



**GURU  
GUIDE**  
with  
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with  
**Heleniq Argyrou**

21

**MAKING WORKPLACES  
FEMALE FRIENDLY**



# A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'Guru Guide' is an attempt to refine decades of hard-earned expertise into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

## The Guru Guide has a pre determined format:

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

## INTRODUCING



**VIDUSHA  
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON  
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.

## INTRODUCING HELENIQ ARGYROU

We met Heleniq through one of our webinars : and the amazing insights and experience she has on HR and Life in general along with her passion for ensuring Women at Work are given every opportunity to truly shine is what inspired this book...

Her passion to transform leadership skills in order to become a more influential leader or have greater impact and global relevance is also equally impressive.

She is an award-winning innovator and forecaster, a true luminary for our times.

She understands, with absolute clarity the gulf between 'ideal states and 'practical realities' and is one of those people who will become neither

gorily pragmatic nor baselessly pragmatic - and manages to find creative ways to bridge that gap.

She is an expert in inspiring and actualizing human potential, an innovative clinical psychologist, sound and drum therapist, corporate and group organizational trainer and facilitator. Heleniq is a 'flow' state expert having explored the neuroscientific bounds of peak performance. As a drummer reaching peak states, she was initially self trained and later trained by world renowned percussionists Layne Redmond, Rowan Storm and Master Zohar Fresco, on frame and tambourine and in djembe Arthur Hull teambuilding drum circle methods.

She is an innovative Clinical Psychologist, Peak Performance Expert and Speaker Change Leader. Delving into neuroscience resulted into her pivoting her expertise into Peak Performance to train and develop thought leaders and paradigm shifters. She has special talent in integrating science and spirituality, revitalizing education, coaching pioneers and elevating new style thinking on business excelsior epic female leaders for the future. Leadership Coaching and Visibility Publicity Services for global female leaders in her Women of Truth Inner circle.

She currently lives in Cyprus with her family and friends but originally from South Africa, born in Zimbabwe.



## WHY FEMALE FRIENDLY ? DOESN'T THAT MEAN WE ARE 'FAVOURING' WOMEN OVER OTHERS ?



Well, making a workplace female friendly doesn't have to be at the cost of anybody else... Also, it is important to understand that as much as we are working to make organisations 'female friendly' you need to ensure that all diversity is appreciated and inclusive organisations are built (and you DO have a book on that don't you). So, the focus here, with this conversation is on Women - and how we can make sure that they are included, appreciated, and ofcourse, helped : because the reality IS this : there are many many issues women face that actually go unaddressed.

HR is there for ALL - but I think we do need to address the elephant in the room. Men, in comparison to women, have generally (and I do know there are many exceptions) had it easier - and traditionally don't have to do the same juggling act that women are expected to perform ! So, isn't it fair to make sure we acknowledge this - and try and ensure women are given the 'prop up' to ensure they are not 'left behind' in the workplace.

I need to be clear. Equity IS critical : as much as equality : so, once again, I need to reiterate that making workplaces female friendly doesn't have to be about making it 'male unfriendly.'

I do think they are mutually not exclusive in any way !

## **WOMEN HAVE 'ISSUES' WHICH ARE UNIQUE : WHICH WE GENERALLY OVERLOOK...**

See : women in general are 'expected' to be the home makers. There is certainly a growing appreciation and acknowledgement that this should NOT be limited to one gender : but, for the most part, in almost all countries across the globe women are still considered the primary caregiver to a child - at least in their normative years. Now this is NOT to devalue the role a father plays in rearing children in any way : BUT, the REALITY is that mothers are expected to stay at home - not dads. Mothers are expected to cook for the kids - not the dads. Mothers are expected to take the kids to school - not dads. Mothers are expected to put their careers on hold and stay at home if it ever came to that - not dads...

Women also have to deal with a multitude of other issues - biological, social and cultural which is purely based on their sex and gender. So, we need to understand this : empathise with it : and try and find some form of solution for it IF we are going to make women be completely at ease within a work place - so that they can perform at their best...

I think we need to be sensitive to the differences in the type of issues women face every day. We may not be able to change all of society : but at least our work places I think can be made to be at least a little better for them...

We hate calling them 'issues' - because some are not - and we used the work purposefully because this is how society sees it.... Please note that for us, some of them are not 'issues' at all - but we purposefully used the word to get you to understand what millions of women go through every day...

Women are highly capable and score higher on leadership skill levels than men so clearly their 'unique issues' do not interrupt performance. Rather we need to evolve our ability to 'differentiate' and create various ways of understanding different things. This way we could learn to see moon the finger is point at , and not just the finger pointing.

