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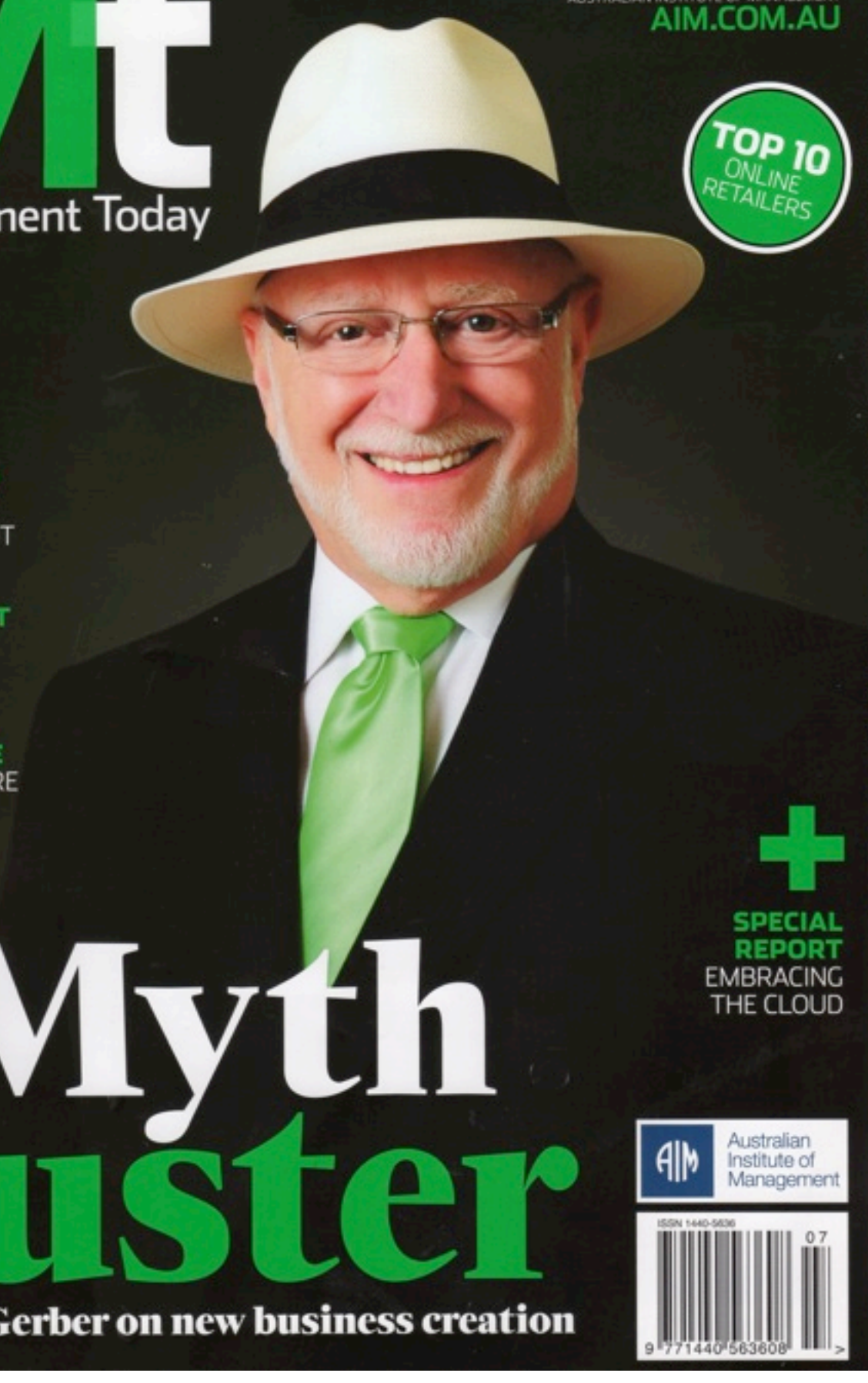
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STEPPING UP
WHEN WOMEN
ARE SHY ABOUT
LEADERSHIP

**HARASSMENT
CLAIMS**
CONTAINING
THE DAMAGE

SAUL ESLAKE
WHY WE IGNORE
ECONOMIC
POSITIVES



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Myth buster

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 Australian
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Management





Taking the next step

Women in business need to recognise their own talents to climb the corporate ladder; being too modest is not a good career move.
By **Hannah Flannery**

Three years ago only 5 per cent of new directors appointed to the boards of ASX 200 companies were women, a statistic that has improved to 27 per cent this year in the wake of the publication of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency census in 2010.

Gender equality on boards will be a key issue at the annual Women, Management and Work Conference, to be held in Sydney this month. According to conference director and CEO of The Morawska Group, Jenny Morawska, women still represent an under-used talent pool in Australia.

"Women need to be empowered to acknowledge their capacity to be great leaders."

Morawska says the conference (presented by Macquarie University)

will be an excellent opportunity for women of all ages to be inspired by other women.

WHY DO SOME WOMEN FAIL TO STEP UP?

Suzanne Mercier, managing director of Liberate Leadership, will address the conference on why many talented women won't "step up".

