

ASEAN WOMEN SUMMIT

“Women -The Emerging Economic Force”

Tuesday, 25 January 2005

Session II

**Women Management - Excellence in the Workplace:
Setting New Direction, Setting a New Paradigm**

“Driving the Shift to a New Paradigm”

by

Tara Kimbrell Cole

Director

SYNOVATIONS™ Pte. Ltd.

Catalyzing INNOVATIVE THOUGHT™

128 Tanjong Pagar Road

Singapore 088535

Tel.: 65 6234 4552

Fax.: 65 6466 0326

Email: tkc@synovations.com

*The contents are not to be cited or reproduced in any form without prior and explicit permission of the author.
Views expressed herein are entirely those of the author.*

“Driving the Shift to a New Paradigm”

by
Tara Kimbrell Cole
Director
SYNOVATIONS™ Pte. Ltd.
Catalyzing INNOVATIVE THOUGHT™

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman... First, I'd like to thank ASLI for inviting me here today. ASEAN has been my home for almost 15 years. I love the ASEAN region with a passion for its diversity and for its spectacular beauty. I feel absolutely blessed every day by the privilege of living here. I am indeed honoured to be here presenting my thoughts to you.

I'd like to begin by recounting the story of an experiment that was conducted at the University of Arizona¹ at a conference on consciousness in 2002. My apologies to those of you who have heard me tell this story before; it is such an important analogy that I feel compelled to repeat it.

In this experiment, the observers were asked to watch closely two participants throw a ball back and forth. The observers were told to focus on the ball. While they were doing this, a man dressed up in a Gorilla costume walked directly through the line of sight between the two participants throwing and catching the ball. What percentage of the observers did *not* see the gorilla? I'd appreciate your participation here. Please let's have a show of hand.

There are 4 choices; how many of you believe that 10% of the observers did not see the Gorilla, 25%, 50%, 75 % The answer is 50% of the people watching the ball throwers did not see the Gorilla. And this was at a conference during which all were focused on consciousness!

Why am I telling you this story and what does it have to do with a new paradigm? It describes the core challenge we face in making a shift to a new paradigm. And it describes both sides of the challenge: that of business men and that of business women.

An outline of my presentation: I am going to start by elaborating on the dual aspects of this challenge with regard to its application in multi national corporations in the region and privately held business, whether small, medium, large or entrepreneurial enterprises. Then, I'll propose a specific course of action for ASEAN business women's consideration. These actions will enable us to drive the process of the shift to a new paradigm. I'll describe that new paradigm, as I see it. Following this, I'll review some of the strengths that women executives have demonstrated and the regional and global environment which is bringing those strengths into the limelight. I'll finish with the conclusion that these strengths and the market environment will support a shift to that new paradigm.

Turning back to the challenge that the gorilla story demonstrates, if we go through life fully focused only on the immediate job, we miss opportunities that are out of our focus. We can only see those opportunities by shifting our perspectives. So

seeing a gorilla is the beginning of the process. Most humans upon seeing a gorilla have a 'knee jerk' reaction that it must be a dangerous problem. It can't possibly be good. It's a gorilla! So the next step is to shift the lenses through which we see. Change the prescription in the glasses so that the opportunity may be observed.

Here is my first point, most business men have *not* been *seeing* women executives either in their executive capacity or as business delivery channels. Or they see women in business *but* as a 'gorilla' of a problem. For male executives in multi national corporations (MNCs) or private enterprises, this problem is fraught with fear and a lack of factual information. In addition, most multi national corporations have addressed agendas related to women based on social responsibility *not* on women's contribution to the profitability of those corporations.ⁱⁱ To exacerbate this, the prominently successful Women who have broken into the very top appear to be considered by men as exceptions. Thus any consideration that some of their capabilities may be found in other female executives in the community appears to be dismissed.

Einstein said "no problem can be solved from the state of consciousness that created it."

Thus I have deduced that the solution lies in

- building awareness in business men of the contributions business women make to the profits of multi national corporations and private enterprises;
- shifting that state of consciousness in male executives to one of seeing opportunities for themselves from placing more women executives in decision making positions.

But *how* can this be achieved?

I'll come back to this in a moment. Let's turn now to the other side of the challenge, since both sides are fundamentally connected.

