

## Women Entrepreneurs: Not So Hidden Secrets for Building Healthy Organizations

In the June 2013 issue of Inc. magazine, Leigh Buchanan declared that “the most effective leaders right now—men and women—are those who embrace traits once considered feminine: empathy, vulnerability, humility, inclusiveness, generosity, balance, and patience”. Asked to classify 125 traits as either masculine, feminine or neutral, 32,000 people identified these words among others like “selfless” as distinctly feminine. Another 32,000 people were asked to rate the importance of the same 125 traits to effective leadership. When the results were tabulated, these seven traits, all feminine, were strongly linked to effective leaders. These findings point to a fact that women have known for a long time – building healthy organizations is best accomplished with a more relational style of leadership and the more laudable traits in leaders are now feminine.



Dr. Edie Williams



Entrepreneurs have, for a long time, measured their success by how much investment funding they can garner, how fast their new ventures grow, and how big they have to be before being noticed in the market. Most women entrepreneurs however, extend these traditional measures of success by including their own personal growth and autonomy and the professional development and skill development of their employees. They often gain higher levels of trust from their employees and get higher marks in customer satisfaction.

With all the talk around sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, there are a few ‘not so hidden’ secrets we can learn from successful women entrepreneurs.

- Make a product or provide a service that makes the customer’s life better. Working for a company that is motivated by making other’s lives better is very satisfying.
- Hire people not only for their strengths but also for their potential. Find out where they want to go with their career and offer them a path and the skills to get there.
- Set the tone and enrich the culture by ensuring that everyone understands the vision and mission of the company and their organization; building commitment to the organization through the use of strong branding and symbols on shirts, hats etc.; and giving of perks and benefits beyond the norm. They don’t have to be extravagant or even cost anything. One example might be dress down Fridays.
- If key employees, e.g. managers, are not committed to the vision of the owner/CEO help them find work elsewhere.

- Remember that the company exists to meet the needs of the customer not its own internal bureaucracy.

These are just some of the lessons we can take from women who exemplify the 7 most effective leadership traits for sustainable organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century— empathy, vulnerability, humility, inclusiveness, generosity, balance, and patience.

**About:**

Dr. Edie Williams is the Strategy Director for Organizational Sciences and Culture, Inc. She is also a certified International Coach Federation (ICF) Executive Coach, published author, professor with The George Washington University, and President of MEW Consulting.

During her 25 years as a Naval Officer, she was assigned various leadership roles in the areas of finance and logistics and spent many years in program management and strategic planning. Since starting her own consulting firm in 2004, Edie has provided guidance to clients in the areas of planning, change management, and organizational diagnosis. She also provides executive coaching and life coaching to clients.

Edie has a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Business Administration from Appalachian State University, a Master of Science Degree in Management from The United States Naval Postgraduate School, a Master of Science Degree in International Relations from the United States Naval War College, and Doctoral Degree in Human & Organizational Learning from The George Washington University.

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