

Elevating Women in Leadership

A study exploring how organizations can crack the code to make real progress

BY TAMMY HEERMANN
SVP, LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION PRACTICE
LEE HECHT HARRISON



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Introduction

Disappointing Progress

Over the past decade, we have worked with organizations to advance females in their leadership pipeline. Many women advanced, pushed beyond what they thought was possible, and became role models for future leaders. These individual cases are fulfilling and inspire forward momentum. But when we look at today's bleak numbers, overall the story for female leadership is disappointing at best.

The Women's Leadership Gap report published by The Center for American Progress, states that today women are nearly 51% of the U.S. population¹ and earn almost 60% of undergraduate degrees and 60% of all master's degrees². And even though they hold almost 52% of all professional-level jobs³, they only make up 44% of the overall S&P 500 labor force and 36% of first- or mid-level officials and managers in those companies. Women are only 25% of executive- and senior-level officials and managers, hold only 20% of board seats, and are only 6% of CEOs⁴.

Over the years, organizations have invested countless time and funds to improve these bleak numbers. CEOs make grand supportive declarations, and new diversity and inclusion roles sprout up. We have witnessed the ebb and flow of optimism and despair as organizations take one step forward and two steps back, or worse, hit the demoralizing plateau.

There has been a slow and steady increase in female leadership positions since the 1970s. This year, however, we have seen progress halt and, in some cases, move backwards. What will it take to really break through? What will it take to cause a true tipping point in organizations that are frustrated with battles yielding, at best, a few percentage points increase year over year? We were interested in finding out the answer to that question.

About Our Study

Elevating Women in Leadership

In 2017, Lee Hecht Harrison (LHH) partnered with HR People + Strategy to explore what's working, what's not and what has the most impact to help companies create the inclusive workplaces required for women to advance.

We surveyed more than 230 individuals in the United States, representing senior human resource executives and leaders who are responsible for helping their organizations build stronger leadership pipelines. There was a cross section of over 20 industries represented and organizations that ranged in size from under 250 employees to over 10,000 employees.

THREE DIMENSIONS TO MAKE REAL CHANGE



What differentiates this research from others is that we have taken a comprehensive look at the three dimensions required to make meaningful change: individual behaviors, leadership culture and organizational practices⁵.

Most organizations are looking for a silver bullet to make meaningful change in the number of women represented at various leadership levels. What training program can we invest in, what partnership can we broker, or what networking group can we construct?

Our findings showed that these one-off initiatives are important, but nowhere near sufficient. The organizations that identified as making real progress were clearly differentiated by what, how and where they invested time, resources and focus. In this report you will find the outcomes from this study including:

- The behaviors of the people managers who are known champions of female talent;
- The aspects of their culture that shaped inclusivity;
- The practices that help support the advancement of women; and
- The behaviors and beliefs displayed by successful women.

We have also provided an audit by way of a number of questions throughout the report so that you can reflect on your own organization's strengths and areas for future focus.

A photograph of two women sitting at a long wooden table in a bright, modern office setting. They are engaged in a conversation, with one woman pointing at a laptop screen. The room has large windows overlooking a cityscape.

Organizations have been investing in women and in organizational practices for decades with little results. The catalyst for elevating women, in fact, is the behaviors of people leaders, the champions of female talent, who shape an inclusive culture making it possible for women to thrive.

Our Findings

The Gap in Importance and Action

Fortunately over the past few years, we have seen organizations change in terms of how they view the issue of advancing female talent. In the not so distant past, advancing women was viewed as ‘the right thing to do’ as a good corporate citizen. However, more and more, organizations are also realizing that they need to better represent their customers and communities through a more diverse workforce. Organizations themselves are putting more pressure on their suppliers and partners to demonstrate a diverse workforce in order to maintain the business relationship. It has become a strategic business imperative, as increased diversity leads to stronger business decisions and more innovative thinking.

We were interested in knowing how pervasive the shift in thinking around advancing women really is.

The survey asked respondents to what extent do you agree or disagree that advancing women in your organization is a critical business issue, and 82% believed that it was a critical business issue. However, only 28% are satisfied with their organization’s ability to elevate women into more leadership roles.

This data supports the frustrations we’ve been hearing from organizations that understand the importance of elevating women in leadership roles yet are not satisfied with the actions they have taken or the results those actions have yielded.

Think about your own organization and reflect on the following:

- To what extent do you believe advancing women in your organization is a critical business issue?
- How satisfied are you with your organization’s ability to elevate women in leadership?

Let’s now take a look at the findings in more detail and see what factors differentiate those organizations that are succeeding and those that are not.



believe advancing women is a critical business issue



satisfied with ability to elevate women in leadership

The Behaviors and Beliefs that Distinguish Women Who Advance

In the survey, we asked questions to better understand which mindsets and behaviors are important for women to demonstrate if they wish to advance upward in their careers. We had respondents think about women in their organizations who were successful in elevating their careers in management and leadership roles and what they did differently. More specifically, what behaviors did they exhibit more frequently than other women, and what beliefs seemed to help or hinder their advancement?

