

## Dr. Alice Adams, Common Ground Consulting

### Leveraging Gender at Work – Sample Content

Overview: When it comes to interactive, professional, trade or any kind of work abilities including leadership, skills-based, or technical, the differences between women and men have been exaggerated to a dangerous and counter-productive degree. Everyone wins when “Mars/Venus” double-talk is rejected and talent, resources and initiatives are deployed irrespective of gender. Alice Adams has been working in the corporate and academic worlds for over 17 years to maximize the understanding and effective utilization of gender. Her focus is on developing new paradigms for operational management, including but not limited to human resources management, to integrate women and men at work. Currently, over half of men or women would have to change jobs to create balance throughout the U.S. workforce, and even in the most progressive companies, moving toward inclusion presents some challenges. With the right tools, it’s possible to manage those challenges exceptionally well and reap clear rewards within a reasonable timeframe

Background/philosophy: Alice firmly believes that at base, men and women are far more alike than different, and that *insider vs. outsider status differences, rather than biological gender differences*, are what segregate men and women in a given endeavor. Although achieving workplace gender inclusion has been considered a slow and difficult process meant to benefit women first and foremost, the pragmatic approach is to embed gender inclusion in standard management/employment or assignment practice with the realization that women and men—and the organization as a whole—benefit from doing so. Hers is a point of view that swims somewhat against the tide; perhaps for that reason more than any other, she is a valuable resource for any organization’s effort to leverage gender.

The program sample: The program description that follows is a sample of a workshop whose goal is to foster an environment for understanding how gender expectations and stereotypes affect performance, retention, and job satisfaction. The program is based on what the most current science says about similarities and differences in men's and women's ability to perform in the workplace. Heady material – both interesting and compelling. Adams' classes take people into realms of gender role at work that many have never visited before, and the results of having done so are startlingly positive.

## **Leveraging Gender Education Program Sample Outline:**

**Logistical Detail:** The following course content outline represents a program length of 6.5 hours in an 8 hour day. This is just a sample outline, as all Common Ground courses are customized for the specific needs of its clients. Sessions are highly interactive, so “lecture” is minimized in favor of conversation. Participants typically have a lot of questions and engage in a great deal of dialogue if the environment and timeframe allows for it.

### **Objectives:**

Participants will...

- appreciate that “gender” is not a code word for “women,” and that people of both sexes deal with stereotypes.
- understand that conflicts about gender roles arise between women and between men as well as between women and men.
- be able to recognize the difference between fair treatment and special accommodation based on gender.
- become better acquainted with what the most current science really says about similarities and differences in women's and men's ability to perform in the workplace.
- understand better how gender roles and stereotypes affect people's experience of the workplace.
- develop practical strategies and greater confidence about dealing with gender role expectations in the workplace.
- understand the factors that affect the retention of women and men.

## Curriculum Sketch:

- The gender quiz: Interactive exercise to introduce terminology and stimulate dialogue
  
- Facts of the Matter
  - What the major gender stereotypes of both sexes are.
  - How stereotypes affect people's experience at work.
  - What stereotype threat is and how it affects recruiting, retention and individual performance.
  - How the social meanings of gender compare with verifiable biological facts about differences and similarities between the sexes.
    - Examples: a) difference between mothers' ratings of children's performance based on gender and children's actual performance; b) given the same resume with either a male or female name, both sexes tend to rate the male higher.
  - Social meanings of gender vary by cultural background and by generation.
  - You don't have to be a woman to be THE OUTSIDER
  
- Business case:
  - How misunderstandings and conflicts about the meaning of gender affect productivity, job satisfaction, and retention, and what the rewards are of resolving those misunderstandings.
  - What men and women value most about their jobs.
  - The effect of gender on dedication to the job.
  - What men and women need to succeed.
  
- Practical application – case studies and strategy brainstorming section
  - Dealing with female leadership
  - Advice to “gender role violators” on the job
  - Difficult situations for men and women
    - loss of the male-bonded workplace
    - fear of being perceived as a sexual harasser
    - if you're the “fish out of water”
    - trying to be twice as good as the men.
  
- Closing: Q&A and evaluations