on the staff of its "customer service" activity. The sales side? Also 90% ... MEN. One old fart in this company said to me, when I asked about the difference, "Well, at the end of the day, when it comes to money, the women are just more comfortable talking to men." I asked him about his research evidence for this assertion. And, uh ...

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Well – we – I, male – could get quite testy about this. (And I sometimes do, albeit with a smile, when addressing my mostly male audiences.) Phil Slater is a grand-old-man and guru's guru in the world of organizational design and change. He gave a lovely talk at a day-long seminar honoring leadership maven Warren Bennis. The punch line: "**Boys are trained in a way that will make them irrelevant.**" A May 2000 *Atlantic Monthly* article provides inadvertent confirmation. E.g.: In 1996 there were 8.4 million women in U.S. colleges, 6.7 million men; that gap will increase to 9.2 versus 6.9 by 2007. (And women's graduation rate is much higher, to boot.) Given that discrepancy, more women than men are currently registered in high-level math and science courses. (**Wow!**) Along similar lines, there are more girls than boys in student government and honor societies. Girls read more books, out-perform boys in artistic and musical ability, and study abroad in higher numbers. Boys do have their own "niches," however. The author points out that boys – men – are clear leaders when it comes to the big three ... **crime, alcohol, and drugs.** *Again ... um, uh ...*

More from school world. If grades matter at all, then we boys are in the soup again. A recent research report I reviewed revealed consistent discrepancies in GPAs. All subjects: women 3.07, men 2.92. Arts: women 3.13, men 3.08. Business: women 2.96, men 2.79. Science and math: women 3.18, men 2.98. Engineering and computer science: women 3.17, men 2.96.

So if the case I've made here is even half right, why do we *still* find the sorts of statistics I came across in Susan Estrich's extraordinary book, *Sex and Power*. She reports: 63 of the top 2,430 earners in Fortune 500 companies are women. Women constitute 8% of Big Five Partners, 14% of partners at the top 250 law firms, 7% of movie directors. One observes women's representation decline as one goes up the ladder. Take medicine: Women constitute 43% of new medical students, 26% of medical faculty, but just 7% of deans. Obviously, some are doing something about such wretched numbers. For instance, I found a marvelous article in a recent issue of the *Harvard Business Review*. I underlined until I ran out of ink. The title: "**Winning the Talent War for Women: Sometimes it Takes a Revolution.**" The author: Deloitte Consulting CEO Douglas McCracken.

There will be no surprises for women in the analysis Mr. McCracken reports from his own firm. “Deloitte,” he writes, “was doing a great job of hiring high-performing women; in fact, women often earned higher performance ratings than men in their first years with the firm. Yet the percentage of women decreased with each step up the career ladder.” The largely unexamined assumption, common as dirt, was that the “girls” were leaving to have babies. After examination, McCracken et al. arrived at a place that was about 180 degrees away from conventional wisdom. “Most women weren’t leaving to raise families,” he reports. “They had weighed their options in Deloitte’s male-dominated culture and found them wanting. Many, dissatisfied with a culture they perceived as endemic to professional service firms, switched professions.”

The lengthy, painstaking, highly professional analysis Deloitte undertook exposed unexamined assumption after unexamined assumption. “The process of assigning plum accounts was largely unexamined,” McCracken continues. “Male partners made these assumptions: ‘I wouldn’t put her on that kind of company because it’s a tough manufacturing environment.’ ‘That client is difficult to deal with.’ ‘Travel puts too much pressure on women.’” McCracken goes on to describe the several-year plan, raised to the level of high strategy, which has led Deloitte, finally, to start reversing these trends.

At this point in my seminars, the “good” (*by my standards*) men are laughing. And, at least in a few cases, I’d like to believe, taking it to heart. But about 20% have turned beet red. (*Leading to occasional hate email, after the event.*) Though I’m hard-nosed in my belief ... we’re idiots not to do better in terms of taking advantage of women’s natural leadership skills ... I am also willing to leaven my remarks. I say, “Okay, some of you think I’ve gone too far. How about going this far with me, though: **DO ANY OF YOU SUFFER FROM TOO MUCH LEADERSHIP TALENT?**” Obviously, the answer is no. *And, equally obviously to me, the answer to the question is ... WOMEN.* (And other, equally non-traditional sources. See below.)

During my stay at McKinsey & Company, from 1974 through 1981, women were moving into the firm and up the hierarchy in record numbers. (The base was admittedly damn low.) This “first wave,” as I call it, were acting in a fashion that, in context, made sense. Most of “them” were “out guy-ing the guys.” They knew more football stats than we did. And had mastered the risqué joke. But now there is a new generation of women. And I side with publisher-editor-soloist-renaissance-woman Harriet Rubin. “‘Obeying the rules’ is obeying *their* rules,” Ms. Rubin writes in *The Princessa: Machiavelli for Women*. “[Women] can never be powerful as long as they try to be in charge in the same way men take charge.” My goal in this essay is not to offer advice to women. So I won’t. I would, however, acknowledge that I cotton to Ms. Rubin’s argument. First, I simply think she’s right. And, second, as I observed at the beginning of this section, I think the rules concerning the way we do business are changing ... and that women-as-authors of those new rules would/should/will be good for all of us.