Mercier's research into what is known as the Imposter Syndrome helps aspiring leaders to understand their own mindset and how mindset can impact on leadership effectiveness.

The Imposter Syndrome has been identified in professionals who are successful, but perpetually concerned about failure. Many of these individuals attribute their success to good luck.

While psychologists in Atlanta first

developed the theory during the 1970s, Mercier is investigating the effect the syndrome has in business. Individuals who don't recognise their own talents don't tend to claim responsibility for their successes, she says.

"This can even happen to particularly talented people."

Mercier says the syndrome impacts men as it does women, but tends to play out differently.

"Many women just don't feel good enough and don't think they measure up, which undermines their confidence and their ability to step up," she says.

"For aspiring leaders to be confident in their ability, they need to recognise their own strengths."

"It is not about suddenly being brash and arrogant, but instead acknowledging skills and knowing that is OK."

**SUZANNE
MERCIER**Managing director of
Liberate Leadership**SUZY
GREEN**Co-founder of the
Positive Psychology
Institute**JENNY
MORAWSKA**Former CEO
of Research
Infrastructure Support
Services Limited**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

Co-founder of the Positive Psychology Institute Suzy Green says for women to be strong leaders, it is essential they identify their strengths.

"The greatest challenge is to constantly use those strengths and align them with goals," she says.

Making explicit links to goals and working out how to use strengths to pursue those goals is crucial, but Green says aspiring leaders are often guilty of identifying modesty as their greatest strength.

"Many women are not comfortable talking about what they do and as a result they hold themselves back," Green says.

"Having a vocabulary to acknowledge strengths is really important and leaders and aspiring leaders have the capacity to be the change agent and start strength spotting."

Green says identifying signature strengths relies heavily on authenticity: If people are not true to themselves and fail to act on their emotions, needs, wants, preferences and personal beliefs, then the ability to build on personal strengths is compromised.

"It's a matter of knowing yourself, being comfortable in yourself and being able to express that to the world," Green says.

"Authenticity is not only a precursor

to wellbeing and strong leadership, it is absolutely core."

Morawska, who formerly worked as the CEO of Research Infrastructure Support Services Ltd, was deputy secretary of two commonwealth departments, a director at Ernst and Young and an executive director at Price Waterhouse, is familiar with being the

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Suzanne Mercier, MD of Liberate Leadership

only woman around the board table.

"I was nearly always the only woman in my environment," she says.

Morawska says the conference will address leadership obstacles, positive psychology, career development, management trends, diversity issues and the value of mentoring and coaching.

"The opportunity to meet like-minded women is particularly valuable and although there will be women from a range of working environments, many will find they are dealing with similar issues," she says.

As a single mum, Morawska admits her personal success has required a juggling act.


"If you don't have a way of

maintaining a balance, then none of it is sustainable. You must find your own way to maintain balance, or you can't value-add to your organisation, nor can you achieve your personal goals," she says.

Morawska says the greatest lesson she has learnt during her career is that doing our best is all we can ask of ourselves.

"If you try hard, acquire the skills you need and are passionate about what you do, then you are going to do a good job. Stop beating yourself up. You did the best you could at the time," she says.

She says the important thing is the lessons you take from challenging experiences.

Macquarie University's annual Women, Management and Work Conference (www.mm.mq.edu.au/women_management_work_conference) will be held in Sydney on July 12-13. 

AIM NSW/ACT's women in leadership debate will be held later this month. The debate "Women: Natural Born Leaders?" will feature a number of guest speakers, including Mt columnist Jane Caro.

Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre Grand Hall
Friday, July 20, 11.30am-2pm
Canberra National Convention Centre Grand Hall
Friday, July 27, 11.30am-2pm

**GETTING ON BOARD****What is the ratio of male to female graduates?**

- While the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows a consistent majority of female university graduates over the past decade in Australia, that majority is yet to reflect itself in top jobs.
- Between 2002 and 2011 in the 25-29 age group, the proportion of women with a bachelor degree or above rose from 29 per cent to 41 per cent and from 25 per cent to 40 per cent in the 30-34 age group.
- For men in the 25-29 and 30-34 age groups, the rise was from 22 per cent to 30 per cent and from 23 per cent to 30 per cent respectively over the nine-year period.

Will we achieve gender balance in leadership?

While statistics indicate some improvement in the gender equality of senior management in Australia, meaningful movement is slow.

In 2010, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) released census data suggesting 46 per cent of ASX 200 companies have at least one female board director.

In the US, the comparable figure is 87.7 per cent, in South Africa 78.5 per cent, in Canada 58.3 per cent, in New Zealand 40 per cent and the UK 75 per cent.

Helen Conway, director of EOWA, says since the release of the agency's 2010

census results, there has been a renewed enthusiasm for gender equality in the workplace.

"Most visible are the changes at board level in the ASX top 200 companies," she says.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors tracks appointments to boards of these companies and the most recent data shows that among the ASX 200, almost one-third of appointees so far this year have been female.

This year, EOWA will again conduct its census of women in leadership. It will extend the pool to the ASX top 500 companies. Outcomes of the 2012 census will be published in November.