



**Does gender play a role  
in product management?**





# A bit about me

Amanda Ralph

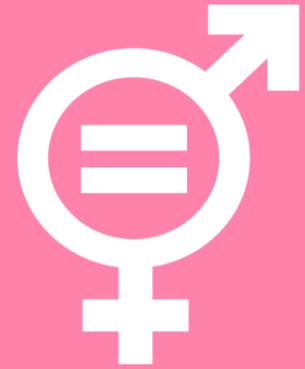
Product Management 'evangelist', mentor and  
*that product chick*

@thatproductchick 

[www.thatproductchick.com](http://www.thatproductchick.com)

au.pinterest.com/thatproductchick/ 





So why talk about gender?

**#prodmgmtwomen #thatproductchick**



# In numbers too big to ignore

- Can we really afford to ignore 50% of the population?
- Women control and **influence household purchasing decisions**. Gender diversity brings new perspectives into your product strategy and design considerations
- Diverse teams (both Board, Executive and general) are more innovative, resulting in **better products, better business performance** and a strategic and **competitive advantage** in market
- Failure to consider gender in product design can also lead to very real omissions (and associated failures and costs) in product efficacy

[Gendered Innovations Stanford University](#)

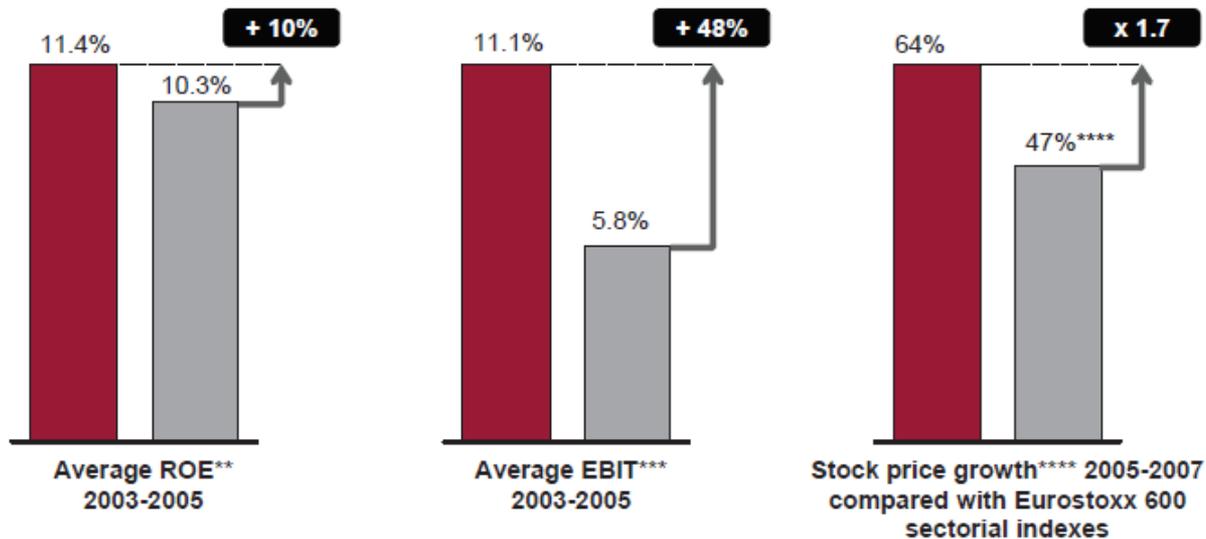


# Why women matter

Companies with a higher proportion of women in their top management have better financial performance

Economic performance of the companies with most gender-diverse management teams compared with their industry average

■ Companies with most gender-diverse management teams\*  
■ Industry average



\* 89 companies, identified with the scoring system developed by Amazon Euro Fund

\*\* 87 companies, data not available for two companies

\*\*\* 73 companies, financial sector not included

\*\*\*\* Of the 89 most gender-diverse companies, 44 have a market capitalization greater than 2 billion euros

Source: Amazon Eurofund database; Amadeus; Research Insight; Datastream; Bloomberg; McKinsey





Are the known benefits of gender diversity reflected in the world of product?



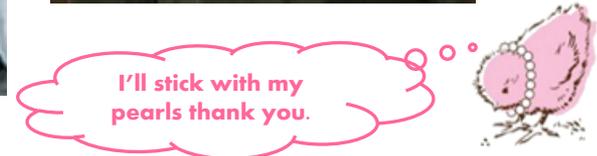
# OVERT



You could be forgiven for thinking that the role of product manager is an exclusively **male** affair



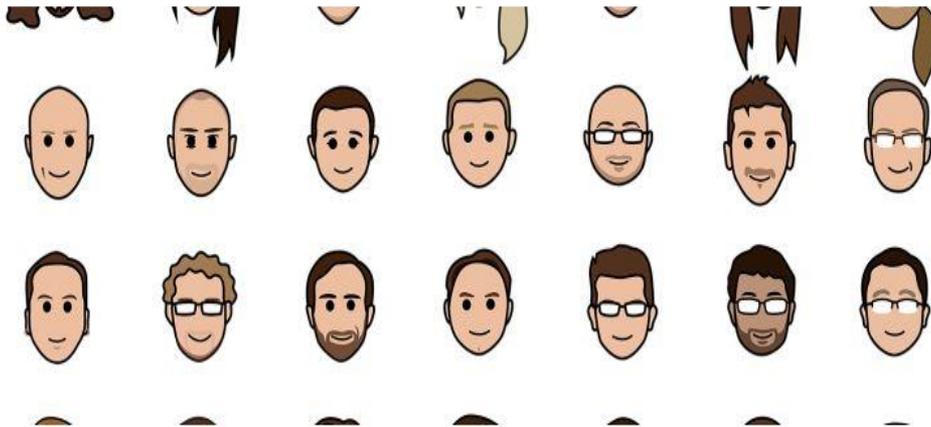
# Apparently to be a product manager you need to wear a tie (or at least know HTML)



