GENDER INEQUALITY SPEECH

FOR

ELVIS CROSS

Hello everyone. The word “I” is gender neutral yet we do not find this neutrality and equity in the workplace. Gloria Steinem has said, “Nothing changes the gender equation more significantly than women’s economic freedom.” It is time to discuss gender inequality in the workplace. Whether or not any of us think it has affected us personally, believe me, it has. If you are a woman or have mothers, sisters, daughters, or friends that have been or are currently working… and I am **SURE** you have, they have been affected by this and in turn, so have you. It may have been more of a silent issue in the past. You may have discussed this in private, or complained about it to colleagues, but the time has come to have an open discussion and to do what is necessary as a community to effect change.

Let’s imagine that you have a daughter and she has just graduated from college and has gone on job interviews. You eagerly wait for her to come home and share her adventures in job hunting. After all, we can all use positive information. She walks through the door looking frustrated and dejected. She tells you the good news is that a job has been offered. She mentions the salary and you console her by reminding her it is an entry-level position. She then tells you a young man from the same university with comparable experience-which is none… with a similar skill set and education, has been offered a position for the same job…. for $5,000 a year more than the offer she received. Before you rationalize that this is a hypothetical example, I would like to give you some information:

According to a document released by the Australian Government just a few months ago (in August 2015), entitled Gender Workplace Statistics at a Glance, we learn:

* Women constitute 69.0% of all part-time employees, 35.8% of all full-time employees and 54.8% of all casual employees.
* Among non-public sector organizations with100 or more employees, the gender pay gap for full-time annualized base salary is 19.9%, and for full-time annualized total remuneration is 24.7%.
* Women hold 12.0% of chair positions, 23.7% of directorships, as well as represent 17.3% of CEOs and 26.1% of key management personnel in Agency reporting organizations.

It’s time to stop complaining about what’s wrong. It’s time to take a stand in insuring that EVERYONE is equal in the workplace and in life. It is no longer acceptable for men to ignore the issue by reinforcing outdated and inaccurate stereotypes and it is no longer acceptable for women to feel that they cannot share an equal voice in advocating for themselves. It’s time for men to stop feeling threatened by female bosses. If they are equally capable, responsible, and committed to the success of the company, there is NO ISSUE as to why she is there. It is time to stop reinforcing the concept that women are more emotional than men in the workplace, or that men have more of an implicit “camaraderie” than women have. Women bring so much to the table. There can be a greater sense of nurturing, viewing the company and the team as an entire functioning unit, and there can be an opportunity for a greater sense of intuition to be used for the good of the company as a whole.

There are many reasons to support gender equality and the day must come when this is no longer even a discussion, but since it is clearly still an issue and point of divisiveness, keep this in mind:

* Gender equality in the workplace has the ability to attract top tier talent. An organization is only as good and effective as its workforce. Equal pay for equal work promotes greater harmony and teambuilding.
* The World Economic Forum has found a strong correlation between empowering women and its inherent benefits: enhanced productivity and economic growth, more efficient use of the workforce, less waste, and increased overall strength of human resources.
* The Grattan Institute has also brought up the point that promoting gender equality in the workplace has the potential have a great and positive impact on our country’s bottom line. They argue that by increasing female workforce participation by 6% there is the potential to add $25 billion per year to the Australian economy.

Former U.S. Astronaut and current Director of the Johnson Space Center, Ellen Ochoa, reminds us, “What everyone in the astronaut corps shares in common is not gender or ethnic background but motivation, perseverance, and desire- the desire to participate in a voyage of discovery.” Participation in life and in the workforce is no different. We are all in this together and must demonstrate a mutual respect and regard for talent, contribution, effort and compensation. I believe this is non-negotiable. It is time for gender equality. Thank you!