INTRODUCTION

American business has a problem—and an opportunity. Men and women each now represent roughly half of the U.S. workforce. Compelling evidence links inclusion, engagement, and gender diversity in leadership with superior retention, productivity, and profitability. Women have been in the pipeline long enough that we might expect them to be represented proportionally at each level of the corporate ladder, including at the top. They aren't. On the way up the organizational ladder, many women disengage, quit climbing, and leave. This is much more than a problem for women. It is a problem for business. The problem has a big price tag. And solving it presents a big opportunity—capturing the payoff of gender diversity.

This book will help American leaders and managers increase engagement and retention of women in the workplace, which will lower costs and increase productivity and profits. How? By teaching those leaders and managers to identify, appreciate, model, and leverage both "masculine" and "feminine" approaches to getting results. Managers who learn to appreciate both can create inclusive environments in which both men and women feel valued and in which they feel they can grow and succeed. Creating an environment that works for women raises overall engagement and lowers overall turnover.

I have decades of firsthand experience with workplace diversity. I began my career over thirty years ago as one of very few women lawyers. At that time, it was natural to expect that there would be few senior or management-level women attorneys. I recall a conversation in which a senior (male) partner in the firm acknowledged that, naturally, women were only at entry levels in the

profession. "It's just a matter of time," he said. Women would work their way up the ladder when they'd been in the pipeline long enough. If we were just patient, we would penetrate the upper levels and become leaders alongside men.

Well, obviously time has passed. Decades of time. Women have indeed worked their way through the pipeline and up the ladder. But the envisioned future of a proportionate sharing of space at the higher levels has not yet come to pass.

When you diagram where women are today in business and in the professional hierarchy, a rough pyramid emerges: Plenty of women are at the lower (entry) level and even at the level of middle management, but fewer have arrived or stayed at the next level, even fewer at the next, and very few at the top. Women seem to be leaking from the pipeline at the higher levels. Diagram I-1 shows the 2010 data collected by Catalyst, a nonprofit organization that conducts research and provides consulting on women in business.
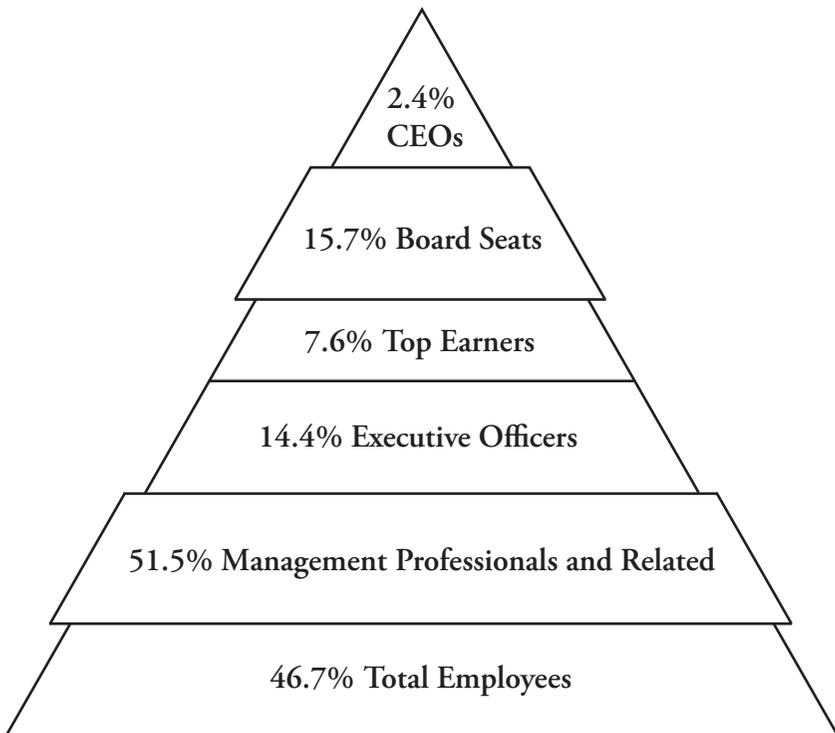
Diagram I-1. The Corporate Pyramid Problem
Source: Catalyst.org, U.S. Women in Business, May 2011.

The stubbornness of this phenomenon has been getting increased attention. For example, in April 2011, the *Wall Street Journal* presented a series of pieces titled *A Blueprint for Change* that focused on the question, "What's holding women back in the workplace?" (http://online.wsj.com/public/page/women-04112011.html). For women, the problem has been cast as the "glass ceiling," the "sticky floor," or the "maternal wall." These are symptoms of the root problem—the failure to adequately engage women and leverage their strengths. The way I approach this problem is not how it affects women but how this is a problem for business and how business can benefit by solving it.

