



SEARCH

Is the workplace ready to embrace more 'feminine' interests?

[NICOLE MADIGAN \(HTTPS://WOMENSAGENDA.COM.AU/AUTHOR/NICOLE-MADIGAN/\)](https://womensagenda.com.au/author/nicole-madigan/) - OCTOBER 15, 2012

I admit it. Following a day of words, deadlines, emails, phone calls, children, and general brain overload, I welcome 30 minutes of superficial story lines taking place in the inconsequential land of make-believe. Sometimes, that means watching *The Bold and The Beautiful*.

This sad reality doesn't alter the fact that I'm a tertiary educated professional woman. My favourite pastime is writing, followed closely by reading. I'm up to date with news and current affairs, enjoy challenging conversation and am comfortable in a corporate environment.

But we all need an escape, albeit brief, from the seriousness of our intellectual and professional lives.

Some women escape with a good fashion fix, others a dose of reality TV or a trip to the nail salon. For many men (and some women), it's sport. None of this is representative of intellect, so why do we, as women, feel the need to conceal these light-hearted interests?

A little indulgence (no matter how superficial) and intellectuality don't have to be mutually exclusive.

While my example is tongue in cheek, it represents an attitude that's quite real, on a wider scale, and in particular within the workplace.

As women have strived to break the glass ceiling, achieve equality and prove our worth in the corporate world, we've often shunned our femininity, deeming typically female characteristics and interests as somehow inferior.

Almost as if being more masculine meant perceived superiority resulting in an increased level of respect. While femininity might be expected in particular industries, for those in pursuit of a credible executive career or corporate leadership role, it was all about manning up and proving intellect.

Men and women are equal. But we're also different. And that's ok.

In any case, regardless of gender, a little bit of low-brow doesn't take away from the high-brow.

But are things beginning to take a shift in a feminine direction? Are female executives beginning to embrace their femininity, recognising that leaders can be varied and layered without the need to be pigeonholed into a one-size-fits-all corporate box.

Finance Executive Cheryl Lin thinks so. With a healthy interest in fashion and style, she runs [business fashion blog](http://www.businessChic.com.au) (<http://www.businessChic.com.au>) in addition to enjoying a successful career in finance.

"What's important is showing that you know your stuff, that's an important trait for the workplace," she says.

"There's increasing recognition that we have varied interests – it's about light and shade and not pigeonholing yourself as someone who only talks about fashion.

"If I was talking to someone who said they watched *Q&A* but was only ever able to discuss the issues superficially or didn't really grasp the discussion, I'd think they were less credible than someone who geeked out on *Beauty & the Geek* and knew all the random facts, relationships between contestants and sub-storylines."

Cheryl says these days, rather than feeling pressure to be less feminine, she feels pressure to actively demonstrate her competence and intelligence. Which is something everyone pursuing a corporate career feels compelled to do.

"Everything else is window-dressing."

What do you think? Is it ok to embrace your indulgences in the office?

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