IDEA EXCHANGE:

Advancing Women in the Workplace

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

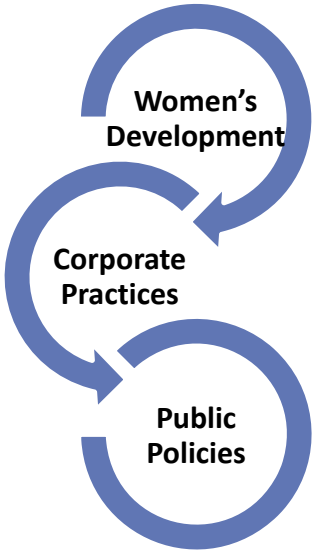
Center for Women and Business

CENTER *for* WOMEN *&* BUSINESS

Moving from Conversation to Action

Bentley University's Center for Women and Business is dedicated to the advancement of women in business. It is the source of practical, effective solutions to challenges posed by a diverse workplace. We offer our business partners a combination of innovative resources and programming that foster an inclusive work environment in which diversity is recognized as a business imperative. Only by finding better ways to support, retain and promote women in the workplace can business organizations harness the talents of their entire workforce and succeed in today's competitive global markets.

To develop an effective "roadmap" for our business partners, we need the input of all stakeholders – from entry-level employees to C-suite executives. The VIVA CWB Idea Exchange is an innovative way to gather the views of men and women in the business world who grapple daily with the challenge of making the workplace more conducive to the advancement of women. Using the New Voice Strategies peer collaboration platform, the CWB conducted an online exchange of ideas that engaged more than 350 individuals who shared their thoughts and suggestions over a three week period. Eleven of those participants then prepared a report that captured and elaborated on these ideas and developed a set of recommendations for action.



These recommendations are summarized in the following pages. They reflect the fact that the obstacles women face need attention and action from multiple stakeholders – from corporate leaders and managers, women in the workforce, and public officials – and offer specific steps that these three stakeholder groups can take to move beyond conversation to action.

We hope that by implementing these recommendations to accelerate the advancement of talented women, businesses will become and remain more competitive.

Sincerely,

Betsy Myers, Founding Director
Susan Adams, Senior Director and Professor of Management
Bentley University
Center for Women and Business

Work of Our Own: An Action Plan to Solve, Resolve, and Ultimately Advance Women in Business

RECOMMENDATIONS AND 24-HOUR CEO CHALLENGES TO CHANGE THE WORKPLACE

Prepared by: The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Peer Collaboration

Abstract & Summation: Women and men from across the country spent hundreds of hours debating how best to help women stay on the leadership track at American companies, ranging from ways to eliminate barriers both small and large to the supports women need inside the office and at home. Then a small group of those women spent countless more hours distilling the ideas into 78 solutions, 16 ideas for CEOs to make change in just 24 hours, and tips and advice for women themselves.

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Introduction

The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Idea Exchange invited women and men from across the country to share their personal experience and professional expertise to come up with ideas about how to end the talent drain and keep women on track to senior management at American corporations.

The online VIVA CWB Idea Exchange uses technology operated by New Voice Strategies. Facilitation is provided by veteran journalist Cindy Richards to ensure the conversation is safe, productive and available whenever participants are.

The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Idea Exchange was open from July 17, 2012 –August 16, 2012. **The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Idea Exchange was conducted in three phases:**

During **Phase I**, women and men from across the country were invited to share their ideas in answer to the question:

"For American businesses to be truly competitive in today's global marketplace, companies need to do much more to retain and promote women as leaders. What are your ideas for creating a corporate culture in which female employees have the support, direction and desire to stay on a leadership path?"

In response, 350 members added 86 ideas and shared 122 comments with one another.

During **Phase II**, a group of 11 women whose active participation in Phase I was clear in terms of both quantity and quality were invited to join The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Writing Collaborative. Their assignment: Take the ideas presented during Phase I and synthesize them into discrete, workable recommendations for keeping women on the leadership track at American corporations.

Phase III of the process will begin when the members of the Writing Collaborative present their ideas in meetings with policy makers in Washington DC and with senior executives at companies across the country.

At New Voice Strategies, we believe in the inspiration that grows from pragmatic experience and in the power of individual voices to make big change. The VIVA CWB Advancing Women in the Workplace Idea Exchange is one example of that power in action. We are inspired by all of the women who participated and particularly the 11 thought leaders: **Deborah Dean, Corina L. Fisher, Dr. Lisa Kaplin, Emily Klein, Karen Linder, Laura Rossi Totten, Julie Madhusoodanan, Melanie Kadlic Meren, Carla Molina, Lisa Amaya Price, and Laura Rock**, whose bios can be found at the end of this report. The innumerable hours these women spent grappling with big ideas and small details made this work possible.

We at New Voice Strategies are grateful for the generous partnership and support of the **Bentley University Center for Women and Business** as we worked on this project.

Executive Summary

If one could assess the success of companies' initiatives to advance the careers of women, the results would be wide-ranging. This report, and the variety of recommendations herein, are written to appeal to all interested parties (CEO, supervisor, or early career employee) who want to move their organization along the continuum, no matter where their starting point, to provide a stronger corporate environment to attract, retain, develop, and advance women.

There is no one solution, so this paper offers an array of recommendations:

- **View Women as a Strategic Asset.** Gender diversity must be tied to corporate strategy, and a compelling business case must be made. Embed gender diversity into strategic conversations and planning sessions. Review the organization's framework and key messages, ensuring they include a strong commitment to diversity.
- **Pave the Way as Corporate Leaders.** In order to make meaningful progress, leaders at all levels must be committed to the inclusion of women. Engage men and women at all levels, making them part of the solution. Ensure that the organization's leadership style is broadly defined, allowing room for both men and women to be successful.
- **Heavily Recruit Women to Ensure More Diverse Governance.** Organizations with diverse board leadership make better decisions and produce stronger financial results. Increase the representation of women on boards to a minimum of 30 percent by encouraging self-nomination of high-potential women, requiring existing board members to sponsor high-potential women and providing board competency training to high-potential women.
- **Increase Cultural Consciousness.** It is critical that leaders understand their corporate culture and ensure that it supports the organization's diversity strategy. The "career ladder" is passé and needs to be replaced with the "career lattice" giving women (and men) options to balance their career advancement with life's other priorities. Educate all employees to be aware and mindful of unintended biases and micro-inequities. Candid conversations must be fostered to remove systemic barriers that have hindered women's advancement into leadership and executive roles. Examine the physical environment, policies and processes to ensure they empower all employees.
- **Choose Accountability.** Everyone knows the axiom "what gets measured gets done." Gender diversity is no different. Ensure appropriate measurement systems assess the impact of the organization's initiatives. Talk to women and discover what will enable their success.
- **Invest in Training and Education.** Corporations need to invest in the development of women in order to retain them and develop future leaders. Use distance learning as a way to keep women engaged during those periods of time when they choose to slow down their careers. Keeping skill sets current and fresh provides women with more options and positively impacts company growth.

- **Create Connections in Support of Women.** Connecting with others — whether it is a mentor who provides skills coaching, a sponsor who opens doors to new career opportunities, a role model who inspires, or a colleague met at a networking event who provides a sympathetic ear — is critical to women's success. The challenges for women in the workplace are considerable, and a sense of community affords the reassurance that they are not alone.
- **Help Working Parents Keep Children Safe and Supported While They Work.** Working mothers (and fathers) are concerned about the environment their children are in. Is my child receiving a good education? Is my child being bullied at school? Is my infant being cared for well? These concerns stem from inconsistent quality in child care and school settings, and the incongruity between the length of a school day and a traditional workday. Women are opting out of the workforce because the situation is untenable. Companies that want to keep these women need to understand that investing in education, on-site or subsidized child care, and the development of strong, confident girls is an investment in their own success.
- **Make Workplace Flexibility the Rule Rather than the Exception.** Along with the "career ladder," the concept of a 9-to-5 job in an office is passé, particularly for today's knowledge workers. Both women and men need the flexibility to integrate their work and home lives. This flexibility goes beyond offering flexible work hours or alternative work arrangements; it means changing the corporate culture so that working flexible hours isn't just tolerated, but applauded and modeled by senior management. It means demonstrating how flexible, mobile work is strategically linked to larger corporate goals. Have honest conversations about employees' needs and possible trade-offs. Provide employees with the necessary tools (technology and social media). Find ways that work can be done effectively in a results-oriented environment, allowing for work-life synergy.
- **Advocate for Public Policy Solutions:** It is incumbent upon public policymakers to level the playing field for women and "set a floor" of conditions that create favorable work environments for women. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: Provide tax incentives for corporations that have at least 30 percent female board representation or offer telework/telecommuting; promote policies that support better education for children; engage in a national dialogue on maternity leave practices, and advocate for alternative school schedules that better align with work schedules.

Throughout the report you will see boxes of suggested personal action plans for both working women and CEOs. For working women, we urge you to take ownership of your career and find your voice as an advocate, not only for yourself, but for the generations of girls and young women entering the workforce behind you. For CEOs, our particular challenge to you is noted throughout as a "24-Hour CEO Challenge." No matter where you are on the continuum, pick one, make it happen, and set the wheels of change in motion. The clock is ticking.

Overview

"Only 5 percent of the executives in the top 50 American companies are women: the numbers numb. Where once, even recently, there was nothing, all those statistics and all their corollaries now show there has been something: some progress forged for women over the past decade of challenge and confusion. Perhaps those numbers are really a crude scale for a new geography, exploring the wide gulf between something and satisfaction."

At first glance, it's easy to assume this quote is a recent commentary on the state of women in the workforce. A closer look will reveal it is actually from the 1982 Time magazine cover story "American Women: The Climb to Equality." In the opinion of the women behind this paper, this quote should seem so outdated in its observations after 30 years that there should be no confusing what decade it's referencing. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

We believe 30 years is more than enough time to have pushed that 5 percent of executives well into the double digits. It's understandable that it took time to get talented women in the door and to create a talent pool from which to choose good, diverse leaders. Recruitment efforts seem to be paying off: recent data indicates 53 percent of entry-level positions and 37 percent of early to mid-management positions are held by women. However, something is happening once women get into the workforce that draws or pushes them away before they have a chance to step into leadership positions. Talented women continue to opt out of corporate America at unacceptable rates. With an unimpressive 3 percent of women holding CEO-level positions, it's obvious the lesson yet to be learned is how to retain female talent by creating environments and systems conducive to their needs.

The women behind this paper want to see more corporations led by women, not just because it's time, but because we believe the key to bottom-line success is having leadership diversity. In today's challenging economic environment, no company can afford to ignore practices that have been proven to produce positive financial results.

So what can we, a loose affiliation of 11 women, some in the corporate world and some who have opted out, add to the extensive body of work addressing the need for more women in corporate leadership? Our experience. We bring to the table our experiences of what has successfully supported us in our corporate careers and what has driven us out. Each of us has, at one point or another, put our best selves into being leaders within an organization and received varying degrees of support in return. We are ready to lead the charge for substantive change.

Here are a few of our stories: (see next page)

Stories

Lisa Amaya Price

Lisa is a human resources leader in the biotechnology industry and credits her husband's support of her career for being able to stay focused on reaching her professional goals. She works full time to support her family while her husband focuses on their two children, ages 2 and 8. When no suitable educational options were available to them, Lisa and her husband chose to home-school their children. Having fostered a supportive relationship at home that allows her to thrive in her career, Lisa feels it's tremendously harder to establish the same support at work. Undeterred, Lisa has taken the matter into her own hands and has begun the journey to help her company balance out gender inequality.

