
Pulse

Unleashing the feminine

Purposeful leadership masterclass

Insight Report

Over the last two years, Pulse has led a series of masterclasses around a set of leadership principles that can be deployed to help individuals, teams and organisations to be at their best.


On March 7, Pulse held their sixth masterclass 'Unleashing the Feminine'. With attendees from different backgrounds and industries, the session kick-fired discussion on how and why feminine qualities are critical to addressing issues from climate change to social exclusion.

Co-hosted by Simon Milton from Pulse and Karen Downes from The Flourish Initiative the workshop ignited a discussion on how we can move away from the old-world patriarchal mind-set.

We have picked out six major insights but in reality the event is part of a long journey for many in the audience covering multiple complex issues.

The insights

- Exploring the feminine provides a powerful lens to understand the largely masculine world we live in - and this understanding helps to create a useful insight into what needs to change. Since organisations have historically based themselves on masculine behaviours it's not surprising people can struggle to be and feel wholly present.
- There was a clear belief that both the masculine and feminine aspects of the 12 Purposeful Leadership Principles are equally important in addressing the issues we face. For example, our goal-driven world (masculine) needs to pay equal attention to the health of the system/ community/team (feminine).
- Talking about the feminine and masculine qualities is only useful if it helps us become better versions of what we are. For example, an understanding that there are many different feminine and masculine qualities of courage or humility within us is important.

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- How useful is it to look at the idea of how qualities are specifically masculine or feminine when we all have both capacities? Does defining them as masculine and feminine reinforce prejudice and hold back our ability to explore and grow?
 - We are largely shaped and limited by our own life stories and often by our inability to be open when exploring the different and sometimes subtle qualities we need as leaders.
 - The event was really much more about ‘awakening’ rather than ‘unleashing’ the feminine and masculine qualities which we all have and are capable of living. Exploring these different qualities will help build greater awareness and belief in our own capability to effectively lead and engage others.

A tool to help you dial up your Masculine and Feminine

During the masterclass, we explored the 12 Purposeful Leadership Principles and examples of their feminine and masculine qualities.

Our recommendation is to choose three or four principles which you believe are critical to the success of an initiative you are currently working on.

In particular, pay attention to the principles that you or your team/organisation struggle with. There is a good chance that paying attention to these principles will help you and your team gain greater traction and impact.

Consider the different feminine and masculine qualities which are useful at different times. In any piece of work, both the masculine and feminine qualities will be critical to success.

Finally, spend time stepping back and reflecting on your own behaviour and what gets in the way of you being at your best.

12 Purposeful Leadership Principles

Over the last 15 years Pulse has developed a set of principles to help all leaders, from the receptionist to the founder, engage and communicate more effectively.

Serve others

Purposeful brands exist to serve others. They remain mindful of their customers, colleagues, investors, community and the world they serve at all times. A purposeful brand or organisation stands out because it stands for something.

Journey towards a unifying vision

A purposeful brand starts with a clear unifying vision. Without a mental picture of the world you are trying to create how can people know what to do or whether they want to support it?

Courage

Purposeful brands require the courage to make difficult decisions and to challenge the status quo on a regular basis. It takes courage to create change and even more to admit when you are wrong.

Humility

A purposeful brand never takes itself too seriously. Making a profit and doing good can coexist but it's easier to do when we understand our weaknesses and have the empathy to build deeper and more authentic relationships.

Building coalitions

Purposeful branding is about developing the relationships and coalitions you need to support the vision you are trying to create. Building the momentum to create change can only come with the support of others.

Uncovering

A purposeful leader spends time listening and understanding. Deep and meaningful insight comes from both looking beyond your own beliefs and exploring the possibilities.

It starts with the individual

We are all different. It is being mindful of these differences that builds organisations which can sustain success. A purposeful organisation or brand should provide the framework for the individual to thrive. Differences should be recognised, celebrated and utilised.

Small things make a difference

We can get hung up on big ideas or idealistic visions. In reality, it's the accumulation of lots of small things that really makes a difference. The way we respond to somebody in a lift or to an email is critical to building trust. It demonstrates care and authenticity.

Substance

Being purposeful is about getting to the truth at the centre of yourself and your organisation. It's about giving life to the things that make you passionate, drive you and allow you to be at your best.

Work iteratively

Purposeful organisations require a sensitivity to the existing culture and ways of operating. A step-by-step approach is a far easier way to drive change than just introducing something new. People have the opportunity to get involved and to be a part of the change.

Ownership

A purposeful brand requires all leaders and functions to step up and manage reputation. It is not just the role of any one department. A high-performing culture requires everybody to be on board and take responsibility for their actions.

Playful

You have to like what it is you are doing. We are at our best when happy. It helps you through the hard times, and attracts others to your cause. If what you do is joyless then people switch off.

Masculine

Courage

Feminine



Masculine courage often comes from a personal appetite to take action, sometimes considered to be challenging or risky. The masculine quality is about living by example with a willingness to take the difficult decisions.

Feminine courage might be shown in challenging situations where a willingness to show vulnerability is a strength. Courage is driven by being in service to the overall system or community and is often not seen. It is less about personal gain but more about staying committed to what is best for others.

Brave
Risk-taking
Ambitious

Selflessness
Noble
Show vulnerability

Masculine

Humility

Feminine



Masculine humility can include an openness and willingness to expressing one's own weakness. There is often an appetite for self-discovery in order to improve.

