



eve-olution

Authentic Leadership

**the competencies women need
in order to be successful**

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In association with:
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Introduction

Our work with senior women over the past few years has allowed us to collect a lot of valuable data and insight into what makes successful women stand out among their peers. The critical competencies we identified have been used to help individuals evaluate their own strengths and development needs, and we are pleased to be able to share these with you now, to help you do the same.

The women who participated in the launch of this project were all in the *marshmallow layer* within blue chip organisations and were ready to take the next step into Senior Executive positions. In other words they were, on average, within the top 15% of employees within their organisation and were, therefore, already enjoying considerable success in their careers.

eve-olution began working with women aspiring to be in leadership positions in 2001 and we have had the privilege of seeing thousands of women go through our programmes, and of helping them to enhance their leadership skills and achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations.

How to use this report

The Authentic Leadership model and benchmarking data can help you to understand the characteristics required of a successful woman leader in a large organisation. It allows you to perform self-analysis to see how you measure up and from there to identify the areas that you should emphasise as strengths or seek to minimise or develop.

Background to the 360° Performance Review

To come up with a set of meaningful competencies for effective and inspiring leaders we first consulted with senior women in major Blue Chip companies on what they believed the key competencies for women leaders should be. Following the initial consultation we ran several focus groups and carried out training needs analysis to refine the final competency list.

Training and development needs identified by the focus groups

A number of key areas were highlighted by the groups as being crucial if women are to feel empowered and confident in taking their careers to higher levels. The challenges identified were:

- Women don't network enough – through lack of confidence and know how.
- Women do not put themselves forward for promotion or new projects, unless they are fully confident of doing the job. This means that they are less likely to apply for challenging or high-profile positions.
- Although flexible working arrangements are on offer, women may feel that their career prospects will suffer if they take these up.
- Women do not use their considerable relationship and communication skills enough in influencing and negotiating in the workplace.
- Women place great importance on building and developing their teams and need to continue to do this whilst ensuring they take credit for achievements and build their profile at higher levels in the organisation.
- Women are driven by their core values and their choices need to reflect this.
- Women praise and sell their teams, each other, their families, but don't talk about the things they have done. They assume other people will just notice.

The ability to develop skills to meet these challenges was then reflected in the final competency list.

Following Data Gathering

Before we finalised the competencies to be measured we studied academic literature and consulted experts in psychology and organisational behaviour, and we worked closely with our key partner, Engauge, to produce the software needed for capturing and analysing the data in a meaningful way.

Over the 2 year period between 2004 and 2005 we used this tool to gather data from the many women who went through our programmes and took part in the 360 degree process offered. The aggregate data establishes a benchmark performance against which aspiring leaders can measure themselves.

The Authentic Leadership Model

We identified 5 broad and interrelated dimensions of leadership to form the model (detailed in the next section): **Building Relationships, Developing Self, Leading Change, Leading People, and Leading Performance.**

We call the model Authentic Leadership because we are strong advocates of the idea that men and women have different skills, traits and abilities and we are keen to encourage women to lead in their own style, even if this differs from the traditional male style. In fact, we know these differences do exist because we have run this model with mixed groups and split the results by gender. And the results have borne out that women's perceptions of good leadership are often different to men's. Not better or worse, but different. It is important in interpreting and using this data that we don't polarise - we need to be working towards a wider range of acceptable leadership styles. We hope that this benchmark will provide women with their own standards rather than feeling they have no choice but to adopt the male work ethic. Vive la difference!

The Competencies of an Authentic Leader

Our leadership programmes and this Authentic Leadership model are about having a fully rounded range of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual abilities that drive personal and professional achievement and inspire others to follow. All men and all women must consider these Leadership Categories as critical to career success. In this sense there is no difference at all.