## THE 'ISSUE' OF EMOTIONS



Our world society and most cultures around the world have a very basic level of understanding of emotions. In fact, society at large does not show very evolved levels of emotional maturity. By simplifying this very powerful human phenomenon and associating them almost always with women, the power of emotion is severely distorted.

We all feel emotions and we are all vulnerable at times, yet we haven't given men permission to be emotional and yes it may not always be appropriate to be, but it is definitely natural and human. This lends itself to the extreme and often problematic ways we judge, criticise and even minimise the power of emotions and what they can really reveal and transform in us and our behaviour. More so women get stereotyped in it all.

With all this 'reductionist' way of dealing with such a powerful force in ourselves, women carry the distorted idea that they are wrong to have emotions or to feel various feelings at work. Add to this stereotypical and negative bias that emotions are 'unprofessional', 'dangerous' or 'unpredictable and suspect' and it's clear to see how we 'brand' women when emotional as inferior to the logic and rationality our society upholds as superior to emotion - and associated with men.

## THE 'ISSUE' OF VULNERABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE



Since our world society and most cultures around the world have such a simplistic understanding of emotions, the aspect of vulnerability is seriously misunderstood. It become seemingly the main point for critique and judgement.

Society judges vulnerability as weakness and avoids, suppresses or outright insults people for it. Moreover derogatory comments like "you're crying like a girl" show how men are stopped from showing vulnerability. Thankfully we 'allow' women to be vulnerable somehow but we still don't RESPECT them when they are or what strength they get from it.

This lends itself to the extreme and often problematic ways we judge, criticise and easily bypass what for most human behaviour specialists is one for the most significant human conditions. It is only through vulnerability that we cultivate true strength.

Resilience, stamina and the 'Growth mindset' itself all rely on harvesting a certain amount of stamina, insights and deep power from the realisation that you can get strong through adversity. Rob a society of this and you destabilize the dignity that comes from all triumph during human struggle. Reduce women to weak or unable unstable for it and you miss their true power.



## THE 'ISSUE' OF MENSTRUATION

Why is menstruation an 'issue' you may wonder - isn't it a normal biological thing... Well yes.... If you are a guy...

For women, menstruation can range from 'I don't even feel it' to 'excruciatingly painful' to at times, dizzyingly emotional. Menstruation is an intensely personal thing : and affect different women differently - most men never understand this.

'What's up with her ?' And the quick quip comes 'it's that time of the month' - and then comes the laughter...

Let's forget that aspect of it for a moment...

Think about coming to work - and finding out you are having your period. Yes - you ought to know it is 'that time of the month' and be prepared - most are - but we are also human garnet we - so, we CAN forget - and we DO forget. Also, remember that it isn't like an accurate Swiss clock - it can vary hugely...

Then think about how many times a woman may need to change their pad - depending on the flow of her period - and having to go to the toilet - sometimes in between a meeting - and sit their trying to 'sort' herself out...

Of course, lets not even talk about when it 'leaks' all over - and no - it isn't because we don't know how to wear a pad or a tampon properly - its just that some times we get engrossed in our work and can completely miss the fact that we haven't changed our pad - until its too late !

Men will not have a reference point for this at all - even if they have wives and daughters.... Specially to understand what it is to work in this circumstance...

## THE 'ISSUE' OF GENDER BASED DEGRADATION



Its high time we work through, outright remove and then soon after stop tolerating the lower level commentary insults and degradation that happens at the expense of women.

We have seen how society judges vulnerability as weakness and avoids, suppresses or outright insults people for it with comments like "you're crying like a girl" and now even "is he on his period" or "she must be on her period". show such disrespect.

Looking deeper - with a psychological lens, these comments show two more things indignance of the person commenting. how men are stopped from showing vulnerability. Thankfully we 'allow' women to be vulnerable somehow but we still don't RESPECT them when they are or what strength they get from it.

This lends itself to the extreme and often problematic ways we judge, criticise and easily bypass what for most human behaviour specialists is one for the most significant human conditions. It is only through vulnerability that we cultivate true strength.

Resilience, stamina and the 'Growth mindset' itself all rely on harvesting a certain amount of stamina, insights and deep power from the realisation that you can get strong through adversity. Rob a society of this and you destabilise the dignity that comes from all triumph during human struggle. Reduce women to weak or unable unstable for it and you miss their true power.

## THE 'ISSUE' OF MOTHERHOOD



Women often have to make the 'choice' of whether to have kids or not PURELY from a perspective of having to quit their jobs IF they were to become mothers - be it pressure from society or from a spouse or from your own conscious. Most men NEVER even think of that choice - fathers continue to work - there is no 'issue' there...

Being a mother is important to many women who work. However, having to decide between a career and being a 'good mother' is a choice many women can't make - and honestly shouldn't have to make in the first place. Both work and motherhood is important to most - and it is unfair to have to choose...