Deborah Dean

"Work hard and make yourself indispensable. Then, when the time comes and you want to have children, the firm will work with you to accommodate your needs so it can keep you here." Deborah was given this advice early in her career and applied it every step of the way. As a result, she was able to enjoy a flexible schedule for 12 years, while her children were young.

Emily Klein

Emily thanks her long tenure with one company for allowing her to take advantage of flexible work practices and reduce the amount of business travel required in her role after her daughter was born. Dismayed that flexibility is not common in all businesses, Emily left corporate America after many years to help organizations implement flexible workplace practices that support the more mobile ways of working today.

Karen Linder

Karen left a 16-year career in academia to open her own small business. She sought more flexibility, better pay and more opportunities. Since her initial departure, she's successfully started two additional businesses and published a book.

Overview

We are united here because we believe what is acknowledged in the minds of today's business leaders is not yet accepted in their hearts. Too often, business leaders speak about the value of gender diversity, but their actions fail to drive home the same message. This report provides a variety of recommended actions so leaders can substantively practice what they preach and, confident in the improved business outcomes, begin to wholeheartedly embrace diversity. To get women to the top, corporate America needs a paradigm shift in how leadership supports women's careers, helps them to integrate their work and home lives, and builds relationships with women that will last throughout a career.

This paper is an action guide — in some cases, action that can be taken within 24 hours — to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to making your company a place where women can thrive and lead. Where other reports succeed in making a solid case for why change is needed, this paper provides specific, actionable recommendations for impacting how an organization can approach supporting and empowering its female talent. Here you'll find an escape from broad suggestions. Instead you'll find detailed steps for fixing the leak in the talent pipeline.

The authors of this paper tapped into their own experiences as women with relationships with corporate America and spoke to areas which weaken retention efforts when it comes to female talent. Throughout the paper you will hear our experiences in our own words. If you are reading this, we are speaking to you. We challenge you to take from this report at least one action item to implement within the next 24 hours.

RECOMMENDATION 1

View Women as a Strategic Asset

The Importance of Feeling Supported

Corina L. Fisher

I have been with the same employer for 12 years, and while advancement opportunities have been abundant, I did not always feel supported by my leadership. At times, it was discouraging to not be part of the "boys club." That changed in June 2011, when I accepted my current position as Director of Talent Strategy within MetLife.

I am proud to be part of an organization that not only listens to women, but actively seeks out our feedback. My leader made it a strategic business goal to retain, develop, and advance women. He asks MetLife women what specifically holds us back and provides the tools, resources, and learning opportunities needed to advance. He stresses the importance of having a diverse workforce and is a shining example of "walking the talk" by having a leadership team that's nearly 50 percent women. He understands that although he does not possess all the answers, he is willing to work toward finding solutions.

Over the course of my career, I have never felt more engaged, dedicated, and loyal than I do working in his organization. It's uplifting to know that when he seeks out my opinion, it's because it means something to him. That, in turn, means the world to me.

Statement of the Problem

Women face difficult challenges and choices throughout the trajectory of their careers. When companies fail to commit to helping women advance to senior roles and don't promote and support flexible work, many women leave to pursue other options. In a UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School survey, nearly half (48 percent) of respondents indicated that the development of women was not on the strategic agenda. Leaders who commit to women's advancement as a strategic business imperative and effectively link it to broader corporate strategic goals are better positioned to be an employer of choice.

Proposed Solutions

1. **Create and communicate the compelling business case for diversity as a strategic necessity**. Companies that embrace and leverage diverse perspectives will have the competitive edge in both attracting and retaining talent. The world is not flat, nor is it composed of one sex. In order to understand the market, companies must understand their customers — who they are, what they want, how they think. Those companies that understand this and then act to ensure they include within their own ranks the diverse perspectives that reflect their market will have the advantage over competitors. Companies that attract and retain women will improve their competitive place in the market.

2. **Embed gender diversity initiatives into strategic conversations and strategic planning.** Asking leaders what characteristics in an existing culture inhibit inclusion opens dialogue about changes needed to move the current organization culture forward. Organization cultures will not evolve without focused time thinking about culture and getting commitment to change from senior executives and the management team. This requires establishing or refining a vision for an organization's future.

Advice for Working Women

- Who is involved in the strategic planning process in your organization? If there are no women, approach your CEO to discuss the best way to ensure greater diversity in the process.
- Champion corporate strategies that support and advance women.

3. **Review your strategic framework — mission statement, vision statement, and values — to ensure it contains a commitment to inclusion and diversity.** Consider creating a separate diversity statement that reaffirms the organization's commitment and establishes desired objectives.

Task your Chief Administrative Officer or the head of Human Resources with assessing your strategic framework documents with a defined deadline for reporting back. If a gap exists in addressing diversity, set a goal of amending the documents.

Why We Believe This Will Work

Efforts to achieve alignment need to include conversations about how diversity is a business strategy that moves beyond traditional biases and perceptions of it as a gender issue, HR initiative alone, or a perk for a select few stellar performers. Demonstrating how inclusion is a corporate business strategy is an important step in gaining understanding and consensus of why it merits attention and resources. By establishing a strong business case for the retention and advancement of women and demonstrating a compelling return on investment, executives have greater visibility of, and show increased commitment for, goals that impact the bottom line.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Pave the Way as Corporate Leaders

Statement of the Problem

The compelling business case for greater diversity has been made. Despite this, and despite decades of work on the subject, the goal of unmitigated corporate diversity and inclusion seems elusive. How can this be? Quite simply, because what is acknowledged in the minds of today's leaders is not yet universally accepted in their hearts. This means the CEO — the person who sets the culture for the company — has not made it clear that recruiting, training, supporting and promoting talented women is a corporate priority.

A recent McKinsey & Co. survey found that when asked about the connection between diverse leadership teams and financial success, 85 percent of the female respondents believed that there was a connection versus 58 percent of the male respondents. Given that males make up 83 percent of senior leaders, this is a problem. Let's be honest: While corporations have made strides in some areas of inclusion — hosting women's networks, introducing mentoring programs, championing leadership development programs, and encouraging flexible work arrangements — what remains is the hard stuff that moves inclusion from "something we need to do" to "something we inherently believe in." Leaders, both men and women, have to get real with one another and start by addressing their own beliefs.

Proposed Solutions

4. **Ensure leaders are including women.** Senior management must be fully committed to the inclusion of women, or there will be no impact on the demographics of executive leadership. Leaders need to ensure corporate cultures authentically reflect that including women equally in the upper leadership ranks is not just nice to have, it's a business imperative. Companies with at least 25 percent women on their executive committees outperformed those companies with no women on their executive committees by 41 percent in return on equity from 2007 through 2009, according to McKinsey's research. In some instances, ensuring your corporation's leaders are committed to gender diversity may take nothing more than a CEO decreeing that it is a key business goal. In other instances, it may require more tangible proof of commitment, perhaps by tying a portion of a leader's compensation to his or her success in meeting diversity goals. Engage senior leaders in making the business case. This will drive the commitment down the management chain to recruit, develop, and retain skilled women, thus loading the pipeline with qualified women ready to move into the ranks of executive management.

Are you fully committed to gender diversity? Show that you are willing to "walk the talk" by issuing an all-employee email or memo emphasizing your personal commitment and intent to institute substantive change.

5. **Give leaders time to learn and personalize inclusion.** Drive home the company's commitment to gender diversity by requiring all of your key leaders, regardless of their gender, to rotate into a three- to six-month assignment in which they focus on being an advocate for inclusion. Leaders would be relieved of at least 20 percent of their regular duties to accommodate this assignment. The assignment would include a listening tour focused on the experiences of women at all levels of the organization, developing a clear business case for the organization on the benefits of inclusion, and leading their peers in education and workshops around how to lead an inclusive organization. This a cost-effective strategy that establishes diversity as an integral part of the organization, not just another stand-alone initiative.

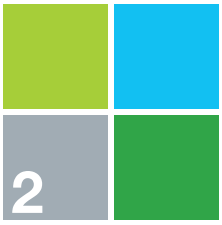
6. **Expect executives to participate in the solution.** Leaders should demonstrate how they are creating a gender-balanced, flexible culture by participating in it themselves, communicating their stories, and actively encouraging others at all levels of the organization to follow. Ongoing dialogue and coaching designed to engage the participation of others is also part of embedding inclusion throughout the organization.

Host a "coffee chat" with a select group of influential leaders within your organization. Share your personal story. How have you or the women in your life (mother, wife, sister, daughter, etc.) successfully addressed the challenges working women face? Or, share what actions you've taken to help women overcome these challenges. Then listen while the leaders tell you why they have (or have not) furthered the company's goal of increasing female representation at the highest levels.

7. **Assess the preferred leadership style in your organization and ensure it is gender-neutral.** Is your company's preferred leadership style unintentionally biased toward a style that is more natural to men than women? Are women's styles (collaborative, empathetic, communicative) viewed as not strong or assertive enough for leadership roles? Is it possible that some women are dropping off the promotion track because they do not feel they can be authentic? If this is the case, partner with the HR department to redefine the organization's core leadership competencies and make sure they are considered before making key promotion and hiring decisions.

8. **Set a corporate policy that says your company will not sell products with advertising that sexualizes girls or is sexist in nature.** Companies need to demand of themselves a zero-tolerance policy of marketing, producing, and delivering any products that are anti-women. A woman cannot be expected to consider herself a valued employee at a company that would use sexist marketing techniques to sell their products.

9. **Require at least one man and one woman on succession plans.** This forces leaders to get serious about identifying a diverse slate of future strategic leaders.



Why We Believe This Will Work

Leaders must actively role model desired mindsets and behaviors to build more accepting cultures. Hands-on CEOs need to reach out to get other senior leaders involved in the effort, making them catalysts and partners for change. By engaging leaders in the conversation as equal partners, a greater commitment to set a corporate strategic direction that embraces an evolved work culture is achieved. This culture welcomes flexibility and women's advancement as competitive differentiators. We believe companies that support, develop, respect, and reward women within the company as well as young girls and women within the community, will find their workforce to be stronger, more vital, and more self-sustaining.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Heavily Recruit Women to Ensure More Diverse Governance

Aspiring to Board Membership

Debbie Dean

I have been a lawyer for 25 years. My current role is Vice President, DS Americas General Counsel for Dassault Systèmes, the second-largest software company in Europe in terms of market cap (10-plus billion euros) and revenue. Over the course of my career, I have counseled companies both private and public, from emerging to large market cap. I have worked with all functions across corporations —sales, finance, research and development, marketing, human resources, boards, executives, investors — and grappled not only with legal issues facing corporations, but also with finance, accounting, employment, ethics and strategy matters, on a local and a global basis.

I aspire to be on a public company board at some future point in my career. I know many senior-level women who have similar wide-ranging and relevant experience who could provide unique and invaluable wisdom to companies in a board position. Those companies that understand this have already populated their boards accordingly and have reaped the benefits in profits and growth. My belief is that other sophisticated companies will now follow suit, and gender parity on boards will increase at a much faster rate than we have seen to date.

Statement of the Problem

The United States underutilizes its workforce. Despite the fact that women occupy 47 percent of the jobs in our country, less than 20 percent of corporate board seats are held by women. Diverse boards perform better. Corporations having female board members outperform those that have none in terms of share price performance and return on equity. This is not a gender issue. It's an economic issue.