5 Main Leadership Categories and Competencies

Building Relationships			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing and negotiating • Interpersonal skills • Communication 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering and networking • Political insight 	
Leading Change	Leading People	Leading Performance	Developing Self
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making • Flexibility • Resilience • Strategic focus and vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict management • Leveraging diversity • Integrity • Team building • Developing others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Managing performance • Business knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-insight • Continual learning • Managing self

Figure 1

Building Relationships – In today’s business world, relationships are critical to success. Those who establish strong relationships both inside and outside their organisation deliver higher value to their company and make faster progress. In many industries, this is a key skill that women often apply extremely successfully to the benefit of their careers.

Developing Self – Self awareness and the process of continual development is key to career progression. The trend for job mobility suits those who focus on acquiring and honing transferrable skills.

Leading Change – Agile businesses require people who embrace and support change. Any change initiative must be led by champions who understand the need for change and the way others respond to it.

Leading People – Good diversity, conflict management, and team working are the characteristics of today’s strongest businesses. Common traits of authentic leaders who are able to inspire others are integrity and the ability to develop others.

Leading Performance – Delivery of profitability has to be underpinned by high performance throughout the organisation. Leaders need to demonstrate accountability themselves and require the same from their teams. Strong business knowledge is essential to the ability to perform in a management role, as is the management of the team’s performance.

360° Feedback

A critical aspect of the evaluation process is that it does not rely on the individual's opinion alone. You are asked to complete a questionnaire yourself, but also to invite your Manager and up to 8 Direct Reports and Others to complete the questionnaire on your behalf. This process gives a more fully rounded view of the capabilities of the person being assessed.

Results presented to individuals can then be used to develop personal development plans, accurately targeted at improving skills in those areas where performance is low or where deserved recognition is not forthcoming.

The Benchmark for Authentic Leadership

Our studies indicated that the women participating in the reviews were, not surprisingly, above average in all 5 categories and underlying competencies. The aggregated data¹ smoothes out the variations for individuals within the competencies, to establish the benchmark level that women leaders should aspire to achieve.

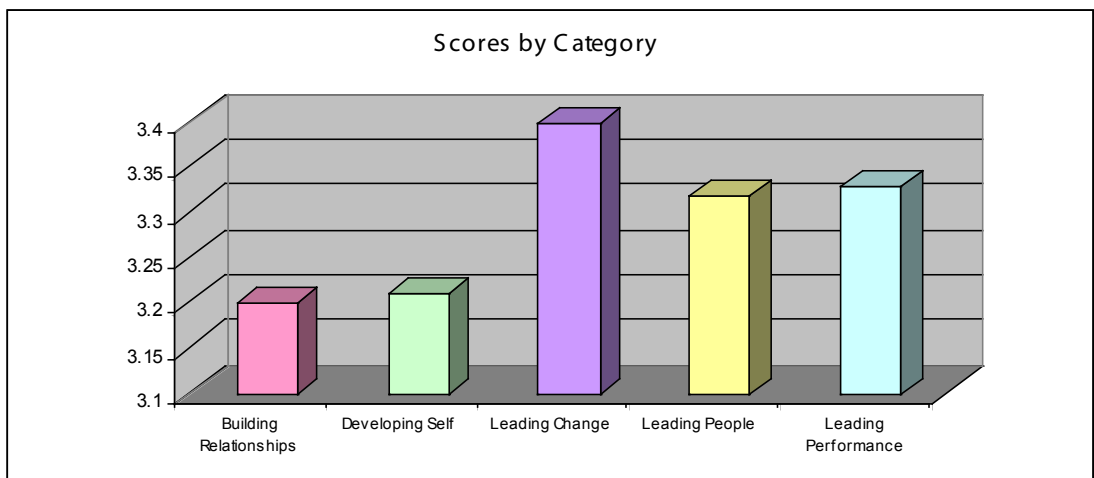


Figure 2

¹ Based on a total of 97 completed 360 degree feedback reviews by women from multiple organisations

