Culture Pop

Hustle
less

Exploring the cultural shift away
from hustle culture and the
archetypal 'Girlboss' narrative.

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End of the
Girlboss hustle era

The narrative of the hustling "Girlboss" trope has become ubiquitous in recent years, infiltrating our mugs, social media, and workplace culture.

Although initially synonymous with disruptive corporate feminism, the feminist hustle narrative is now being called out for reinforcing the exploitative nature of capitalism, and instead perpetuating inequality, a false sense of hope and added pressures onto women.
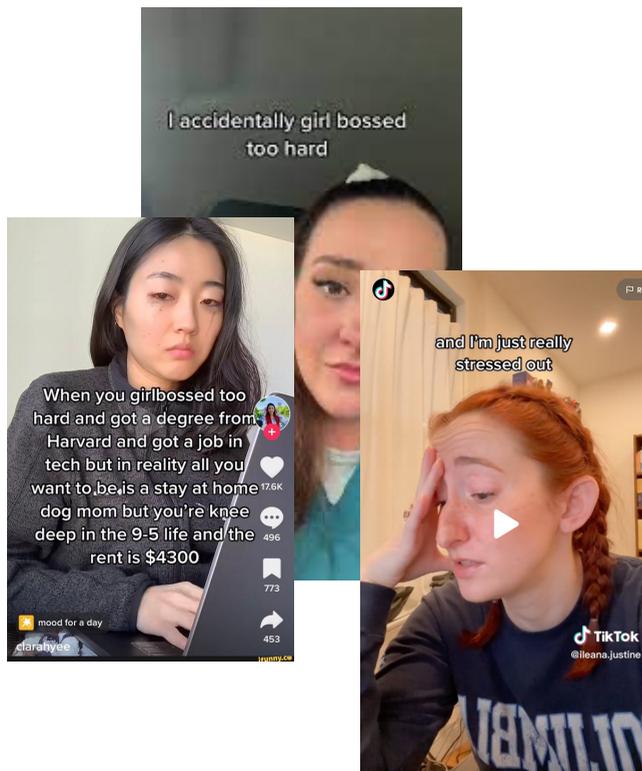
Is it really the end of the #Girlboss era?
And what does this mean for the future of work and society?

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Cultural
artefacts

Jacinda Ardern
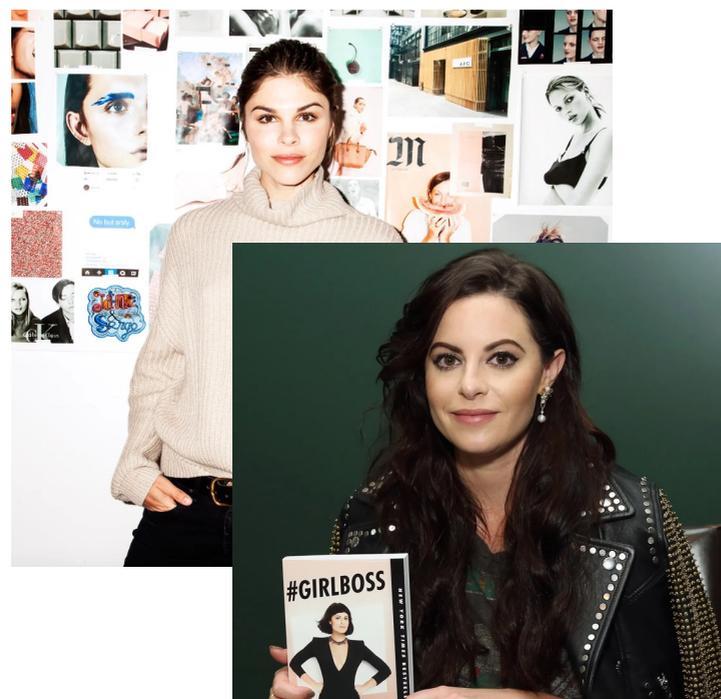Many praised New Zealand ex-Prime Minister for her honesty and integrity in stepping away when she felt was right to

"I Girlbossed too hard"
TikTok trend sharing the daily stress and regrets faced when #Girlbossing

Women's Network Redundancies
The leading women's community and Australian behemoth *Business Chicks* announced it was scaling down in Oct 2022

Original #Girlbosses step down
Both Emily Weiss, founder of Glossier, and Sophia Amoruso, founder of Nasty Gal, stepped down as CEOs of their companies

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So, what might be the cultural forces driving the fall of **Girlboss hustle culture?**

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1. The rise of the #**Girlboss**

Nasty Gal founder Sophia Amoruso coined the buzzword in 2014, and it became a term for successful women in opposition to a male-dominated business world. Like Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In," the narrative yoked careerism to feminism.

The #Girlboss movement sparked a wave of mediagenic female leaders with impeccable personal branding and millennial-focused products.