More or less along these lines, Judy Rosener makes an intriguing point that she labels the “**rule of three.**” The secret to big-scale change along the lines she and I favor: getting three women into the top management ranks. Three, *literally*, becomes a critical mass. (**Less than three = Token = Odd anomaly.**) Then, almost inevitably, things begin to change strategically. It’s an age that demands creativity. And creativity, as I’ll further assert below, is largely a function of diversity ... in the broadest sense of the word. In *Sex and Power*, Susan Estrich asks, “Would Congress [or the Board room – TP] be a different place if half the members were women?” **Damn right.** *And ... wouldn’t it be interesting. And, I vehemently contend, productive and profitable.* I suspect, in fact, far short of the 50% mark, that we will begin to see significant

changes in the U.S. Senate now that the traditional number of women – zero or one – has grown to 13 as of January 2001. Message to women *and* men: **Seize the moment.** Women in leadership positions represent a staggering opportunity. Talent defines success in the new economy. Here is underutilized talent source #1. Talk about a no-brainer!

## *The Leadership Opportunity Idea Writ Large: Rainbow Century*

“Where do good new ideas come from?” queries MIT Media Lab Director and info-tech guru Nicholas Negroponte. “That’s simple! **From differences.** Creativity comes from unlikely juxtapositions. The best way to maximize differences is to mix ages, cultures, and disciplines.”

*Fact: I am a diversity fanatic.* For reasons associated with social good? None of your business! For reasons associated with economic good? **Damn right.** That *is* my business. It is your business. It is an enormous opportunity.

This essay is about women. And I will mostly limit myself to that (enormous) topic. I will only say in passing that the New Economy demands creativity.

### **Creativity is a product of diversity. Period.**

Peer at it through the widest-angle lens imaginable. “Diversity defines the health and wealth of nations in a new century,” Pascal Zachary boldly asserts in his new book *The Global Me: New Cosmopolitans and the Competitive Edge*. “Mighty is the mongrel. The hybrid is hip. The impure, the *mélange*, the adulterated, the blemished, the rough, the black-and-blue, the mix-and-match – these people are inheriting the earth. **Mixing is the new norm. Mixing trumps isolation. It spawns creativity, nourishes the human spirit, spurs economic growth and empowers nations.**”

I now live on a farm in Vermont. My business has been headquartered for 20 years in Palo Alto, at the epicenter of the Silicon Valley phenomenon. The magic of Silicon Valley: *Technicolor and rainbows!* The diversity is, simply, staggering. And it accounts for an extraordinary amount of the Valley’s success.

Zachary expands on the essential idea. “Capitalism and the conditions for creating wealth,” he writes, “have changed in ways that play to the strengths of hybrid individuals, organizations and nations. And those that wish to profit from changing economic conditions must view hybridity as their first and best option. This bold claim warrants an explanation. The ability to apply knowledge to new situations is the most valued currency in today’s economy. Highly creative people ... are misfits on some level. They tend to question accepted views and consider contradictory ones. This appreciation defines the mongrel mentality. Strangers [including women, strangers to top management, unfortunately – TP] instinctively question things that natives take for granted. Many things strike them as odd or stupid.”

I can do no justice to Pascal Zachary's magisterial book in these brief extracts. Nor is it the main point of this discussion. Or, rather, it is precisely the main point. What Zachary says about diversity in general applies to women in particular.

**Diversity! Damn it! Any way you can get it!** University of Michigan Business School professor Theresa Welbourne reports the results of a study of 1,400 high-growth IPO companies. Those with women in top management positions out-performed those with men only – stock price, stock price growth, earnings. “I don't think it's the women per se,” Professor Welbourne concludes. “I think it's the diversity of the management team.” And again, **Amen.**

Not so incidentally, this line of argument has gargantuan implications for our educational system. “Our education system is a second-rate, factory-style organization,” writes the prescient futurist Alvin Toffler, “pumping out obsolete information in obsolete ways. [Schools] are simply not connected to the future of the kids they're responsible for.” Put bluntly, the school system does not honor diversity of thought patterns. That is certainly underscored in the 20-year research program undertaken by Harvard guru Howard Gardner. Gardner is the inventor of “M.I.” ... Multiple Intelligences. He argues persuasively that there are seven different, discernable and measurable varieties of intelligence: logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal. Historically, our male-led school system has emphasized only the logical-mathematical flavor. **Again:** a crime in a New Economy context which demands that we pay more and more attention to issues such as branding, design and creativity in general.

**Diversity.** A winning enterprise “strategy.” Good – *no, great* – for the bottom line in a talent- and idea-driven time of discontinuous change.