The side of the challenge that we face within ourselves is the particularly noteworthy fact that for all ASEAN business women have accomplished, we ourselves have addressed women supportive agendas in multi national corporations from the perspective of social responsibility. I am not trying to suggest that we cease using social responsibility agendas for working women when and where appropriate. I am suggesting that ASEAN business women have an opportunity to use business techniques to address the business issues.ⁱⁱⁱ For all the business acumen we ASEAN business women possess and apply to our businesses, we have not yet applied business methodology to achieving the core requirements for the wider community of executive women such as equal wages for equal performance of equal work and more women in decision-making positions. It is important for business women to drive the shift of the focus away from a 'compliance' driven model (with its corresponding backlash) to one where these issues are properly integrated into overall business decisions. This is the gorilla problem and opportunity that we have not addressed in ourselves. It is our responsibility to work together as a group to demonstrate and communicate to

business men the opportunity that ASEAN women executives in decision making positions present. ASEAN business women need to collectively talk business with business men. This is an opportunity to shift their consciousness and our own and thereby to address both sides of the challenge.

The key objective is to prove and communicate that placing women in management in decision making positions makes sound business sense because it leads to greater profitability and is aligned with shareholders' interests. To demonstrate and communicate that there is a correlation between profitability and women executives in decision making positions in ASEAN.

The Goal is for ASEAN women to undertake and to continue to undertake a business strategy to drive progress on the following outstanding issues:

- Equal Wage for the equal performance of Equal Jobs
- More Women in decision making roles
- An Improved financing environment for businesses owned by women
- More ASEAN Women on Boards of Directors of Multi National Corporations

The business model I'd like to propose for your consideration is the following:

1. Women's business organisations join together to form an ASEAN Women's Business Research Centre which will
2. Obtain and analyse any already existing data from the various governments to find proof of the correlation between women executive performance and profits; undertake new research that may support the desired proof points.
3. Undertake awareness campaigns using sophisticated marketing techniques to drive understanding of the facts that will replace the myths about women in business.

On the marketing point, we need to of course treat the capacities of ASEAN business women as the product and to use the enormous success stories of prominent ASEAN business women along with supportive research on the wider female executive community to market ASEAN business women's capacities.

Turning back to the point on research, ASEAN women can find encouragement from the recent experience of western business women. In a white paper that I wrote in 2003, I "called for" similar research in North America focused on women executives in publicly listed corporations.^{iv} Catalyst, a leading women's research organisation, executed the research and the results, released in January 2004, were positive. That research showed a positive correlation between more women in decision making positions and on boards of directors and corporate profits.^v

Following that development, Calvert Group, a series of socially responsible investment funds incorporated some of the concepts from that white paper in the drafting of the Calvert "Women's Principles", which were issued in cooperation

with the United Nations Development Fund for Women.^{vi} The call for gender diversity in business continues to gain momentum in the west.

ASEAN business women can create this momentum here and structure their own research from the ASEAN experience and for this market. An ASEAN Women's Business Research Centre would be in a position to emphasize ASEAN business women's contribution to the profits of multi national corporations operating in the region and private business enterprises.

An ASEAN Women's Business Research Centre could play a pivotal role in moving the agenda of business women forward, thus driving the shift to a new paradigm in which the capabilities of women business executives are viewed by men as an opportunity to increase profitability and are recognized for the valuable contribution they make to business process and result.

Let's move on to address three of the demonstrated inherent strengths of women executives along with the global and regional environment which is drawing attention to those strengths.

Since the mid 1990s intense attention has been focused on the subject of intuition and extensive research and scores of books have emerged. It is indeed ironic that the capacity, for which women were most highly criticized years ago, has now been acknowledged as a major asset in business. Research has proven that intuition is of significant value in decision making, when the decision maker has deep knowledge of the subject.^{vii} This is now recognized as a successful methodology for solving particularly complex problems^{viii}. Intuition is a right brain function, historically nominated the "feminine" side of the brain. Leading executive men recognize the value in developing this capacity. Indeed it is even in vogue for these executives to credit their good decisions to intuition.^{ix} Nevertheless, the wider population of business men still rely predominately on linear thinking, a left brain function. The left brain has historically been nominated as the "male" side of the brain.

