Eileen Fisher Is The OG Of Feminist Business

I had the honor of interviewing Eileen Fisher for an event with Nordstrom. One thing I kept thinking about in preparation for our interview was how little credit she gets for being the OG of feminist business. She was the first BossLady. She encouraged employees to find their passions, show up to work as their full selves and close their laptops at night (no emails after 7:30 p.m.) before it got you press and a spot on “best places to work” lists.

She revolutionized the supply chain so that dyes were safer for local water supplies. She insisted on organic seeds and fabrics, lessening workers’ risk of cancer. She cared about sustainability long before it was cool. Fisher made leadership training for women and girls both inside and outside the company a priority before Lean In. Employees even own a portion of the company and participate in profit sharing.

She’s gotten a lot of criticism over the years for being a brand for women who “give up.” I think that’s unfair. Can you name another business leader who’s built a successful company based on treating people fairly and making a beautiful product that allows women to move comfortably through life and work? She’s one of the only leaders that sees business as a movement, does something about it, and makes enough money to keep it going so the change she makes is sustained.

In the interview above, I talk to Fisher about how she feels about fashion companies catching up to her after so long and how she’s built a successful and profitable business on treating everyone along the supply chain with respect.