

#WomenNotObjects

I recently watched this video on the objectification of women and have had to re-watch it a few times.

Each time it sinks in a bit more than the last. It's one of those topics we all think about but honestly, we hide from it. We think we're a progressive society:

Women are running for President of the United States (1 dropped out and the other is having a pretty tough time).

- Sports Illustrated put a "plus sized" model on one of their three covers for the first time this year (it's 1 of 3 covers...)
- There are women CEOs in the Fortune 500 (of course it's only 4% of them according to *Women CEOs of the S&P 500. New York: Catalyst, February 1, 2016.*)

Two years ago I asked members of my management team to attend a workshop with me on unconscious bias and the gender gap. I felt like I was being a strong C-level executive moving this conversation forward. Lots was discussed in the conference but when you see that The National Equal Pay Task Force found in 2013 that women still earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns some 50 plus years after the Civil Rights Act, it all becomes real. Outraged, I came back and held a town hall workshop with my management staff on how we can help address the gender gap and deal with the "unconscious bias." We came up with ways we as a forward thinking company could address these issues. Here's a few:

- Set strong requirements for positions and hire based on qualifications only
- Encourage mentoring relationships
- Senior management should identify and develop high performing women in the organization
- Move to flex-time schedules for all

I was proud that we were addressing these issues and discussing them. But what have we done since then? Fast forward two years and we have no mentoring program, no women have suddenly climbed into senior leadership. I watch this video and it's a 2x4 to the head that says this really isn't so unconscious is it? That's just a phrase to make us feel better, like saying racism is a product of your environment. No, it's a choice.

We have created and perpetuated the objectification of women. How will we ever have equal pay without changing these ads and changing the conversation? Let's do our parts as business leaders and owners to change this.

I'm no longer proud of starting a discussion, I want action.