

Women Entrepreneurship and Connective Leadership: Achieving Success

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Abstract

Successful running of a business firm will require a balance between two different and often contradictory approaches: management and leadership. Rapid changes in both internal as well as external environment with respect to technology, govt. policies, customer demands, workers' expectations, etc. will require excellent entrepreneurial leadership skills. The women entrepreneurs should follow the connective leadership approach, which includes power direct achieving style, social instrumental style, and relational achieving style depending upon the situational demands. The women entrepreneurs in 21st century were very successful because of giving much more attention on management of intellectual capital, creation of self-organizing networks, proper counseling & guidance, clearly defined organizational goals, organizational design, transparency & collaboration, and consensus building & collaboration

Keywords: entrepreneurship, connective leadership, organizational design, consensus building and collaboration.

1. Introduction

An entrepreneur is one who is willing and able to initiate and successfully manage for a period of time an activity that involves at least some degree of personal and organizational risk. Pareek and Nadkarni (1978) viewed that an entrepreneur is one who initiate and establish an economic activity of an enterprise. From these, it can be stated that an entrepreneur is perceived as an individual having certain ability and potential which will help in thinking about the business activities, initiating, establishing, running and lastly managing an enterprise. So an entrepreneur takes the challenges to carry out the activities for the success and survival of the enterprise by integrating his/her attitudes, values, behavior, and leadership abilities. Moreover, an entrepreneur denotes a person who discharges the entrepreneurial functions of coordination, organization, supervision, risk bearing, high need for achievement, problem solver, setting goals and reaching these goals by one's own efforts (McClelland, 1961).

In India, major portion of the female community were involved with domestic works as a result their entrepreneurial skills and abilities were not properly utilized for the development of the nation. The emphasis was given for the promotion of women entrepreneurship after the 1970s with the introduction of the women's decade. The government of India declared the year 2000-01 as the Women Empowerment Year by keeping in view the social and economic well being of the female community. But majority of women do not undertake entrepreneurial ventures. There is need to strengthen and streamline the role of women in the development of various sectors by harnessing their powers towards nation building and to attain accelerated economic growth. As the environment is conducive and perfect atmosphere exists, women have to come forward to utilize their potential in a productive way. Gainful employment of women is identified as a major entry point in promoting their economic conditions (Chinnadurai, 2005). Now a

day some young women entered in to the fields of industry, public service as well as business and are successful in these fields. As per the 2001 census, the female population was 48.2 per cent of the total population but their participation in economically productive activities is often underestimated. For last two decades, women's work participation rate has been increased from 22.73 per cent in 1991 to 28.6 per cent during 2001. This is the right time to encourage and guide women to organize business and services to enable them to join business and services in large numbers.

2. Women Entrepreneurship

Primarily, entrepreneurship is a survival instinct that motivates women to start a business (Moore and Buttner, 1997). For the woman entrepreneur, the process of starting and operating a new enterprise can be tremendously difficult in both the formal and informal sector because they often lack skills, education, and societal support system to facilitate their efforts. Although efforts made by women may be thwarted in many ways as "entrepreneurship among women is a vibrant and growing trend internationally" (Weeks, 1995). Understanding and appreciating the social and economic impact of women entrepreneurs is a key to a more effective identification, preparation, and utilization of human resource which contributes to the vitality and well being of the economy. In twenty first century, the status of women in India has been changing because of growing industrialization and urbanization, enactment of social legislations, and through social change and development. Due to the wide spread of education and awareness, women have shifted from the kitchen, handicrafts and traditional cottage industries to non-traditional higher levels of activities (Kollan and Parikh, 2005). Sadat (1997) said referring to business ownership, there are those who yet realize that they too can enter the race. But in spite of many obstacles, women somehow find a way to engage in entrepreneurial activities. When the issue of entrepreneurship is at stake, the question should not be a matter of "can she" or "why does she" but "how does she" and "where can she go for help". Women started their own businesses from a desire for self-determination and for career challenge, and that they expect the corresponding respect, recognition, and esteem that both self-determination and challenge provide.