Based on our work developing female leaders at all levels globally, we identified 13 common behaviors and beliefs that distinguish women who are successful in moving to more senior levels of leadership. We compared the data of the organizations that were extremely satisfied with the progress they are making elevating women in their leadership pipelines versus those that were not at all satisfied with their progress.

Women in the extremely satisfied organizations demonstrated every behavior more frequently than those in the unsatisfied organizations. They also held beliefs that were more helpful to their advancement.

THE DISTINGUISHING BEHAVIORS AND BELIEFS

We found five distinguishing behaviors and beliefs emerge above all others in organizations that were extremely satisfied versus not at all satisfied.

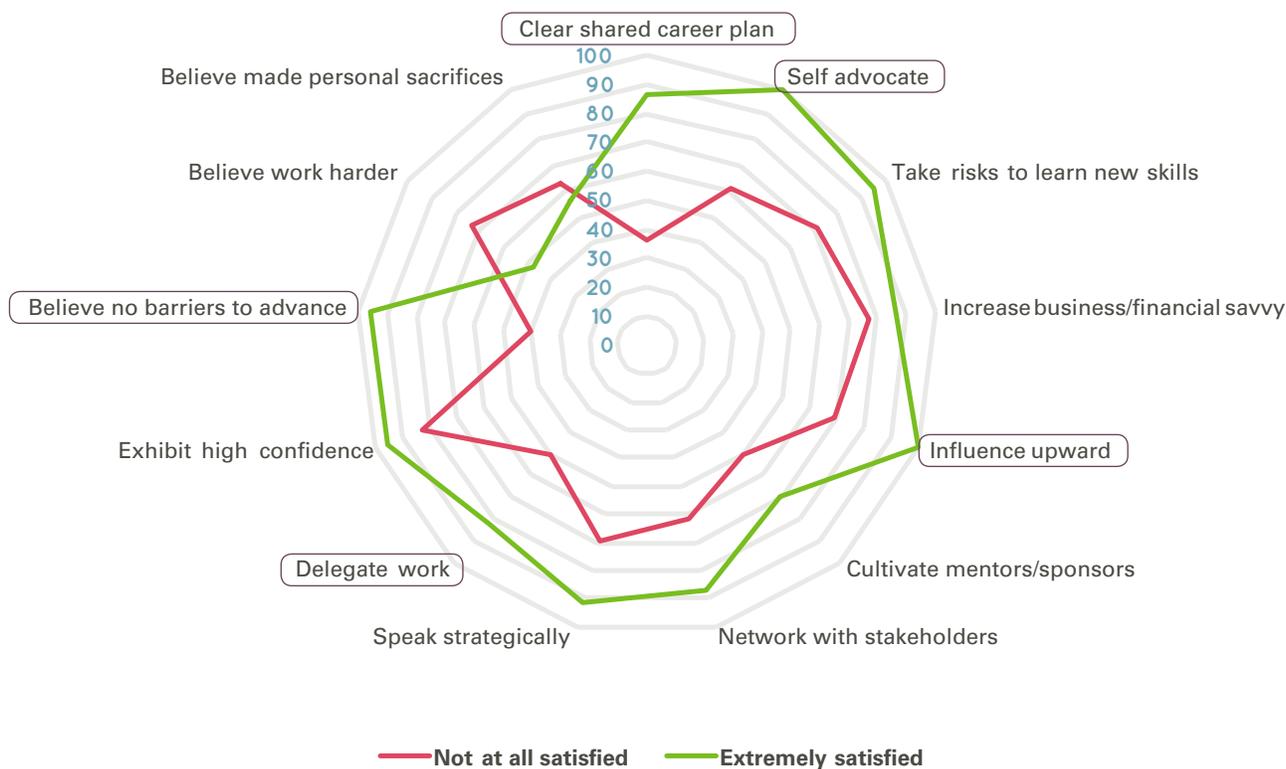
1. **Clear, shared career plan.** Compared to men, women tend to have less clear career goals that are shared with others, which then results in receiving less sponsorship for growth and development. Women do take more breaks in their careers than men due to child rearing and family responsibilities. However, women who are successful in advancing upward plan their careers with a longer time horizon in mind, continuously share their plans, and get the support they need along the way to continue to progress.
2. **Self-advocacy.** Results do not speak for themselves, and opportunities do not just fall in our laps. Self-advocacy is a critical behavior to learn; unfortunately most women struggle with it. Successful women know how to own their strengths and accomplishments, share how they add value to the organization, and ask for opportunities to grow and advance.
3. **Influence upward.** Research has shown that women are quite skilled at influencing, especially down and across an organization. Women face a bigger challenge, however influencing upward with more senior stakeholders. Women who are successful in moving upward use exposure through projects, roles and purposeful networking to better understand important stakeholders and more successfully influence how things get done.

