

LEAN IN



WOMEN, WORK, AND THE WILL TO LEAD by SHERYL SANDBERG

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Summary Brief

Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, has a vision for a better world. Her vision includes more women in powerful positions and more men in caregiver roles. She defines true equality as a world where women run half the countries and companies and men run half the homes. Throughout *Lean In*, she provides research and personal anecdotes to explain why there are not more women in leadership and what can be done about this imbalance. With humility she shares her successes, failures and ongoing challenges to inspire both women and men to find true equality. What began as a TEDTalk in 2010, has turned into a transformational movement that inspires the change needed to break down barriers to equality and achieve a better world for all.

The Lean In Approach

As Sheryl Sandberg's career developed, she began to notice she had fewer female colleagues and she still has never reported to a woman. Women in the developed world are better off than they





Climb the Leadership Jungle Gym

The concept of getting to the top in an organization has traditionally been compared to a ladder, but as Sandberg points out this vision is limiting. There is only one way to the top of a ladder and your options are limited to going up, down, on or off. Replacing the ladder with a jungle gym creates a much less limiting vision. It also takes the pressure off the need to have a well-planned out career path.

"I could never have connected the dots from where I started to where I am today." (Chapter 4)

On a jungle gym, there is an unlimited number of ways to reach the top. There are also multiple places to get on and off. Sandberg says that her career resembles a jungle gym much more than a ladder. She never envisioned herself working in the tech world, but her zig zag of a climb around the professional jungle gym has led her to her current position at Facebook. It is her hope that the jungle gym model shows women there are many pathways to success and with this knowledge empowers them to stay in the workforce.

"The jungle gym model benefits everyone, but especially women who might be starting careers, switching careers, getting blocked by internal barriers, or reentering the workforce after taking time off." (Chapter 4)

ever have been, so why do men continue to hold more powerful positions and women continue to get paid less for equal work? Sheryl explains the answer to this question with what she calls the leadership ambition gap.

Studies support that fewer women aspire to obtain leadership roles and that jobs described as powerful are more appealing to men than women. The reason for the leadership ambition gap seems to be ongoing gender bias. As more woman entered the workforce, a new inequality was born. Women began working outside the home, but maintained the same level of household responsibility. In addition to increased responsibility, the working world includes more challenges for women than it does for men. Sheryl notes that, "Female accomplishments come at a cost" (Sandberg, 2010, Chapter 1). The same words, such as aggressive and powerful used to positively describe male leaders are often used negatively towards women. Women today seem to recognize that it is not possible to do it all and careers are often the first thing to go when seeking a better balance. For the women who remain in the workforce, it is common for to lean back from their careers and avoid taking on the higher level of responsibility that comes with many leadership roles. So how do we get women to lean in? The table below highlights Sheryl Sandberg's key concepts for inspiring women to lean into their careers.

Sheryl's Vision:
 "A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes." (Introduction)

Sheryl's Concept	What It Means
Sit At The Table	Believe in your ability to lead. Do not shy away from opportunities to participate and ask questions.
Seek & Speak Your Truth	Communicate in an honest and appropriate way. Speak up and keep it simple.
Don't Leave Before You Leave	Continue to work hard and take on new responsibilities even if you plan to leave or take a break at some point.
Make Your Partner a Real Partner	Choose a partner that is willing to work toward an equal balance.

The *Lean In* Leadership Connection

Although Sheryl Sandberg would identify her approach to leadership as aligning with the principles of authentic leadership (she even references the work of Bill George like Northouse), I believe her approach through *Lean In* aligns more closely with transformational leadership. The table below shows the transformational leadership factors and provides a quote from *Lean In* as an example of how each factor is represented within the book.

THINK:
Is Sheryl Sandberg a transformational or authentic leader? Can she be both?

Transformational Leadership Factors	Related quote from <i>Lean In</i>
Idealized Influence	“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.” (Chapter 10)
Inspirational Motivation	“And I hope that you-yes,you-have the ambition to lean in to your career and run the world. Because the world needs you to change it. Women all around the world are counting on you.” (Chapter 1)
Intellectual Stimulation	“My jaw hit the floor. I had hired thousands of people over the previous decade and no one had ever said anything remotely like that...It was a killer approach. I responded, “Recruiting is my biggest problem. And, yes, you can solve it.” (Chapter 4)
Individualized Consideration	“I knew this message could be misinterpreted as my judging women for not making the same choices I have. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I believe that choice means choice for all of us.” (Chapter 1).

