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## ARTICLE

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### **WHEN WOMEN WIN, SO TOO DOES THE WORLD**

Gone are the days when the rights of women were restricted, and they were relegated to 'second class citizens', expected only to tend to the domestic chores around their home and taking care of their children. With the abolishment of various draconian laws and abandonment of certain male dominant perceptions regarding the role of women in leadership -- increasingly -- we are experiencing the positive effects women bring to business, sport, politics and religion.

In a modern business world, which espouses the values of fairness and equality, it is essential that past prejudices against women's abilities to lead and rule is eradicated and that key leadership positions are filled by women who have the skills, ability and appropriate credentials which are not pre-determined by gender issues.

Moreover, and particularly due to the fast pace of change in business and its competitiveness, employees generally require a lot more motivation and inspiration from their leaders in order to achieve their targets for success than previously. Interestingly, such motivation does not generally come from male leaders who may tend to be more dogmatic in their leadership style and approach. Predictably, most women leaders tend to be able to inspire their followers to achieve the required successes through their three basic leadership attributes, these being; *motivation*, *reward* and *commitment*. Considering these qualities are found amongst most women in leadership positions, and also that they tend to choose a particular course of action (or career) over a longer period than their male counterparts, one wonders why there are not more women placed in leadership roles where they can influence, and cause positive change in our society? Further, it is admitted that women leaders are "more likely to be transformational leaders, defined as those who serve as role models, mentor and empower workers and encourage innovation even when the organisation they lead is generally successful" (Evanston, 2005).

In light of the importance that is attached to the role of women in corporate leadership (amongst their other positions), CGF Research Institute is proud to be strategically aligned to the largest international businesswomen's network in the world, namely the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International). BPW (SA) is the premier business network for women who want the professional edge.

The first South African BPW branch opened offices in Johannesburg in April this year, with the idea of expanding its reach throughout Gauteng and South Africa. The networking initiative aims to develop the professional, leadership and business potential of women through advocacy, mentoring, networking, skill building and economic empowerment programmes and projects.

BPW International targets businesswomen from mid to senior management and has over 90 branches in 5 continents, representing over 250,000 members that include leaders, entrepreneurs, business owners, executives and professionals. BPW's aim is to encourage equal participation of women and men in decision-making roles through a combination of capacity and confidence building. Through hosting various business events and aligning with organisations such as CGF, the BPW is paving the way by enriching the knowledge base of women directors and stakeholders when it comes to taking responsibility in a corporate setting.

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To conclude, it is generally known that female leaders will exercise patience to assist their followers to develop their behavioural and cognitive skills in order that they can become effective self leaders. To this end, an important aspect to determine one's own *leadership and success* lies within the leader's followers. That said, leadership must start from within and the *strength* of a leader is measured by their ability to facilitate the self leadership of others.

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