Proposed Solutions

10. **Increase female representation on boards of directors to a minimum of 30 percent.** The inclusion of women on the board of directors benefits the company by providing governance that results in better financial outcomes and, if our public policy recommendation becomes law, a tax break (see public policy recommendations).

Contact the head of your board's nominating committee and stipulate that the next slate of nominees must consist of at least 50 percent viable women candidates.

11. **Encourage outside board self-nomination and participation for high-potential women.** Lessons learned in governing other companies helps develop necessary executive leadership skills.

12. **Require existing board members to sponsor a female leader.** Create a pipeline of potential board member candidates by having current directors participate in career sponsorship.

13. **Provide board competency training to women who are potential candidates.** Training prepares women to serve on boards and provides existing board members confidence in the candidate and/or new board member.

Advice for Working Women

- Practice "Impact Purchasing" and "Impact Investing." Be a consumer and investor of companies that include women on their boards and support your values.
- Acquire a sponsor who is a corporate board member. Connecting with current board members is the most likely path to a board appointment.
- Nominate yourself for board membership. Share your resume with firms that perform searches for corporate directors.
- Obtain board competency training from your employer or an outside source. Acquire the necessary skills for board membership and the confidence to perform required duties.

Why We Believe This Will Work

In terms of share price performance, large companies with at least one woman on the board perform 26 percent better than those without, while small and midsize companies with female board representation perform 17 percent better than those without. Additionally, the average return on equity of companies with at least one woman on the board over the last six years is 4 percentage points higher than the average ROE of companies with no female board representation. Homogenous board composition encourages "group think," with potentially tragic outcomes. Diverse boards are better equipped to make decisions and take action. Bigger and broader representation closer to the population means that companies can engage better; businesses that are not deploying female high-achievers could be missing out on a vast array of talent.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Increase Cultural Consciousness

Thursdays

Laura Rossi Totten

I've always been passionate about my work. When I started my family, I knew my career would remain a priority. What I didn't know: I would have twins, I would move away from New York City, and I would have a special needs child.

And yet I've managed — after two decades of a career that still feels like a dream-come-true — to make my work work. Along the way, clients and colleagues, bosses and peers, mentors and coaches, projects and cities, move in and out of my life. My career constantly evolves.

Which brings me to my Thursdays — they are a snapshot of how flexibility, a lattice sensibility, a "can-do" attitude, and a new work model drives my career forward.

I mark Thursdays because they are remarkable — by 2 p.m. I am caring for my children and attending my son's therapy, and by 6 p.m. I'm back at work.

This seamless synergy between family and work proves that integrating all the moving parts of my life is what makes my work work.

Statement of the Problem

Corporate culture can be defined as the combination of structural elements and behaviors/norms. Structural elements include tangible artifacts such as mission and value statements, policies, organizational design, physical work environment, and rewards and recognition systems. Behaviors and norms reflect the degree to which the leadership and employees act in a way that is consistent or divergent with the structural elements of the culture. These cultural components must be congruent. The challenge is that corporate cultures originally were shaped from a male (with a stay-at-home spouse) perspective that does not suit the needs of today's working women.

Proposed Solutions

14. **Adopt a non-linear lattice career path approach to accommodate the new ways of working.** The "Corporate Ladder" paradigm stunts growth when it comes to women. This outdated, linear model assumes a straight, narrow and uninterrupted path to success. This isn't the case for today's working women. Today, women aren't climbing the corporate ladder, but rather navigating a confusing maze of dead-ends and wrong turns. In fact, the ladder to the top does not account for the natural, unpredictable nature of an employee's life. This means a large portion of non-linear talent is potentially lost. The ladder model isn't beneficial to women, especially to mothers who often step in and out of the workforce during maternity leave and use non-traditional schedules to accommodate family responsibilities. Rather, a "Lattice Model" of work is needed to support today's working women, from staff level to corporate leadership. A lattice pattern with ups, downs and sideways movements has been proven to boost morale, assure longevity, and affect the bottom line positively. The key is integration and agility — life and work.

15. **Foster non-competitive workplaces, allowing employees to seize the "anti-ladder."** Eliminate competition and design promotion and recognition systems that foster non-competitive workplaces to allow employees to seize the anti-ladder. Climbing up and over and on top of others to succeed will no longer be the hidden motive. Rather, concurrent successes can be celebrated and strived for by individuals for collective company success.

Charge your communications department with developing a monthly communication (website, email, bulletin) that lists all internal career moves, not just those that move "up" the corporate hierarchy, as a way to showcase your company's "lattice."

16. **Teach collaboration.** Offer team-building activities or retreats to foster a collaborative environment.

17. **Focus on individual talents and niches.** They are the foundations for success at the individual, department and companywide platform. Adopt the mindset of "it takes a village" to yield universal rewards and teach managers how to best assess and deploy employees to work to their strengths.

18. **Promote an inclusion model for women that offers alternative paths to success.** Explore implementing Mass Career Customization or similar systems that support high performance and career development. These approaches acknowledge that workers' priorities change over time, and thus focus on providing options.

19. **Ensure all leaders are aware of and guard against well-intentioned, yet unconscious, bias.** Men and women need to learn how to have constructive dialogue about diversity. If we can't talk openly, we'll never be able to work through the issues. A culture must be established where both men and women can honestly express their thoughts, opinions, and concerns in an attempt to leave behind preconceptions they have of each other and rid the environment of unconscious bias.

    - *Facilitated training.* Start at the top with your senior leadership team and conduct training sessions intended to help participants uncover unintended biases and raise awareness of behavior perceptions.
    - *Micro-inequities.* Give employees the tools they need to address "micro-inequities," such as small slights, subtle insensitivities and little daily acts that cumulatively demoralize employees. Micro-inequities can be conveyed by gestures, words, treatment, or tone of voice. Examples include seemingly harmless jokes, disregarding someone's comments in a meeting or the use of football analogies.
    - *Create champions of bias-elimination.* Be vigilant and create a culture where biases and micro-inequities are neither defended nor tolerated. Train your HR department to be a watchful champion of bias elimination.

20. **Be careful of assumptions.** Offer stretch assignments to men and women equally, without assumptions regarding their personal circumstances.

21. **Replace embedded institutional mindsets.** Eliminate existing deep-seated beliefs — "everyone knows a woman shouldn't be doing that," "that job can't be done part-time" — by addressing them head-on.

Advice for Working Women

- Ask yourself what assumptions you make of others. Are you unintentionally limiting the opportunities of others based on those assumptions?
- Confront and replace your own self-limiting, embedded mindsets.

22. **Create productive work spaces depending on the preferences of the individual.** Empower employees to customize their optimal work environments. Employers can help employees create working spaces that let them be the most productive. For example, designate quiet workspaces for individuals who work best alone, or ensure open, interactive workspaces for teams that rely upon collaboration. The ability to customize the work environment helps establish a culture that sees workers as individuals, not interchangeable machines.

23. **Ensure your hiring process is free of unconscious biases.** Challenge your hiring managers with these types of questions: Are you making decisions based on objective job-related criteria? Is one candidate preferred over another because of a similar background or training? Could the team benefit from having the perspective of someone who brings a different perspective and background to the work?

24. **Include information regarding flexible options in the interviewing, hiring, and on-boarding process.** Alter job descriptions to include options regarding flexibility. Send the message early on that your organization is committed to work/life synergy.

25. **Utilize data and HR to monitor progress.** Conduct companywide reviews of structural barriers that limit career growth, and analyze data to pinpoint where change can be made. Action steps can include: monitoring the career progression of top performers, an anonymous companywide survey assessing employee attitudes and work/life goals, and the development of talent retention strategies.

Task the head of HR to gather relevant data on high potential-women — job postings, promotions, compensation, development plans, and training. Compare it to male contemporaries to determine dissimilarities that may pinpoint previously undiscovered barriers.

26. **Create a maternity leave tool kit celebrating the occasion of a birth or adoption.** This tool kit should be made available to all parents who plan on taking time off to care for a new child. The tone of the tool kit should celebrate such a momentous occasion and discuss it as a welcome moment in their career, yet recognizing that their lives have significantly changed, potentially requiring changes to their work habits. Lay out options employees have regarding returning to work. Be sure to include: copies of all leave policies, key contact information, expectations regarding the leave process timeline, sample leave request forms, personal stories from role models, and a list of vetted and recommended child care providers in the area. Most importantly, ensure that managers are familiar with the information in the tool kit. Having a central document for employees and managers to reference gets the conversation started with equal knowledge.

Advice for Working Women

- Contact locally elected officials to discuss the importance of improved maternity leave policies, not just for mothers but for families. Take it a step further and organize a group of passionate and concerned citizens to share individual stories of why this issue is important.
- Join an advocacy group and keep up to date on efforts nationwide to improve maternal and paternal leave policies.

27. **Ensure performance reviews are gender-neutral.** Use the same performance evaluation criteria for both genders. Women are often evaluated based on their accomplishments while men often are evaluated for potential. Make certain that your process neutralizes the impact of parental leaves and/or flexible work arrangements.

Why We Believe This Will Work

To remain competitive, organizations must inherently align company values to support advancement without gender bias and create inclusive corporate cultures that support the needs of the diverse workforce in play today. When corporate strategy is inherently inclusive, and the executives believe, act and hold themselves accountable in a manner that showcases them as ambassadors of inclusion, it will ultimately help the organization reap the advantages of diverse thinking.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Choose Accountability

Statement of the Problem

Leaders of organizations that embed women's advancement initiatives with corporate strategy, supported by the use of measurement systems to track and communicate outcomes, are more likely to build accountability for results in their organizations. A structured approach to articulating and managing initiatives, aligning individual and departmental objectives, and a commitment to the behavioral/cultural aspects of manifesting systemic change strengthens understanding and commitment to long-term strategies.

Proposed Solutions

28. **Diagnose and track what really impacts women's success in your organization.** Don't just examine the structural elements of your culture. Be a relentless cultural steward and ensure that all leaders "walk the talk." Talk to women at all levels, listen to their experiences and proactively address the issues that negatively affect their engagement and retention.

29. **Find out why women are not reaching the upper levels in your organization.** Research shows that while most successful large corporations have a workforce composed of more than 50 percent women, fewer than 20 percent reach the executive ranks. In our experience, many companies choose to address this by focusing on their female top talent at the upper levels of middle management in the hopes of encouraging this group to stay engaged and not choose to leave the organization. This approach assumes that the obstacles to the upper levels start at the upper levels. But the obstacles are many, and start when women enter the organization.

30. **Create and implement systems and tools that enable flexibility.** Within businesses and in individual departments, create and implement systems and tools of collaboration that promote a results-oriented work environment for all employees, regardless of location.

    - *Measure productivity and accountability.* Regular meetings between managers of distributed teams and virtual employees via video chat and conference calls enforce accountability. Cloud-based systems make work accessible and measurable regardless of location, and eliminate the need for employees to be in the office to be productive.
    - *Measure results, not hours.* Foster a culture where getting the work done is what matters, not hours clocked. Address mid-manager resistance to change through training, education, and incentives. Incentives should have team and individual elements.
    - *Train at least one member from each department to be an inclusion advocate.* Make sure there are inclusion "sentinels," other than HR, present for all key hiring, promotion and development decisions; it should be understood that these

individuals have the responsibility to be vigilant against unintended bias. The role of these advocates is to ask some tough questions before a decision is finalized. For example, "We just said that the team finds Mary's leadership style too aggressive — would we feel differently about her leadership style if she were a man?"