# Have a good amount of facial hair

## How To Be A Better Product Manager: A product manager's guide to shipping happiness

Posted JANUARY 6, 2015 by CHRIS HOOGEWERFF



## INSIDE THE MIND OF A PRODUCT MANAGER

### COMMUNICATION 40%

**Conductor** - Must keep the entire team on track  
**Motivational Speaker** - Must convince & motivate team to work together on one vision  
**Diplomat** - Negotiate & coordinate with different departments for a product release  
**Smooth Talker** - Tactfully communicate progress to higher ups, can turn a roadblock into an insight or even an opportunity

### DESIGN 20%

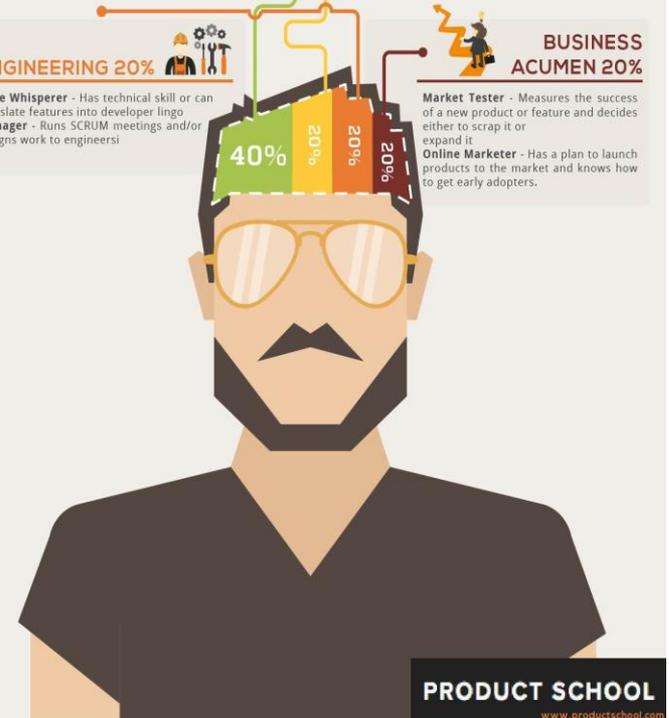
**User Advocate** - Understands what motivates certain actions of the users.  
**Sketch Artist** - Can take his/her vision and creates an accurate mockup

### ENGINEERING 20%

**Code Whisperer** - Has technical skill or can translate features into developer lingo  
**Manager** - Runs SCRUM meetings and/or assigns work to engineers

### BUSINESS ACUMEN 20%

**Market Tester** - Measures the success of a new product or feature and decides either to scrap it or expand it  
**Online Marketer** - Has a plan to launch products to the market and knows how to get early adopters.



PRODUCT SCHOOL

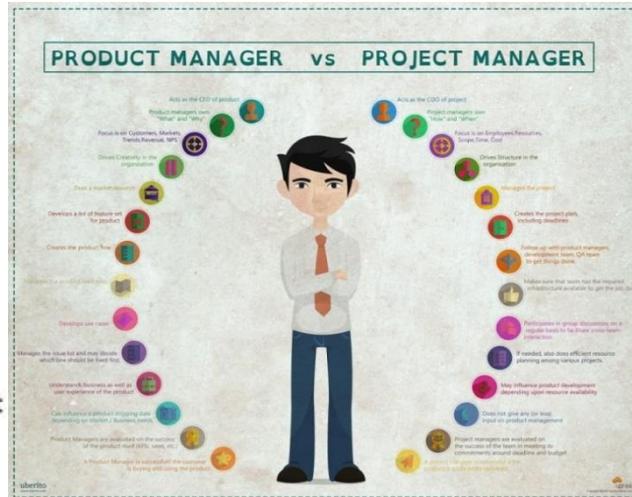
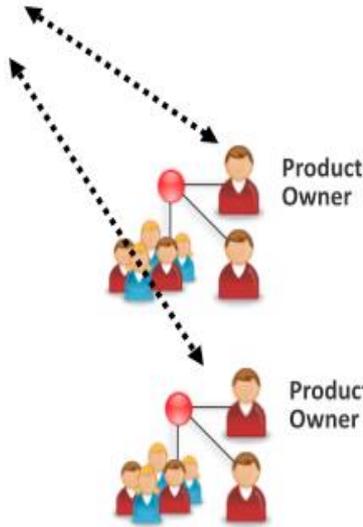
[www.productschool.com](http://www.productschool.com)



# Being a **cartoon** guy seems to help



Product Manager



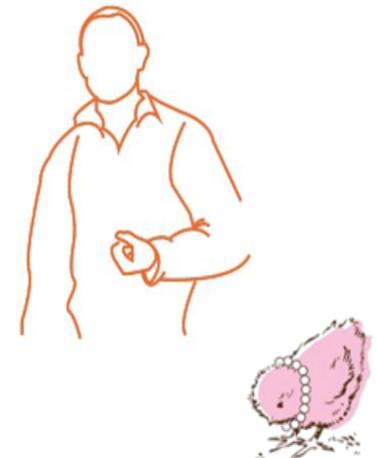
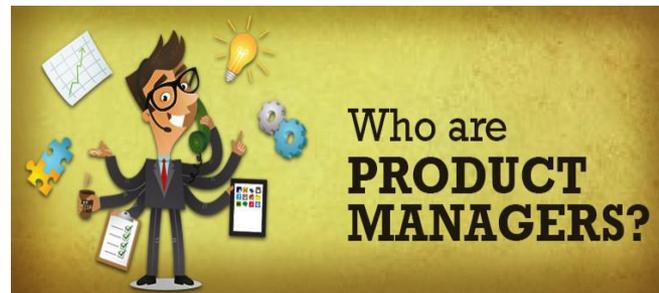
## Roles of Product Manager



- The role of Product Manager involves managing in-life product performance: sales, margin, and churn, conducting extensive numerical analysis using company data.
- Identifying and presenting innovative and creative product solutions.
- Project management of all product integration/launches/changes throughout implementation.
- Identifying the business and operational requirements based upon the business requirements & objectives of each product.
- Displaying a high level of critical thinking in cross-functional process analysis and problem resolution for new and existing products.
- Responsible for reviewing product data to ensure that the field force is kept up to date on new developments regarding the companies or competitors products.