3. Connective Leadership

Connective leaders easily perceive common ground and possibilities where more traditional leaders can only see division and difference. They have the ability to construct multiple and shifting coalitions and do not see the need for colleagues or constituents to support their every issue. By calling supporters to join them in the quest to make the world a better, more just place, they present others with the opportunity to make a difference, appealing to a deeply felt need for meaning and legacy in most of us (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Connective leadership or shared leadership has referred to that form of leadership where leadership is essentially conceived of as an activity that can be shared or distributed among the members of an organization or group depending on the needs of the situation and the capabilities of the people involved. There is a fundamental paradigm shift in both the philosophy and exercise of leadership as Raelin (2003) believes that the people in this category are advocating leadership that is less tightly-controlled and allows for more unexpected possibilities. It carries higher risks precisely because it is less predictable but it also transfers more of the responsibility for outcomes to the people engaged in the venture. Fundamentally, it is less ego-centric in that the leader is less concerned with his or her own agenda and more oriented towards helping others facing problems in the process of goal attainment. There is a shift away from individual achievement towards shared responsibility and collective achievement.

Fletcher and Kaufer (2003, p. 24) have given emphasis on 'who' and 'where' of leadership by focusing on the need to distribute the tasks and responsibilities of leadership up, down, and across the hierarchy. They indicated the 'what' of leadership by articulating leadership as a social process that occurs in and through social interactions, and they articulate the 'how' of leadership by focusing on the skills and ability required to create conditions in which collective learning can occur. Drath (2001, p.165) places a strong emphasis on the shared creation of knowledge and notes that connective leadership should be framed as both a communal capacity and a communal achievement. Using a social constructivist view, he explores leadership from a relational perspective with an emphasis on what he calls "relational dialogue". It is this particular leadership principle which helps to bridge conversations across worldviews

so as to allow for sense making and thus, ultimately, for new possibilities to emerge. He strongly advocates developing leadership in organizations as a systemic capacity and increasing the “capacity of the whole system to make sense of direction, commitment, and adaptive challenges”. The basic characteristics of connective leadership which must be honored to assure an authentic shared governance process are: climate of trust; information sharing; meaningful participation; collective decision making; protecting divergent views; and redefining roles as all members are leaders or reflecting shared leadership.

Connective leadership is important in the context of interdependence and/or wholeness since in a transformational organization, all members must be viewed as leaders. The tasks of the group are shared by all; therefore, all are leaders regarding some group goals and objectives (Gardiner, 2006). A change in the nature of human interactions will be needed in order for a true transformation in shared governance to take place. It also integrates and creatively revitalizes with a crucial female perspective, as a total system of interconnected, uniquely important parts, rather than as independent, competitive, isolated and unequal entities.

4. Approaches of Connective Leadership

Connective leadership is a process to influence individuals not only to their own tasks and ego drives but also to those of the group and community that depend upon the accomplishment of mutual goals. It is such type of leadership that connects individuals to others and others’ goals using a broad spectrum of behavioral strategies (Gilligan, 1982). This new integrative form of leadership not only encompasses both transactional and transformational behaviours but also stretches its practitioners beyond individualism and charisma, even beyond competition and collaboration (Gardner, 1990). Connective leadership, which connects individuals’ creativity to their tasks and visions, to one another, to the immediate group and the larger network, empowering others and instilling confidence, represents a crucial set of strategies for success, not only in the workplace but also in the external environment. For effective management of the enterprises, women entrepreneurs or proprietors are following various approaches of leadership in order to influence the people towards desired goal on the basis of situational demand.

4.1 Power Direct Achieving Style

Leaders preferring power direct achieving style may delegate tasks to others; they retain strict control over both the targeted goals and the means to their accomplishment. They do not attract and unite their followers simply by the creativity and worthiness of their own dreams & goals but to draw the attention of the followers by identifying the external threats.