The Five Most Distinguishing Behaviors & Beliefs in Women Who Advance

1. Clear, shared career plan
2. Advocate on own behalf
3. Influence upward
4. Delegate work
5. Belief of no barriers to their advancement

4. **Delegate work.** In order to move into new roles, advance into senior positions, or make time for projects and development that will help with growth, women have to leverage the skill of delegation. Women in our study were more apt to delegate or distribute work to free up time for strategic initiatives. They did not get mired in the weeds; rather they knew how to leverage others to get work done.
5. **Belief of no barriers to advancement.** There is no doubting that there are many deep-seated societal and organizational barriers to the advancement of women. Well-engrained stereotypes are present in both men and women, which impact advancement opportunities. However, women in the extremely satisfied companies differed markedly in their own mindset. They believed that there were no barriers for themselves. There may have been factors all around them that could have prevented their success, but they didn't let that get in the way of their own beliefs around what they could personally accomplish.

DISTINGUISHING BEHAVIORS & BELIEFS IN WOMEN WHO ADVANCE



THE OTHER IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS AND BELIEFS

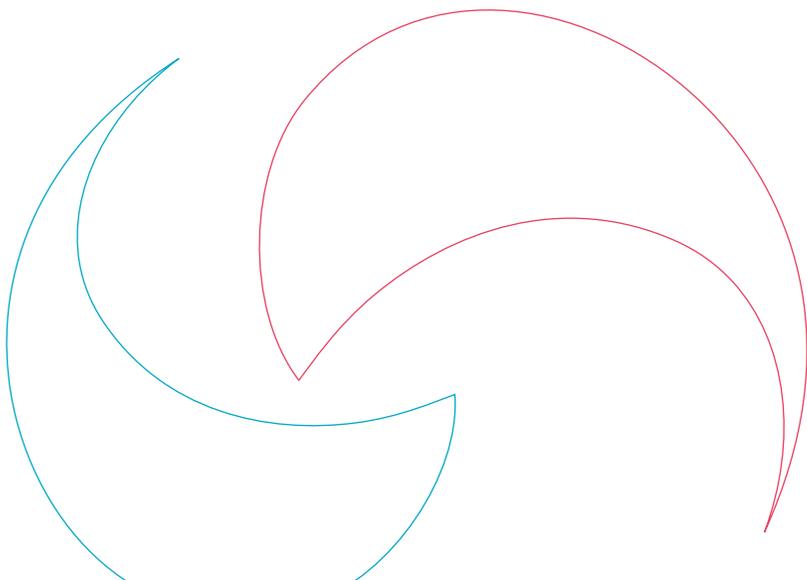
Women in the extremely satisfied organizations demonstrated all behaviors and helpful beliefs more frequently than those in the unsatisfied organizations. While we discussed those five behaviors and beliefs that represented the greatest differences, the others are important as well. We discuss them briefly below.

Exhibit a high degree of confidence. Self-assuredness and showing confidence was an important factor of all respondents. From our experience coaching thousands of women worldwide, we know that often what holds women back from stepping up or fully stepping into their leadership roles is their level of self-assuredness and how they demonstrate that to others to gain their confidence. While this area is tougher to develop through group development programs, one-on-one coaching can assist with this greatly.

Take risks to learn new skills. Women who are seen as successful in advancing have made bold and sometimes uncomfortable moves to fulfill new roles, worked on high profile projects, made important presentations to senior stakeholders or made geographic moves. These opportunities have provided exposure, profile and invaluable skill development. While these are often seen as significant stretches, they are necessary to succeed longer term.

Network with important stakeholders. There is truth to the saying we are only as successful as our network. Virtually no work can be accomplished alone today. It's also impossible to advance without the support of others. Successful women have shown to cultivate strong internal and external networks to get work done, stay ahead of strategic issues and advance their own careers.

Speak strategically. Those who advance in their leadership careers understand that it's important to speak to peers and senior stakeholders in the language of the business. Women need to give people confidence in their ability to think broader, bolder and longer term, not always getting mired in the details. They must articulate the connections they see with customers, strategy and how the organization will win.



Cultivate mentors and sponsors. Ask any successful person how they got ahead and most will credit help to someone who had their back, gave them profile and challenged them to grow. Whether formal or informal, it is critical for women to develop relationships inside and outside their organizations to help them develop and advance.

Increase business and financial savvy. Holding senior leadership positions means having a solid understanding of business, i.e., how does the company make money, what financial levers can it pull, and what does it take to successfully execute a strategy. However, most women shy away from roles that require direct P&L experience. Women who ultimately advance know they need to build the business and financial acumen to operate beyond their technical expertise.

Belief that they must work harder. The women in the study who were successful in advancing upward were described as believing, in essence, that they were on a level playing field. While barriers may certainly exist, they did not fall prey to them. A more helpful mindset for women to hold is that they are not always facing an upward battle, or that they need to put in more time than others to be successful. Women must believe in themselves and their abilities which will, in turn, shape behaviors that allow them to realize the full extent of their own potential.



Belief that they must make personal sacrifices. Leadership is hard work. Gender aside, when anyone decides to take on more responsibility there will inevitably be sacrifices. It is not surprising that there was not a marked difference in the extremely satisfied and very unsatisfied organizations on this factor. However, women have long battled the feeling of guilt around personal sacrifices made and need to get better at setting and keeping boundaries to be present in the many aspects of their lives.