## Product Manager

- ❖ CEO of Product or Product Line
- ❖ Works with multiple corporate departments
  - Sales – Marketing – Engineering – Finance
- ❖ Understands market dynamics
  - Works with all market influencers
- ❖ Understands customers and their needs



# ...even cats seem to get greater representation

← BACK TO "CHECK MEOWT"

## Tending Gardens & Herding Cats: Maintaining a Healthy Rapport with Your Development Teams

November 4, 2014 by [The Clever PM](#) – [Leave a Comment](#)



## Product Management Course!

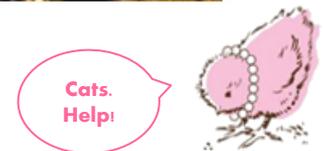
\$850.00

ADD TO CART

← Share

## The Key to Success... is Product Management?

0 Jan. 31 (2 years ago) By Alan Ying Blog Share: Twitter | Facebook | Google+



**So how does product management  
stack up in terms of the numbers?**



# 63% male

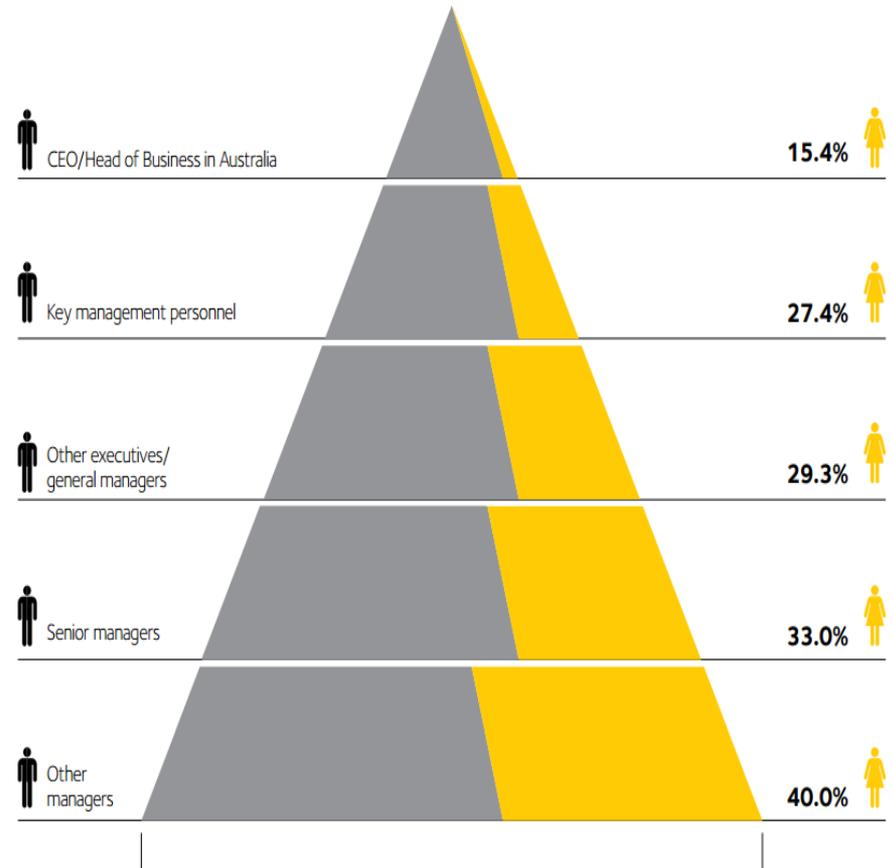
The 2016 *Pragmatic Marketing Survey* found that **63%** of product managers are male. This increased to **79%** among more senior PMs, those earning above \$200k.



# The survey supports more general findings in Australia

The higher up the organisational hierarchy, the more pronounced the inequality of gender representation.

Chart 1: Proportion of women by management category in 2014-15



Female managers overall 36.5%



“As women move up the corporate ladder they are increasingly isolated because there are fewer and fewer women the more senior they go,”

[www.moneymanagement.com.au/expert-analysis/editorial/women-finance-breaking-down-barriers-and-stereotypes](http://www.moneymanagement.com.au/expert-analysis/editorial/women-finance-breaking-down-barriers-and-stereotypes)



Looks like a  
scene out of  
*Mad Men*.



# COVERT



Many aspects of product management  
are **covertly male**



Women product managers need to overcome implicit and **unconscious bias**



# Women's leadership is evaluated differently to men's

abrasive too assertive

ability to execute confident self-starter

pushy bossy outspoken

shows initiative problem solver

You need to let others shine

aggressive delivery nailed it smart

[performance review gender bias](#)



The evaluating manager's gender **isn't** a factor.



# Performance Feedback – not the same for women and men



[performance review gender bias](#)

## Loaded Language?

A study of performance reviews found that, compared with men, women receive:

**2.5 TIMES**

as much feedback about having an aggressive communication style

**2.4 TIMES**

as many references to team accomplishments

**ABOUT HALF**

as many references to their having vision

**ABOUT HALF**

as many references to their technical expertise

**ONE THIRD**

as much feedback linked to business outcomes



# How does it affect women's career progression within **product management**?

- It puts a very real barrier to women progressing in their product management careers
- Within **S.E.T.** sectors, in particular, it is one of the reasons many women exit their product careers early
- Labour supply is not the issue



[Gender bias turns up at work in feedback WSJ](#)





**Ironically, the very skills core to a product manager's role are often couched as 'soft'**



# What does it mean for women venturing into product start ups?

Investors preferred entrepreneurial ventures pitched by a man than an identical pitch from a woman by a rate of **68%** to **32%** in a study conducted jointly by HBS, Wharton, and MIT Sloan.