I managed to work my way pretty far up that stubborn corporate pyramid. Starting at the bottom when there were few women in management, almost none in senior management, and very few serving on boards of directors, I did well. Over the years in the private practice of law and later inside a public company, I learned the language and the rules. I was rewarded. I made partner in a tough field in a large law firm. In my company, I climbed to the C-level.
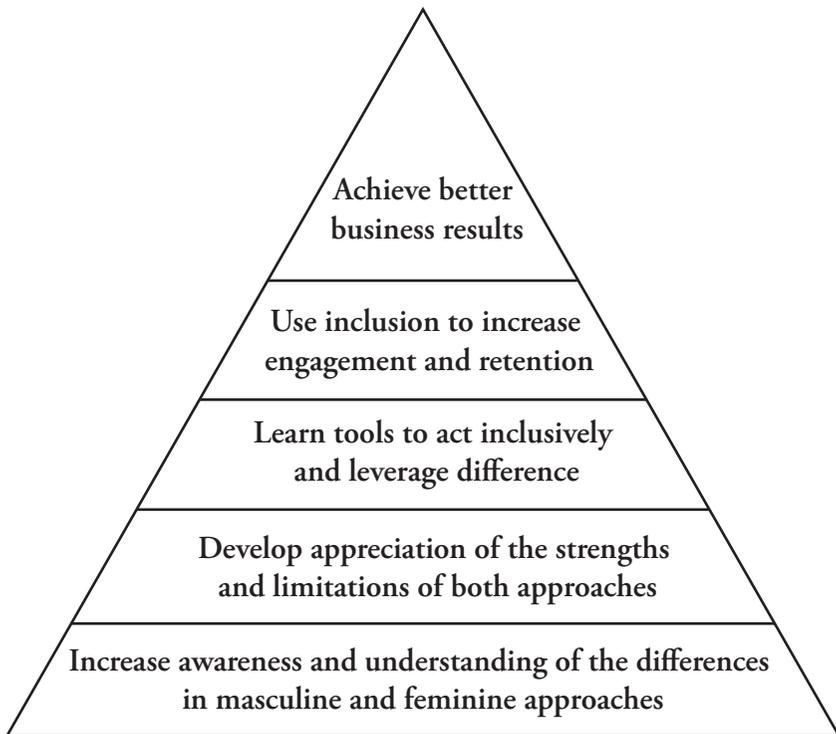
When I left the corporate world, I looked back with a much clearer perspective on my experience. I realized that my career had been more challenging than it might have been because I, as a woman, had had to adapt myself to a world in which the masculine approach to achieving results predominated and was most valued.

I am now a consultant to the business world. I advise clients on creating cultures of inclusion, facilitate workshops, and deliver speeches. I've taught workshops on "gender difference" for years. My business partner—Steffie Allen, founder of The Women's Vision Foundation and The AthenA Group—and I built on materials she and her colleagues had developed earlier, creating tools to help people understand the feminine and masculine ways of working and the strengths and limitations of each. Now I'm applying those tools to help leaders and managers leverage those different approaches in the workplace.

Note that this book is about more than gender, a matter of physiology. It is about masculine and feminine approaches, ways of seeing the world and operating. Men and women each embody both masculine and feminine approaches, and both approaches are needed for the best business results. With women now constituting close to 50 percent of the workforce, it is likely that feminine approaches are more common in the workplace than ever before. That means this topic has more currency than ever.

This book is written to enroll men and women leaders and managers in solving the pyramid problem for the benefit of their organizations' bottom lines. Women alone can't solve this problem. Business leaders and managers, men and women, can.

Chapter 1 will help leaders appreciate why they should care about the pyramid problem and why they should want to solve it. The rest of the book will take leaders through the levels of a different pyramid, the steps that I offer as the solution (Diagram I-2).

Achieve better business results

Use inclusion to increase engagement and retention

Learn tools to act inclusively and leverage difference

Develop appreciation of the strengths and limitations of both approaches

Increase awareness and understanding of the differences in masculine and feminine approaches

Diagram I-2. Steps to Solving the Corporate Pyramid Problem

This book addresses the three lower levels of the pyramid. It will raise your awareness and understanding of masculine and feminine differences and demonstrate to you the value of both. Understanding and appreciation occur internally; they are attitudes that enable you to *act* inclusively. The book will help

you develop and practice inclusive behaviors and leverage the strengths of both masculine and feminine approaches. The result of these external behaviors is an inclusive environment, one in which both men and women feel valued and experience a sense of belonging in the workplace community. The top two levels of the pyramid are the promised outcomes of the first three steps—engagement, retention, and results.

There is a variation of this more positive pyramid that has to do with customer relations. At the third level, you will find that acting inclusively allows you to deal more effectively with your male and female customers and clients; this leads to improved customer satisfaction—a specific form of better business results. While I focus primarily on the workplace environment, engagement, and retention, what you learn in chapters 3 through 10 can pay dividends in terms of attracting and retaining clients as well.

Near the ends of chapters 3 through 9, I've suggested actions to take to create a more inclusive culture. They are designed to have you try some new behaviors. At first they may feel awkward, just as with acquiring any new skill such as skiing, a foreign language, or public speaking. Once you've mastered these behaviors, you'll find the competence gained in appreciating and leveraging masculine-feminine differences is transferable to leveraging other kinds of differences as well.

My goal for you is that, by the time you finish reading this book, doing the exercises, and practicing some new ways of thinking and behaving, you will have become a Sage. Sages are leaders who understand, appreciate, and leverage differences, including those between the masculine and the feminine ways of working. Now, obviously, this isn't the only thing great leaders need to do to sustain high engagement. They must, among other things, create a sense of vision and purpose, supply adequate resources, and provide financial stewardship. But by understanding, appreciating, and leveraging both masculine and feminine approaches to work *in addition to* demonstrating other leadership strengths, Sages are able to drive their organizations to top performance. Are you ready to become a Sage?

Before you begin, I suggest that you first identify whether or not your organization *has* a pyramid problem. The numbers of women in many industries—and many organizations—result in variations of the pyramid shape. You're more likely to pay more attention, and get more out of this book, if you first look

at the data from your own organization. Find out right up front whether or not the engagement and retention of women is an issue in your organization. Appendix A provides an exercise to help you do just that and, if you do have a problem, understand its dimensions. It will also help you take steps to understand the causes and nature of the problem, enabling you to craft the most effective solutions.

So now, let's begin.