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## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: END THE SCOURGE

Women (and men) do not need to tolerate harassment. The experience is unique to the individual experiencing it. Whereas both genders experience sexual harassment, women do so more prevalently, so this article focuses on that part of the population.

The effects of sexual harassment on targeted females are well-documented, profound, and long-lasting. Adversely affected are a woman's mental and physical health, career advancement; self-esteem often plummets; and PTSD can result. The costs to organizations are multifaceted. Legal fees can be enormous but even absent lawsuits, there are costs from lowered productivity and morale, and also attrition costs. See [Sexual Harassment Work Cost](#) for costs to organizations and recommendations for changes. For more recommendations see: [Ending Harassment Culture](#).

If a certain segment of the population gets superior business results, why would any leader denigrate, demotivate, or damage anyone who is part of this segment? Why would leaders turn their back on 47% of the brain power available to run their organizations? This is what happens when women are sexually harassed or discriminated against. Leaving aside the fact that sexual harassment and discrimination are illegal, immoral and repugnant, *they do not make business sense*.

Let's get back to business. Research has shown that:

- Having women on boards yields better investment decisions and less aggressive risk-taking, leading to better shareholder results. See [Research When Women Are on Boards Male CEOs Are Less Overconfident](#).
- Women are rated more highly on virtually all leadership competencies than men. "Women in leadership positions are perceived just as — if not more — competent as their male counterparts." See [Research Women Score Higher than Men in Most Leadership Skills](#).
- Studies from UC Davis, Credit Suisse Research Institute, Nordea and more have shown that women-led businesses have superior results. See [Proved Women Are Great for Business yet Still Being Pushed Out](#).

So why would a rational businessperson want to demotivate, dehumanize, depress, deter, and/or demoralize 47% of the workforce with the type of behavior that led to #MeToo or the type of behavior displayed by Ken Fisher recently at an investment conference? ([Ken Fisher Inflames Financial Advisors with Sexist Comments](#).) It is not logical.

Here are 5 steps leaders can take to end the scourge of sexual harassment in their organizations:

1. Call out anyone who engages in sexual harassment in any form and to any degree.
2. Ensure that consequences occur, up to and including termination and/or legal steps.
3. Ensure that there is a safe way for people to report incidents. Ensure people are encouraged to come forward if they see or feel something — even if it appears small or infrequent. See our article

from last month, [Leadership Effectiveness the Courageous Choice](#), for some suggestions about providing safe, easy, and nonthreatening places to report issues.

4. Provide training, including training on unintended consequences of one's actions — and an awareness of what types of actions those might be.
5. Ensure hiring and promotion decisions are fair and gender blind.

*Has your organization done enough to eliminate sexual harassment? If not, is the leadership aware of the extent of the problem?*