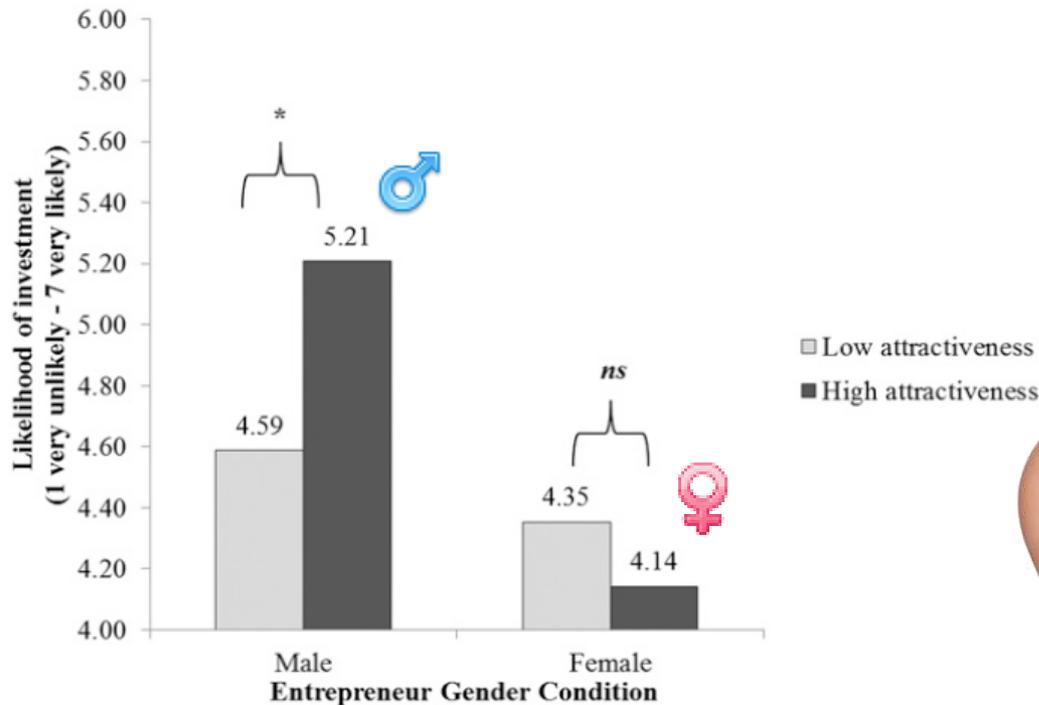


*“Male-narrated pitches were rated as more persuasive, logical and fact-based than the **same pitches** narrated by a female voice.”*

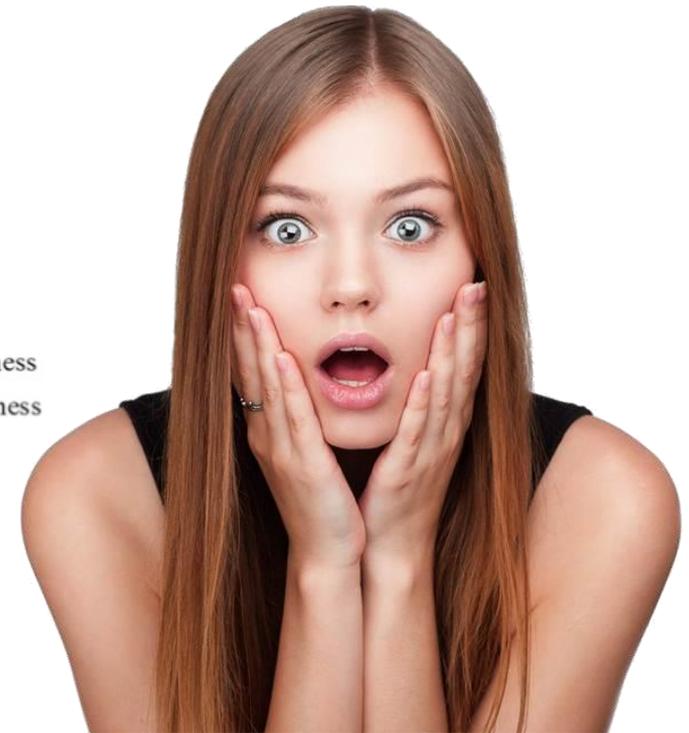
[PNAS Investors prefer entrepreneurial ventures pitched by attractive men](#)