Feminine humility comes from an inner compassion and focus on connecting and supporting others. This feminine compassion refuses to be preoccupied with itself.

Openness
Honesty
Self-improvement

Listening
Compassion
Selflessness

Masculine

It starts with the individual

Feminine



The masculine attitude is often focused on the self and action. A belief that one's personal role and commitment is critical to success. This is about accepting the consequences of one's actions.

The feminine attitude is more about how to take action rather than focusing on the action itself. Paying attention to one's intuition about what is right and how to support others is key. This means being compassionate to others' needs.

Personal commitment
Judge me by what I do
Focus on the self

Personal reliance
Understanding of oneself
Self-development

Masculine

Small things make a difference

Feminine



The masculine approach might include undertaking small things as part of a clear objective and plan. There is often a desire to show others that something has been done in support of the strategy. This is about having an action mindset.

Small feminine actions are often less visible and are about supporting and being in service to others. This could be about being a good listener or about being compassionate to the needs of others. The small things often enable others to thrive. These actions, whilst less visible, are equally impactful.

Strategic
Analytical
Quantitative

Intuitive
System-level actions
Enabling

Masculine

Ownership

Feminine



Personal ownership recognises the importance of the self and a level of commitment and belief. Masculine ownership might be about defining, controlling and driving through the necessary change and being accountable for one's own actions.

Personal ownership is based on an intuition to nurture, support and be in service to the team or organisation. Feminine ownership might be based less on rational reasoning but more on acting in the moment on what feels right.

Deduction
Boldness
Passion

Authenticity
Serving others
Nurturing

Masculine

Playful

Feminine



Masculine playfulness is often about a willingness to be self-deprecating and ways to build meaningful relationships. It's often about making light of the situation and softening the difficulty.

Feminine playfulness might be more about feeling the humour in the moment and reacting to what emerges. Playfulness focuses on ensuring that all feel included.

Intentional
Making light
Softness

Spontaneous
Heart-felt
Joyful

Masculine

Serve others

Feminine



Masculine leadership might lead from the front and by example. (There is often a need to be seen to be doing good.) Serving others is about a sense of responsibility and duty.

Serving others comes from a place of genuine care for others. Feminine leadership might concentrate on nurturing others to lead and be at their best. The quality of leadership is light, subtle and sometimes invisible but always leaves an indelible mark.

Caring
Bold
Considered

Nurturing
Loyalty
Focus on others

Masculine

Journey towards a unifying vision

Feminine



A masculine approach might be to set measured goals to turn an inspiring vision into a reality. It's a step-by-step process that is achieved through a ruthless focus on practical and measured steps. Masculine leadership inspires through strength of character and creating a shared belief in success.

A feminine approach might be a general focus on building a better world for others. The journey can be long and the goal is not always known at the start. Feminine qualities helps to overcome obstacles and setbacks and the focus is often on how to get there.

Vision-setting
Leading
Pragmatic

Longer term
Perseverance
Self-sacrifice

Masculine

Building Coalitions

Feminine



Purposeful leaders think about those who are needed to make something happen. A masculine approach might be highly energetic, inspiring others to join in and feel welcomed. The focus is very much on the outcome.

A feminine approach might be to put others first and recognise that little is done working in isolation. Building coalitions is both natural and intuitive. Attention is put on building the coalition rather than the output or outcome.

Inclusive
Strategic
Goal-driven

Community focus
Collaborative
Building relationships

Masculine

Uncovering

Feminine

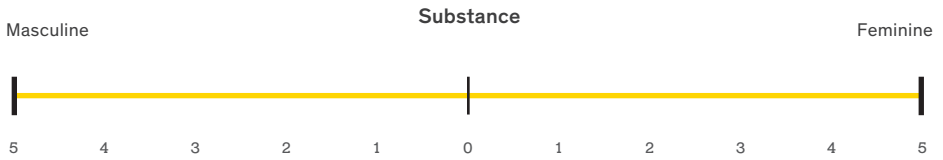


Masculine uncovering may be the ability to question and challenge to help achieve a task. There is an understanding that initial perceptions can be wrong and unhelpful. There is rigour and clear purpose behind the uncovering.

Feminine uncovering pays attention to the unsaid or the felt sense of what is happening. The work is about listening and allowing the answer to emerge. The feminine relies on the intuition to see what is happening and why it is happening.

Analytical
Scrutinising
Inquisitive

Intuitive
Listening
Empathetic



Masculine substance pays attention to personal desires and beliefs. There is an ability to remain focused, single-minded and driven to succeed.

Feminine substance lets go of ego. The focus is on love, kindness and being in service to others. There's an attention to truth, authenticity and what might block progress.

Authenticity
Energetic
Passionate

Humility
Loving
Kindness



The masculine approach understands the importance of emergence, enquiry and allowing space for new thinking. In a world of continual change and complexity there is little time for fixed thinking. The ultimate goal drives the process.

The feminine approach centres on deep listening, acceptance of others' differences and the importance of the collective. An intuitive understanding about the way humans operate within systems helps build understanding of where and when it is best to act iteratively.

Openness
In the moment
Goal-focused

Listening
Strategic
Patience



For further information:
www.pulsebrands.com
www.theflourishinitiative.com