Category	Competence	Mean score
Leading Performance	Business Knowledge	3.79
Leading People	Learning Diversity	3.70
Developing Self	Continual Learning	3.67
Leading Performance	Accountability	3.66
Leading Change	Resilience	3.64
Leading People	Integrity	3.63
Leading Change	Decision Making	3.60
Building Relationships	Political Insight	3.58
Leading Change	Flexibility	3.58
Building Relationships	Partnering and Networking	3.54
Building Relationships	Communication	3.52
Leading People	Conflict Management	3.51
Building Relationships	Interpersonal Skills	3.48
Leading People	Team Building	3.45
Leading Performance	Managing Performance	3.43
Building Relationships	Influencing and Negotiating	3.41
Developing Self	Self Insight	3.39
Developing Self	Managing Self	3.37
Leading People	Developing Others	3.37
Leading Change	Strategic Focus and Vision	3.36

Figure 3

Interestingly, even among this elite group of women, the weaker areas echoed the training needs analysis reported earlier. The strongest category was Leading Performance, with business knowledge the highest scoring competency. As you would expect all the respondents are extremely technically good at their jobs, whatever that function maybe. And influencing and negotiating came out as a relatively lower score.

These graphs illustrate in more detail the relative strengths and weaknesses of the key competencies within the categories. Some key points to note:

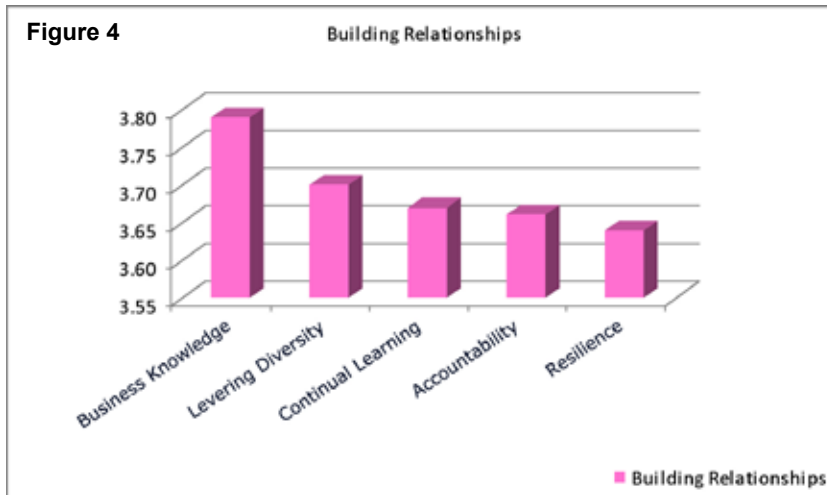
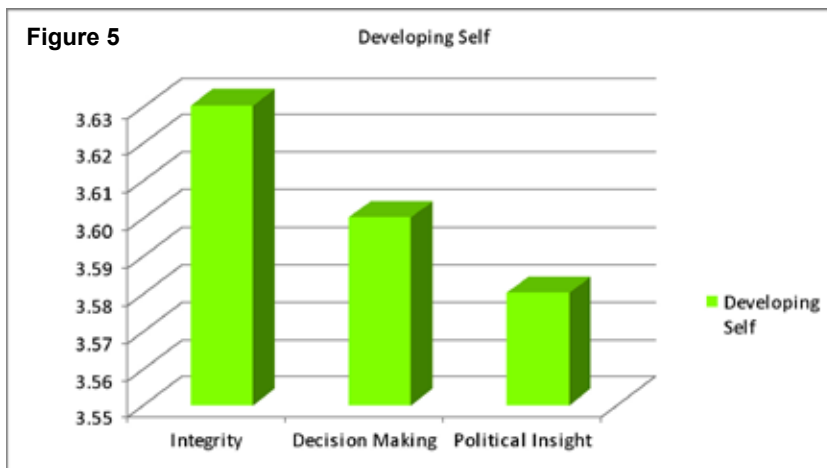


Figure 4 highlights the fact that resilience is generally a weaker score. Nonetheless women who get promoted to the board will have developed more resilience than the average, which means self development to give inner strength.