Authentic transformational leadership, not to be confused with the authentic leadership approach, is defined as “socialized leadership, which is concerned with the collective good” (Northouse, 2016, Chapter 9). This definition is supported by Sandberg throughout *Lean In* because her vision has nothing to do with what more female leaders can do for her, but what they can do for the world. She notes, “The laws of economics and many studies of diversity tell is that if we tapped the entire pool of human resources and talent, our collective performance would improve.

THINK:
What transformational leadership factor is most important to you when describing someone as a transformational leader?

The Heidi Howard Case Study (Chapter 3)

Sandberg points out that one of the many challenges facing female leaders relates to likeability. As success increases, likeability decreases for women only. Sandberg demonstrates the negative correlation between success and likeability by sharing the Heidi Howard study.

In 2003, researchers provided business students with a case study detailing the successes of venture capitalist Heidi Roizen. For half of the students, they changed the name Heidi to Howard. When students were polled regarding their impressions of Heidi and Howard, the results indicated an obvious gender bias. Both Heidi and Howard were respected for their competency, but Heidi was seen as less appealing. Unlike Howard, Heidi was considered a selfish and an undesirable leader.

Why does this matter? The fear of becoming unlikeable can make women question whether or not it is worth reaching for the top. What the Heidi Howard study shows is that gender bias can be unintentional. This means that if we wish to find true equality and remove or reduce women's fear of becoming unlikeable leaders, we must become aware of these unintentional biases. It can be a challenge to identify our own biases, so we need to seek feedback and assistance from others. Sheryl shared her own story of unintentional bias. She had given a talk regarding gender issues and had closed off the question period, but continued to answer questions from those with their hands raised - only men. It was a participant in the session that pointed this out to Sheryl after by indicating that she learned to keep her hand up. Sheryl completely unaware of this was grateful for the feedback because she could then correct for this in future sessions.

Critical Evaluation

Prior to reading *Lean In*, I heard that Sheryl Sandberg presented unrealistic expectations for women and that it would be impossible for regular women to do what she does. For this reason, I was initially hesitant to read the book because I did not want to end up feeling overwhelmed by her expectations for women or worse feel inadequate. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that what I had heard was wrong. *Lean In* presented a very realistic perspective on women in the working world. Although Sheryl and I come from very different educational and financial backgrounds, I found it easy to relate to both the stories she shared and leadership concepts she presented. She devoted an entire chapter to dispelling the myth that equality means women can have and do it all, which I think takes the pressure off women from all walks of life. It has been really interesting to review *Lean In* at this time in my life.

THINK:
In what ways are you influenced by traditional gender roles? How can you correct for your biases?

THINK:
Have you ever leaned back in a job? What impact do you think it has had on your career?

I am in the middle of a career transition, which involves working three jobs and completing courses towards a master's degree. Prior to reading *Lean In*, I found myself wondering if all this hard work was really worth it. The two part time jobs I love and see as key steps in building toward my future goals, but I had started to view my full time job as simply as a means to paying my bills. I had leaned way back in this career and **left before I left** a concept that is described in the table on page 1. After completing the book, I have found myself leaning in and feeling more inspired in my full time job. I have easily started to seek out new opportunities within this position and as a result I am much happier for the 35 hours a week I spend there. Transformational leadership can be described as "a process that changes and transforms people" (Northouse, 2016, Chapter 8), which is exactly what I have experienced from reading *Lean In*. Now, how can you lean in too?

Quotes To Inspire Leaders:

Recommendations

If you enjoy the Lean In concept, I recommend the following to:

Watch:

TEDWomen 2010 - Sheryl Sandberg - "Why we have too few women leaders" https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders

TEDGlobal 2012 - Amy Cuddy - "Your body language shapes who you are" https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

TEDWomen 2013 - Sheryl Sandberg - "So we leaned in...now what?" https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_so_we_leaned_in_now_what

Get Connected

Join the Lean In movement, www.facebook.com/leaninorg

Find others who are leaning in using #LeanInTogether

Use the leadership resources available on www.leanin.org



References

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.) [Kobo iPad version]. Retrieved from <http://www.kobo.com>

Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* [Kobo iPad version]. Retrieved from <http://www.kobo.com>

"...knowing that things could be worse should not stop us from trying to make them better." (Introduction)

"The ability to learn is the most important quality a leader can have." (Chapter 2)

"Real change will come when powerful women are less of an exception." (Chapter 3)

"Seeking out diverse experiences is useful preparation for leadership." (Chapter 4)

"The ability to listen is as important as the ability to speak." (Chapter 6)

"Success is making the best choices possible and accepting them." (Chapter 9)