# And it only gets worse if you are unlucky enough to be an 'attractive' woman



\*  $p = .024$



Clearly chicks can't be good looking and smart



# Think you're immune?

## "I'm not biased"



Irene  
Rosenfield



Zhang  
Xin



Dilma  
Rousseff



Christine  
Lagarde



Julia  
Gillard



Ellen  
Johnson



Kristina  
Kirchner



Chanda  
Kochhar

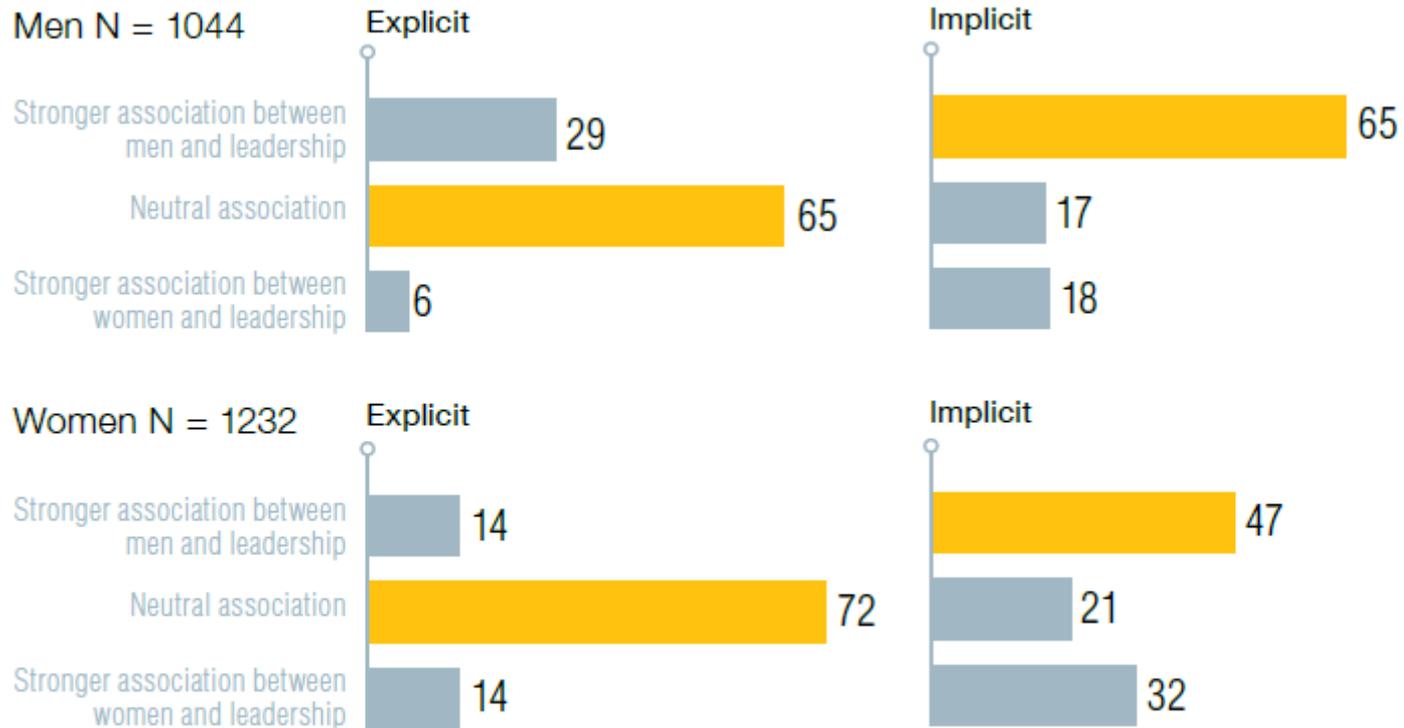


Unknown men randomly from a stock image website

[Unconscious Bias - A highly effective toolbox](#)



# Both men and women implicitly associate men with leadership



Younger respondents have a **stronger** implicit association between men and leadership.



“ I want every little girl  
who's told she's bossy,  
to be told instead she  
has leadership skills –

Sheryl Sandberg, CEO Facebook



# DESIGN



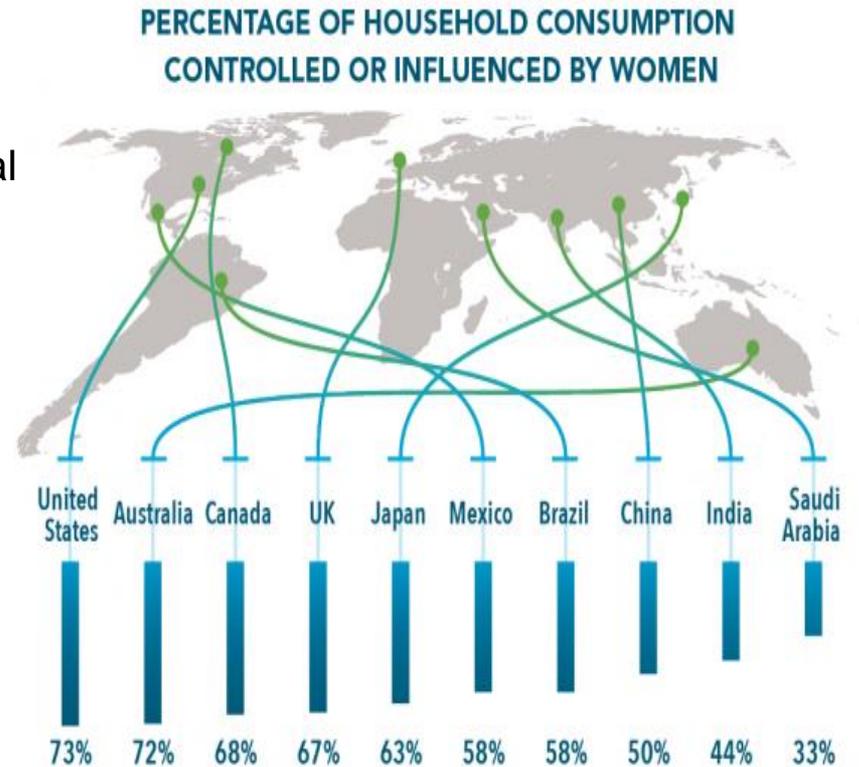
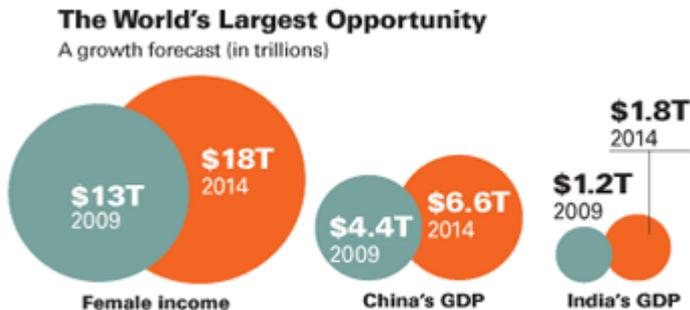
Why gender matters in **product design**



