

PRESS RELEASE

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Increasing the number of female directors boosts corporate profits

Business psychologists Binna and Jo Kandola pose an intriguingly simple way of boosting corporate profitability. They point out that a recent scientific survey of 1.1m people examining 32 dimensions of difference undertaken by SHL, a leading psychometric test publisher, found that there were no personality differences between men and women. Given that women continue to hold relatively few senior corporate positions and are paid around two thirds of the equivalent male salary, why not replace the men in leadership positions with equally capable women? Such a move would not only slash the executive wage bill, it might also lead to better governance of the organisation, after all, how many women were on the boards of the financial organisations that brought about the current worldwide economic recession?

So why is it that women are paid less than men in every major economy and more often work in support roles rather than in positions of leadership? In their new book - *The Invention of Difference*, Jo and Binna Kandola trace the history of women and work and explain why gender inequality continues to thrive and what we can do to change this.

“Until the 18th century, there was less gender segregation in the work undertaken by men and women than is seen today. Historically women performed a wide range of roles both inside and outside the home, so the division of labour we see today is a relatively new construct. It was only during the industrial revolution that the idea of the male ‘breadwinner’ emerged, and a woman’s role became increasingly idealised and focused on the home and family” argues Binna Kandola.

Stereotyping of the sexes is still going strong today. Female stereotypes tend to be more positive than they once were; women are now generally labelled with traits such as being caring or nurturing. Unfortunately, these qualities are not deemed as valuable in a business context as ‘male’ traits, such as being decisive. By accepting these positive stereotypes, women have in effect allowed themselves to be portrayed as less capable employees and therefore less suited to leadership roles than a man.

“There is overwhelming evidence that there are no genuine differences between the genders in the context of work,” says Jo Kandola, “but perpetuating the idea of differences means women continue to be held back in their careers – particularly in senior management roles.”

“Because society created and perpetuates this myth of inequality, we have the power to change it. Recognising bias in an organisation – and having the will to change it – are both key to eliminating prejudice against women in the workplace,” says Jo. “Challenging bias is everybody’s responsibility. We all need to make it part of everything we do.”

The Invention of Difference is published by Pearn Kandola Publishing and is available from www.pearnkandola.com and www.amazon.com. *The Invention of Difference* follows Binna Kandola's critically-acclaimed book, *The Value of Difference*, published in 2009, which examined unconscious bias and how to eliminate it in organisations.

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