31. **Clearly define competencies and behaviors necessary for success, ensuring gender-neutrality.** Publicly identify both male and female role models who exemplify these competencies and behaviors.

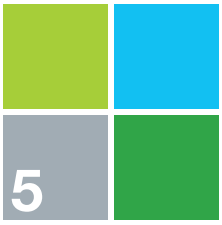
32. **Conduct regular retention interviews of high-potential women.** Find out what's on these women's minds. Are they still fully engaged? Are they able to be authentic leaders in your organization, or are they making uncomfortable compromises? This is difficult information to hear, but it's essential to know these things if you want to make a sustainable difference in your leadership demographics. Take action on this information at both the individual level and the organizational level.

Engage a high-potential, early-in-her-career employee in an open dialogue about the challenges she faces as a working woman. Practice active listening to gain a better understanding of concerns that might push or pull her from the organization.

33. **Conduct engagement surveys and analyze the results based on gender at different levels of the organization.** Does your organization do an employee engagement survey? Track engagement scores of women by level; conduct focus groups at levels where there is a large divergence between male and female scores. Care deeply about uncovering the root causes of this divergence.

34. **Create actionable goals and metrics to create accountability.** Performance metrics should go beyond identifying eligibility and participation rates. They should also measure overall satisfaction and attitudes supporting women's advancement and outcomes of inclusion programs. Utilizing a strategic management system reinforces that the responsibility for achieving corporate goals rests not in the hands of executives alone, but is dispersed and shared throughout an organization. Have gender-specific hiring goals and indicators of performance in hiring, retaining, promoting, and developing women.

35. **Evaluate leaders on the achievement of strategic diversity goals and use data to measure progress.** Connect individual and departmental outcomes to performance management systems that aid in annual reviews and compensation/rewards. While many companies have not yet linked performance to compensation in meeting workplace flexibility and women's advancement goals, it is an essential next step toward progress and realizing successful outcomes. Specifically assess a manager's success in developing female employees and their participation rates in leadership development courses. Tie a portion of the manager's salary increase to an improvement in gender diversity of their team and promotion of women in their department.



Why We Believe This Will Work

Committing to increased performance around gender diversity goals requires that organizations routinely ask how well they are doing and how they can improve. Organizations that effectively link gender diversity with larger strategic goals and initiatives are more clearly able to track desired outcomes with data that informs management and leadership on systemic progress in the organization. Linking those corporate performance outcomes to performance reviews and compensation awards strengthens accountability in organizations in an essential way. Managers and leaders are shown that fostering a results-oriented culture that promotes a high-performing workforce is achieved, in part, by ensuring gender diversity goals are met and rewarded.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Invest in Training and Education

Statement of the Problem

Women will benefit from leadership training and support that begins early in their lives, and continues through their working years. While much can be done once women are in the workforce, it is essential that young girls are set on a path to achieve confidence and attain vital workforce skills. Despite representing approximately half of the workforce, women receive less leadership training than men and are, therefore, less prepared to advance to executive levels. Leadership training is inadequate to address the needs of women in business, and women must learn how to break into the organization's power structure to advance.

Proposed Solutions

36. **Promote the self-esteem and educational development of girls.** Adopt a zero-tolerance policy of marketing, producing, and delivering products that overtly sexualize girls. Host educational and motivational film showings; showcase female speakers who have succeeded in a variety of career paths; or create shadow days in which girls can observe employees to learn the variety of job opportunities within varying fields.

37. **Participate in programs that advocate science and math careers for girls.** Not only will this serve to promote these critical skills for girls, but it will be an excellent opportunity for companies to identify promising young leaders in these fields. This would allow companies to follow and assist a girl from a young age up until the time she is ready to begin her career.

38. **Promote opportunities for girls in typically male-dominated fields.** Encourage corporate volunteerism in middle and high schools to promote opportunities for girls in typically male-dominated fields such as engineering, science, and architecture. Offer a "lunch and learn" series for female employees, young girls and women in the community to discuss career opportunities, educational requirements, and long-term career planning.

Task a senior executive with creating a "lunch and learn" series for female employees, young girls and women in the community to discuss career opportunities, educational requirements, and long-term career planning. Then make a pledge to attend the first session to demonstrate your company's commitment to this program.

39. **Make the criteria for success easily obtainable.** Create a leadership roadmap outlining the necessary skills and education to attain specific leadership roles. Include the following specifics: required previous experience and how to acquire it (provide examples of projects and job roles which will meet expectations); certifications or degrees required specific to the leadership role being addressed; and the name and profile of the current incumbent (i.e., their journey to the position). Roadmaps should be updated regularly and distributed as part of a career workbook enabling employees to compare their career map to date with the road they're hoping to travel.

40. **Make distance learning available to women who have chosen to slow down their careers while on maternity leave, during extended alternative work arrangements or during transitional times.** Make professional development opportunities more easily accessible to women who want to stay on track skillwise with their professional goals. A willingness on behalf of both parties to invest in education and developing relevant skills is an investment in building a long-term relationship between an employee and a company.

41. **Require continuing education to keep employees current and agile.** In the same manner that educators need professional development credits, create systems that will support this model for businesses. For example, technology seminars or software training can keep employees' skills fresh and current. Investing in the workforce will yield choices and agility as employees navigate their career lattice.

42. **Have clear policies regarding participation in career advancement conferences.** Invest in your employees by giving them time to attend these conferences and, if your budget allows, fund registration fees and/or travel expenses.

43. **Establish gender participation guidelines for leadership training.** The guidelines should state that the percentage of female participation must be equal to the company's entry-level female representation, when possible. For example, if 40 percent of the company's entry-level jobs are filled by women, leadership development programs at all levels will include 40 percent female participation.

44. **Provide skill-building programs specifically for women.** Institute a Women's Advisory Committee composed of women from all levels of the organization that can speak to the competency development needs of women in the organization. Topics of interest could include confidence-building, industry or financial acumen, how to successfully self-promote, or when to and how to find a career mentor or sponsor.

Identify the Women's Advisory Committee chairperson. Reach out to her to discuss the opportunity and objective. Collaborate with her to develop a strategy for recruiting the remaining committee members.

45. **Open exceptional corporate leadership training programs to outside individuals to promote best practices.** These existing programs provide high-quality education and training to individuals from outside the organization who lack access to quality development programs.

Advice for Working Women

- Be a lifelong learner to keep your skills current and build confidence, particularly during those periods of time when you decide to slow your career. Take a long-term view and continue to develop yourself, ensuring that you remain viable.
- Become an education advocate to share information with parents, educators, and the medical community on how to raise daughters in a healthy way in today's challenging society.
- Promote math and science events, share your own successes, and point out female role models in these fields to prepare girls to educate themselves, compete, and succeed.

Why We Believe This Will Work

The more educated, empowered, and confident women are as they enter the workforce, the more likely they are to be successful throughout their career. Companies that support, develop, respect and reward women within the company as well as young girls and women within the community, will find their workforce to be stronger, more vital, and more self-sustaining.

Expanding the pool of qualified leaders by investing in the development of women improves the effectiveness and success of leadership. Selecting leaders from 100 percent of the population results in companies that outperform those with less diverse leadership.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Create Connections In Support of Women

A Connected Community Story

Julie Madhusoodanan

A big part of my career growth can be attributed to the availability of timely information and opportunities made possible through the existence of a community that was invested in both the professional and personal growth of women employees. This manifested itself in various forms (formal mentoring networks, training, women's conferences, and social events). The end result was exposure to a wealth of knowledge and a subsequent inheritance of rich experiences that was not achievable through traditional resources like books. The in-person conversations, immediate turnaround and personal touch that such a community renders is beyond compare. It took time commitment from the people involved and a deep-rooted belief in the corporate culture to acknowledge and support the growth of this community framework.

This framework helped me discover job matches that would never have come my way otherwise, get advice on managing tough situations at the workplace and simple tips and tricks on work-life balance. One example: When I was nearing the end of my maternity leave, I was overwhelmed with sorting out a routine to get back to work. Choosing between multiple day care offerings was one of them. I ran into a colleague I met through a conference. I had immense respect for the diligence and thoroughness she projected in her presentations. She happened to have done extensive research on the topic of day care (no surprise) less than a month earlier for her child and was more than willing to share it. The end result was savings on the order of days as I made my choice. I cannot underscore enough the importance of this information-sharing and how much it helped with my seamless transition back to work.

A Thank You Note to My Sponsors

Laura Rock

I would not be where I am today without the influence of sponsors throughout my career. They are the reason I attended the local Chamber of Commerce yearlong leadership program and subsequently became the first female board chairperson; they are the reason I attended a week-long business finance seminar at a preeminent business school early in my career; they are the reason I obtained my master's degree; they are the reason I found the courage to relocate my family to advance my career; they are the reason I have led enterprise-wide, high-impact, high-visibility change initiatives; and they are the reason I was fortunate enough to be able to contribute to this initiative.

They have been both men and women, and despite their many differences, the one thing they had in common was that they all believed in me more than I believed in myself. That's what

7

a sponsor does — they invest time in you, they put you in challenging situations, they watch your back, and they passionately advocate for you, putting their own reputation on the line. While I'm confident in my abilities and ambitious, I never would have accomplished what I have without their support. Thanks to them, the more they see in me, the more I discover in myself.

Statement of the Problem

Women too often lack formal mentors and sponsors during their professional careers. This can be detrimental to them advancing at the same pace as men. One reason is the shortage of women in senior leadership positions who can act as role models for women looking to advance. Women are often told they need mentors but do not proactively search for one or are uninformed on how to select one. In addition, both men and women can be unclear on the differences between mentoring and sponsoring and may interchange the two terms. While one is not better than the other, they are very distinct activities and are utilized differently throughout the career lifecycle. While a mentor can be considered a job coach for someone looking to master their current role, a sponsor is an advocate who will make recommendations for stretch assignments and advancement. Lastly, women can feel excluded from traditional networking activities, such as sporting events, or do not actively take advantage of the networking opportunities available to them due to family commitments.

Proposed Solutions

46. **Educate both men and women on the differences between sponsoring and mentoring.** Sponsorship is about being an advocate and helping people get connected. Sponsors actively open doors, arrange key introductions and facilitate important relationships. A sponsor will vouch for someone and advocate for high-visibility projects. Mentors are job coaches who guide individuals through their current role and teach them to avoid career missteps. They propose key strategies for handling issues and offer day-to-day advice. While a mentor will answer questions on how to advance a career, a sponsor will foster the relationship to ensure it happens. Educating men and women on the differences between the two will grant them the ability to strategize and get the most out of their relationships. It will also help employees identify the types of leaders that will best fit the sponsor and mentor roles.

47. **Facilitate support for professional women early in the career lifecycle.** Too often professional development programs and support are reserved for employees who are at senior management levels. Research shows that high-potential women make the decision to opt off of the leadership track due to their cumulative experiences since the very start of their careers. Focus the investment of community frameworks on women just entering management.

Choose to publicly model your commitment to gender diversity by sponsoring at least one woman in an entry-level management role. If you do not already have someone in mind, reach out to the head of HR to see who is on his or her talent radar. Identify where your active sponsorship can best impact the trajectory of her career.

48. **Mandate executive sponsorship of women.** While the decision of whom to sponsor lies with the individual leader, women who have been identified as high-potential should be paired with a sponsor. Tie effective and successful sponsorship to compensation for senior leaders. At the executive level, corporations should implement a yearly requirement to sponsor and advance at least one high-potential woman.

