

Women are leaving the workplace faster than men

by Michael_Kinsman

If I ever get the point where I believe my job was a dead end - that I could do nothing to succeed no matter how hard I tried - I would quit.

I would go find another job or figure out a way to create my own business or career opportunity.

Women apparently feel the same way.

Every year, you read about the swelling ranks of female entrepreneurs and women who take jobs as consultants so they can be their own bosses. The percentage of women leaving traditional employment to pursue these options has dwarfed that of men for at least a decade.

The reason is simple: Women just don't think the workplace treats them the same way as men.

That's a terrible statement to have to write, particularly when I believe it to be true.

Think about the pride our country takes in treating everyone equally and allowing them the freedom to choose their careers and the way they live their lives.

Why doesn't that exist within our workplaces?

A new study by Catalyst strongly suggests that gender stereotyping still exists in the workplace, which causes companies to routinely underestimate and underutilize women's leadership talent.

"When companies fail to acknowledge and address the impact of gender stereotypic bias, they lose out on top female talent," says Ilene Lang, president of Catalyst, a nonprofit research organization that concentrates on women's issues.

"Ultimately, it's not women's leadership styles that need to change. Only when organizations take action to address the impact of gender stereotyping will be able to capitalize on the 'full deck' of talent."

We know that even though women make up half of the nation's management and professional work force, they hold just 15.6 percent of the top officer slots at Fortune 500 companies and just 14.6 percent of the board positions.

The gender discrimination that is so bluntly evident from those figures comes from the subtle belief that men are "default leaders" and when women rise to key leadership posts, it is "atypical."

That kind of thinking means women are perceived as never quite being right. If women follow gender stereotypes, they are viewed as too soft. If they go against those stereotypes, they are considered too tough.

That thinking also means that women have to work harder than men to achieve the same level of success and the women who are assertive care not personable, yet if they are less assertive they don't have leadership skills.

Do you see the Catch 22 developing here?

Sadly, we will be talking about this in 10 years unless American companies really make an effort to change.

If they truly believe in equitable treatment of all employees, they will attempt to send that message to everyone of their employees until the lesson is learned.

Don't ask women to change. Don't look at them as if they don't belong. Don't expect them to accept less than equal treatment.

Women in the workplace should have the respect and chance to succeed that every male has. Companies that don't accept this will be doomed to their own second-class status.

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