4.2 Social Instrumental Style

Leaders who use social instrumental strategies understand relationships and networks as vital for accomplishment of the objectives of the organization. They do things through other people, selecting specific individuals for specific tasks.

4.3 Relational Achieving Style

This style of leadership required by an interdependent environment involves an orientation towards others and their special goals. It contains three components like contributory, collaborative and vicarious- that encompass such inclinations or affiliations. Women entrepreneurs are taking responsibility in order to keep the work group together with clarity of roles of the followers. Hence women excel in collaborating, contributory and mentoring behaviour, as all are important aspects of connective leadership.

5. Connective Leadership and Effective Management

Development of women proprietors for success of the business is an important issue in the competitive business environment. The role that human resource development (HRD) needs to excel is by making greater efforts in effectively developing the soft skills. This includes such subjects as diversity, communication and people skills that allow people to understand each other and develop good team skills. This should be the number one priority of HRD to build real teams for organizational excellence. It will help women entrepreneurs in a number of ways such as: to define a clear objective; to attract good people into the right jobs; to build teams which create synergy and to fulfill the customers demands in a very competitive environment. So it is the responsibility of the entrepreneurs to develop the people to acquire new horizons, technologies and viewpoints. It enables leaders to guide their organizations towards new expectations by being proactive rather than reactive. It enables workforce to create better products, faster services, and to become more successful organization in the competitive environment. In the new work environment, job centered leadership is being replaced by worker centered leadership which has the potential to drastically alter the role of an effective leader. There is some justification for the followers as the most crucial factor in any leadership event. Followers affect the strength of a leader's influence, the style of leader's behaviour and the performance of the group through which many leadership functions are carried out is critical to workers for production, rewards, morale, and work satisfaction.

6. Successful Women Entrepreneurship

Since women tend to think differently than men, they interact with employees differently, in what has been called a more people-centered way. It has been seen that the typical female entrepreneurs are managing information, emotions and relationships differently than the typical male. If cross-functional collaboration is the medium for managing innovations then women were most comfortable with facilitating discussion and smoothing organizational conflicts. In twenty first century, women between the ages of twenty five and thirty five will have more education than their male counterparts; it appears that women may just have the right and adequate skills for the evolving new economy. So the organizations run by women do not take the form of traditional hierarchical pyramid but a network system, where leaders reach out, not down, to form an interrelating matrix built around a central purpose. But women on the other hand, encourage employees to align their self interests by identifying with the group (Rosner, 1990). These leaders share power, encourage participation and recognize their presence in more significant way. More specifically, they share power and information, enhance others self worth by listening and get others excited about the task at hand. Successful entrepreneurs are driven by success and determined to achieve their goals. The effective and dynamic leadership lead towards women entrepreneurial success due to the following practices:

6.1 Clearly Defined Goals

Actions without clear-cut direction lead nowhere. That is why there is very little achievement in spite of a lot of movement in life. Women entrepreneurs having very clear in their minds about what to achieve, how to achieve and then they reinforce it with a strong will power and commitment.

6.2 Women's Ways of Organizing

The work environments conceived and developed by women were found to reflect a preference for organic structure and collaborative operation where the flow of the work defines the form of the organization and information is shared freely among members, without attachment to functional position. Context and processes are characterized by a strong commitment to values, with particular attention to building relationships in order to establish the trust needed to accomplish complex tasks.

6.3 Organizational Design

Women entrepreneurs successfully met the challenges by using the organization design process to transform the energy as well as the focus of the organization from a static hierarchy to a dynamic form. They aligned their personal

values with the organization to determine three principles that guided the redesign process: organizational standards and structures, processes and procedures, language and symbols for congruence with women-centered values which were defined as cooperation, interdependence, inclusiveness, and process-orientation. This approach reflected as webs of connection that viewed staff and board members as peers rather than hierarchies and encourages to every one towards goal attainment.

6.4 Managing Intellectual Capital

Developing human capital and converting it into useful products and services is first becoming the critical executive skill of the age. As other skill management, they effectively utilize intellectual capital by identifying followers' skills and abilities.