In **figure 5** we can see that a key area for development is political insight. Men are very good at playing politics and at senior levels it is an inevitable part of life, even though women generally dislike it. Integrity is an enormous strength for women and will be a bonus in tough economic times as women's strengths become more valued.



Figure 6 illustrates how women have learnt to be flexible because of the many demands on them from the varied roles that they play. However another key skill that women typically shy away from is the ability to handle conflict.

Figure 7



It is interesting that women are perceived as having great interpersonal skills but lower self insight (see **figure 7**). Could this be a stereotypical blind spot? Perhaps women do have self insight but are not communicating in a powerful and congruent way?

Figure 8



Although only a marginal difference, the weakest area was identified as strategic focus and vision, a key requirement of Senior Executives across all industries (**figure 8**).

However, delving deeper into the results, it was apparent that the self-evaluation scores were particularly at odds with the scores from colleagues and managers. Further evidence, perhaps, that the female style often lacks self-belief and does not promote itself effectively?

Indeed, in almost all of the scoring of the categories and competencies the individual tended to mark herself more harshly than the others did – most noticeably in the Building Relationships and Leading People categories. These are generally recognised as female strengths, but the difference in external perception and self-belief may be holding women back from really capitalising on these critically important management and leadership skills.

Using the Authentic Leadership Report

Even without undertaking a formal 360° review you can look at each of the categories and competencies and ask yourself, as honestly as possible, if you have developed a well rounded approach to your own leadership capabilities. We are all stronger in some areas and weaker in others. In fact, most of us have done some sort of personality profiling or psychometric testing and we know where we need to focus our energy (strengths) and develop or delegate (weaknesses). Even if you haven't done any profiling before you will have an intuitive idea about what you are good at and what you aren't so good at!

So, with this in mind, take each category and list the competencies under each. Give yourself a tick if you believe that your peers would say that you excel in that area. Go through the full list and when you have completed this task see if you can identify any gaps.

For example under Leading Performance you may be good at all 3 competencies and you may have given yourself a confident tick next to accountability, managing performance and business knowledge.

However, under Developing Self you may believe that your peers would give you a tick for continual learning but not self knowledge or self management. This leadership competency, Developing Self, should be given a red flag and identified as an area for development.

As validation you may want to test your assumptions by asking directly for feedback from your manager, team and colleagues. You may be surprised to find that they rate you more skilled in certain areas than you do yourself.

Next steps

Once you have identified what you are good at and celebrated your achievements it is time to be realistic about where you need to develop your weaknesses. The benchmark data tells you what you need to be aiming for. There are many ways to do this, of course, and it will be dependent on the particular category that is underdeveloped. Some of the more practical skills are, perhaps, better learned on work-based projects with the help and support of your line manager. Other areas that are more closely linked to your personality and developing the soft skills are better addressed with external help such as a training programme or coaching or by using personal development books.

It is important to recognise that as women leaders we have different drivers and learn in different ways so you need to find the approach that is right for you, that allows you to be honest about your weaknesses and to get the support and help that you need within the context of your own unique work and life experience.

How eve-olution can help you in this process

The 360° feedback tool was developed through collaboration with Engauge and to date has only been offered to participants in corporate initiatives. If you are interested in the approach and feel that it may be beneficial to you to undertake a formal review and feedback process, with your own personalised report, you can find all the information you need to help you do this on our website.

The insight gained from an in-depth review of this kind is a powerful route to understanding yourself and how others perceive you. It can provide a sound foundation for coaching discussions and for further dialogue with reviewers to explore strengths, development areas, and future potential.

You will also find on our website a wide range of materials and information that will help you grow as a female leader. We are proud and honoured if we are able to support you in your journey to success!

Please go to: www.tracey-carr.com for our full range of products and services that support individual women leaders and here www.genderiq.tv for a full range of on-line webcasts on Gender IQ

Please contact us at info@eve-olution.net if you have any questions