## PART II

# Outside the Organization: Women as Marketplace Power #1

### *The [New] Marketplace Imperative: Creativity Wanted!*

All hell is breaking [*has broken*] loose in the marketplace. The new technologies, led by the Internet and biotech, are changing everything. But the trend I'm thinking of actually goes back to pre-Internet days, to the '80s. We worked hard on quality. Empowerment. Customer service. Shortening the time to market for new products. That is ... *everybody* ... worked on these things. Thence, every new car readily starts at 19 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, etc. Two Swedish strategy professors, Kjell Nordström and Jonas Riddersteråle, in a marvelous book called *Funky Business*, declaim on the net result: "The 'surplus society' has a surplus of *similar* companies, employing *similar* people, with *similar* educational backgrounds, working in *similar* jobs, coming up with *similar* ideas, producing *similar* things, with *similar* prices and *similar* quality." Or as CEO Carly Fiorina put it about her firm, Hewlett-Packard, "We make over three new product announcements a day. Can you remember them? Our customers can't!" (**Ouch!**) Then there was Paul Goldberger's feature article on retail, called "The Sameness of Things," that appeared in *The New York Times*: "While everything may be better," Goldberger wrote, "it is also increasingly the same." (**Ouch III!**) Finally, Danish marketing phenom Jesper Kunde, in *Unique now ... or never*, puts it this way, "Companies have defined so much best practice that they are now more or less identical." (**Ouch III!**)

**The answer?** We must urgently seek entirely new bases for differentiation. "We are in the twilight of a society based on data," says Rolf Jensen, head of the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies. "As information and intelligence become the domain of computers, society will place more value on the one human ability that cannot be automated: emotion. Imagination, myth, ritual – **the language of emotion** – will affect everything from our purchasing decisions to how well we work with others. Companies will thrive on the basis of their stories and myths. Companies will need to understand their products are less important than their stories." Kunde chimes in (it must be a Danish thing!): "You can't survive floating on the tide, assessing the competition, conducting surveys to find out what your customers want right now. What do *you* want? What do you want to tell the world in the future? What does your company have that will *enrich the world*? You must believe in that '**it**' strongly enough to become unique at what you do."

I'm not going to go all the way out on the end of the limb, and start sawing. But I think it is fair to say that the sorts of issues that Jensen and Kunde bring up, as answer to the deadly "sameness

of things” phenomenon, are more likely to be the sorts of concerns that women would instinctively bring to the product-development and marketing table. I’ve been to that table. And when women’s voices are present in “critical mass” numbers (*remember the “rule of three”*), such issues do, indeed, move up – **sometimes way up** – on the strategic agenda.

## *Winning by Design*

Let’s translate the general idea of creativity’s central New Economy role into two specific strategic opportunities – that more often than not go wanting. The first is *design*. I have loved well-designed things as long as I can remember. But in the last eight or nine years, I’ve come to realize how under-appreciated design is in most organizations – and what a difference it can make when it is appreciated. Apple style. Nike style. Gillette style. Disney style. Body Shop style. In fact, I have recently crawled out on yet another limb, and claimed that design – writ large, as I want it writ – drives the whole idea of brand identity. As Apple’s design fanatic, co-founder and CEO Steve Jobs puts it, design is the “**fundamental soul**” of a product or service. (And Nordström and Riddersteråle, Jensen and Kunde just told us that such “soul” is antidote #1 to the enormous “similar-similar-similar”/“sameness of things” conundrum.)

Here’s eight years of hard thought boiled down to four simple statements:

***Design “is” . . . WHAT & WHY I LOVE SOME THING/SERVICE/EXPERIENCE. (Love.)***

***Design “is” . . . WHY I HATE A PRODUCT/SERVICE/EXPERIENCE. (Hate.)***

***Design “is” never . . . NEUTRAL. (Never.)***

*Hence, this profoundly important (if I’m right) Master Design Hypothesis:*

**DESIGN IS THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE.**

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I had the opportunity to keynote a prestigious design conference in October 2000. I report here the contents of my first slide and “positioning statement”:

*I am a design fanatic. Personally, though not “artistic,” I love cool stuff. But it goes much further, far beyond the personal. Design has become a professional obsession. I SIMPLY BELIEVE THAT DESIGN PER SE IS THE PRINCIPLE REASON FOR EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT [or detachment] RELATIVE TO A PRODUCT OR SERVICE OR EXPERIENCE. Design, as I see it, is arguably the #1 determinant of whether a product/service/experience stands out and forms the basis for attachment . . . or doesn’t. Furthermore, design is “one of those things” that damn few companies put – consistently – on the front burner.*

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I will not say that women are better designers than men. In fact, I don't believe in this instance that there is a bias one way or the other. (*Though evidence does suggest that women's aesthetic proclivity is better developed than men's.*) I do, however, distinctly believe that women in leadership positions – staff jobs and line jobs – are more likely than men to be tuned in to issues such as design. That is, women seem to have a far better left brain-right brain balance than the more “rationally” oriented males. Perhaps one could say that “new rational” (as specified above by Rolf Jensen and Jesper Kunde) emphasizes the “old irrational” (the “soft stuff” has become the hard, new basis for product and service differentiation).

