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SINGLE, PROFESSIONAL EDUCATED WOMEN (SPEWS)

SNAGS (sensitive new age guys) have received a lot of attention. Here is another set of initials: SPEWS: single, professional educated women. These young women (in their 20s and 30s) represent both a new challenge to male managers and a new set of opportunities for businesses.

SPEWS are the direct success of the increased attention that girls have received at school in recent years. They now perform better than boys at school and women do better in gaining entry into higher education and graduating from it. For example, women now make up the majority of general practitioners graduating from Australian medical schools.

Their attitude to life is different from that of their mothers. They know the problems that their mothers may have had in marriage, including having to suspend or terminate their own careers on marriage or parenthood. They want the freedom of having their own careers – and schools and the human rights movement have encouraged their aspirations.

Additionally, marriage is no longer the rescue route for women. They know they will not die if they do not get a husband and they will not become a tragic spinster figure of classical English literature. Being single is fun and financially rewarding. These are the first generation of women to be better educated than their male peers. They may have better employment opportunities than the males and so there could be domestic tensions if they were married and earn more than their partners.

They may later have children – they are not ruling out that option – but they are not rushing into it. Having a baby is the biggest economic decision a woman can make. One can tell the wealth of a baby from the age of the mother. Young mothers (with few assets) have financially “poor” babies, while older mothers (having had careers and accumulated some assets) have “wealthy” babies.

Society virtually conspires to encourage educated women to delay or avoid parenthood because of the chances that women will be paying off higher education expenses during their 20s. They are then faced with the costs of child care and the foregoing of income during the time of caring for the baby. (Ideally their partners would be taking time off for parenting but that is still unlikely).

From a management point of view, SPEWS offer four challenges. First, they are working because they have serious career aspirations. They not just marking time until “Mr Right” comes along (they may not even be looking for him).

Second, if they do not like the company they will leave. They have the knowledge and self-confidence to quit and go elsewhere. Their parents may well have struggled on in a company for fear of leaving the company's comfortable (if oppressive) routine. But their daughters have a greater sense of initiative and willingness to give something else a go.

Third, modern business practices favour women. The old style of company with several layers of staff, with a "god" CEO delivering orders to the minions, is now going. That style fitted masculine values of order, leadership and strict organization. But the modern company is based less on hierarchy and more on networks; less on status and more on teamwork; less on instructions and more on co-operation and negotiation; less on fixed structures and more on flexibility and multi-tasking. These are the values that are found more naturally in women. Many women flourish in these new-style companies

Finally, some young women with initiative are creating their own companies. They may have grown tired of the corporate rat race and are striking out on their own. If your company is going into strategic alliances, it might well be with ones headed by female CEOs.

SPEWS also provide many new business opportunities. First, SPEWS have an appetite for learning (not least for finance) and so they want educational courses. Second, SPEWS are "street people" in the sense that make great use of the services that are provided by the shops in their streets, such as dry-cleaning, home-cleaning, gyms and personal trainers. The commercial supply of domestic services is becoming a growth industry.

Third, they are also purchasing or renting inner-city apartments and so are contributing to the lifestyle revivals going on in the inner capital cities. These inner city areas used to be fairly quiet after 6 PM on weekdays and throughout weekends. But now there is a flourishing market for coffee shops and restaurants. Among the innovations are the bookstores combined with coffee shops – a learned place to socialize and more upmarket than smoky singles bars.

To conclude, SPEWS represent a new social movement. They are not just a passing fad.

For hundreds, if not thousands, of years, the world has run on a very limited source of brain power: white, male, middle class brains. The global human rights revolution has meant that, for the first time in history, there is an opportunity for all people - black and white, female and male – to make the most of their education. If we assume that brain power spread at the same rate across races and genders, then we are in the process of liberating the brain power of six billion people. All this brain power can transform the planet as we know it.

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