

BY CHRISTINE SWANSON

INSPIRE National Chair



inspire

connecting women in advice

Inspire is a community that attracts and empowers more women to take on leadership roles within the financial advice profession.



## Changing Perceptions

*Being asked to take on the role of National Chair for Inspire is an absolute privilege, having the opportunity to lead this exceptionally talented team of ladies is quite a humbling honour and one which I don't take on lightly.*

Personally, I'm passionate about creating initiatives and programs that will change how women perceive themselves, helping more women increase self-esteem and confidence, and enabling them to step into more leadership roles.

Scientists agree that half of our personality comes from our gene pool and the other half from life experiences. For some people the roots of believing the negative stuff as adults may be with parents who do not demonstrate faith in a child's ability.

There is a part of our brain that's assigned to negative thinking, the worrywart part of the brain is the anterior cingulate cortex, in women it's actually larger and more influential, this is one of the reasons why women think that they are too fat, not pretty enough, not good enough to go for that promotion etc. and lack confidence and self-esteem. The good news is that our brains can be retrained to break the negative cycle.

Gender diversity is on the strategic agenda of many industries and companies, both private and government. Most have agendas to increase the number of females in leadership roles. It's not surprising as statistically women are in fact more likely, than their male counterparts, to have relevant post-graduate qualifications. This is despite their tendency to undervalue their own skills and to be less forthcoming in pursuing leadership positions.

Economically, it is a worthwhile investment, according to Goldman Sachs, narrowing the gap between male and female employment rates would have huge implications for the global economy – in Australia it would boost our GDP by 11%.

The current gender bias means that women are employed in roles where their productivity is not maximised. If the gender productivity gap was minimised, by increasing the number of women in leadership positions, the level of economic activity in Australia could be boosted by 20%.

Economic incentives such as these would have flow-on effects for the wider society as well; it would assist in addressing the problem of pension sustainability, thereby reducing the dependency ratio; lifting household savings rates and increasing tax received by the government.

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Believing the good stuff and breaking negative thought cycles in women, instilling more women with confidence and self-esteem is I believe at the core of helping women step up and lean in. These are amongst some of the very real reasons why I believe that it's vitally important for the AFA to lead the way with new initiatives and incentives to encourage women to join the advice arena.

Inspire was not created to be a networking group or to hold women's only events. I truly believe that there is a real fundamental difference between networking and actually connecting so we genuinely encourage our male counterparts to join the Inspire community and to join the conversation.

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My team of exceptionally talented, beautiful women are very excited about the next chapter of Inspire, creating further awareness, initiatives and programmes to drive us into the future of advice and to encourage more women to achieve their full potential. I am honoured to have been chosen to lead Inspire into a new era.

*As a great author once said 'Women need to be encouraged to lean into their careers, we also need to encourage men to be more ambitious in their homes, only then will we have true equality.'*  
Sheryl Sandberg.