# Gender in product design

## Who's buying your products?

- Globally, women control or influence household consumption
- Women constitute the fastest growing global market, worth over **\$20T\***
- In China, female earnings are projected to grow from \$1.3T in 2010 to \$4T by 2020\*\*



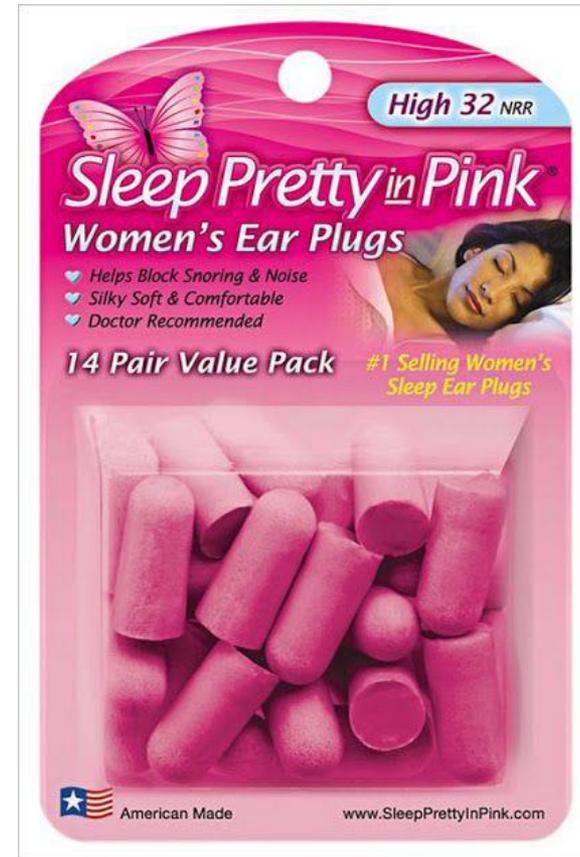
[Global Buying Power of Women](#)

\* [The female economy](#)

\*\* [The female economy in China and India](#)



# The solution is not 'pink' products



# Your products must be designed to solve for a customer need and job to be done



Utility and aesthetics

And not just in categories traditionally thought to be 'pink'



# And this needs to translate across the E2E product/service proposition

‘It’s my car. So why are you only talking to my husband?’



LETITIA ROWLANDS

78



Letitia with her sons

by LETITIA ROWLANDS

As the mother of an energetic three-year-old and a yet to sleep through the night six-month-old, there are times when the ability to make myself invisible would be quite a helpful skill. Little did I know all I needed to do to in order to master this seemingly impossible feat was walk into a car dealership with my husband and two young sons in tow.

Abracadabra! Just like that, I disappeared from sight. Well, as far as several car salesmen were concerned, anyway.

[Mamamia - Women Have the Buying Power](#)

“He said my teeth are so good I can be his receptionist when I grow up.”

**Macleans White Fluoride for stronger, whiter teeth.**

you're sitting there, in the  
room worrying, when As your dentist will tell you, regular brushing with Macleans all Macleans toothpaste makes  
teeth whiter.



# Why does it matter?

## Don't let unconscious bias unhinge your product strategy

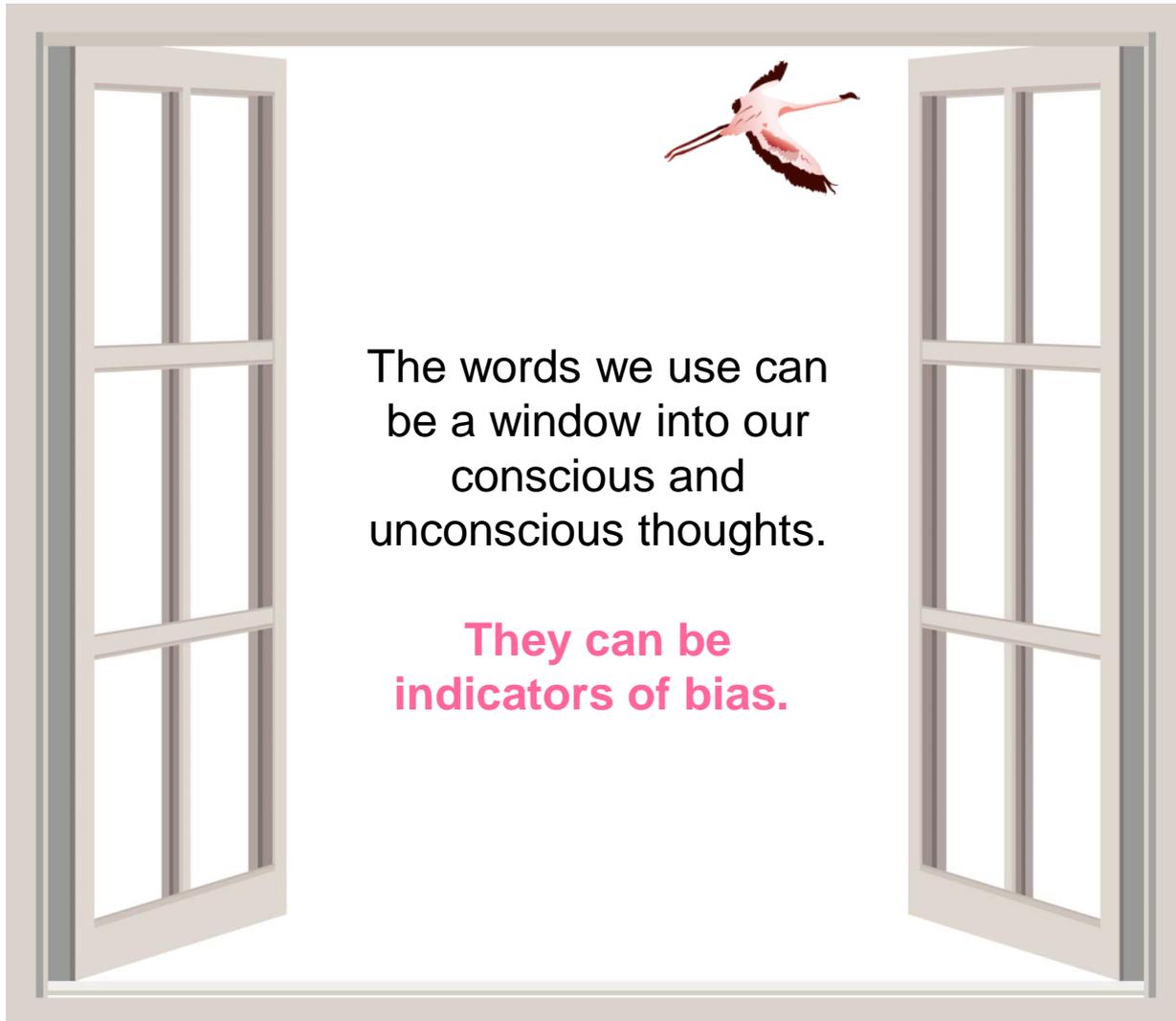
- Unconscious bias drives our behaviours and decisions
- It drives them in relation to our colleagues
- It drives them in relation to our customers
- It is why we need to be aware and conscious in our decision making