There is a lot of debate as to whether organizations should single out development programs for women. In our experience women benefit greatly from group and individual development opportunities that provide skill application, connection and networks to other leaders and profile to senior leaders.

Our research shows that there is a distinction in the behaviors and beliefs exhibited by successful women and programs should target these areas specifically. While the behaviors and beliefs we targeted in our study are pertinent to all genders, there are acute challenges for women within these areas that can be addressed through formal development.

Audit Your Organization Part 1

THE BEHAVIORS AND BELIEFS WOMEN NEED TO ADVANCE

PLEASE RATE EACH QUESTION

(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

To what extent do you develop the women in your organization to:

Create and communicate a clear career plan?

1 2 3 4 5

Advocate on their own behalf?

1 2 3 4 5

Influence upward in your organization?

1 2 3 4 5

Delegate or distribute work to enable time on more strategic endeavors?

1 2 3 4 5

Develop a positive mindset that cultivates self-assuredness, confidence and risk-taking to learn new skills?

1 2 3 4 5

Network with important stakeholders internally and externally?

1 2 3 4 5

Speak strategically about the business?

1 2 3 4 5

Gain access to mentors and sponsors?

1 2 3 4 5

Increase their business and financial savvy?

1 2 3 4 5



The Definition of a Gender Inclusive Culture

In our study we set out to better understand which factors contributed to a more gender inclusive culture. We asked respondents to think about their organization's current culture and how it supports or does not support elevating more women in leadership roles. In fact, when we compared organizations that are extremely satisfied with their progress to those who are not at all satisfied with their progress there was a marked difference. The very unsatisfied organizations had a complete absence of the gender inclusive culture factors. The top five aspects of a gender inclusive culture that differentiated extremely satisfied organizations were the following:

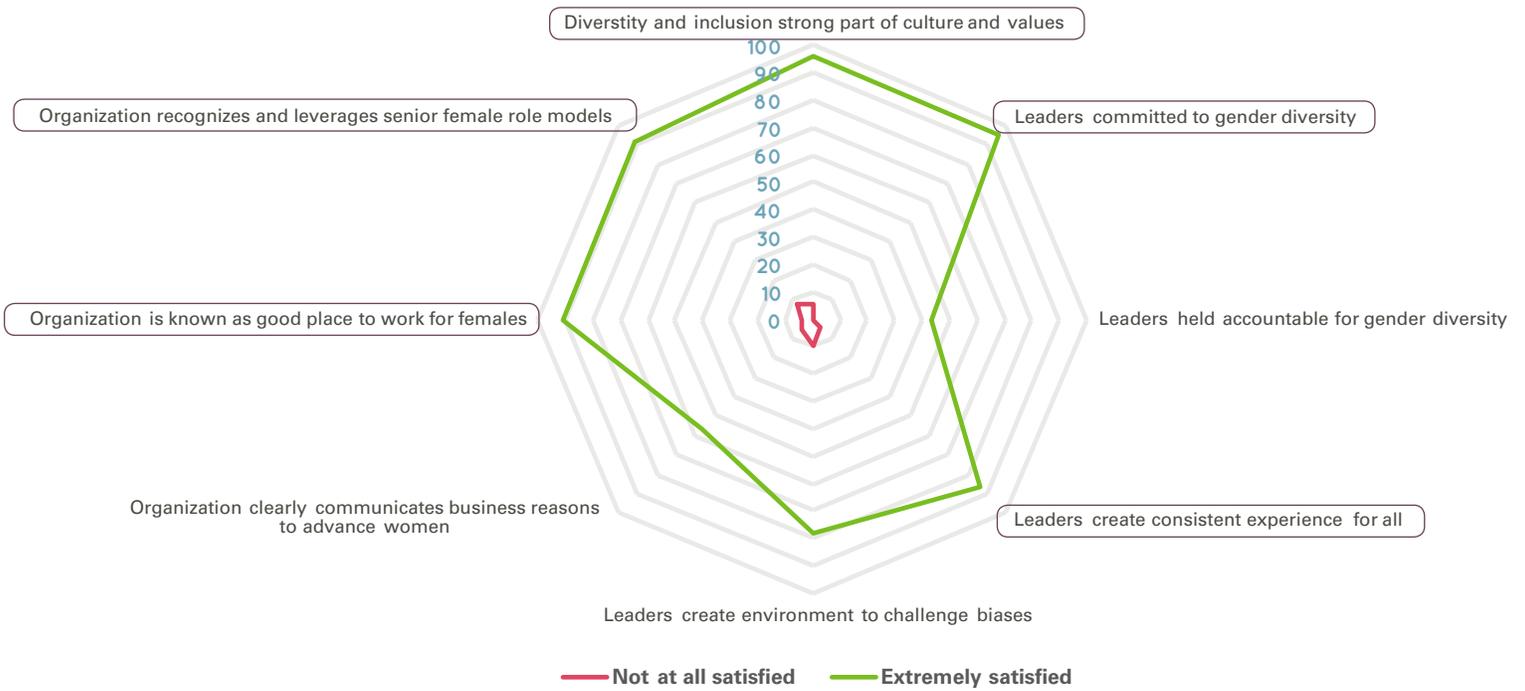
- 1. Diversity and inclusion are a strong component of our culture and values.** The extremely satisfied organizations described themselves as having diversity and inclusion baked into their DNA. It wasn't something new that they were working on, it was consistent with how they operated.
- 2. Leaders are committed to gender diversity.** The extremely satisfied organizations had leaders who were visibly committed to increasing the number of women throughout the organization. Leaders didn't pay lip service; they took action on it.