Then, at the conference mentioned above, I did wiggle out on that dratted limb again ... and offered this not-so-mildly inflammatory statement: **Men cannot design for women's needs. Period.** Of course I believe there are exceptions to the rule. But there are a bunch of issues – to be touched upon below – associated with women's attachment to products and services and experiences that are, simply, dramatically different from men's. My proclamation surely got the room buzzing. And that was my intent. I know it's not “correct” ... but I'm damn sure that it's not totally incorrect either! In any event, “design mindfulness” is an increasingly important strategy in the New Economy ... and there are non-trivial reasons to say, once again, that this quite likely plays into women's hands.

## *Creating Great Experiences*

“Experiences,” write Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business A Stage*, “are as distinct from services as services are from goods.” You could call it a semantic quibble. *I don't think it is.*

Some “get it” ... and make billions off it. “We have identified a ‘third place,’ ” Starbucks district manager Nancy Orsolini told us in a television interview a few years ago. “And I really believe that sets us apart. The third place is that place that's not work or home. It's the place our customers come for refuge.” It's not just the coffee. (**Understatement**) It's not just relatively prompt service with a smile. The last 99% is “other” ... arguably, “**the experience.**” Speaking of “experiences.” A Harley-Davidson exec put it this way, “What we sell is the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns, and have people be afraid of him.” Laugh if you will, but creating that experience is what distinguishes Harley from the pack ... and is, again, worth billions in market capitalization.

It's a whole/holistic way – I would argue a whole new way – of thinking. “Car designers need to create a *story*,” said Freeman Thomas, co-designer of the VW Beetle and designer of the Audi TT. “Every car provides an opportunity to create an *adventure*. [For example], the Plymouth Prowler makes you *smile*. Why? It has a *plot*, a reason for being, a *passion*.” Love those words: **Story. Adventure. Smile. Plot. Passion.**

Pine and Gilmore suggest that there are four levels involved in the creation of economic value. (1) The old days of “extraction”: iron ore, oil, timber, and other raw materials. (2) The first step is the creation of goods. (Iron ore becomes steel becomes paperclips.) (3) Then comes the service economy, with which we are all familiar. (IBM and GE, officially manufacturers, have each

shifted well over half of their revenues to services.) (4) And now we are climbing toward the experience economy ... which makes all sorts of sense, in the fully developed world, where traditional goods and services have, indeed, gone into surplus.

And, one more time, I and some others believe it is utterly fair to consider the male-female schism. Extraction and goods “economies” were male oriented and dominated. Services and experiences are/will be female oriented and dominated. As always, there are exceptions to the rule. But, again, there is that “central tendency” which the statisticians love so much ... which puts women on the side of the new economy’s Experience Angels.

## *Global Business Opportunity #1*

Every time I launch this part of my seminars, I hear the echoes of that 18 December 1996 meeting in Boston. I still hear those powerful women ... without exception ... telling me the degree to which they have been ignored, dismissed, treated as brainless by bankers and doctors and car salesmen and computer salesmen. (And I also “feel” the incredible body language and unprecedented spontaneous applause I’ve gotten from women in 300 audiences in the last 4+ years ... in seminar rooms all over the globe ... from the USA to Sri Lanka ... as I dare broach this subject.)

*A smartly turned-out, six-figure-income financial services executive approached me after one of my riffs on women’s treatment in the marketplace. Over lunch a few days before, she’d gone to a Mercedes dealership with every intention of buying a car. All three salesmen were in their cubicles, eating their sandwiches. As she wandered the showroom floor, none bothered to wander in her direction. Finally, some guy finished off his peanut butter and jelly, or whatever, and came over to her. First words out of his mouth: **“Honey, are you sure you have the kind of money to be looking at a car like this?”***

Some of the men who read this remark will say, “Bull. She’s making it up, or at least she’s exaggerating.” None of the women who read this will have that reaction. This is something that, after four years of listening and studying, I ... know. Hey, I’ve got, literally, dozens upon dozens of stories like this ... from financial services companies and hospitals and hotels and computer companies, as well as those forever-dim car companies, to back me up. And I’ve never, amongst all the tens of thousands of people to whom I have presented these notions, seen a single woman’s head shake in disagreement.

*But I get ahead of myself.*

**Basic idea:** Women are under-served by the marketplace. Which is insane. Because they buy the bulk of stuff, commercial as well as consumer. Research I’ve pulled in over the years, mainly from the United States, Canada, and Australia suggests the following numbers: Women are responsible for 83% of all consumer purchases. Home furnishings ... 94%. Vacations ... 92%. Houses ... 91%. Consumer electronics ... 51%. Cars ... make 60% of purchases, significantly influence 90%. Services the same story: choice of a new bank account by women ... 89% of the time. Health care ... 80% of decisions, over two-thirds of all health care spending.