The anguish many women go through daily because they feel 'guilty' about not having spent enough time with their kids - or not being there for those important moments are very real - even amongst the most career minded ones. It is sometimes a necessity to work - and not being able to juggle the priorities often result in many mental health issues which can easily be avoided if workplaces became more female friendly.

## THE 'CHOICES' WOMEN HAVE TO MAKE



Women DO have to make many difficult choices when they come to work. This is NOT to say men don't have issues - they do too - but, from a work place perspective, the equation is rather lopsided because women have to probably work 'harder' to become successful in their careers.

Our attempt here is not to get into the debate of the genders - but to accept a simple truth that women have certain obstacles PURELY based on their sex/gender and we do need to understand that - and do something about it...

Women are NOT BETTER than women - neither are they LESSER than men : nor are they EQUAL to men : they are DIFFERENT. So, if they are different - then may be the kind of help and support we need to give them should be different to the kind of help and assistance we offer men...

## IDEAS : WHICH MAY HELP...



Each organisation will have its own limitations : and we are deeply respectful of this fact. Sometimes, it is tough to implement policy level frameworks given the constraints. However, there is a lot we can do amongst ourselves with a little support from our organisation towards making sure women are not isolated and having to 'fend for themselves.' This support structure is critical if you want to really create a female friendly work environment.

This is NOT to ever take away from the fact that we need to OWN our problems - and find solutions for them. As Women, it is important to not feel victimised all the time - and understand things for what they are : and not EXPECT our problems to be 'sorted out' for us. This ownership is critical to be empowered, and also, to be individuals in our own right.

However, it IS important to acknowledge that we DO need help : and that working and juggling other priorities CAN be so much easier with help. So, there is that fine line : on the one hand we should learn to sort our selves out - at the same time, as organisations we need to be sensitive to women's issues and do our part to help.

Finding this balance can be hard : but we DO need to start somewhere. We may not be able to find IDEAL solutions - but, every little bit certainly helps...

## IDEA 1 : FLEXIBLE WORKING

Flexible working hours isn't a new thing - but MOST organisations don't really have proper, solid and properly thought through frameworks and policies around flexible working. Flexible working isn't just about 'coming to work whenever' or about 'stay at home one day' type arrangements - it is about looking at the kind of flexibility women may need - and having solutions around them. For sure - if men need flexibility - specially around being a single parent etc - it needs to be factored in - but, fundamentally, to look at flexible working arrangements can support many many employees overall.

- »» Why can't certain work be done from home ?
- »» Why can't we have a small desk and internet provided for work from home arrangements ?
- »» Why can we look at coffee shops where we can arrange for employees to work out of it required - and have some arrangement with the shop to have a dedicated space for our employees ?
- »» Can we arrange for meetings to be done partly virtually - so that employees can join in on line when required - rather than HAVING TO BE THERE PERSONALLY
- »» Can we rejig the JD to address flexibility ?

Flexible working arrangements need to be thought through - properly - and taking into consideration the types of issues women have to face : rather than making it a fad that doesn't accomplish much...

## IDEA 2 : 'SENSITISING' MEN

Many organisations have now undertaken Diversity and Inclusion training - a good start.

However, we need to have a more wide ranging 'conversation' around gender - rather than one hour 'presentation' that people 'have to' attend (or be damned by HR). The idea is to be able to sensitise men - and make them understand - not grudgingly listen. As you can see - it is a journey and a process - not a tick in the box 'training' !

- » Why can't we get men to talk about what they think of women at work ?
- » Why can't we get women to talk about how they feel ?
- » Why can't we have brainstormings about how to make the workplace harassment free ?
- » Why can't we get males and females to talk to each other about how they view gender ?
- » Why can't we highlight the actual issues at the workplace openly - not to point fingers - but to find solutions ?

CONVERSATIONS need to be had : and it needs to be on going.... Unless men are part of the solution - they will forever be the problem.... The same goes to Women too !

## IDEA 3 : PART TIME WORK THROUGH COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Well here's a novel idea ! Why not look at setting up cooperative type organisational frameworks for women who have worked but who are now staying at home : and collectively taking on work they can do from home. This way, there is an organisational structure - and accountability and responsibility rather than relying on just one 'freelancer.' So, why not set up a structure for anyone within a few organisations to give out work on a regular basis - or better still, outsource work solely to these type of women who left the workforce to work from home and still contribute effectively ?

- » Payroll processing and related work
- » Personal File up keeping and related work
- » Secretarial and related work
- » Accounting, Management Reports and related work
- » Analysis and related work

And a multitude of other work can be easily outsourced as 'specific' jobs - each tracked through a rather simple 'fiverr.com' or 'freelancer.com' type arrangement. This way, you have full traceability, there is ratings to see who is good at what - and complete transparency : and BEST OF ALL - mothers CAN work purely from home - and never have to choose family or work - they can do both (and possibly earn as much or more !)

