

## **Do women need Viagra?**

*So Soft It's Hard*

Business Week had this to say: "Management gurus now know how to boost the odds of getting a great executive: Hire a female." What drives this idea?

More and more business research is reflecting that Emotional Intelligence – *the capacity to recognize and understand our own feelings and those of others; and for managing these feelings in our relationships* – is critical to the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century leader. Research by Dr J.P. Pawliw-Fry of the *Institute of Health and Human Potential* revealed that leadership jobs require 82% EI and a mere 17% IQ and technical skills combined.

The soft skills of collaboration, trust, sensitivity and relationship building are often labeled as feminine characteristics and heaps of recent research suggests that women make better leaders than men. Goleman (1995) devoted a whole chapter to the difference between the sexes in his book "The EQ Difference".

**If you are looking for that one little pill to strengthen your company, then read on.**

In difficult times when companies face retrenchments and short time, they are making withdrawals from their relationship with their people. Covey's *Emotional Bank Account* is a powerful analogy in the current economic climate: Do you have sufficient funds to be making withdrawals? Managers need to be asking themselves: How many deposits did we make in the boom years? And most importantly: How can we make deposits during challenging times to build trust?

Whether success belongs to male or female leadership, the hard reality is that many companies find themselves in the red, not only financially, but emotionally too because managers have found the soft skills simply too hard. Building rapport and trust by engaging your people in critical times will strengthen and prepare your company for a profitable future.

Soft skills take time, they are not a quick fix. They will not put money back on the balance sheet by the end of the week. Soft skills require planning and nurturing. While popping pills, be aware that the short term effects, although desirable, are a poor substitute for the real thing.

PS. Dr. Anthony F. Smith in her book *The Taboos of Leadership* says this: "Women do make better leaders, *when* that's what they really want to do."