First speech of the year in 2001. A fellow comes up to me afterwards. He'd attended a seminar of mine a couple of years ago, when I was just warming up on this topic. He said he thought about it, decided to take me somewhat seriously, and do a little quick and dirty research. The results astounded him. It turns out that 80% of his purchasers of a primary product were women. The product: *riding lawn mowers!*

*And on it goes.* Forty-eight percent of American working wives earn 50% or more of the family income. American women write 80% of all checks, pay 61% of all bills, own 53% of all stock (and fueled the mutual fund boom), constitute 43% of all Americans with a net worth of a half-million dollars or more, make 29% of financial decisions single-handedly and significantly influence 75% of financial decisions. As of the first quarter of 2000, women became the majority users of the Web. Six out of every 10 new Web users are women, and 83% of wired women are the primary decision makers for family health care, finances and education.

Add up women's role as "purchasing officers" for consumer goods for their families and their significant role as professional purchasing officers for corporations and agencies, and, in effect, you have an American women's economy that accounts for over half of the U.S. GDP ... about \$5 trillion. Hence, according to one wag, this economic ranking: Earth's third largest economy ... *American men.* Earth's second largest economy ... *all of Japan.* **Earth's largest economy ... American women.** I dedicated this essay to America's nine million women business owners. Those nine million American women-owned businesses employ 27.5 million of us (one out of every four workers) and bring in about \$3.5 trillion dollars in revenue. **Translation: The revenue from American women-owned businesses exceeds the GDP of the German economy!**

Start looking at this stuff, as I have been doing now for over four years, and one (*me!*) is stunned. Back in 1970, for example, women constituted but 1% of American business travelers. If current trends continue, that number will surpass the 50% mark in early 2002. (*And, yes, I've got dozens of stories of women abused – not too strong a word – by hospitality companies. Perhaps only Wyndham, with a special strategic program oriented towards women business travelers, goes much out of its way at all for this huge/enormous/wealthy market. Incidentally, those women business travelers include the large majority of CMPs ... Certified Meeting Planners. In this "little area" alone, tens upon tens of billions are at stake.*)

I am an unabashed "difference feminist." There is no doubt, men and women are equal. There is also no doubt, I think, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that men and women are *different*. Consider Harvard Sociologist Carol Gilligan's classic study *In a Different Voice*. To summarize: **Men: ... want to get away from authority and family. Women ... want to connect. Men ... self oriented. Women ... other oriented. Men ... rights oriented. Women ... responsibilities oriented.** As trend-spotting guru Faith Popcorn put it in her book *Clicking*, "Men and women don't communicate the same way, don't buy for the same reasons." As to the buying part, she adds: "He simply wants the transaction to take place. She's interested in establishing a relationship. Every place that women go, they make connections." Have you read consumer researcher Paco Underhill's *Why We Buy*? If you haven't, you should. For entertainment, if not for enlightenment. Women and men are the same? Try the following and see if you in any way disagree: "Men seem like loose cannons. Men always move faster through a store's aisles. Men spend less time looking. They usually don't like asking where things are. You'll see a man move impatiently through a store to the section he wants, pick something up, and then, almost abruptly, he's ready to buy. ... For a man, ignoring the price tag is almost a sign of virility." It's amusing

... and based on incredibly meticulous research that Underhill has performed for the most prestigious clients over the last few decades.

**Message:** Men and women are ... *different*.

I had the opportunity to keynote MacDonald Communications' (Publishers of *Ms.*, *Working Women*, *Working Mother*) first ever Marketing To Women Conference in New York a couple of years ago. The mostly female presenters offered research, in marketplace after marketplace, that focused on (1) the difference between male and female consumption behavior and (2) the degree to which women got the short end of damn near every stick. For instance, women and health care: Women are more dissatisfied, more frustrated by the way they are treated and *spoken down to by physicians*, seek more information, are more pressed for time ... and make 80% of health care decisions and control two-thirds of health care dollars.

Women and financial advisors: Women want a carefully considered plan, want to be *listened to*, want to be *taken seriously*. Want to read the material, want to think about it. Women *do not want* ... an in-your-face sales pitch.

Professors Terrance Odean and Brad Barber, from UC Davis, report that women do a better job than men at investing. Guys – surprise? – are typically in and out of stocks, playing the game. Women make more careful choices and hang in for the long term. Financial columnist Jane Bryant Quinn rails against advice columnists and advice books that tell women to start acting like men and show some “guts” in their investment behavior. “Why all this focus on women and their lack of investment guts?” Ms. Quinn wrote in *Newsweek* in early 2001. “A far greater problem, it seems to me, is trigger-happy speculation, mostly by men. The kind of guys whose family savings went south with the dot-coms. Imagine a list of *their* money mistakes: Shoot from the hip. Over-trade their accounts. Believe they’re smarter than the market. Think with their mouse rather than their brain. Praise their own genius when stocks go up. Hide their mistakes from their wives.”