49. **Create a forum for students to be paired with professional mentors prior to college graduation.** Offering students the opportunity to be paired with a corporate mentor provides a positive role model and sounding board as they consider career options and during the often confusing transition into the corporate world. Having a mentor will provide students greater self-esteem, better prepare them for starting a new position and will enable them to progress further and faster within the workforce. Corporations also benefit by having a pipeline of entry-level talent that can quickly assimilate into the workforce.

50. **Construct networks, both external across industries and internal to companies, to support women networking.** In the U.K., the City Women's Network was formed to establish a women's peer network to assist women entering business, particularly in traditionally male-dominated professions. Leveraging this example, industry-specific communities for women should be supported and/or created by corporations.

51. **Create internal, open forums for women to network with other female professionals and leaders.** Corporations should sponsor open, informal forums providing current and future female leaders the opportunity to interact face-to-face and develop important connections that they can rely upon daily. By fostering this community, corporations benefit by having women that are more engaged and feel more connected to one another and the company.

Advice for Working Women

- Educate yourself on the difference between mentoring and sponsoring and make sure you have both. Know how to utilize them to further develop your skills and advance your career.
- Realize that you too have a lot to give others. Network with other women and provide support. Become a mentor or, if you are in a position to help, be an active sponsor for other women.

52. **Give high-potential women access to executives and role models.** This can be achieved simply and inexpensively by having executives host a monthly roundtable discussion with small groups of women, and it goes a long way in helping women learn to navigate the political landscape of the organization. Or, implement "leadership open office hours" where senior leaders make themselves available to employees who want to learn more about becoming leaders.

Commit to hosting your company's first roundtable discussion, and at least once a quarter, be one of the senior executives offering "leadership open office hours."

53. **Invest in corporate memberships to prominent women's business groups.** This will provide women the opportunity to attend events and access the resources and networks of these outside associations. Actively promote the availability of these memberships.

54. **Institute a funded Women's Network.** The amount of the funding can be relatively small at first, depending on the financial status of the company. The point is to make a financial commitment, thus demonstrating the organization's commitment to diversity. Encourage executives to be vocal advocates, and require that they attend at least two meetings or events per year. The objectives of such a group will vary by company, but could include: coordinating female youth outreach, being a sounding board for the marketing department to obtain a diverse "woman's perspective" on company advertising or customer outreach, and/or coordinating speakers/trainers supporting the growth and development of female employees.

55. **Develop a mothers' mentoring program.** Enlist women within the organization who have juggled or are juggling motherhood and a career and pair them with female employees during their pregnancy or adoption process. Mentors would provide support in mapping out a career plan, figuring out leave and return-to-work options, and other challenges faced when transitioning into motherhood as a businesswoman.

Why We Believe This Will Work

Building a sense of community for women to support both their professional and personal aspirations has produced positive results in addressing the problem of retaining women in the senior ranks of large corporations. The emphasis here is on removing the perception that an individual is facing the challenges of working in the corporate world on her own. This structured support can begin in college, by aligning students with mentors to better enable the success of future generations of talented women. Once in the workforce, providing women the support of sponsors, mentors and peers via networking equips them with a well-rounded support system allowing them to stay in the workforce and advance further and more quickly.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Help Working Parents Keep Children Safe and Supported While They Work

Sexism and Staying Power

Lisa Kaplin

As the mother of a daughter and a first-generation female college graduate, I have seen how difficult it is to navigate sexism, a highly sexualized society, and often demoralizing behaviors toward both women and girls. The damage it did to my own self-confidence and to many women that I work with has periodically felt insurmountable. When my daughter was born, I felt my resolve strengthen to change my own circumstances, and to promote change within my community and the world in order to pave the way for my daughter and her peers. The problem is a large one with the advent of social media and its ability to promote highly sexualized material that is available to many girls and children. Women who are highly educated and skilled can still feel like sexualized objects and struggle with those demands. This can limit their ability to grow to their fullest potential both personally and professionally.

My work with women gives me the opportunity to help them navigate sexism both at home and at work. I teach them to raise their voices against sexism, to ask employers to remove advertising that is inappropriate for girls and women, and to teach their daughters how to speak up for themselves personally, professionally, and politically.

Statement of the Problem

Working women need to know that their children are in safe spaces during their working hours. One of the biggest factors pulling women out of corporate America is the lack of quality, affordable child care and education options for their children. Working women frequently struggle to find adequate child care in a convenient location that fits their work schedule. Since nearly two-thirds of parents who use child care use formal arrangements (child care centers, family child care homes, and nursery or preschools), addressing quality is a major requirement to enabling more women to work knowing that their children are safe and being prepared for life.

Furthermore, the cost of child care requires working women to do cost-benefit analyses. If a significant portion of a woman's salary goes to substandard child care where it's a hassle to pick children up around her work schedule, exiting the workforce becomes an attractive option. Once children reach school age, it doesn't get easier, as our education system is falling short of preparing children for lifelong success. Teaching to standardized tests, decreasing amounts of recess and physical education, and increasing class sizes with fewer staff put enormous pressure on parents to supplement schools in a way unseen just a few decades ago. Because of this, parental involvement is needed more than ever during the school day and after school, creating difficult choices for parents who face competing work and family responsibilities.

Proposed Solutions

56. **Document child care options close to the office, or offer on-site childcare.** Provide information for local child care providers and preschools, including contact information for county child care and referral agencies. Preferably, offer subsidized on-site child care.

Order an employee survey of parents to find out about their home life challenges. Once you have that information, look for ways to help employees solve their home challenges, knowing that less stress at home means more productive employees at work.

57. **Support education initiatives that foster business collaboration in education reform work.** Businesses are particularly interested in growing more talent in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Much groundwork has been laid, but businesses can contribute more in their own self-interest by working to improve American education at national and local levels.

Advice for Working Women

- Know what constitutes quality in child care, early childhood education and school-aged child care programs, and locate strong programs by contacting county-level childcare resource and referral agencies.
- Understand available tax credits and employer-provided flexible spending options to subsidize child care costs. Ask employers for flexible spending opportunities if they are not provided.
- Advocate to Congress for more holistic education policies that support well-rounded education content with a variety of subjects, alternative school schedules, outdoor and physical education, and parental involvement.

Why We Believe This Will Work

Working mothers need care and education they can trust — environments that offer high quality, developmentally appropriate learning, beginning as young as the infant age. When women are assured that their children are safe, happy, and growing, their productivity is maximized. Easing the financial squeeze on working women will help them remain in the workforce, rather than push them to trade their careers for full-time motherhood because it's not financially possible to have both.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Make Workplace Flexibility the Rule Rather than the Exception

Going Rogue in Search of Synergy

Melanie Kadlic Meren

I always aspired to improve American education, working nationally to provide the most good for the most kids.

I set the path: bachelor's in political science, master's in public policy. I entered the U.S. Department of Education via fellowship. I disbursed millions in grants within weeks of hire. I created program-monitoring tools and analyzed regulations. I next joined an education-focused consulting firm. But I held sights on returning to government — to the White House.

At the firm, it became time to start my family. I was crushed envisioning a brief maternity leave followed by full-time work. In hindsight, six months of paid leave, then returning part-time leading to full would have been ideal. Instead, I became an independent consultant, remaining so for the last three years.

When President Barack Obama took office, I believed I was qualified for positions. Yet, I half-heartedly applied and didn't follow up. I didn't ask connections to help open doors. The White House is no place for a new mother. I exchanged my dream for work-life synergy. I contribute, in smaller ways, to education reform, with time for preschool pickups, playdates and exercise.

Time will tell how my flexible approach to living will allow me to contribute further to American education.

Beyond Flexible Work Arrangements

Carla Molina

When I had my first daughter, my husband and I bent over backward to be able to pursue our careers and be the parents we wanted to be. My husband worked 40 hours in three days, allowing four days off a week. I scheduled my lunch around her feeding times so I could nurse. I pumped twice a day. I cut back from a 40-hour work week and was in office four days a week.

It was hectic, but necessary, for me live a life aligned with my values.

When baby No. 2 arrived, it was overwhelming. While my employer was generous with its approvals of my requests for flexible arrangements, it was daunting to be the only one truly invested in figuring out how to make my career and my life work. So I left.

I have a real support system. I had one at home but not in the office. I appreciated every accommodation, but genuine support goes beyond green-lighting a flexible work arrangement or a telecommuting policy. My schedule became more flexible, but my workload and the pace of my career remained the same. It was dictated by a standard never built to accommodate mothers or career downshifting. In order to have remained in corporate America, I needed to believe my company was truly invested in my personal and professional success.

9

Statement of the Problem

Research demonstrates that workplace flexibility increases employee engagement, reduces attrition, and fosters greater retention. There is a direct and beneficial correlation between workplace flexibility and productivity that positively impacts employee output for women, and men, in the workplace.

Too many companies are built around the Industrial Revolution paradigm — the outdated model of a 40-hour work week. By insisting on a one-size-fits-all work day, companies are too narrowly focused to see how this decreases output. New technologies and collaborative tools have created an environment that fosters workforce agility and mobility. Companies supporting a forward-thinking philosophy that pioneers high-performance, flex-focused work and human resource practices achieve greater financial success.

Proposed Solutions

58. **Offer employees flexibility in work hours.** Two types of flexible work practices seem especially well-suited to parents who work: flex time arrangements that allow parents to coordinate their work schedules with their children's school schedules, and policies that allow workers to take short periods of time off — a few hours or a day or two — to attend a parent-teacher conference, for example, or care for a child who has suddenly fallen ill. Many companies that have instituted such policies have benefited through employees' greater job satisfaction, increased productivity and better employee retention.

Advice for Working Women

- Advocate for yourself. Ask employers for flexibility to accommodate children's school schedules.
- Educate yourself about workplace flexibility options — from telecommuting to video conferencing to working a compacted or extended work week — then make a case for the arrangement you need.

59. **Encourage both men and women to take advantage of alternative work arrangements.** These programs should be built into your company culture, not be reserved for those on a "mommy track," because every employee has some life challenge — from elderly parents to finishing a graduate degree — that would be made easier by workplace flexibility. Once this is a part of corporate culture, the reason for the need for flexibility becomes less important, so those who ask for it are not marginalized or "mommy tracked" in their careers. The process should focus on a dialogue between employee and manager on how the arrangement will not interfere or detract from the employee's ability to achieve her performance objectives. The ultimate goal is a corporate culture in which managers tell all employees about their flex options, rather than waiting for individual employees to make requests.

60. **Find ways to mitigate the impact of flexible/alternative work arrangements on employees' careers.** Ensure your company has authentic conversations around possible trade-offs for using flexible/alternative work arrangements, especially for employees who aspire to reach the highest levels of leadership. Few managers are comfortable talking about the impact of these policies on individual careers. The problem is not typically a company's flexible work policy, but the behaviors and norms that arise around the utilization of these policies.

Advice for Working Women

- Investigate your company's flex policy and understand what the ramifications might be to your career and whether they are likely to be short or long term.

61. **Encourage senior leader utilization of flexible or alternative arrangements.** If you have employees in prominent leadership roles who successfully take advantage of flex/alternative work arrangements — flaunt it! Companies often keep the fact that a star VP works from home every Friday a secret because they're afraid that everyone will want to do the same, and it will hurt productivity. Why not create a flex work "hall of fame" for those who contribute to the business, but also take advantage of these policies?

