

GIRL TROUBLE
EMPLOYEES PREFER A MALE BOSS, SAYS POLL

By MACKENZIE DAWSON

July 23, 2007-- TIMES may have changed, but it's still a man's, man's world - at least in the workplace. According to a recent survey conducted by WorkPlace Media, 76 percent of working Americans, men and women alike, say when it comes to being bossed around, they'd rather it be a man barking out the orders.

So what's going on in American offices? In this day and age, why do so many people prefer to (literally!) work for The Man? We asked a few experts to weigh in, and got a rundown on the most common stereotypes behind women in power.

She'll be trouble. Women may have made huge leaps in the public and professional spheres in the last few decades, but tedious old stereotypes persist.

"Let's face it - there's just one word our culture bestows on that supremely ambitious woman who values success in her career as much as her personal priorities: bitch," says psychologist and career advisor Debra Condren, the author of "ambITCHous."

"It's our prevailing cultural paradigm: Ambitious men are go-getters, but ambitious women are bitches. People who have absorbed this idea assume that a woman boss equals a bitchy boss, so they assume that a male boss is the better choice."

She'll take the mommy track. In a recent season of "Grey's Anatomy," new mother Dr. Miranda Bailey (played by Chandra Wilson) worries she's being "mommy-tracked" when the hospital chief keeps her off the surgery board. Dealing with the perception that motherhood is inevitably going to dull a woman's drive is a sad reality of professional life.

It also explains why some workers would prefer a male boss, says Alan Weiss, president of Summit Consulting Group. Employees want to feel protected by a manager that's looking out for their best interests - and if a woman is trying to juggle her job with her family, there might be a perception that she won't concentrate on her team.

Meanwhile, says Weiss, the irony is that "women think they'll be seen as stronger if they drop their family obligations in favor of work, but men say things all the time like, 'I can't be at that meeting, I have my son's soccer game to go to.'"

She's supposed to nurture, not negotiate. Speaking of motherhood, there may be a Freudian angle at work as well - a lot of people, men especially, might see women as mother figures and not as managers, particularly if they were brought up in a family with a more subservient mother.

"The workplace becomes an extended family; we find our role within that workplace, and everyone has to find their pecking order," says Nancy O'Reilly, a clinical psychologist and founder of Womenspeak.com. "If they came from a male-dominated family, they're probably going to expect that in the workplace."

She won't fight for herself - or you. The statistics speak for themselves: Women tend to get lower raises and slower promotions. Fair or not, there's a perception that women tend to be uncomfortable asking for raises or fighting when the negotiations get tough - so by extension, the fear is that if she won't fight for herself, she won't fight for you, says Weiss.

She won't be direct. "There is a perception that women don't get to the point, that they talk too long and say too much," says Suzanne Bates, author of "Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results."

Women do communicate differently than men, she points out. "There's a tendency to speak more, and to bog down comments with qualifiers like, 'Well, this is just an opinion, but ...' or 'I could be wrong, but ...'" says Bates. Such comments can undermine confidence in a manager's competence.

She'll take everything personally. In the Mafia, "it's not personal, it's just business." This might as well be the mantra of male professionals everywhere. Women? Not so much.

"One stereotype is that women take everything personally, instead of a simple business-to-business arrangement," says Weiss.

Fair or not, perception is everything, and if employees think a boss can manage people without bearing grudges, that's a manager they'll want to work for.

Weiss advises that women go out of their way to show they can take a hit without taking it personally - for example, after a contentious meeting, by "extending your hand and suggesting that you have lunch. If that's seen visibly, it will make a big difference."

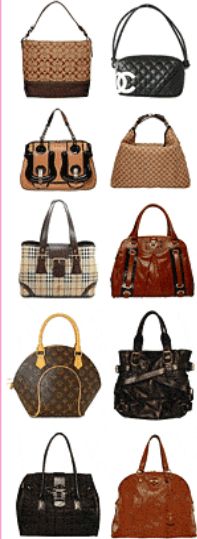


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