

# I ntroduction

The idea for this book was collaboratively developed by the three partners of GenderStrategy. The writing is mine, and I accept full responsibility for all errors. The theme and the stories arise from my experiences during a rather unique 25-year career. My youthful adventures included a five-year career managing a retail furniture store. Exhausted from working 363 days a year, I sought a more relaxed pace by going to law school and becoming an attorney for a large law firm. I subsequently became Vice President of Legislative Affairs with a Fortune 500 company, and ultimately served as the President and CEO of a multi-billion dollar state toll authority.

Throughout my career, I observed many women watch younger, ‘less talented’ men get the choice assignments and the promotions, and think: it must be discrimination.

Sometimes it is.

*But sometimes it isn't.*

This book is about *what it is* when it isn't discrimination. Because *then* you can fix it.

WHY MUST THERE BE DRAGONS? is a fable set in the 31<sup>st</sup> century, where dogs and cats run the world. The canines and felines are metaphors for men and women and exhibit traits that are eerily similar to those of their human counterparts.

The protagonist of the book, Kathryn (“Kat”) Wu, does not pretend that the workplace is either equal or easy. Nor does she suggest changing the workplace or the canines who run it. These systemic changes are left to time, HR departments and committed CEOs. Kat accepts the workplace as it is and seeks to help both canines and felines work more effectively together.

The book is divided into three sections. Part 1 sets the stage by introducing us to the fictitious company, Feline Foods, its major players, and its ‘feline integration’ problem.

Parts 2-5 begin with Kat and her corporate side-kick, Ryan (“Wolfe”) Wolfhound holding a set of interviews. The first interview in each part is with a frustrated feline employee who tells her story. In the second interview, you hear the same story from her supervisors’ perspective. Kat & Wolfe then discuss why the feline and canine have such a different perception of the same set of ‘facts.’ They also discuss Kat’s approach to improving communication between the two species. As Kat explains to Wolfe, her approach is two-fold. First, she *educates both canines and felines* how their respective styles and patterns of communication tend to differ, and how these differences can cause miscommunications and misperceptions in the workplace. Then, she *trains felines* how to use their feline flexibility to avoid the styles and patterns of communication that create a negative perception among canines, and to focus more effort on *managing their careers*. Each of these four Parts concludes with some “Lessons” for the frustrated feline (and the reader).

Part 6 concludes the lessons and finishes by explaining Why there are Dragons.