When have you taken advantage of workplace flexibility? Do you take conference calls on the sidelines of your son's or daughter's game? Have you ever worked from home, or the cabin/beach house, on a Friday to get a jump on the weekend? Early in your career, did you ever modify your schedule to pick up/drop off the kids? Contact your head of communications and request that your next all-employee communication incorporates your personal flexibility story.

62. **Institutionalize the idea of a lattice career path for everyone.** This will eliminate the idea that taking a short-term flex-time arrangement equals jumping off the fast track. Make it easy for women to jump back on the fast track when circumstances change by engaging them in frequent conversations about options and opportunities.

63. **Invert the traditional approval process by making managers get approval to deny an employee's request for a flexible/alternative schedule.** Most programs indicate that direct manager approval is required. This approach enables managers to unilaterally deny requests, even if the real reason for the denial is that they philosophically disagree with flexible/alternative work arrangements, do not want the hassle of managing them, or fear that approving such a request will "open the floodgates" to requests from everyone on the team. Instead, assume all requests can be accommodated and require the manager to obtain approval from a cross-functional oversight committee before denying a request. Such an approach will encourage managers to think more creatively about how they can accommodate flexible/alternative requests.

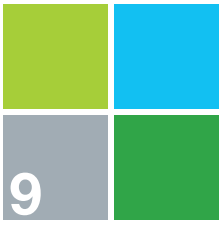
Contact your head of HR and request a proposal to turn the flexible work arrangement approval process upside-down and institute a cross-functional flexibility work arrangements oversight committee.

64. **Offer a leave or sabbatical program that would entail continued interaction between the employee and the company.** Design a program that would entail maintaining meaningful and scheduled contact on a cadence decided between the employee and the company while the employee is out so that the employee is up to date and engaged with the company. This simultaneously ensures the company maintains confidence that the employee will not be stale or too out of touch with the company's business when the employee eventually returns. If possible, the program could also include an opportunity for the employee to work on isolated projects that might be otherwise difficult to complete in the traditional workplace environment.

65. **Provide a donated bank of hours to be used for unpredictable family care emergencies.** Build your corporate culture of flexibility by allowing employees to donate their unused vacation or personal time off to others to be used in the case of unanticipated emergency or the need for an extended leave.

66. **Harness social technologies to foster flexibility.** Leverage the full power of social media tools to foster a more collaborative culture that builds authentic employee engagement in creating a flexible, more inclusive workplace. The ability to harness social media technologies and integrate them into existing technology architecture can foster corporate knowledge sharing and enterprisewide collaboration. These tools help broaden conversations about flexibility in the workplace by promoting an open culture of sharing information and experiences on topics including, but not limited to: manager and employee training, employee concerns, best practices in managing distributed teams, and the impact of time zone and cultural differences.

Task your head of Information Technology with developing training materials showing employees how they can work smarter with currently available technology tools.



Why We Believe This Will Work

All employees are struggling to find ways to integrate their work and home lives. They want to be there for their children, their elderly parents, or just preserve time to pursue their own interests while also working hard to succeed professionally. Women are constrained by a system that basically says, “Choose. You can’t have it all.” The problem with that thought process is it lacks a true understanding of what women so desperately want. Women don’t want it all right this minute. They just want to be able to work toward it all without the system putting up road blocks to the careers and personal lives they aspire to have.

These recommendations are rooted in an understanding that, given the proper support systems, talented individuals can become well-rounded people while also contributing to their careers. Businesses need to drop the either/or mentality and start saying, “We support you. How can we help?” Employees’ personal lives aren’t the enemy of effective corporations; they don’t kill motivation or drive. Indeed, less stressed employees are likely to work even harder to ensure the economic security of their families. Companies need to tap into a woman’s innate desire to provide for her family and create an infrastructure focused on making it easy to contribute positively to careers and personal lives.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Create More Effective Public Policy Solutions

Statement of the Problem

America needs a robust public policy agenda to establish a foundation for what women need as leaders, mothers, and individuals who contribute to the growth of our economy. Addressing intractable issues through public policy, ones that further support efforts championed in the private sector, will help advance issues most concerning to women in ways needed now more than ever. Without a determined focus on policies that support women in the workplace, America is at risk of spending another 30 years saying changes need to happen, with no discernible result. The following are recommendations for ways federal and state government, policy leaders, Congress and even the White House can support gender diversity across corporate America.

67. **Provide tax incentives to companies in which 30 percent of the directors serving on the board are women.** A strong economy and successful global business competition requires strong U.S. corporations. Businesses are strengthened by a diverse board of directors. Incentivize companies to increase the number of women on their board of directors.

68. **Promote best practices of states (i.e. Virginia, Arizona, Washington) that offer tax incentives for flexible work practices in the workplace.** State agencies can host educational forums and CEO roundtables across diverse industries to discuss what is and is not working in creating a results-oriented culture of workplace flexibility at the management and employee levels domestically and globally. Leverage successful TED Talks and other conferencing opportunities with thought leaders to spread ideas at local and national levels on the successes of workplace flexibility across both the public and private sectors.

Contact your local Labor Department office and offer your company's resources to help organize, promote, and attend Best Practices Roundtables.

69. **Leverage the public policy bully pulpit to get out the message that companies with increased female leadership enjoy financial advantages.** Create a data sheet of the most compelling information supporting the financial advantages of increased female leadership and create a marketing plan to disseminate the findings. Identify influential organizations to help publicize the data sheet and catalyze action, including: The White House Office of Jobs & Competitiveness, The White House Office of Women and Girls, Fortune 500's, NOW, NPR, Catalyst, McKinsey and other management consultants, institutions of higher education, and think tanks. Share this information with bar associations and people who advise corporations, boards of directors, policymakers, and legislators. Partner with key influencers identified above to broadcast the information. Post the data sheet on the Bentley University Center for Women and Business' website with the message that the sheet may be copied and distributed at no cost.

70. **Raise the quality and availability of affordable child care and education to truly meet the needs of working women and their families.** Continue federal government efforts under the Early Childhood Development Interagency Coordination initiative to align and bolster early childhood education programming provided by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Defense at national, state and local levels. Examine financial support options in the form of tax credits for subsidies provided by companies and the government to provide more help to families paying for child care. Look to international models in France, Sweden and other nations for guidance on what should be included in a well-rounded family support plan.

71. **Address the decreasing quality of American public schools and the impact on families.** Working parents need to know their kids are well cared for, whether in child care or school, so they can concentrate on doing their best work. That requires all schools to be of the highest quality, with balanced education content that includes time for all subjects, including academics, music and the arts, physical education and community service. National conversations about the Common Core standards for academic subjects should be balanced with discussions about the daily experience of school and how it positively or negatively impacts children and their working parents.

72. **Determine how school schedules can better align with work schedules.** Further explore how to scale already-successful alternative school schedule efforts in the United States. Examine policies in Wake County, North Carolina, Clark County, Nevada, and elsewhere. Leverage the resources and expertise of groups, such as the Education Commission of the States and National Governors Association, to foster learning and best practices across states to allow policymakers and practitioners to create systems for alternative school schedules that would support working families' schedules as well as students' learning needs.

73. **Engage in a national dialogue on maternity leave practices.** Develop a White House forum on maternity leave practices similar in format to the one the White House Council on Women and Girls produced on workplace flexibility. This new forum should follow the same format detailed on the website with equal attention given to how individuals can organize events on their own. A maternity leave event starter kit, to encourage and educate individuals to have their own local event and continue the conversation started by the initial forum, should be posted on the site. It should include: a description of events interested parties can organize based on their goals for gathering information on identifying key stakeholders; reference materials with data on the need for improvement in maternity leave practices; the ability to officially register the event on the Council website; an event follow-up form, and link to resources on the topic, which could include this report.

74. **Create a White House Council on Women and Girls blog category specific to women in leadership and how businesses can support them.** A social media campaign of this nature would promote businesses supporting women, encourage other businesses to follow suit and show federal government support for women's leadership, improved family leave practices, and efforts to support women who want to stay on track to senior executive status. Sample posts should include: profiles of business best practices, successful international models of maternity leave, including the infrastructure needed to bring them to fruition, methods for sponsoring high potential women, ways to support employees who choose a lattice career path, and more.

75. **Task the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor with launching a "National Dialogue" on paid family leave.** Launch a "National Dialogue" tour to include the added priority as a way to demonstrate the federal government's commitment to supporting women in the workplace and helping all employees cope with the demands of home and work. Create a task force at the end of each tour stop, consisting of at least one legislative representative and enlisting her or him to begin the process of making paid family leave the law in her or his state. It can be a phased project to take place regionally with a projected completion date in 2016. As in previous "National Dialogue" tours, invite members of the business community, advocates, researchers, union leaders, government agencies and employees to discuss the issues. At the end of each tour stop, ask business leaders to commit to making one change in their business using the far-reaching arm of social media to track and report on the progress of their pledged action.

76. **Establish a campaign to promote a full agenda of policies that support working women.** Conversations about women in the political sphere trend toward hot-button issues. Use the bully pulpit to ensure that the full range of issues facing women and mothers in the workplace are regularly a part of the public discourse, including family leave policies, child care quality and availability, quality of education, flexible work schedules and family leave policies.

Advice for Working Women

- Support political candidates who subscribe to the full agenda of policies that support working women.

77. **Create and support educational programs on how schools can better prepare girls.** Train teachers on the detrimental effects of marginalizing, sexualizing and belittling girls and boys and the importance of calling on girls in the classroom. Require classroom curriculum on healthy development. Make it cool to be smart. Promote female teachers in the areas of science and math. Promote STEM programs for girls. Bring in successful women as mentors, advisers and role models.

78. **Support businesses that advocate for women's issues and don't discriminate against girls or women.** Propose regulations prohibiting companies from developing, marketing or distributing products that exploit children.

Why We Believe This Will Work

American corporations cannot change America on their own. They need government as a supportive partner. The government can leverage sympathetic tax policy to promote programs that support women and girls inside and outside of the workforce. The government can use its bully pulpit to lead the charge for pro-girl and pro-woman policies in the public as well as the private sphere. And the government can revamp its spending in a way that supports children, in turn making it easier for all parents — dads as well as moms — to do focus on work when they are work, confident in the knowledge that their children are safe and well cared for.

Conclusion

As a nation competing in today's global economy, we cannot afford to wait another 30 years. Ideally, the next generation of working women will look at this report and marvel at how many of these suggestions are already an established part of their corporate culture. That cannot happen if business leaders, policymakers and working women fail to rise to the occasion today.

There is no excuse for anyone who comes across this report to step away from it without a plan to change the face of American business. Creating a level playing field isn't just about allowing women to catch up to their male counterparts. It's about boosting our economy, securing the financial stability of our families and positioning America to be truly globally competitive. We cannot afford to ignore the plenitude of advantages businesses gain when women are present in significant numbers throughout its ranks, up to and including CEO and board of directors.

Act on the recommendations in this paper, and 10 years from now America will be a model for the world.