*Women as consumers express concerns that men don't. Take the looming issue of genetically altered food. Seventy-one percent of males say they would eat it, just 50% of women. Fifty-nine percent of men would feed genetically altered food to their children, while 37% of women would. Thirty-five percent of men would pay more for non-altered food, versus 47% of women.*

Story after story adds up to two things: **(1) difference; (2) opportunity.**

*I don't have to do the work here. Why: Faith's done it!* In late 2000, Faith Popcorn and her research director, Lys Marigold, published *EVEolution: The Eight Truths of Marketing to Women*. Is it a perfect book? No. None is, in my extensive experience. But I also think that my experience is extensive enough to be able to say ... unequivocally ... that this is a *genuine original*.

Let's just briefly examine one of Popcorn's eight “truths.” Truth #1: **Connecting Your Female Consumers to Each Other Connects Them To Your Brand.** Again, are men and women different? You be the judge. Popcorn and Marigold: “The ‘Connection Proclivity’ in women starts early. When asked, ‘How was school today?’ a girl usually tells her mother every detail of what happened, while a boy might grunt, ‘Fine.’ ” *Is there any parent reading this who disagrees with that assessment?* Similarly, Popcorn quotes reporter and novelist Anna Quindlan: “I only

really understand myself, what I'm really thinking and feeling, when I've talked it over with my circle of female friends. When days go by without that connection, I feel like a radio playing in an empty room." ***Trust me, a guy wouldn't say that!***

"Women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy," Judy Rosener wrote in *America's Competitive Secret*, "and men speak and hear a language of status and independence. Men communicate to obtain information, establish their status, and show independence. Women communicate to create relationships, encourage interaction, and exchange feelings." Helen Fisher, in *The First Sex*, likewise says, "The [Hollywood] scripts that men write tend to be direct and linear, while women's compositions have many conflicts, many climaxes, and many endings." It adds up to a difference. **A huge difference.** And it has huge implications for leadership. (See above.) ***And for designing products, marketing campaigns, service activities.*** Each of the eight principal sections in Popcorn and Marigold's book concludes with the sorts of suggestions that they might offer to a big client. Concerning truth #1, the Connection Proclivity, they write: "What if ExxonMobil or Shell dipped into their credit card database to help commuting women interview and make a choice of car pool partners?" Or: "What if American Express made a concerted effort to connect up female empty-nesters through on-line and off-line programs, geared to help women re-enter the work place with today's skills?" The two authors conclude, "Women don't buy brands. They join them." ***Powerful statement!***

I could go on and on. I'd like to go on and on. But this simple essay does not permit me to do so. So, let me cut to the chase: **The opportunity I've just described amounts to trillions of \$\$\$\$\$\$ in the United States, trillions more around the world.** (*I've wondered sometimes, in countries such as Malaysia, whether or not to present this material to my seminar participants. In the end, I've done so ... and consistently discovered that this issue strikes a sympathetic chord ... everywhere.*)

**Bottom line:** *Financial services* companies don't get it. *Hospitality* companies don't get it. *Health services* companies don't get it, even though two-thirds of health care employees are women. God alone knows, *automobile* companies, with a half-trillion dollars a year in retail sales in the U.S. alone, don't get it. But "*getting it*" will not be a product of some Year of the Woman campaign. It will require total overhaul of the enterprise: recruiting, hiring, rewarding, promoting, structure, processes, measurement, strategy, product development and innovation, corporate culture, vision, leadership ... and, above all, *redefinition of the brand itself.*

Perhaps I don't need to say it again, but I am, in a way, mostly writing for male executives. The point of all this is not morality. IBM internal research pointed out that, consistent with Popcorn's "Connection Proclivity," women business owners buy computer systems for reasons different from men. Women focus more on the vendor relationship, less on the raw technical specs. IBM therefore created a special unit to focus on our nine million women business owners. One of the execs in that unit, Cherie Piebes, told us in a TV documentary interview: "It is critical that we all understand that IBM is not marketing to women because it is the thing to do, or even the right thing to do. We are marketing to women entrepreneurs because it is a huge opportunity."

**TP: Amen.**

*And ... ah yes ... my stories. "Honey, are you sure you have the kind of money it takes to be looking at a car like this?" Or the financial services CEO who went in to lease a company car,*

to be greeted by: “I didn’t know [company] was giving company cars to secretaries.” A California senator with a severe back and neck problem went, accompanied by her husband, to a renowned physician. Ten minutes into the conversation, she interrupted the physician: “Excuse me, doctor, but it’s my neck that’s in pain!” The doc had been talking only to her husband. Then there’s the woman, with a bank balance to die for, who attended a land auction. “I was probably the only one in the room,” she told me, “who could have bought anything for sale by writing out a check on the spot.” During the initial two-hour session, the auctioneer failed to respond to her standard signals for recognition. She went up to him at the first break and said, “Start recognizing me, or expect a law suit.”

