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FOR WOMEN**

Feminist leadership in practice

Introduction

Feminist leadership is about more than just running a business—it's about reshaping the way power is distributed and decisions are made. It challenges traditional hierarchies and fosters environments where collaboration, inclusion and equity thrive. For women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, this leadership style offers a powerful framework for creating impactful, sustainable businesses.

What is feminist leadership?

At its heart, feminist leadership seeks to empower others, dismantle inequalities, and promote shared decision-making. Unlike traditional leadership models, which often centre around individual authority and competition, feminist leadership focuses on community, collaboration and equity. It asks leaders to not only grow their businesses but also to contribute to a fairer, more inclusive world.

Core principles of feminist leadership

To practice feminist leadership, it's essential to embrace key principles that guide your actions and decisions:

Empowerment

Foster a culture where every team member has the opportunity to grow, contribute and lead. Empowerment doesn't mean giving up your authority but sharing it in a way that builds collective strength.

Accountability

Hold yourself and your team responsible for maintaining fairness and equity. This includes creating policies that prevent discrimination and ensuring everyone is treated with respect. Ensure there are mechanisms for feedback and give space for growth, allowing everyone to learn from mistakes and improve with grace.



Collaboration

Shift from a competitive mindset to one of collective achievement. Encourage your team to work together toward common goals and celebrate group successes.

Inclusivity

Actively challenge systemic barriers and ensure everyone—regardless of gender, ability, background or experience—has access to opportunities. Create an organisational culture that includes and values all voices at all levels.

Putting feminist leadership into practice

Start with self-reflection

Feminist leadership begins with you. Before you can build an inclusive and empowering environment, take time to examine your own values, assumptions, and areas for growth. Ask yourself: Whose voices do I prioritise? Where might my biases show up? How do I respond to feedback or share credit?

Build an inclusive team

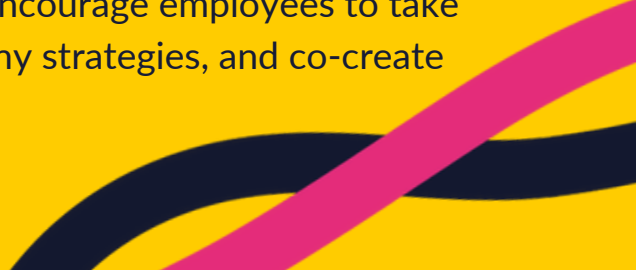
Hiring inclusively goes beyond meeting quotas—it's about creating a workplace where diversity is celebrated. Seek out individuals from different backgrounds and experiences who can bring fresh perspectives to your business. Make sure your hiring process is free from bias and provides equal opportunities for all.

Lead with transparency and fairness

A feminist leader is open and honest about how decisions are made. Whether it's allocating budgets, setting salaries or promoting staff, ensure these processes are transparent. Fairness and transparency build trust, and trust is the foundation of a strong team.

Share power, not just responsibilities

There is more impact in shared power. Empowering your team means involving them in meaningful decision-making processes. Encourage employees to take the lead on projects, provide feedback on company strategies, and co-create solutions to challenges.





Prioritise well-being

Recognise that people perform their best when they feel supported. Offer flexible working arrangements, advocate for work-life balance and ensure your workplace is free from harassment or discrimination.

Overcoming challenges in feminist leadership

In many contexts, women entrepreneurs face societal or cultural resistance to non-patriarchal leadership styles. You may encounter scepticism or pushback when trying to implement feminist principles in your business. Here's how to navigate these challenges:

Educate and advocate

Share the benefits of feminist leadership with your team and stakeholders. Explain how equity and inclusion lead to better business outcomes, including higher employee retention and better performance.


Find support networks

Connect with other feminist entrepreneurs or women's organisations for mentorship and encouragement.

Lead by example

Show, rather than tell, how feminist leadership creates positive change. As your business thrives under this model, others will see the value in adopting it.

Activity

- Reflect on your organisation: its structure, policies and culture. Where can you introduce more feminist practices?
 - Reflect on your leadership. How can you become more feminist in your approach? How can you empower others? What internal barriers do you face in being more feminist, and how can you overcome them?
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Final thoughts

Feminist leadership isn't about being perfect—it's about being intentional. By leading with empathy, fairness and collaboration, you can create a workplace where everyone thrives. As you grow your business, remember that your leadership has the power to change lives, not just for your team, but for your community as well.

Start small. Focus on hiring inclusively, making fair decisions and listening to your team. Over time, these actions will build a stronger business and a brighter future for all involved.