Research from a leading centre for strategic and international studies indicates that the complexity of business challenges will dramatically increase over the next 20 years.^x It is widely acknowledged that these problems will not be able to be solved by linear thinking alone. Thus there are some thought leaders at the world's distinguished universities, who propose that women executives may take the leading positions in the 21st century because they are particularly adept at the complex decision making.^{xi} The capacity to 'digest' and synthesize information across diverse channels, to engage abstract thought and intuition are required. In contrast, compartmentalizing information is a characteristic of the left brain, historically nominated as male. Indeed senior male executives are now taking courses to develop their right brain capacity.

Research indicates that male managers tend to engage an autocratic management style, while female managers tend to engage a collaborative style. Since research has now shown that a collaborative management results in dramatically increased productivity,^{xii} multi national corporations have begun to allocate substantial funds to re-educate their executives in the collaborative

approach. These strengths are now recognized critical competencies for executive leaders.

It is apparent from this information that the business environment and market realities are demanding a more diverse capability from executives. This can be delivered by more women executives working with men and in the decision making process. These strengths in women and the market environment support the shift to a new paradigm.

In summary, in order to drive the shift to a new paradigm in which women executives are viewed by men as a business opportunity, I propose that women's business organisations join together to form the ASEAN Women's Business Research Centre which will obtain, undertake and analyse research as well as engage awareness and marketing campaigns to shift the consciousness of men from seeing women executives as a part of the problem to seeing them as a part of the solution. The time is right because the management strengths in right brain functions and the ability to collaborate are now recognized. This and market conditions support the shift to a new paradigm.

The United Nations reports that it took industrialized nations 100 years to make the progress that Emerging Markets have made in 30 years! This may be an opportunity for ASEAN women executives to leap frog to the forefront of the world's business women.

The time is right.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ *Toward a Science of Consciousness*, "Tucson 2002" Tucson Convention Center Music Hall, Tucson, Arizona April 8-12, 2002, Sponsored by the Center for Consciousness Studies at The University of Arizona

ⁱⁱ “*Driving Gender Supportive Policies’ Impact on Share Value*” white paper by Tara Kimbrell Cole, May 2003

ⁱⁱⁱ “*Monetizing the Value of Women Friendly Policies*” text of presentation by Tara Kimbrell Cole at the Annual Global Forum of The International Alliance for Women, Washington, DC, and PowerPoint, 6 November 2003.

^{iv} “*Driving Gender Supportive Policies’ Impact on Share Value*” white paper by Tara Kimbrell Cole, May 2003

^v “*The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity*”, A Research Study, by Catalyst Research and Advisory Organisation, published January 2004

^{vi} 5. “*Calvert Women's Principles*” _ Calvert Group and United Nations Development fund for Women (UIFEM) team up to launch the new code of conduct for corporations, the first to focus exclusively on women's rights. "The Calvert Women's Principles constitute the first global code of conduct for corporations focused exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide," said Barbara Krumsiek, President and CEO of Calvert. "The Women's Principles will provide companies a set of goals they can aspire to and measure their progress against, while offering investors a set of tools they can use to assess corporate performance on gender equality issues." *Calvert Group is the USA's largest socially responsible mutual fund firm with approximately \$9.9 billion in assets under management.* www.calvert.com .

^{vii} Judgment and Choice, Educating Intuition by Robin M. Hogarth , (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago USA, 2001)

^{viii} Research on Judgment and Decision Making : Currents, Connections, and Controversies (Cambridge Series on Judgment and Decision Making)by William M. Goldstein (Editor), Robin M. Hogarth (Editor), Hal R. Arkes (Editor), Lola Lopes (Editor), Jonathan Baron (Editor) (Cambridge University Press 1997)

^{ix} “*Intuition at Work: Pathways to Unlimited Possibilities*” (New Leaders Press, San Francisco, CA, 1997). co-editor Dr. Frantz, professor of economics at San Diego State University,

^x “*The Seven Revolutions*” and “*The Seven futures*” research studies by Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington , DC

^{xi} Discussion between Tara Kimbrell Cole and Colin Crook, Senior Fellow at Wharton School at Wharton Fellows’ master class and Milken Institute’s Annual Conference, “Milken and the Media” April 26, 2004

^{xii} Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C., USA