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Book Review

Amy Lee Andreassen

PLAY LIKE A MAN, WIN LIKE A WOMAN: WHAT MEN KNOW ABOUT SUCCESS THAT WOMEN NEED TO LEARN.

by Gail Evans. New York: Broadway Books.

Introduction

Success: The achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted: attributed their success in business to hard work. (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

Gail Evans began her career working on a number of congressional staffs during the 1960s. In 1970, she was a founding partner of Global Research Services, a research and marketing firm based in Atlanta. She began working for CNN at its inception in 1980, and in 1996 she was promoted to Executive Vice President. She later was named to Executive Vice President of Domestic Networks for the CNN Newsgroup in September 2000 (Program Resources).

When you read this first book by Gail Evans, you realize why she succeeded at becoming the first female executive vice president at CNN. Evans uses an easy style, a quick wit, and a “to-the-point” manner to set forth a foundation for women leaders.

In her book, Evans, now retired, attempted to define the “unwritten rules” in business. Her premise is that to get ahead in today’s corporate environment, women need to understand and “play” by the rules written by men. Evans believes in the bottom line, “When it comes to business, most women are at a disadvantage. We’re forced to guess, to improvise, to bluff. That is why so few of us play the game well, and even fewer find it fulfilling” (p. 7).

Gender differences in leadership style have been the focus of recent studies. Whether in the business field or in an educational setting, gender does play a role in leadership. Daily and Dalton (2003) stated that it is imperative to have gender diversification in corporations. They wrote,

About the Author

Amy Lee Andreassen started her teaching career in San Antonio, Texas, where she worked primarily with minority, English language learners in the elementary grades. While in San Antonio, Andreassen received her Masters in Educational Administration from Trinity University.

After relocating with her family to North English, Iowa, she served as Director of Curriculum and Instruction for two rural school districts.

She served on the board, and as president-elect of Iowa Women in Educational Leadership (IWEL). In addition, she has served on various committees for School Administrators of Iowa (SAI). Andreassen is currently an elementary principal at English Valleys Elementary in North English and is active in community and school affairs. She is working on her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

Do women add unique value to the boardroom? Absolutely. They provide unique perspectives, experiences, and work styles as compared to their male counterparts. The addition of women to the boardroom, for example, can greatly enhance the board's deliberations. Women's communication styles tend to be more participative and process-oriented. These stylistic differences may enhance directors' decision-making processes by encouraging the board to consider a wider range of strategic options.

Overview

There is much research to support the issue of masculine versus feminine leadership styles (Collingwood, 1995; Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Helgesen, 1990). Evans' book serves as a platform to teach women how to build upon their strengths enhancing their feminine side while learning to employ masculine techniques as well.

Evans identified four rules that women need to understand to be successful in the workplace.

You Are Who You Say You Are

Rule number one is You are Who You Say You Are. This rule urges women to take charge of their own destinies. Evans writes, "As I see it, women have two options: to structure our world around our own choices, or to let

someone else make the choices for us” (p. 21). She points to many women who fall into the trap of being victimized. The women see themselves as victims (to their husbands, to their children, to their bosses) so much in fact that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Evans urges professional women to set their own goals and then to do everything possible to reach those goals.

One Prize Doesn't Fit All

Rule two is One Prize Doesn't Fit All. This rule examines the role of fulfillment in the workplace. Evans relates several stories concerning the decisions men and women make when entering the job market. Men have a tendency to move up the corporate ladder at a faster pace than women. She wrote,

We women are much more likely to find an area in our company that we find fascinating and remain there for years. We tend to ignore the stars, bells, and brass rings that men consider necessary markers of success. For us, the ultimate reward can simply be the ability to say: I feel great about what I'm doing. (p.24)

She continued, “When we choose to fulfill ourselves by what we do, rather than only what we make, we're not playing the game the way the guys are playing it. They are much more likely to be thinking about material success or power than fulfillment” (p. 25). Robison and Lipman-Blumen (2003), found significant gender differences on competition with men reporting higher scores than women (2003). Competition can be a leading factor in workplace achievement. When men negotiate to start at a higher pay at the beginning of their careers, the gap between male and female salaries is difficult to overcome.

Work Isn't A Sorority

For rule number three, Evans focuses on workplace relationships. She wrote,

Women enter the job arena with a stronger urge to form and maintain relationships than men do. Whether we are talking to the dry cleaner, the cashier, or the boss, we want to know a life story, we want to exchange feelings, we want to turn the other person into just that, a person, rather than the other party in a business transaction. (p. 26)

She then contrasted this need to build relationships with the male view of not personalizing their interactions with others. She advised, “The people you meet in business can be nice acquaintances, individuals you can have a good working relationship with, but the key word is “working” (p.28). Women

need to understand that highly visible emotions are not desired in the workplace setting. Personal relationships do not need to be built in order to have a successful working partnership.

You're Always a Mother, Daughter, Wife, or Mistress

Rule four follows. Women succumb to role-playing when dealing with men who tend to pigeonhole women into four categories: mother, daughter, wife or mistress.

When the time comes for that young boy who is now a man to mix with the opposite sex at the office, he is often at a loss. And when in doubt, he – like most people – stereotypes. Thus he tends to think of a woman co-worker as his mother, his daughter, his wife, or his mistress – even when she is very clearly none of the above. Knowing this will help you understand male behavior patterns. (p. 30)

Evans cautions women about falling into these roles in the workplace environment, and she gives strategies to help meet male counterparts on an even level.

Discussion

Evans provided a dialogue on how to “play” the game. She relied on the premise that men make the rules and therefore have a marked advantage in the business world. Women take a critical assessment of actions and choose to embrace feminine leadership skills while building upon the positive male leadership skills, a better chance of success in the corporate world. This same lesson can be applied to an institutional setting such as a public school district.

Another new book, whose author maintained a similar viewpoint to Evans, is *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (2004) by Lois P. Frankel. Frankel, like Evans, stated that gender differences in the workplace can lead to corporate ruin unless women undertake a separate set of workplace behaviors. Once again, the focus is on eliminating unconscious mistakes that sabotage women's careers. Frankel wrote

The workplace is exactly that – a game. It has rules, boundaries, winners, and losers. Women tend to approach work more like an event (picnic, concert, fund-raiser) where everyone comes together for the day to play together nicely. In our desire to create win-win situations, we unknowingly create win-lose ones – where we're the losers. Playing the game of business doesn't mean you're out to cause others to fail, but it is competitive. It

means you are aware of the rules and develop strategies for making them work to your advantage. (p. 20)

Both of these books offer an interesting perspective on gender issues in the workplace. Those interested in the role that gender plays in forming leadership capacity will find Evans' book an interesting resource. Even though the book strays from the academic path to become more of a "beachside top ten list" read, the insight that Evans provides is invaluable. The topic of diversification whether it be by race, ethnicity, or gender, is important for all leaders to understand. Evans shares her wealth of knowledge through *Play Like A Man, Win Like A Woman: What men know about success that women need to learn*.

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