6.5 Creating Self-Organizing Networks

An organization's knowledge worker operates on four levels within a networked organization such as social interaction, advanced technical skills, understanding of business process, and self-motivated and self-directed teams. When decision-making authority is coupled with peer collaboration, managers find an increase in self-motivated creativity. So managing a network organization, where knowledge is a strategic advantage, means that how workers are viewed and how they are developed will be the key to long-term corporate success.

6.6 Counseling and using proper Power

When team members face problems while carry out their work, they seek guidance and advice from their leaders. The problem may be technical or emotional in nature. Leader has to exercise power and authority over the subordinates as per situational demand. Exercise of power needs to stimulate positive response from the subordinates.

6.7 Knowledge and Intelligence

One most important requirement of a leader is to have required knowledge of human behavior, psychological and professional competence. In order to develop competency, the leader also must update continuously and keep renewing.

6.8 Transformational Leadership

The new emphasis was on leadership that is transformational in the sense that it is future oriented rather than present oriented and that strengthens organizations by inspiring followers' commitment and creativity. A women entrepreneur as transformational leader state future goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and innovate, even when their organization is generally successful (Eagly and Carli, 2003). By mentoring and empowering followers, such leaders help followers to develop their potential and thus to contribute more effectively to their organization.

6.9 Consensus Building and Collaboration

Due to the advance of technology, shifting demographics and globalization, the need for organizational partnerships and alliances becomes a reality. There is a greater demand for committed people, virtual teams, nonconventional outsourcing, job-sharing, and public/private partnerships. Because of the way women tend to think, interact, communicate and view power, they are more comfortable than men working in non-traditional work arrangements based on consensus building and collaboration (Tyler, 2002). Key aspects of this collaborative approach are: the high value given to inclusion; building relationships before addressing complex tasks; sharing personal as well as professional information; peer relationship; and encouraging a continuous and open flow of information.

6.10 Transparency and Accountability

The issue of trust is related to the need for increased transparency and accountability, and since studies show that women tend to be more comfortable than men sharing power and information and their presence on corporate boards. They develop and implement company policies, procedures, training, and internal reporting processes to ensure observance and implementation of these principles throughout the organization and establish a clear, unbiased, non-retaliatory grievance policy allowing employees to make comments, recommendations, reports, or complaints concerning their treatment in the workplace.

6.11 Comfortable with Complexity and Ambiguity

The way their brains work, women tend to be more sensitive than men to subliminal cues, body language, changes in tone of voice, and are able to both think about and do different things simultaneously. This ability results in women finding situations with limited clarity and a multiplicity of options familiar to them. Studies show that when given problems with limited instructions to solve, men tend to come up with one answer, while women tend to come up with multiple answers. This is thought to be related to sex-linked brain differences as well as how women are more socialized which is required for business success.

7. Conclusion

Properly running of a business will require a balance between two different and often contradictory approaches: management and leadership. In the competitive business environment, executive leadership matters more than ever before. Rapid changes in both internal and external environment with respect to technology, govt. policies, customer demands, workers' expectations, etc. will require excellent entrepreneurial leadership skills. The job of an executive is to articulate vision. Leaders need to communicate a shared picture of the future that fosters genuine commitment and motivation. Leadership must be augmented through attention to details on roles, performance measures and reviews but always with an eye on proactive strategy rather than reactive strategy. Women entrepreneurs chart a course for control, stability and practicality with the other eye on the day-to-day operations, the customer and market share (Sinha, 2003). Balancing these two requirements is vital for the success of every business enterprise. Interactive leadership relies heavily on communication skills. It is about creating the space for dialogue and thinking together for the common achievement. It requires a level of maturity in which both leader and followers should work together for betterment of the organization. One of the reasons why women are finding their way into more and more leadership jobs is that they tend to know better how to create webs of inclusion and environments for open communication. While these skills may come more naturally to women, they may be the most important ingredients for success in the 21st century as male dominated organizations are struggling for survival.

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