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With the New Year rolling, I won't bore you with the typical "new year, new you" speech (although, strategic planning is pretty crucial for your business). Instead, I'll open up 2018 with some strategies to amp up the diversity in your meetings, among panel discussions, and embrace diversity at work. While the workforce may be combining young and not-so-young employees, we can't ignore the lack of diversity in Hollywood, in hiring professional speakers, and so forth. Hopefully, you can spread the word, and spread the change as team leaders and business professionals.

Kristin

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#### HOW TO HEAR FROM MORE WOMEN AT YOUR NEXT MEETING

When I joined my first national board a decade ago, many of the female directors complained that the male directors ignored their ideas. But THEN, amazingly enough, when it became THEIR idea, it was remarkably brilliant!

While I was a bit skeptical at first, anecdotally, it seemed to happen more often than not. But, from my vantage point, that didn't happen to me – at least I didn't think so at the time. (Truth be told, I'm hard to ignore at a board meeting!)

Well, now the [research](#) has proved the point: Men get the credit for voicing the ideas. In two different studies, the researchers found:

Men who spoke up with ideas were seen as having higher status and were more likely to emerge as leaders. Women did not receive any benefits in status or leader emergence from speaking up, regardless of whether they did so promotively or prohibitively. Interestingly enough, both men AND women gave men more status when speaking up, but not to women!

So what do we do about this? Provide opportunities for women to "lean in" and speak up. Whether it is going around the table so that everyone has the opportunity to express their ideas or making it a point to call on women in meetings, create the space to hear their input. You can also look for less formal contexts to ask for women's improvement-oriented suggestions.

While it's important to provide the space for women to speak up, it is also just as important for *everyone* to pay attention to the suggestion. Okay, I gotta ask: Isn't this just good team skills that we should listen to all ideas regardless of the provenance of gender, race, ethnicity etc.?

Evidently not. The researchers counter that argument. "After all, if our natural tendency is to give less recognition to women's ideas, then we will need to make an extra effort to overcome this bias. And given that [women are interrupted more often than men are](#) when speaking up in groups, we suggest managers be vigilant about ensuring that equal respect is shown to women when they are voicing their ideas."

Fair enough. As a facilitator, I also find it helpful to capture the ideas on a flipchart or other medium, so that when that brilliant idea pops forth from a man's lips, we can point to the idea expressed previously by his female teammate.

So let's go out there and use our extraordinary team skills regardless of gender!

### **PREPARING AND MANAGING YOUR TEAM IN THE "NEW NORMAL" By Joseph Sherren**

Although 2018 is looking very optimistic on many fronts, we are still experiencing the effects of uncertainty in some areas. This past year, we faced political anxiety, a polarization of viewpoints, financial failures, earthquakes, droughts, fires, floods, and myriad other crises; and there are no signs that it will end anytime soon. We may even be on the brink of war in several regions.

Another trend disrupting most businesses is the new and diverse workforce, filled with young and not-so-young people. Each group brings different ideologies about how people should be managed and which organizational cultures work best. They have different loyalties, desire more engagement, and are intolerant of the autocratic management styles of most traditional companies.

I talk with many business owners and executives wondering when this constant churn will stop – and we can all get back to "normal." Unfortunately, I don't see that happening in the immediate future.

We are in a "new normal," and for managers, that requires new reasoning. I call it "new normal thinking" where we really don't know for sure what is going to work. What has worked in the past may work in the new normal – but, more likely it won't.

Managers must be amenable to doing things differently to achieve better results. Yet, there is an inherent problem: most managers are recognized and rewarded for their successes and behaviors from the past – and it is incredibly difficult to let go of that paradigm. They can be heard saying: It worked before – why shouldn't it work now? These are the typical effects of conditioning as I have written about in past articles.

In this new normal, the rules have changed. The economy has changed. Buying structures and methods have changed. More significantly, expectations of how people want to work have changed. As a result, managers are quickly discovering that their former actions and decision-making which created success, promotions, and recognition are less effective in this new normal.