- 3. The organization recognizes and leverages senior female leaders as role models.** Organizations making progress have women already in senior leadership roles and they are not token roles. Successful organizations use these roles as examples of possibility while not burdening solely the senior women to carry the mantle of gender equality.
- 4. The organization is known as a good place to work for females.** Successful organizations have a brand inside the organization as a great place to work because it is supported by an inclusive culture, a safe environment, family friendly policies and opportunities for growth. This permeates outside the organization through partnerships with community groups and associations furthering women in leadership.
- 5. Leaders provide equal opportunities and create a consistent experience for all employees.** Successful organizations have a culture of strong talent management. People leaders are skilled at attracting, retaining and growing their employees. In this environment, everyone feels that growth and development is possible.

The Top Five Aspects of a Gender Inclusive Culture

1. Diversity and inclusion are a strong component of our culture and values
2. Leaders are committed to gender diversity
3. The organization recognizes and leverages senior female leaders as role models
4. The organization is known as a good place to work for females
5. Leaders provide equal opportunities and create a consistent experience for all employees

GENDER INCLUSIVE CULTURE FACTORS



THE OTHER IMPORTANT GENDER INCLUSIVE CULTURE FACTORS

Below is a brief description of the other three gender inclusive cultural factors which are important to consider.

Leaders create an environment to challenge biases. Leaders have an important role in shaping a culture where employees at all levels can talk openly about perceived biases. We need to get better at having human conversations when things aren't sitting well or don't seem right.

The organization clearly communicates the business reasons for advancing women. Successful organizations understand the social, economic and organizational benefits of advancing more women. They communicate that having the most diverse and inclusive environment possible is core to executing their strategy, rather than a disconnected HR initiative.

Leaders are held accountable for gender diversity. Organizations making real progress know how to leverage champions to get moving on important change and then how to weed out those who are not part of the desired future.

Audit Your Organization Part 2

THE DIMENSIONS OF A GENDER INCLUSIVE CULTURE

PLEASE RATE EACH QUESTION

(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

Thinking about your current leadership culture, to what extent does it possess the following attributes:

Diversity and inclusion are a strong component of your culture and values?

1 2 3 4 5

Leaders are committed to gender diversity?

1 2 3 4 5

Leaders are held accountable for increasing gender diversity?

1 2 3 4 5

Leaders provide equal opportunities and create a consistent experience for all employees?

1 2 3 4 5

Leaders create an environment where individuals can raise behaviors or decisions that may be biased?

1 2 3 4 5

The organization recognizes and leverages senior female leaders as role models?

1 2 3 4 5

The organization is known as a good place to work for females?

1 2 3 4 5

The organization clearly communicates the business reasons to increasing female representation?

1 2 3 4 5

What Champions of Female Talent Do Differently

Leaders shape culture. And when you need your culture to shift, you need enough of your leaders acting in the desired ways. We asked respondents to think about the known leaders in their organizations who champion elevating women in leadership roles and what they do differently. We explored 10 behaviors in particular and for **all 10 behaviors, champion leaders were on average twice as likely to demonstrate the behaviors to a very high degree as other people managers.**

Below are the five behaviors that differed the most between organizations that were extremely satisfied and extremely unsatisfied..

1. **Create opportunities to network informally that are inclusive of interests and schedules.** We hear many women say that building relationships and connecting informally with team members and their managers is difficult given it often happens during times when they need to be present at home. Champions of female talent know that informal networking builds better working teams and is important enough to do during regular working hours and inclusive of broad interests.
2. **Give females exposure and profile to senior leaders and decision makers.** Advancing to more senior levels requires that a broad set of stakeholders know and have confidence in an employee's ability to lead. Champions know that providing exposure and profile through meetings, presentations, or project or committee work is essential. This includes ensuring that credit is given and advocating for individuals in their physical absence as well.
3. **Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen.** We know coaching and feedback are critical fundamental people leadership skills. Champions of female talent not only understand how to engage in these skills, they also understand the nuances that come into play with females. Studies have shown that not only do women receive less feedback, the feedback they do receive is much less focused on their impact on business objectives. Gender champions are deliberate about coaching women to increase their business acumen and provide feedback that discusses their impact on business metrics, not just communication or style.