I spoke on this issue at a marketing services conference in early 2000. A couple of weeks later I received the following email from a Shelley Rae Norbeck: **“I make one third more money than my husband does. I have as much financial ‘pull’ in the relationship as he does. I’d say this is also true of most of my women friends. Someone should wake up, smell the coffee, and kiss our asses long enough to sell us something! We have money to spend and nobody wants it!”**

To say the least, Ms. Norbeck made my day/week/month. **You go, girl!**

At about this time in my presentations I’ll flick to a slide, in large print that reads “*Psssst! Wanna see my ‘porn’ collection?*” I explain – and this is true – that I began to collect porn about a year ago, age 57. My well-thumbed photos are snapshots of Fortune 500 boards of directors and operating committees – extracted from annual reports. “Celebrate the Past” ... one of the themes of Sharon Davis’ California Governor’s Conference for Women. Yes, “it” is better than it was. Nonetheless, those board snaps are highly predictable: Typical: a 20-person board. Eighteen old white males. One woman ... VP of HR. One African-American ... VP of Corporate Communications. (Sometimes the jobs of the African-American and the woman are flipped about.) I’m no fan of quotas. But I have a problem ... **a big problem** ... when the composition of the board bears no resemblance ... whatsoever ... to the composition of the *marketplace*. I’m not suggesting 51% women (*though it’s not a bad idea*), 14% African-Americans, 4% Asian-Americans ... whatever. I am suggesting, I say again, that if the board and the marketplace bear no resemblance to one another ... well ...

**I’ve never wanted to be CEO of a large corporation.** My reasoning is eminently sensible: too hard! Or, rather, I *had* not wanted to be CEO of a big corporation ... until I got on to this “women’s thing.” Now I want to be a Big Boss in the worst way. Just for five years. A giant financial services or health services company. I would take the strategy of that firm and jerk it around ... damn near 180 degrees ... in the direction of reorganizing to develop products for, market those products to, and service products aimed at the women’s market. *Funny thing:* I would do it ... and my OWM-led competition would stare at me ... and watch me do it before their eyes ... and the old boys wouldn’t have a clue as to what I was up to!

Why do I get so riled up about all of this? Again, nothing to do with social good. Reason: pure anger. **I hate stupidity.** This *is* the biggest opportunity that exists. And only one out of ten ... **one out of 100?** ... are going after it aggressively, the way Deloitte Consulting does inside the firm.

**Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!** It’s early 1997. I am keynoting that First Annual MacDonald Communications Marketing to Women seminar, in Manhattan. I finish my talk, head down the aisle and off to my next gig. Someone accosts me. She is one of the top half dozen executives at

BankAmerica. I know her. She's Kathleen Brown. Former elected treasurer of the State of California. (*By some measures, earth's sixth largest economy.*) Former gubernatorial candidate, who ran a close election in an impossible situation against a popular incumbent. (I knew her from that campaign.) "Tom," she says, pulling me aside, "would you do me a favor next time you're in the Bay Area?" "If I can, of course," I say. KB: "I'd like you to have dinner with me and David Coulter [CEO of BankAmerica, prior to the NationsBank merger]." "Sure, but why?" I say. "I'd like you to tell him what you just told this group," she says. Me: "Me? *Why me?* You were treasurer of earth's sixth largest economy. You're one of the most powerful women in one of the most powerful single 'nations' on earth. I'm just a consultant. Why me?" I repeat. The Reply (of course): "He'll listen to you."

*It's "little" vignettes like that. By now, four+ years in, I have them by the hundreds. It's not that they make me sad, though they do. It's that they make me mad. Very, very mad.*

Yes ... **Opportunity #1!** Period.

What do women face in the big wide world, even in the "advanced" new millennium? Ms. Brown put it this way, when asked by a reporter what it was like to be a female candidate for a top office: "*If we are single, they say we couldn't catch a man. If we are married, they say we are neglecting him. If we are divorced, they say we couldn't keep him. If we are widowed, they say we killed him.*" That's not Catch 22. That's Catch 44. (P.S.: I was never able to schedule the dinner. After the NationsBank acquisition, Mr. Coulter was fired. Why do I somehow think that ex-Marine, tough-guy Hugh McColl, new boss of the combined banks, and not terribly competent, hasn't yet gotten "it"?)

## *Another [Related] Enormous [Missed] Opportunity*

The following is also worth dwelling on. Another multi-trillion dollar opportunity. Largely ignored ... *again*. Somewhat related to our principle topic, though somewhat not.

It's early 2001. Now we have [had] nouveau football ... the XFL. The goal? **Clear**. Marketers going after the "all important" 18- to 24-year-old market. In fact, marketing/marketers' mantra in general: *It's 18-44 stupid!*

Let me suggest an alternative: ***18-44 is stupid, stupid.***

*Why?* Because ... *it's the demographics, stupid.* That is, between now and 2010 that 18 to 44 population, in absolute terms in the United States, will decline by 1%. And: The 55+ population will increase ... by 21%. The 55-64s will shoot up, between now and 2010, by fully 47%.