16 Ways to Make a Difference for Women

1. **Task your Chief Administrative Officer or the head of Human Resources with assessing your strategic framework documents with a defined deadline for reporting back.** If a gap exists in addressing diversity, set a goal of amending the documents.
2. **Are you fully committed to gender diversity?** Show that you are willing to "walk the talk" by issuing an all-employee email or memo emphasizing your personal commitment and intent to institute substantive change.
3. **Host a "coffee chat" with a select group of influential leaders within your organization.** Share your personal story. How have you or the women in your life (mother, wife, sister, daughter, etc.) successfully addressed the challenges working women face? Or share what actions you've taken to help women overcome these challenges. Then listen while the leaders tell you why they have (or have not) furthered the company's goal of increasing female representation at the highest levels.
4. **Contact the head of your board's nominating committee and stipulate that the next slate of nominees must consist of at least 50 percent viable women candidates.**
5. **Charge your communications department with developing a monthly communication (website, email, bulletin) that lists all internal career moves, not just those that move "up" the corporate hierarchy, as a way to showcase your company's "lattice."**
6. **Task the head of HR to gather relevant data on high-potential women — job postings, promotions, compensation, development plans, and training.** Compare it to male contemporaries to determine dissimilarities that may pinpoint previously undiscovered barriers.
7. **Engage a high-potential, early-in-her-career employee in an open dialogue about the challenges she faces as a working woman.** Practice active listening to gain a better understanding of concerns that might push or pull her from the organization.
8. **Task a senior executive with creating a "lunch and learn" series for female employees, young girls and women in the community to discuss career opportunities, educational requirements, and long-term career planning.** Then make a pledge to attend the first session to demonstrate your company's commitment to this program.
9. **Identify the Women's Advisory Committee chairperson.** Reach out to her to discuss the opportunity and objective. Collaborate with her to develop a strategy for recruiting the remaining committee members.
10. **Choose to publicly model your commitment to gender diversity by sponsoring at least one woman in an entry-level management role.** If you do not already have someone in mind, reach out to the head of HR to see who is on his or her talent radar. Identify where your active sponsorship can best impact the trajectory of her career.
11. **Commit to hosting your company's first roundtable discussion with women to help them learn to navigate the political landscape of the organization.** At least once a quarter, be one of the senior executives offering "leadership open office hours."
12. **Order an employee survey of parents to find out about their home life challenges.** Once you have that information, look for ways to help employees solve their home challenges, knowing that less stress at home means more productive employees at work.
13. **Contact your head of communications and request that your next all-employee communication incorporates your personal flexibility story.** When have you taken advantage of workplace flexibility? Do you take conference calls on the sidelines of your son's or daughter's game? Have you ever worked from home, or the cabin/beach house, on a Friday to get a jump on the weekend? Early in your career, did you ever modify your schedule to pick up/drop off the kids?
14. **Contact your head of HR and request a proposal to turn the flexible work arrangement approval process upside-down and institute a cross-functional flexible work arrangements oversight committee.**
15. **Task your head of Information Technology with developing training materials showing employees how they can work smarter with currently available technology tools.**
16. **Contact your local Labor Department office and offer your company's resources to help organize, promote, and attend Best Practices Roundtables.**

Advice for Working Women

22 Ways Women Can Help Themselves

1. **Find out who is involved in the strategic planning process in your organization.** If there are no women, approach your CEO to discuss the best way to ensure greater diversity in the process.
2. **Champion corporate strategies that support and advance women.**
3. **Practice "Impact Purchasing" and "Impact Investing."** Be a consumer and investor of companies that include women on their boards and support your values.
4. **Acquire a sponsor who is a corporate board member.** Connecting with current board members is the most likely path to a board appointment.
5. **Nominate yourself for board membership.** Share your resume with firms that perform searches for corporate directors.
6. **Obtain board competency training from your employer or an outside source.** Acquire the necessary skills for board membership and the confidence to perform required duties.
7. **Ask yourself what assumptions you make of others.** Are you unintentionally limiting the opportunities of others based on those assumptions?
8. **Confront and replace your own self-limiting, embedded mindsets.**
9. **Contact local elected officials to discuss the importance of improved maternity leave policies, not just for mothers but for families.** Take it a step further and organize a group of passionate and concerned citizens to share individual stories of why this issue is important.
10. **Join an advocacy group and keep up to date on efforts nationwide to improve maternity and paternity leave policies.**
11. **Be a lifelong learner to keep your skills current and build confidence, particularly during those periods of time when you decide to slow your career.** Take a long-term view and continue to develop yourself, ensuring that you remain viable.
12. **Become an education advocate to share information with parents, educators, and the medical community on how to raise daughters in a healthy way in today's challenging society.**
13. **Promote math and science events, share your own successes, and point out female role models in these fields to prepare girls to educate themselves, compete, and succeed.**
14. **Educate yourself on the difference between mentoring and sponsoring and make sure you have both.** Know how to use them to further develop your skills and advance your career.
15. **Realize that you too have a lot to give others.** Network with other women and provide support. Become a mentor or, if you are in a position to help, be an active sponsor for other women.
16. **Know what constitutes quality in child care, early childhood education and school-aged child care programs, and locate strong programs by contacting county-level childcare resource and referral agencies.**
17. **Understand available tax credits and employer-provided flexible spending options to subsidize child care costs.** Ask employers for flexible spending opportunities if they are not provided.
18. **Advocate to Congress for more holistic education policies that support well-rounded education content with a variety of subjects, alternative school schedules, outdoor and physical education, and parental involvement.**
19. **Advocate for yourself.** Ask employers for flexibility to accommodate children's school schedules.
20. **Educate yourself about workplace flexibility options** — from telecommuting to video conferencing to working a compacted or extended work week — then make a case for the arrangement you need.
21. **Investigate your company's flex policy and understand what the ramifications might be to your career and whether they are likely to be short- or long-term.**
22. **Support political candidates who subscribe to the full agenda of policies that support working women.**

Index of Actionable Ideas

RECOMMENDATION 1
View Women as a Strategic Asset

Proposed Solutions

1. Create and communicate the compelling business case for diversity as a strategic necessity.
2. Embed gender diversity initiatives into strategic conversations and strategic planning.
3. Review your strategic framework — mission statement, vision statement, and values — to ensure it contains a commitment to inclusion and diversity.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Pave the Way as Corporate Leaders

Proposed Solutions

4. Ensure leaders are including women.
5. Give leaders time to learn and personalize inclusion.
6. Expect executives to participate in the solution.
7. Assess the preferred leadership style in your organization and ensure it is gender-neutral.
8. Set a corporate policy that says your company will not sell products with advertising that sexualizes girls or is sexist in nature.
9. Require at least one man and one woman on succession plans.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Heavily Recruit Women to Ensure More Diverse Governance

Proposed Solutions

10. Increase female representation on boards of directors to a minimum of 30 percent.
11. Encourage outside board self-nomination and participation for high-potential women.
12. Require existing board members to sponsor a female leader.
13. Provide board competency training to women who are potential candidates.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Increase Cultural Consciousness

Proposed Solutions

14. Adopt a non-linear lattice career path approach to accommodate the new ways of working.
15. Foster non-competitive workplaces, allowing employees to seize the “anti-ladder.”
16. Teach collaboration.
17. Focus on individual talents and niches.
18. Promote an inclusion model for women that offers alternative paths to success.
19. Ensure all leaders are aware of and guard against well-intentioned, yet unconscious, bias.

20. Be careful of assumptions.
21. Replace embedded institutional mindsets.
22. Create productive work spaces depending on the preferences of the individual.
23. Ensure your hiring process is free of unconscious biases.
24. Include information regarding flexible options in the interviewing, hiring, and on-boarding process.
25. Use data and HR to monitor progress.
26. Create a maternity leave tool kit celebrating the occasion of a birth or adoption.
27. Ensure performance reviews are gender-neutral.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Choose Accountability

Proposed Solutions

28. Diagnose and track what really impacts women's success in your organization.
29. Find out why women are not reaching the upper levels in your organization.
30. Create and implement systems and tools that enable flexibility.
31. Clearly define competencies and behaviors necessary for success, ensuring gender-neutrality.
32. Conduct regular retention interviews of high-potential women.
33. Conduct engagement surveys and analyze the results based on gender at different levels of the organization.
34. Create actionable goals and metrics to create accountability.
35. Evaluate leaders on the achievement of strategic diversity goals and use data to measure progress.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Invest in Training and Education

Proposed Solutions

36. Promote the self-esteem and educational development of girls.
37. Participate in programs that advocate science and math careers for girls.
38. Promote opportunities for girls in typically male-dominated fields.
39. Make the criteria for success easily obtainable.
40. Make distance learning available to women who have chosen to slow down their careers.
41. Require continuing education to keep employees current and agile.
42. Have clear policies regarding participation in career advancement conferences.
43. Establish gender participation guidelines for leadership training.
44. Provide skill-building programs specifically for women.
45. Open exceptional corporate leadership training programs to outside individuals to promote best practices.

Index

RECOMMENDATION 7
Create Connections In Support of Women

Proposed Solutions

46. Educate both men and women on the differences between sponsoring and mentoring.
47. Facilitate support for professional women early in the career lifecycle.
48. Mandate executive sponsorship of women.
49. Create a forum for students to be paired with professional mentors prior to college graduation.
50. Construct networks, both external across industries, and internal to companies, to support women networking.
51. Create internal, open forums for women to network with other female professionals and leaders.
52. Give high-potential women access to executives and role models.
53. Invest in corporate memberships to prominent women's business groups.
54. Institute a funded Women's Network.
55. Develop a mother's mentoring program.

RECOMMENDATION 8
Help Working Parents Keep Children Safe and Supported While They Work

Proposed Solutions

56. Document child care options close to the office or offer on-site childcare.
57. Support education initiatives that foster business collaboration in education reform work.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Make Workplace Flexibility the Rule Rather than the Exception

Proposed Solutions

58. Offer employees flexibility in work hours.
59. Encourage both men and women to take advantage of alternative work arrangements.
60. Find ways to mitigate the impact of flexible/alternative work arrangements on employees' careers.
61. Encourage senior leaders to use flexible or alternative arrangements.
62. Institutionalize the idea of a lattice career path for everyone.
63. Invert the traditional approval process by making managers get approval to deny an employee's request for a flexible/alternative schedule.
64. Offer a leave or sabbatical program that would entail continued interaction between the employee and the company.
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RECOMMENDATION 10

Create More Effective Public Policy Solutions

Proposed Solutions

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THE VIVA CWB ADVANCING WOMEN
IN THE WORKPLACE PEER COLLABORATION

Who We Are

Bios

DEBORAH DEAN is currently vice president and general counsel-Americas for **Dassault Systèmes**, a multi-billion dollar global 3DEXPERIENCE software company headquartered in France. Previously, she was general counsel for MatrixOne, Inc., where she counseled other technology companies. Throughout her career, she has been committed to the development of women in the technology sector and is currently a member of the board of directors of WEST, an organization dedicated to advancing women in technology and science. Deborah received her B.A. from Wellesley College and J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law.

CORINA L. FISHER is the director of talent strategies for the group sales force within **MetLife**. She is responsible for providing strategic leadership in the development and execution of all talent and diversity initiatives to ensure MetLife attracts, develops, and retains a talented and diverse workforce. Previously, Corina was a senior business architecture consultant within MetLife responsible for leading initiatives to reduce complexity, lower operational spending and enhance customer satisfaction. Corina was also part of MetLife Human Resources for 10 years. She worked extensively in the areas of performance management, total rewards philosophy, management coaching and employee development. Corina received her B.A. in psychology from Lehigh University.