## IDEA 4 : 'MOTHERHOOD FUND'



Here is another novel idea. We all have 'retirement' funds : why not start a 'motherhood' fund which both the organisation and the employee can contribute towards.

A small fund that you start when you start working at 18 - that can be transferred whenever you move jobs as well. This way, the fund keeps growing - and growing - until the day you become a mother...

Whatever you have collected can be then withdrawn if you want to have an extended maternity - to be able to fund yourself - or if you want to be a stay home mom - use it to start a small venture of your own.

Having this kind of benefit will enable you to attract women to come work for you - and will be a huge addition to the Employee Value Proposition.

## IDEA 5 : 'SISTERHOODS'



Why not look at creating sisterhoods of like minded women - maybe from the same area they travel from - so that they have some one to talk to - to confide in - and her out whenever needed.

These can be informal - or formal - and either way, there can be concerted effort to train and offer coaching type expertise so that they can help each other out. This also enables networks of social 'safety nets' be formed across the organisation - and if you are a group of companies - across the entire group - broadening its reach and effectiveness...

Social groupings take place naturally anyway - and if institutionalised they can become the 'first line of defence' against harassment as well - given that there is always a better possibility of addressing issues and highlighting them if there is 'strength in numbers' Creating networks that can help each other is critical if you are to help women address some of the unique 'issues' they face...

## SOME FINAL THOUGHTS...



- » Tackling the global gender gap will boost global GDP
- » Operationalizing gender inclusion makes a difference because internal policies and practices have positive impact on sales, and allow the business to tap into new markets. Especially now post COVID.
- » Companies that are gender and ethnically diverse outperform their peers

## SOME OF HELENIQ'S WORK

Helenq Argyrou is a master in Human Behaviour and Peak Performance. Known as an innovative clinical psychologist she is respected for a unique ability to blend ancient wisdom with psychology, spirituality and modern life sciences to 'shift paradigms and evolve perception while solving problems creatively. She specialises in Wise Ai, using technology mindfully, revolutionising education with holistic brain and integrative techniques and peak performance with neuro-scientific research and peak/flow states. She focuses on shaping leaders for the future.

"I believe we are entering a time where we need skilled voices to support society to mobilise and galvanise existing and new resources for the upcoming challenges in the world, because we are the ones we have been waiting for".

- »» The Leadership Chamber co founder with Sinead Hewson
- »» Visibility consultant for global leaders inner circle
- »» Aha Intelligence Wise AI and wellness program for corporates.
- »» Body Safety, sexual abuse prevention education with Global Goodwill Foundation
- »» Trainer for start-ups and innovation in Cambridge International Centre,
- »» Rotterdam, Business trainer, mentor and advisor at Venture cafe
- »» Lithuania Changemakers ON mentor for social entrepreneurship
- »» Cyprus Ambassador for Female Wave of Change, operating in 49countries.
- »» Cyprus Business Innovation group LinkedIn founder
- »» Women of Truth conferences elevating the expertise and knowledge of for global female leaders
- »» Mentor X Partner, India
- »» Luminary Learning Partner, Sri Lanka
- »» Miracle Makers Academy sponsor, Los Angeles
- »» XtraVisionary podcast for erudite pioneers, innovators and visionaries shaping the future.
- »» Hosted Over 200 live and virtual events summits and seminars
- »» Women of Excellence award winner, Women's Economic
- »» Ambassador for Women's Economic Forum International

Featured in TV, media in Dubai, South Africa, Belgium and Cyprus with workshops endorsed by the Ministry of education in Cyprus.

"I am at your service through this, one of the most challenging and incredible growth opportunities of our lifetime"

# HELENIQ ARGYROU

## REACH OUT TO HELENIQ

For female Female Leaders and Speakers:  
<https://heleniq.com/inner-circle/>  
Join the inner circle for Visibility Credibility and  
Publicity in Europe and on Global change projects

 [in/heleniq-argyrou-m-a-7a227933](https://www.linkedin.com/company/heleniq-argyrou-m-a-7a227933)

 [@heleniq\\_argyrou](https://www.instagram.com/heleniq_argyrou)

 [/c/AhaIntelligence](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



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



In Conversation with Luminary -  
Disruptive HR Practices:  
Easier Said Than Done?

(Click Here to watch)

# High<sup>5</sup>

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



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



**ANTON THAYALAN**

+94 77 22 666 22 / +94 70 40 666 66  
[anton@luminarylearningsolutions.com](mailto:anton@luminarylearningsolutions.com)

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