Five Differentiators of Champions of Female Talent

1. Create opportunities to network informally that are inclusive of interests and schedules
2. Give females exposure and profile to senior leaders and decision makers
3. Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen
4. Have career and coaching conversations that challenge negative self-perceptions
5. Challenge self and others around unconscious biases

4. Have career and coaching conversations that challenge negative self-perceptions.

There is well-known gender research that has shown that women are less likely to take risks in going after opportunities they think they will not get. Champions of female talent don't subscribe to the idea that those who ask the loudest deserve the promotion. They understand that they may need to challenge negative self-perceptions that females may have around their perceived lack of ability or potential for more senior roles. They also make it clear that advancement is achievable despite the various priorities an individual may have at home and at work at various life stages.

5. Challenge self and others around unconscious biases. Champions of female talent promote a culture of accountability for creating inclusivity. It's hard for individuals to recognize, bring into awareness and steer default mindsets in different directions. This becomes easier, however, when organizations create environments where we can help challenge one another's comments, actions or decisions. Collective accountability is what will further progress.

DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIORS OF FEMALE CHAMPION PEOPLE LEADERS



THE OTHER IMPORTANT FEMALE CHAMPION BEHAVIORS

Champions of elevating female talent were on average twice as likely to demonstrate all the behaviors explored in the study. While we discussed those five behaviors that represented the greatest differences, the others are important for people leaders to exhibit as well. We discuss them briefly below.

Recruit and promote from a diverse pool. It stands to reason that organizations that are successful in advancing female talent have leaders that consciously start with a broader pool both in who they hire and who they promote. Recent research published by Harvard University shows that if at least two females are presented in a shortlist of candidates, a female is 50% more likely to be chosen as the final candidate. When there is only one female candidate, she stands virtually no chance of being selected.

Provide equal access to meaningful stretch assignments. The only way for employees to really prove potential is for them to tackle situations they have not previously encountered. Stretch assignments and projects that are tied to strategic business imperatives do just that. Champions of female talent ensure that these opportunities don't always go to the same people or people that remind them of themselves. They ensure that all team members get equal opportunities to grow and gain the experiences they need to advance.

Take the initiative to mentor female talent. Champions of female talent don't sit around waiting for a formal mentoring program to act as a mentor. They take it upon themselves, proactively, to mentor females.

Support flexibility to manage schedule or location of work. Gender champions focus on creating a culture of delivering against results, not a culture of face time. These people leaders provide flexibility to decide when and where work is accomplished, especially when family demands are particularly high.

Assist with career planning. Great people leaders know that part of their role is building future successors for themselves and the organization. This requires assisting individuals with career plans. Champions of female talent know they may need to adapt their approach to include coaching that builds confidence to reach higher levels of performance and potential, or by providing flexibility to re-enter high trajectory career paths at a later time.



Audit Your Organization Part 3

THE BEHAVIORS OF GENDER CHAMPION PEOPLE LEADERS

PLEASE RATE EACH QUESTION

(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

Thinking about the people leaders in your organization who are champions of female talent, to what extent do they demonstrate these behaviors relative to other leaders:

Create opportunities to network that are inclusive of interests and schedules?

1 2 3 4 5

Give females exposure and profile to senior leaders and decision makers?

1 2 3 4 5

Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen?

1 2 3 4 5

Have career and coaching conversations that challenge negative self-perceptions of ability or potential to advance?

1 2 3 4 5

Challenge self and others around unconscious biases?

1 2 3 4 5

Recruit and promote from a diverse pool?

1 2 3 4 5

Provide equal access to meaningful stretch assignments and projects that are tied to strategic business objectives?

1 2 3 4 5

Take the initiative to mentor female talent?

1 2 3 4 5

Assist females with longer term career planning?

1 2 3 4 5

Support flexibility to manage work schedules or location of work?

1 2 3 4 5



Organizational Practices that Elevate Women

We wanted to find out what organizational practices help elevate women in the leadership pipeline. We defined organizational practices as a broad variety of programs and formal processes that seek to attract, recruit, develop and advance female talent. We asked respondents to think about their organization's practices and how they support or do not support elevating more females in their leadership pipelines.

Once again there was a clear distinction between organizations that were extremely satisfied and those that were not at all satisfied with their progress. The former were more satisfied with every organizational practice we asked about on the survey. The four practices, however, that represented the greatest difference in the extremely satisfied organizations were:

1. Has people practices (hiring, promotion, succession) that are free of gender bias
2. Develops the skills of its leaders to manage diverse talent
3. Addresses historical and current pay equity
4. Provides flexible work arrangements (hours or location of work)