**Yeow.**

There are over 75 million of 'em. Baby boomers, that is. (I'm about two years too old to make the cut. Oh dear.) They are an interesting group on at least two dimensions. Dimension #1:

*They've got the money.* (Damn near all of it.) Dimension #2: This is the first generation of “aging” folks that is saying ... *“I'm in charge!”* It's Viagra. It's cosmetic surgery ... by males as well as females. And so on. It's a group, according to the experts, who want experiences ... convenience ... comfort ... access ... and ... *respect.*

How do women fit into all this? Intimately! *“Such a critical mass of older women with a tradition of rebellion and independence and a way of making a living has not occurred before in history,”* says historian Gerda Werner. This is, then, yet another [HUGE] [WEALTHY] arena in which women will call the shots ... ***damn near all the shots.*** I won't say more here. Except, again, that we're talking about ***trillions*** of dollars. We're talking about a bizarrely underserved market (doubly underserved: women *and* aging, both showered, to this day, with constant disrespect.)

*Hmmmmmm ...*

## *And In Conclusion ...*

I know a lot of people bought *In Search of Excellence.* (Thank you.) A few have read it cover to cover. (*Thank you.*) And a few of those few did some things differently. (*Thank you!*) I've gotten a pretty sizable bucket full of letters (and lately faxes and emails) from those who have thought that I said some things that were useful ... and have done something about it ... and have had good things happen as a consequence. *That is heartening, indeed.* Makes up for having accumulated far too many thousands (make that literally millions) of frequent flyer miles ... and having spent far too many hundreds (make that thousands) of nights away from home and family. ***“Making a difference” ... or at least trying to ... matters to me. A lot.*** And along those lines, nothing matters more ... in the course of my entire career ... than the issue written about for the first time here ... the issue of women in leadership roles, Women as Market Opportunity #1.

I know I scream and shout. I know I wear my passion on my sleeve. But deep down, I'm still the Cornell-trained engineer of 1965. I'm not sure that I am proud of it, but first and foremost I'm an analyst, an observer. I've been observing and analyzing ... relative to this women's issue ... for four years, 10 months, and 18 days as I write. *I have never before tripped over an opportunity this size.* I don't like the designation of “management guru,” but if there is such a designation, I guess I'm one. I'd guess there are 20 of us in the front ranks, God alone knows how many more in the next tier. I'm sure of one thing: There are damn few management guruesses. And – *about this I am completely sure* – there is not one male management guru who is focused – in any way, shape, or form – on the “women's issue.” It's not that I'm proud of that. (*Though, to be perfectly honest, I am.*) It's that I am befuddled by it: WHY HASN'T ANYONE ... AMONG THE “AWESOMELY SMART” BUNCH ... SEEN THIS [BIG THING]? I'm going to push “it.” I'm going to push it to the hilt. I'm going to piss some people off. But I'm going to claim ... *because I believe it ...* that I'm pushing “it” because, in the words of bank robber Willie Sutton ... ***“It's where the money is.”*** Money that comes from better performance in the New Economy that results from tapping into the talent and leadership pool, so under-appreciated to this day, called women. Money that comes from effectively developing products and services and experiences

that serve women ... in automobiles, and health care, and financial services and computers and software, and ... *riding lawn mowers*.

**Nixon went to China.** Only an old Red-baiter could have done it. I'm more or less in that league. An OWM/Old White Male. Two tours in Vietnam. Swear like the sailor I once was. A guy's guy. And yet I'm stuck on this women's wicket.

Linda Ellerbee, one of my all-time heroes, approached me at a reception following the fifth Worldwide Lessons in Leadership teleconference, the biggest show of its kind (management town hall) on earth. (Linda was host-referee in the show ... once again featuring 3OWMs ... Ken Blanchard & Steven Covey, over 60, and YTP (Youthful Tom Peters, at 58). Linda – the toughest dudette or dude in any town! – not only gave me a hug, but teared up. **WHY?** “Thank you, thank you for doing the ‘women’s thing,’ ” she said. “Coming from you [Very Old White Crusty Profane Male TP] makes all the difference.” My speech over in August 2000, I headed for the streets for some of that fabled Hong Kong shopping. As I approached the hotel’s front door, an elegantly turned-out professional woman accosted me [*yup, tears again*] and thanked me effusively for doing my **“women’s thing”** at the just completed SC Johnson top management meeting. She had been, as I recall [*dimly ... you know, 58*] the first working mom SCJ had promoted to corporate VP. I’d offered, she said, “public confirmation” from a ROM [Respected Old Male] for her life’s work. First time she’d heard such – loud **and** obnoxiously – **from a guy**.

In short, I’ve been blown away by “all this.” By the hard, cold facts. By the enormity of the opportunity. By the degree to which we have neglected it. By the extent of the emotional response that I have received from hard-nosed women. **Hey, I’m having the time of my life with this issue.** I intend to stick the needle in OWMs as deeply and painfully as I possibly can. I think it’s a hoot to watch them squirm. And I *know* that the payoff numbers in the *trillions* of dollars.

**HOW COOL!**