What can be done to even the  
playing field?



# Awareness is **key**



The words we use can  
be a window into our  
conscious and  
unconscious thoughts.

**They can be  
indicators of bias.**



# Women need to help each other

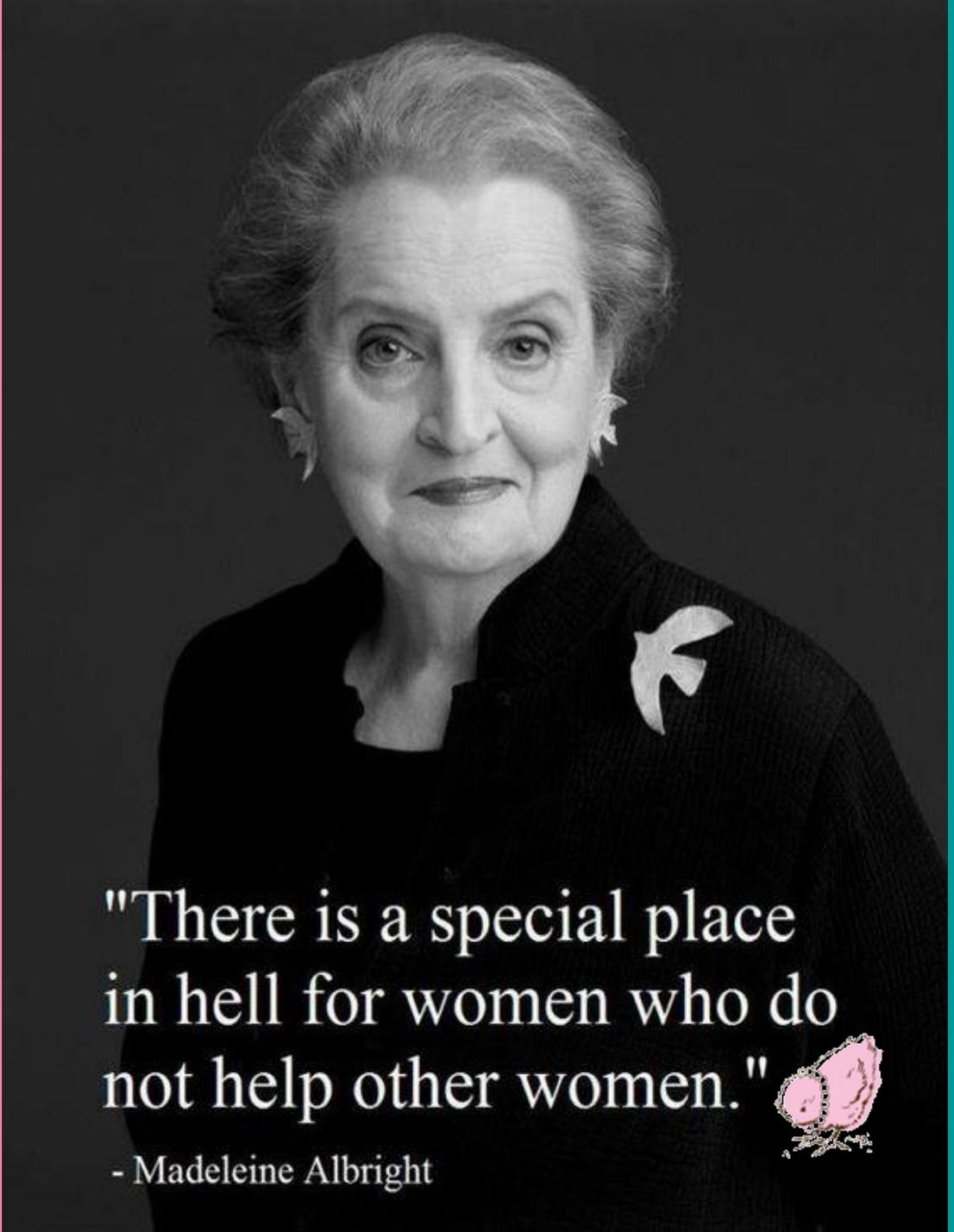
Be supportive.