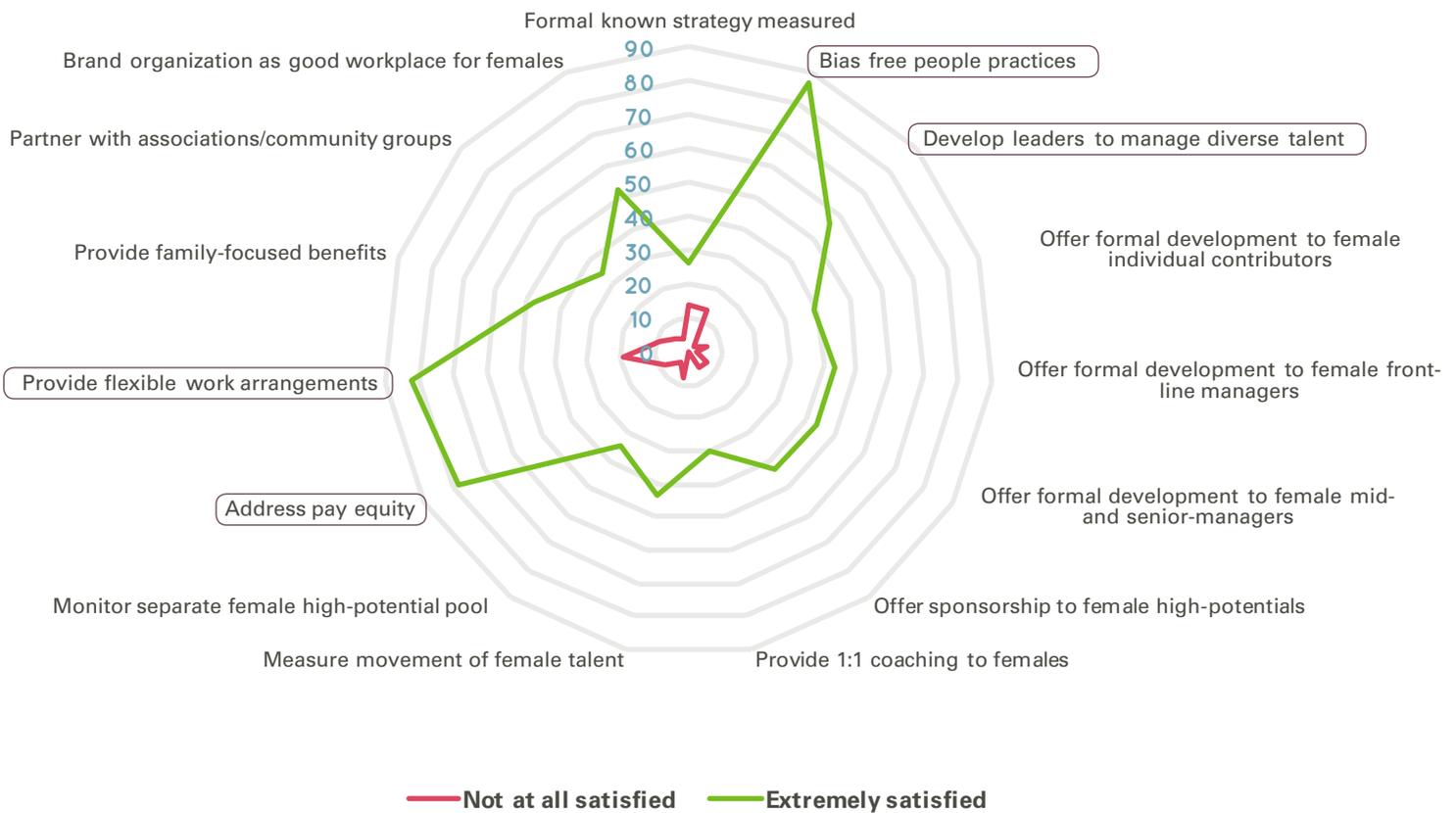
Four Organizational Practices that Elevate Women

1. Gender bias-free people practices
2. Develop people leader skills to manage diverse talent
3. Address pay equity
4. Provide flexible work

Existence Doesn't Guarantee Benefit

What we've learned from speaking with many women and men is that the existence of formal policies sometimes isn't the issue. The challenge is whether employees feel that they can truly access the policy without negative repercussions. For example, asking to leverage a flexible work schedule or using the full extent of a maternity or paternity policy can be considered detrimental in a culture of face time. Attending a development program to help create clarity on career aspirations is often met with resistance when back in the role. **It isn't the mere existence of these practices that count; it's the people leaders' accountability for supporting them that matters.**

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES THAT ADVANCE WOMEN



Audit Your Organization Part 4

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT FEMALE ADVANCEMENT

PLEASE RATE EACH QUESTION
(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

Think about the following practices and determine first the extent to which your organization has the practice, and if it does, the extent to which it is really utilized or a significant benefit derived from it. This may help you target areas for improvement. A gap between the existence and benefit of a particular practice might give you clues into the true support of your people leaders or where to focus investment.

Organizational Practice	Extent exists in your organization	Extent of usage/ benefit derived
Formal known diversity and inclusion strategy that is tracked, measured and reported	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Formal process/tools to track and measure progress of female pipeline at all levels	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
People processes (hiring, promotion, succession) that are bias-free	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Development programs for people leaders to manage diverse talent	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Formal development initiatives for females (workshops, coaching, mentorship and sponsorship)	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Compensation equity process and measures	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Family friendly benefits (parental leave, child care, fertility, etc.)	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Flexible work arrangements	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
Partnerships with associations or community groups and particular branding efforts to attract female talent	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5

Building a More Gender Diverse Organization

This report intends to shed light on a topic that is front and center to most organizations today – how to create a gender representative workforce at all levels. While the topic of gender parity is not new, this issue is more significant than ever because most organizations are disappointed in the speed or progress they have made to date. According to the data, most organizations believe advancing women is a critical business issue; however, the majority are not satisfied with their ability to elevate women in their leadership pipelines.