DR. LISA KAPLIN has a master's degree and doctorate in psychology. She is also a certified professional life coach. Lisa's company, **Smart Women Inspired Lives**, helps women who feel stuck in their personal or professional lives find their voice and reach their highest potential. Lisa is also a corporate trainer for American Management Association, Aetna, and others focusing on psychologically related topics such as communication, stress management, and women's assertiveness. Lisa is a married mother of three teenage children. After struggling with finding a healthy work/family balance, she has focused her career on helping other women to do the same.

EMILY KLEIN is the founder of **Flextime Global**, a consulting and training business that helps organizations achieve success by implementing workplace flexibility programs, strengthening virtual workplaces and building high performing teams. As an accomplished strategy consultant, Emily has developed strategic, performance and change management plans, conducted assessments, implemented process improvement initiatives and created education and training programs that have been highly regarded among executives and managers across the public and private sectors. As an author, Emily writes about telework, mobility strategy, collaborative tools, and workplace transformation. She holds a M.P.A. from the George Washington University School of Public Administration and Public Policy.

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KAREN LINDER is Founder/CEO of **Linspiration, Inc.**, a company that supports entrepreneurship. She serves on the boards of directors of the Museum of Nebraska Art, KANEKO, and SkyVu Entertainment. Linder is a former faculty member of the University of Nebraska Medical Center where she founded the School of Cytotechnology. She also founded Heartland Pathology, Inc., and is past President of the American Society for Cytotechnology. She belongs to the Nebraska Angels and Women Investing in Nebraska groups. She has written numerous scientific journal articles and edited textbooks. In 2012, her business/biography book *The Women of Berkshire Hathaway* was published.

JULIE MADHUSOODANAN has a master's degree in computer science and has worked in the software industry for 15 years delivering products that have worldwide impact. She currently works at **Microsoft** and is deeply invested in diversity and inclusion activities inside and outside the company. In addition to raising her 11-month-old infant, she is involved in community projects, fitness activities and maintaining bonds with friends and family abroad. She attributes her accomplishments to date to the support of immediate family, excellent managers at work and a corporate culture that reflects the needs of the ever changing landscape of women in business.

MELANIE KADLIC MEREN arrived in Washington, D.C., in 2002 to improve education for American children. She has worked for the U.S. Department of Education and Office of Management and Budget, nonprofits and private companies. Melanie marries expertise in education and public policy with her ability to create organizational systems for education efforts. Upon starting her family in 2009, she founded her own consulting practice, **MKM Strategies**, to continue her education reform work while securing time for motherhood. Since then, she has integrated her passions for education, healthy living and motherhood to build a path for better living for American women and families. She authors *So Very Vienna*, a popular local blog, and supports her area's 400+ member moms group.

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Who We Are

Bios

CARLA MOLINA is a freelance writer and creative strategist. Carla, who studied philosophy at Northeastern University, was a student of corporate culture at MetLife Auto & Home in roles in underwriting and compliance. While there, she welcomed two daughters in two short years and left corporate America to pursue a career aligned with her values and lifestyle. Carla now uses her talents to advocate for the passions of small business entrepreneurs, writing and strategizing them into success. Personally, Carla focuses her time homeschooling her bilingual daughters, reading, watching TEDTalks and pretending not to pay attention while her husband watches Breaking Bad.

LISA AMAYA PRICE has been in the workforce since 1987 both as a human resources professional and educator. She is currently a director of talent acquisition programs at **Biogen Idec** in Boston, where she is responsible for university relations, onboarding, contingent workforce management, employer branding and recruitment operations. In 2011, Lisa co-founded Biogen Idec's Women's Innovation Network and helped launch the company's first Diversity & Inclusion function. Lisa received her M.B.A. in global management from the F.W. Olin School of Business at Babson College in 2005, and also holds an M.A. in Teaching from Simmons College in Boston.

LAURA ROCK has worked in human resources in the insurance industry for 20 years. She began her career as a benefits consultant in Chicago and has relocated her family twice during her career for promotional opportunities. She understands the difficulty of juggling a demanding, full-time career while raising two children. She travels frequently, has obtained numerous professional designations and her master's degree while working, stays involved in the community and runs marathons. None of this would have been possible without the assistance of her husband, extended family and, equally as important, supportive managers and corporate cultures. Laura is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and received her M.S.M. from The American College.

LAURA ROSSI TOTTEN is a public relations expert and social media strategist with more than two decades of experience. In New York City, she ran publicity campaigns for celebrity/bestselling authors at Random House, Bantam Doubleday Dell, Viking Penguin and W.W. Norton. Today, Laura runs **Laura Rossi Public Relations**, a full-service public relations agency. A blogger, published author, and entrepreneur, Laura is a regular contributor to The Huffington Post and has been featured on local NPR, in The Chronicle of Higher Education, and other outlets. Laura is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and an honors graduate of the University of Connecticut. She lives with her husband and twins in New England.

Bentley University
Center for Women and Business

Partners

Bentley University's Center for Women and Business in Waltham, Massachusetts, is dedicated to supporting, retaining and promoting women in business. As the source of practical, effective solutions, the Center addresses challenges posed by a multicultural, multigenerational workplace in which women comprise an increasingly larger segment. The Center shares innovative research and real world insights that foster the development of an inclusive work environment through resources, workshops and events where thought leaders and business professionals can share best practices.

BETSY MYERS is the founding director of Bentley University's Center for Women and Business. Her book—*Take the Lead*—provides leadership observations and advice based on her rich experiences in public service and business. Betsy was a senior adviser to Barack Obama's presidential campaign, as COO and as chair of Women for Obama. Prior to the campaign, Betsy served as executive director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where she focused the center's teaching and research around personal leadership and the fully integrated person.

During the Clinton Administration, Betsy was the President's senior adviser on women's issues. She launched and was the first director of the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, served as the associate deputy administrator for Entrepreneurial Development in the U.S. Small Business Administration and was the director of the Office of Women's Business Ownership at the SBA. Prior to joining the Clinton Administration, Myers spent six years building Myers Insurance and Financial Services, based in Los Angeles. She specialized in the small business and women's market providing insurance and retirement planning.

Betsy received her B.B.A degree from the University of San Diego, and a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School, where she was a Public Service Fellow.

SUSAN M. ADAMS, Ph.D., combines her career passions for teaching, research, and consulting in her current position as a Professor of Management and Senior Director of Bentley University's Center for Women and Business. Before coming to Bentley in 1994, she taught a variety of management classes at the University of California-Irvine's Graduate School of Management and Chapman University.

With more than 70 publishing credits to her name, Susan regularly writes in leading academic and practitioner journals, focusing on professional advancement and organizational effectiveness. Her academic insights, shared in and out of classrooms of undergraduates, M.B.A.s, Ph.D.s and executives, are enhanced by her consulting work with over 80 clients. She has served on and chaired boards of companies and non-profit organizations.

Susan is a former Chair of the Management Consulting and Careers Divisions of the Academy of Management and a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society of Human Resource Managers. She earned a B.S. Ed. in mathematics from the University of Georgia, an M.S. Ed in mathematics from Georgia State University and a Ph.D. in management from Georgia Institute of Technology.

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Action

New Voice Strategies

New Voice Strategies is a non-profit corporation founded by **Elizabeth Evans** and **Tom Cosgrove**. New Voice Strategies created WikiWisdom™ to offer leaders a new way to communicate with their stakeholders. Our innovation—the VIVA Idea Exchange, an online peer collaboration platform—plumbs the wisdom of committed people with front-line experience to create consensus on a variety of actionable recommendations. We believe in the power of authentic experience and provide passionate people with an avenue to make a difference. Our passion is to make their voices heard.

A note from the authors of this report: We would like to thank our fearless facilitator, **Cindy Richards**, for her collaborative leadership and infinite patience. Cindy allowed us to voice our opinions in a manner that led to discussion and healthy disagreement. She spent countless hours guiding us through rewrites and edits all with grace and tact. Cindy pushed us to the finish line with the kindest of words, optimism and trust.

Cindy Richards, New Voice Strategies Vice President of New Civics, moderated the Advancing Women in the Workplace collaboration. Prior to joining NVS, Cindy spent more than 20 years as a journalist, including 17 years as a reporter, editorial writer and/or columnist at the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune.

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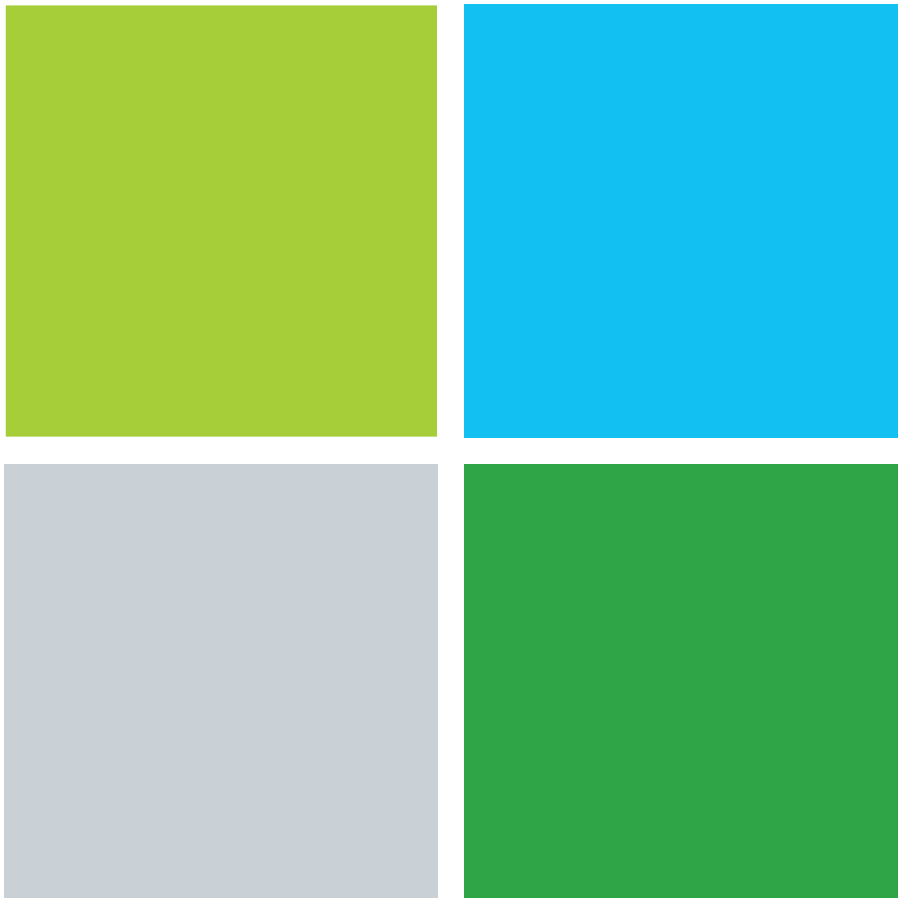

http://newvoicestrategies.org/
http://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business

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About the Center

The Center for Women and Business is focused on helping women reach their full potential in the workplace and helping corporations engage the full potential of talented women leaders.

Our research and programs provide a roadmap for organizations and individuals alike to move this critical conversation forward. We all know what the problems are. It is time to share solutions.

Our goal is to share what is working for companies to advance women and identify new ways to address the long-standing challenges.

The Idea Exchange remains accessible to anyone who wants to register online. You are invited to join the Idea Exchange to view all the comments and to post your own.

- Idea Exchange: http://bit.ly/CWBIdeas
- To stay informed about Center research and events, register for the CWB newsletter: http://cwb.bentley.edu
- For more information about the Idea Exchange or other CWB research, contact Susan Adams: sadams@bentley.edu

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