Share experiences.

Mentor.

Sponsor.

Lead.

A black and white portrait of Madeleine Albright, an elderly woman with short, wavy hair, wearing a dark jacket with a white bird-shaped brooch on the lapel. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

"There is a special place  
in hell for women who do  
not help other women."

- Madeleine Albright



# Women need to be proactive in managing their product management careers



- **Don't hold yourself back** – work outside your comfort zone and take the opportunities that come your way
- Be **explicit** about your career aspirations and choices. Ask for and participate in professional development and training
- Keep real-time records - **objective metrics** and compliments that you can use in your performance conversation
- Use these records to publicly **celebrate successes** – personal and team
- You are not going to be able to please everyone all the time – **respected** versus liked
- Don't undermine yourself – be **quietly confident**
- Watch out for being unfairly assigned '**office housework**'. Be strategic about what you say yes to and what you say no to



# We need to sponsor female talent

We need men and women to actively sponsor female talent within the product management community



Always two there are, no more, no less. A master and an apprentice..



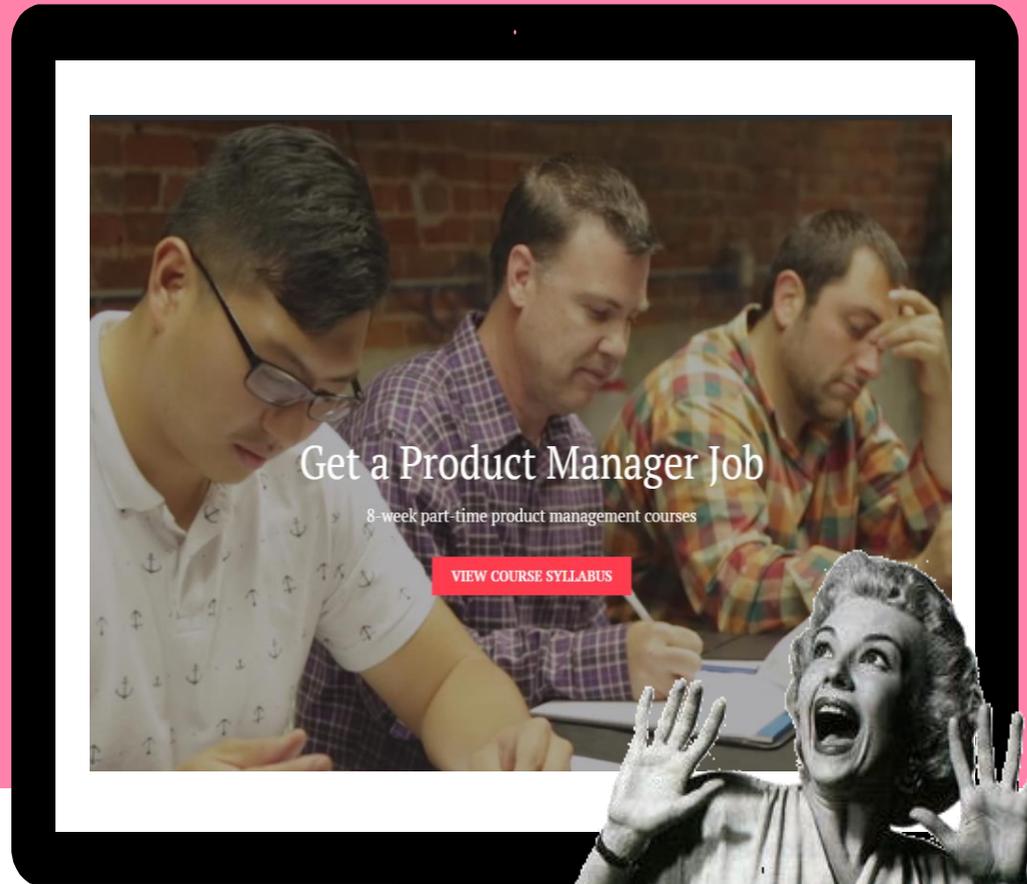
# Skills and approaches that can help overcome bias

- Know your **product portfolio financials** and **metrics** – metrics are hard to argue against; they build your credentials and can bridge divides based on stereotypes or biases
- Actively **engage stakeholders** early and frequently – even the tough ones.
- As a product leader, actively **hire for diversity** and inclusion. Be conscious of your inherent bias.
- Support your team to work across (and up) your organisational structure



# Be aware. Check your own biases

And contribute to making  
the product management  
community inclusive and  
diverse.



# Reflective

of the communities in which our products thrive!





# Thank you!

## Any questions?

You can find me at [thatproductchick@gmail.com](mailto:thatproductchick@gmail.com)

[www.thatproductchick.com](http://www.thatproductchick.com)



# Further reading



- [Earning your "Geek Cred": Advice for Women in Product Management, May 8, 2014](#), Michelle Harper
- [Gender Differences in Product Management](#), 23 July 2013, Natalie Yan-Chatonsky
- [Technology's Man Problem](#), 5 April 2015, Claire Can Miller
- [Portraying Women in Product Management](#)
- [What I talk about when I talk about Women in Product](#), 19 September 2015, Merci Victoria Grace
- [What Women Bring to Tech Product Management: Advice From a Pro](#), 15 May 2013, Jessica Schimm
- [The Role of Women in the Software Industry: A Global Disgrace](#), 4 February 2016, Greg Prickril
- [Why She Buys – the female factor](#), Bridget Brennan
- [Gender Equity Insights 2016: Inside Australia's Gender Pay Gap](#), WGEA
- [Women Matter – The business and economic case for gender diversity](#), McKinsey & Company
- [How to recognise and overcome your unconscious bias](#), 14 December 2015, Kelly Long
- [8 Female Leaders on How To Overcome What's Holding Women Back](#), 9 October 2014, Vivian Giang



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