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Women on the rise

*It's official. Women are more generous and they're also becoming wealthier. This phenomenon has significant ramifications for fundraisers, reveals **Charlotte Grimshaw**.*

The coming decades will see a massive intergenerational transfer of wealth in developed countries. Bequest fundraisers probably think of little else. But have we considered who'll inherit? Women – we live longer than men. What's more, inheritance is just one reason for women's budding prosperity.

Women's wealth is growing

In the United States, women's wealth is on the rise. 2007 IRS data (the most recent available) shows roughly 1 million women each have assets of at least \$2 million. Now, according to a recent webinar by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, women also own more shares on the New York stock exchange than men, and the number of female-owned businesses has grown 59% since 1997 to more than two in five of all American businesses.

In Australia fewer wealth stats are available but indicators point to a similar change here. *Business Review Weekly* has just published its first list of the wealthiest women and the *Australian Financial Review's* '100 Women of Influence' has become an annual fixture.

Women are also gaining ground in business. Dell's gender-focused Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index ranked Australia as the second best place in the world to be a female entrepreneur, while research from the Australian Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry suggests the number of women starting their own business has doubled since 2007 to around 1 million women business owners.

Collaboration is bolstering women's entrepreneurial success too. An example is Scale Investors, newly formed by high-profile Australian businesswoman and philanthropist Carol Schwartz along with what *Business Review Weekly* calls "some of Australia's richest and best-connected women", that is only investing in start-ups with a female founder, or a woman with equity and influence at executive level.

Women are generous – and joining forces to give bigger

In America, self-made women are significant donors who are more likely to donate while living and more likely to leave a bequest to charity than any other group, the *Chronicle* stated recently. Not surprisingly, last year Forbes published a list of most powerful women philanthropists. Indiana University has found female headed households are more likely to give to charity and women give more in nearly all income groups.

Australia's just-released Australian Taxation Office data shows women are more likely than men to donate and they give a higher proportion of their income. True, they're earning \$20,000 a year less on average than men. But if women's business involvement builds, the impact on charitable giving

will be significant. And as these generous women inherit, their stronger financial position bodes very well for the causes they support.

Australia already has some noteworthy female philanthropists who individually are giving at a high level, such as Lady Mary Fairfax, Maureen Wheeler, Jill Reichstein and Margarete Ainsworth.

Women of varying means are also finding ways to up their impact. One example is through giving circles which sprang up in America with the likes of the Washington Women's Foundation and Women Moving Millions (which has pledged more than \$280 million since 2007), and are spreading worldwide. Members of these charitable collectives each contribute their donations into a fund they can then use to make more substantial gifts.

An increasing focus on giving *to* women and girls – by Women Moving Millions, the Australian Women Donors Network co-founded by Carol Schwartz, and Plan International's 'Because I am a Girl', to name a few – is also sowing the seeds for greater female sway internationally in future.

Women are more involved in philanthropic decisions

The growth in structured family giving in Australia through the rising number of Private Ancillary Funds – now numbered at over 1,000 and counting – is changing the giving landscape. Although the money may have been amassed by a successful male executive, says Chris Wilson, director of philanthropic services at JBWere, often his wife and children are trustees with at least as much say in where the money goes. Don't forget, he's likely to be outlived by his children and wife who'll probably have the final say about bequests.

Charities need to change tack

According to the *Chronicle*, women are not being asked to give as often and charities rely on tactics men prefer. Higher value gifts are still being sought from men. It's time for charities to consider changing tack in keeping with women's generosity, growing philanthropic influence and deepening purse.

Instead of just reaching for the *BRW Rich List 200* to seek higher value gifts, try looking within your existing female dominated networks. While you're at it, why not revisit your methods of asking?

Because women's giving motivation is different. According to Beth Mann, associate vice president of the Jewish Foundations of North America, "Men give based on who's asking: women give based on who's receiving." Women are also making their mark in different and innovative ways such as giving circles.

Start thinking now about how a model for fundraising from women might look, and one day these budding philanthropic high-fliers might just carry your organisation into the brighter future you've been aspiring to.

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