



The problem with BBC One's *The Apprentice*'s ruthless masculine entrepreneur, says leadership expert Dr Diane Theodores.

BBC One's *The Apprentice* is back on screens, pushing for a masculine stereotype entrepreneur: one that's ruthless, confrontational, direct, and drives profit no matter the cost.

The programme rewards when contestants show these traditionally masculine traits – which feeds into the idea that women have to fit themselves into these male templates to climb the corporate ladder.



Dr Diana Theodores, international women's leadership expert, broke down why she thinks the show is damaging and dangerous:

◆ **There's more to business than profit**

The Apprentice portrays a mind-numbing, out of date perpetuation of the almighty profit as end game, bottom line mindset. In each task, the team that crosses the finish line with more profit than their competition are the winners. This is regardless of how much they back-stabbed their team, disrespected their customers, or displayed desultory, shambolic, or immature behaviour.

Talks, research, publications and Leadership Development programmes all talk up the importance of emotional intelligence and the ability to inspire and empower teams as the best practice in business life. In these days of global leadership, the 'call' for more enlightened vision and further enlightenment of values – walking the talk – is getting louder.

The Apprentice ignores this and pushes for profit as the single most important factor in business. One really depressing aspect of the show is witnessing a team that has collaborated well, exercised creatively and managed their customers with grace and respect – only to lose the challenge because they didn't drive enough profit.

◆ Pushing the masculine template

The Apprentice's one-size-fits-all ruthless, masculine, entrepreneur drives profits no matter the cost to anyone else. This is a damaging example to give to business women – especially as there are already so few empowered female templates for them to follow in the business world.

◆ Representation of women

The women on *The Apprentice* are masters at what I call 'atrophy through conformity' or – modelling their very own epidemic of obedience to conforming to what they believe is the way things are done in business.

Their teetering stilettos, tight pencil skirts and jackets, make-up masked faces and impoverished speaking, leads to the question – what matters to them really? What do they really value about being a business leader? What examples and role models are they setting about authenticity, about breaking through the 'size zero thinking'?

Is it time the women in the competition began to connect with their unique voice and do things differently?

Dr. Diana Theodores is Director of [Theatre 4 Business](#) and an international women's leadership expert. Her new book *Performing As You: How to have authentic impact in every role you play* is out now, priced £12.99. To find out more go to:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1781333823>