

# Women's Extraordinary Strengths: How to Win the War for Talent

By Nancy MacKay, Ph.D

## Research Says...

What do Tom Peters, Helen Fisher, and Douglas McCracken have in common? Their research shows that women's extraordinary strengths are ideally suited to winning the war for talent. And, they are all doing something about it.

### 1. Source: "Leadership" by Tom Peters

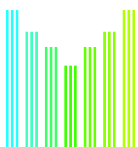
- "Accelerating the movement of women into leadership roles is a ... Strategic Imperative...of the highest order."
- By 2007, there will be 9.2 million women versus 6.9 million men studying at American colleges and universities.
- "Good-bye Command and Control. Hello Cooperation and Collaboration. That's the nature of the work in the New Economy. And that's how women work...naturally."

### 2. Source: "The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They are Changing the World" by Helen Fisher

"On average, women and men possess a number of different innate skills. And current trends suggest that many sectors of the twenty-first-century economic community are going to need the natural talents of women...a talent with words; a capacity to read nonverbal cues; emotional sensitivity; empathy; patience; an ability to do and think several things simultaneously:... a penchant for long-term planning; a gift for networking and negotiating; and a preference for cooperating, reaching consensus; and leading via egalitarian teams."

### 3. Source: "Winning the Talent War for Women: Sometimes it Takes a Revolution", by Douglas McCracken, CEO Deloitte Consulting, HBR 2000

- Issue: women were leaving after having weighed their unpromising career options in Deloitte's male-dominated culture
- Strategies: gender-bias workshops; monitor progress of women to ensure mentoring and premier assignments; policies promoting better balance between work and life for both men and women



Question: What could CEOs do to foster a more inclusive workplace for women?

1. **Watch your language.** Swearing, inappropriate humour, and sexual comments are not part of the solution.
2. **Pick your spots.** Get feedback from both men and women about social activities and venues to hold business meetings.
3. **Value diversity.** Men and women have different and equally valuable communication styles. Women often have to “prove themselves” a lot more in comparison with male counterparts.
4. **Hire women.** If your industry is male-dominated – be proactive.
5. **Promote women.** Women don’t get promoted like men do. Women in leadership positions are exemplars for others.
6. **Establish a formal mentoring program** for both men and women.
7. **Promote life balance.** Implement policies to promote better balance between work and life for both men and women.
8. **Ensure parental leave** policies are competitive globally.
9. **Create a more flexible work environment.** Most women don’t have “stay-at-home” husbands so they need more flexible work arrangements.
10. **Establish a women's affinity group.** Note: these groups typically report to the CEO and are led by the most senior female executive.