Along with the movement came a strong narrative of choice feminism and hustle culture in pop culture.
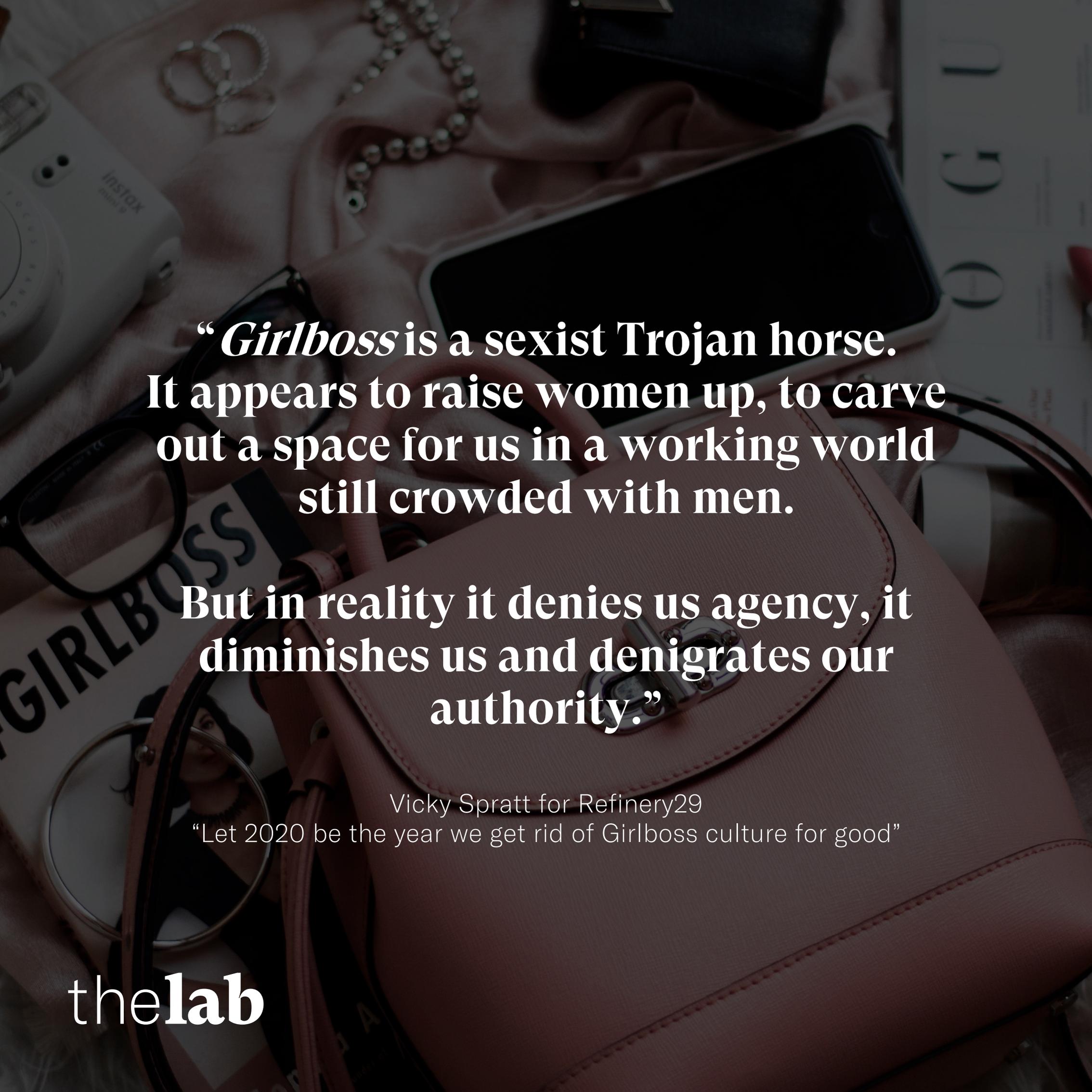
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2. The fall of
hustle narrative

In 2020, a series of stories alleging toxic workplaces and racist behavior in the world of women-led start-ups turned into a wave of high-profile exoduses from Girlboss poster women.

Over time, the narrative has been accused of infantilising and patronizing women, setting unrealistic standards, and perpetuating oppressive structures without acknowledging deep-rooted issues in real work culture.

Another criticism of the archetype is that it is often reserved for predominantly wealthy, white, college educated women, disproving how equitable and inclusive the Girlboss reality truly is.

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"*Girlboss* is a sexist Trojan horse. It appears to raise women up, to carve out a space for us in a working world still crowded with men.

But in reality it denies us agency, it diminishes us and denigrates our authority."

Vicky Spratt for Refinery29
"Let 2020 be the year we get rid of Girlboss culture for good"

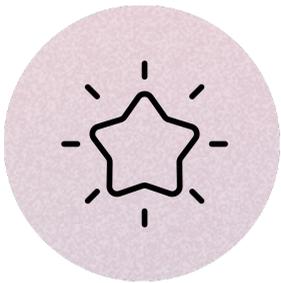the**lab**

3. A longing for **equality and authenticity**

Global pandemic and shifting career priorities have led us to collectively refocus on slowing down and prioritising mental health and wellbeing. This shift has exposed the flaws in the Girlboss narrative and how it may actually work against the women it claims to empower.

As a result, we're seeing a growing movement towards redefining success to balancing ambition and wellness on our own terms, with employees, especially Gen Zers, and public figures like Simone Biles, Chelsea Handler, and Ash Barty leading the charge.

This rejection of hustle culture and the Girlboss trope reflects broader cultural values around authenticity, diversity and inclusion, work-life balance, purpose and mental health.
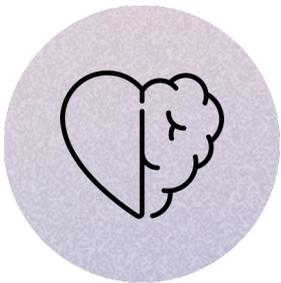
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Thought-starters
for brands in a post-hustle era.

It's time to rethink success
Get to know what real aspirations look like for your customers and staff. In communications, ditch glamorised stereotypes of success and rethink how to connect with and represent their real-life goals.

Embrace failures, reject the superficial
Leverage the growing desire for authenticity and wellbeing by showing the real people and processes behind products and services, highlighting values and processes more transparently.

Prioritise diversity and inclusivity
As we recognize the diversity and equality failings of toxic productivity and the #Girlboss movement, brands should reflect on the true inclusivity of their internal processes and culture.

Thank **you** ㅇ

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