The findings are clear: current investments in female diversity initiatives are not working. Investment in networking groups for women and practices that may or may not get used are not enough. In fact, the people leaders in organizations make the biggest difference.

What is the Way Forward?

Organizations need to pull several levers at the individual, cultural and organizational levels to make meaningful change. Women need to believe that leadership is a possible career path for them and engage in deliberate ongoing planning. Leaders need to actively champion female talent and create opportunities for women to grow and advance. Organizations must continue to support women in their development, offer meaningful formal practices and hold leaders accountable for creating an inclusive environment. When these initiatives are implemented effectively, movement will occur.



The Call to Action for Your Organization and its Leaders

There are a number of insights outlined in this report. A summary of proven actions is provided below.

Make Leadership Possible for Women

Continue the development programs and support with females at the top, and start to address your pipeline lower in the organization. Catch women early in their careers, when they begin to feel doubt about what's possible for them. Provide development for them early on and coach them on how to self-advocate, create and share a career plan, influence upward and delegate or expand beyond the daily tactical whirlwind. Also provide development for your people leaders so that they not only learn how to become great talent managers, but also how to help with the headwinds that females in particular face.

Set Clear Expectations for Inclusive Leadership

Our work and data confirm that organizations need to do a better job making gender diversity a clear priority and hold leaders accountable for creating inclusive environments. Organizations who invest in developing inclusive leaders and hold them accountable for creating diverse teams experience far greater results. Building a genuine culture of inclusivity will mean weeding out those who do not support the desired culture.

Ensure Access to Organizational Policies and Programs

Gender parity can occur only when both women and men have more flexibility to manage family planning life stages. Yet the existence of policies and practices is not enough on its own. Women and men experience backlash when attempting to use these policies in many of today's organizational cultures. People leaders need to be flexible and supportive so that the practices can have their intended benefits.

Organizational Audit Part 5

INSIGHTS & ACTION PLAN

1. What are your key insights on the state of gender diversity in your organization?

2. Based on these insights, what specific actions must you take to strengthen your organization's ability to elevate more women in your leadership pipeline?

About the Author

Tammy Heermann

Senior Vice President, Leadership Transformation Practice

Lee Hecht Harrison

Tammy is a sought-after advisor who helps individuals and organizations get serious about leadership. She has developed pioneering and multiple award-winning programs aimed at changing mindsets, advancing skillsets and sustaining deliberate practices to achieve high performance.

Passionate about advancing female leaders, she is specifically sought out by Fortune 500 companies for her expertise in gender diversity and programs that accelerate female talent.

While having significant impact in the C-Suite, she is happiest when pushing up-and-coming leaders to break through organizational and self-imposed barriers to reach their potential. With real-world stories of her journey from Senior Consultant to Senior Vice President, people express the value of Tammy's down to earth, practical style in creating an environment of trust in a room of strangers.

Tammy sits on the Women's Leadership Advisory Committee for Women in Communications and Technology. She is a graduate of the London School of Economics with a Master of Science degree in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, and holds an Honors Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Saskatchewan. She lives in Toronto with her daughter Ava and husband Thomas.



About Lee Hecht Harrison

Lee Hecht Harrison (LHH) helps companies transform their leaders and workforce so they can accelerate performance. In an era of continuous change, successfully transforming your workforce depends on how well companies and their people embrace, navigate and lead change. Change within the organization, and their career. At Lee Hecht Harrison we use our expertise in talent development and transition to deliver tailored solutions that help our clients transform their leaders and workforce so they have the people and culture they need to evolve and grow. We are passionate about making a difference in peoples' careers and building better leaders so our clients can build a strong employer brand.

A division of The Adecco Group – the world's leading provider of workforce solutions – Lee Hecht Harrison's 4000 colleagues work with more than 7000 clients in over 60 countries around the world. We have the local expertise, global infrastructure and industry leading technology and analytics required to manage the complexity associated with executing critical talent and workforce initiatives, reducing brand and operational risk. It's why 60% of Fortune 500 companies choose to work with us.

**LEE HECHT
HARRISON**

About HR People + Strategy

HR People + Strategy is the executive network of the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), the largest professional society representing 285,000 members in more than 165 countries. HR People + Strategy provides members access to forward thinking exchanges, research and publications and executive level networking opportunities.

**SHRM EXECUTIVE NETWORK
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¹Bureau of the Census, "QuickFacts: United States," available at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/00> (last accessed March 2017).

²National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 318.30. Bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by sex of student and discipline," available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_318.30.asp (last accessed March 2017).

³Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm> (last accessed March 2017).

⁴Catalyst, "Women in S&P 500 Companies," available at <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-sp-500-companies> (last accessed March 2017).

⁵Molinaro, Vince, Liane Davey and David S. Weiss. Three Dimensions of Leadership Capacity. *Leadership Solutions: The Pathway to Bridge the Leadership Gap*. Wiley, John & Sons, Inc., 2007. Page 37.