

FOREWORD

Women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men.

Amartya Sen, 1999

Despite Amartya Sen's astute pronouncement, women still lack opportunities to succeed—and become “dynamic promoters of social transformations.” This is especially so for women in less developed countries who suffer daily injustices. But even in places where women fare relatively well, subtle—but inhibitive—forces hold us back: “traditional” gender roles; the specter of discrimination; and an ever-present glass ceiling.

As a result, women face a double disadvantage at work. Women are less likely than men to have a paid job: the difference between employed men and women—the gender gap—ranges from 12 percent in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries to 50 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. To compound this, women who have a job earn just three-quarters as much as men—even with the same level of education, and in the same occupation.

So, empowering women is certainly about fairness, but it is also about economic growth: 865 million women could contribute more to the global economy. If women were employed at the same rate as men, GDP would increase by 5 percent in the United States, by 9 percent in Japan, and by 27 percent in India. Closing these gaps would be transformative—and it can be achieved through what I have called the Three Ls:

- **Learning:** Investing in schools and making sure girls have a good education, especially in poorer countries.
- **Labor:** Supporting working women through parental leave, affordable and high-quality childcare, and taxes that do not discourage mothers from having a job.
- **Leadership:** Letting women show their true potential by rising to the top, based on their abilities and talents.

This third “L”—which rests not on policies but on women themselves—makes me especially honored to present this encyclopedia of insights into driving women's success. I know from personal experience that mentoring can help women find inspiration in one another, and draw confidence not only to break through the glass ceiling but also to make the most of the opportunity once they have it.

I want to see more women challenging themselves and testing their mettle. When they do, companies prosper: Fortune 500 firms with the best track records in raising women to prominent positions are significantly more profitable than average.

Perceptive and powerful, this book is essential reading for any woman who seeks to fulfill her true potential—and become, as Amartya Sen envisaged, an active agent of change.

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