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The Corporate Goddess ~ Leading with Wisdom

By Jane C. Rosen

Some women enter the world as a Goddess, some develop into a Goddess once they arrive, and others remain clueless for a lifetime.

What exactly is a Corporate Goddess? Much like the ancient Greek goddesses who danced in the Athenian moonlight, the Corporate Goddess shimmies her stuff in the office fluorescents. Destined to lead, she does so with style and wisdom. She is evident in all women who dare to howl at the moon, who can sing "Respect" with the same grit as Aretha, and who have the guts to follow their dreams.

So, if the Goddess could share the Acropolis with the great Gods of Greek mythology, then why can't she take a seat alongside the mere mortals of the corporate boardroom? There seems to be plenty of room up there for intelligent leadership, and God knows there are brilliant women leaders ready to pitch in and change the world. Like those ancient statuesque, toga wrapped beauties, she is poised to take her place at the top of the corporate ladder, while looking fabulous, of course.

Changing the world also requires a sense of humor. If you happen to be a woman working in corporate America you know exactly what I mean. In those hallowed hallways of never-ending gray cubicles a good laugh is a rare and precious commodity. A sense of humor allows you to rise above the nonsense and not take things personally. Objectivity is a necessary trait for any leader, especially for women seeking a role in senior management. They truly understand where the phrase, "behind every successful man is a woman," comes from because it's impossible to get around them.

Let's face it, women who have made it to senior leadership have gone through a lot of hoops. They've had to learn the secret handshake, break the unspoken code, and arm wrestle a few of the boys to prove they're tough enough for the job. To make matters even worse, our culture is loaded with obstacles for women whether it's a glass ceiling, a boys' club, or the onslaught of lousy images of women in pop culture. A Goddesses work may never done, but milestones are being made.

Take a moment and think back to all of the women trailblazers who went before us. They struggled to fit into the male-dominated corporate world. Too often they sacrificed their womanly selves to fit into the boys club simply so they could do their jobs. They forfeited their joy, concealed their femininity behind man-like suits, and worked their tails off to pry open a few doors for the rest of us. They gave women an amazing gift and thanks to them we have more opportunities than ever before, and we no longer need to hide the fact that we are women. We should honor them every day by being the fabulous Goddesses we are and by celebrating that we are uniquely different from our male peers.

It's no secret that men and women have different styles of management. Men are more likely to exchange rewards for services and women are more likely to bring the team together to focus on the interests and goals of the group. In other words, the wise Corporate Goddess supports the team by creating safe environments for debate and exploration, transforming their individual interests to the shared goal of their team members. The wise leader sets the stage for new ideas to flourish and inspire others to lead. As the climate slowly shifts toward the feminine collaborative style, women stand to gain more respect and some well-deserved promotions.

Now is the time. Today's global business culture requires managers who can focus the diverse ideas of their team toward broader goals. It's a new world out there with new ways of thinking and creative solutions we've yet to imagine. The style of leadership that best meets the demands of today's global environment is holistic, inclusive and collaborative. Including diverse perspectives in decision making, we create a broader view with better options for great resolution. And although such diverse perspectives may launch conflict and heated debate, a wise leader will bring it to a healthy resolve. Isn't it about time for the old, military concept of leadership to march off into the sunset?

Strong leaders lead with their strengths and weak leaders lead with their weaknesses and it doesn't take a maharishi to know the difference. Leaders who utilize their strengths are sorely needed and Corporate America has suffered too many fools who have looted their way to the top. We need a few good leaders to step forward and regain the joy of balancing yin and yang, male and female, working together toward success with integrity and accountability.

Wise women in leadership roles have worked hard to get there, but what about the next generation? Are there young Goddesses being mentored to take the lead when we're gone? Mentoring is the lineage of the Goddess, to reach out and help sisters maneuver the difficult climb. We need to be visionary in our efforts to guide them. Who knows, they may be the ones to shatter the glass ceiling.

I believe that powerful men and women can work together to lead the way. They can move beyond the walls and the obstacle courses, the concrete ceilings and gender bias to become visionary thought leaders of community, business and government. It's already beginning. Each of us has a personal gift to offer. We begin with the simple act of listening and encouraging intelligent dialogue. Call me crazy, but I have hope. I still believe we can change the world.

A few Keys to Unlock Your Corporate Goddess:

1. Be the change you wish to see in the world.
2. Empower yourself. Align your femininity with the strength, power and beauty of the Goddess. Then, by all means, own it.
3. Mentoring is the legacy of the Goddess. If we wish to increase the number of women in senior management, we need to mentor the candidates.
4. Embrace diversity. If we're going to share the boardroom with the boys we need to stop rolling our eyes when they say something we don't agree with. Listen and learn.
5. Develop a good sense of humor. You can rise above the nonsense and not take things personally. Objectivity is a good trait for any leader.