Managers with the most collaborative styles will end up with employees who are more productive and engaged. Teams which are encouraged to work together by using social media and their networking skills will generate thriving organizations going forward.

It's human nature to continue doing what has worked before. No one likes to "fail," so we model past activities – the proven strategies and techniques – and hope it will continue to make us prosperous in this new normal. Unfortunately, it probably won't. Managers must be amenable to trying new and different approaches to adapt to the changing environment.

Is there one individual in your organization who knows the exact right approach? Probably not— no matter their position. Success now depends on engaging a team of diverse people coming up with many ideas that are tried, tested, and evaluated. To encourage this mentality, organizations will need a special kind of culture – a culture where people are naturally trusted to just do the right and ethical thing, without constant and direct supervision.

In the new normal, employees will not be micro-managed. In fact, most will be working in teams, often from home or other virtual locations, which will make old-style supervision impossible. Ultimately, it will be the organization’s fundamental ethics, values, culture, and vision that will guide decision-making and actions.

Working strategically to build and maintain a great culture means training employees how to incorporate those values into every choice they make. Doing this will build your reputation today and result in better decisions, happier employees, and success for tomorrow. **My question for managers:** How are you preparing your organization for managing in the “new-normal?”

### **PANELS ARE THE EASY WAY TO SHOW GENDER DIVERSITY – OR ARE THEY?**

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) has received some harsh criticism lately for the lack of female keynote speakers at this year’s show.

Their answer? Of course, they explain they will “redouble efforts to expand women’s voices throughout the conference as featured speakers” next year. Who, in their right mind, wouldn’t say that with all the #MeToo brouhaha and Silicon Valley sexual harassment scandals going on?

But what about this year? Oh, two women will be “on the keynote stage.” Translation: They won’t be keynoting but they will be panelists for one of the featured discussions on the main stage. And the letter goes on to affirm that there will be “242 women speakers” at this year’s show. You’re telling me that not ONE rose to the keynote spot? I see this all the time at conferences that I speak at as a concurrent session speaker! Ah....but I digress.

My main point is that the easiest way to bring a dose of gender diversity to a conference is to bring a woman on as a panel moderator or panelist. (The issue, though is much broader, and includes all visual diversity of all kinds: gender, racial, ethnic, etc.). Yes, it is the easiest thing to do, and frankly, I appreciate the nod to make the lineup more diverse. You would be amazed at how often I get hired to provide a little visual diversity (Thank you!). Critics would call this easy way out as “pinkwashing” the panel. A sign of tokenism to gender diversity. Sigh. I guess it’s better than nothing.

So meeting organizers everywhere, PLEASE give a little thought to your mainstage lineup. When you look at your brochure and see a row of white men staring back at you, consider one of your brilliant female panelists to be on the mainstage!

Note: The term “pinkwashing” is traditionally used for companies presenting themselves as gay-friendly and progressive in order to downplay their negative behaviors – yet this sense, it’s about women!

## **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: IS THERE A HOLE IN YOUR BUCKET LIST?**

We've all heard about the "bucket list" - especially since 2007 when the movie "The Bucket List" hit the movie theater. Like the story goes, as I get older, I sometimes wonder about what I'd like to do before I leave this world. And that's about it. I ponder. Ruminates. Talk about it, but don't do squat.

Why is that? Marilyn Sherman, in her new book, "[Is There a Hole in Your Bucket List: How to Overcome Obstacles That Keep You From Achieving Your Goals](#)" has a theory: you are sabotaging your own success. Who? Me? Nawwwwww... Yet, when I started to read the book, I had small insights and revelations into what is actually keeping me crossing off those items on my bucket list.

But let me be clear: This book is NOT about creating your bucket list - but it IS about what is keeping you from achieving your goals, your dreams and desired - whether it's in your bucket or not. This book is imminently helpful in guiding you to accessing and living your BEST life.

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