BOSTON COLLEGE

Center *for* Work & Family

Women's Career Advancement Programs: Optimizing Efforts for Better Results

Long a key component of corporate America's leadership development and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) efforts, women's career advancement programs have proliferated in various forms over the years. These efforts include, for example, mentoring programs, accelerated leadership development training, and a variety of work-life supports. These initiatives have been developed to address the existing gender imbalance in the workplace and to cultivate women in leadership roles.

This Executive Briefing will broadly explore women's career advancement in light of the increasing body of research on work and gender. It will provide an overview of the most salient initiatives associated with women's career advancement — including best practices from a number of leading companies — and provide recommendations for employers on how to optimize these efforts going forward. In addition, we explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the workplace and its implications for employers. This event, which has drastically altered all facets of life, is having a significant impact on women's careers, threatening to further slow down progress towards closing the gender gap.

Women in the Workforce: Slow Progress at the Top, Limited Pipeline

While women's presence in the U.S. labor force has undergone a dramatic transformation over the past several decades, the pace of the change in advancing women's careers has been markedly slow. Women have increasingly been breaking through the "glass ceiling" — a term coined in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article — but nearly 35 years later, it has yet to be fully shattered. According to the World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Index — which considers women's workforce participation and earnings, public office representation, educational attainment, and health outcomes — **at the current rate of change, the U.S. is slightly over 200 years away from achieving gender parity.**[1] This sobering statistic underscores why dramatic transformational change is needed in order to more impactfully move the needle.

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Despite significant gains in educational attainment — women currently earn nearly 60% of bachelor's and master's degrees and approximately half of doctoral degrees in the U.S. — and almost equal participation in the workforce (47%), women continue to lag behind men when it comes to positions of leadership.[2]

■ Only 37 companies in the most recent Fortune 500 list are led by a female CEO (7.4%). While certainly an improvement compared to a mere two 20 years earlier, the increase in female chief executive leadership has been modest in recent years.[3] Furthermore, only three of these companies are led by a woman of color (0.6%). [4]

■ An ongoing study by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org found a troubling trend for women early in the pipeline. Their findings highlight a "broken rung" — a significant gap in the number of women who are promoted and hired into first-level management positions.[5] According to their 2020 report, for every 100 men promoted to manager, only 85 women are promoted. This ratio drops to 58 for Black women and 71 for Latinas.[6]

■ Women also continue to experience a chronic gap in pay, earning roughly 80 cents for every dollar made by a man (for full-time, year-round work). This gap is much more pronounced for most women of color, particularly for Latina, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native women.[7]

Women's Educational Attainment and Workforce Participation
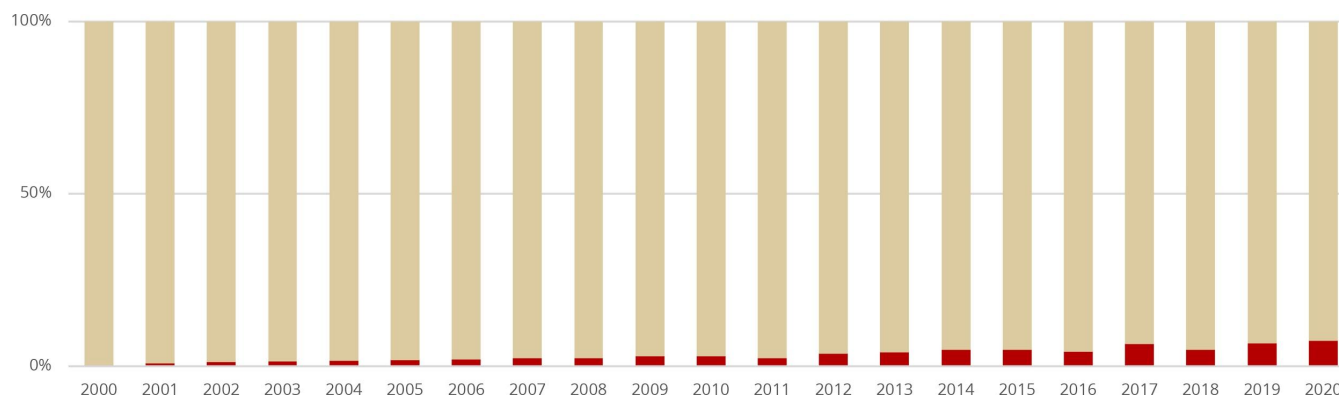
57%
College Graduates
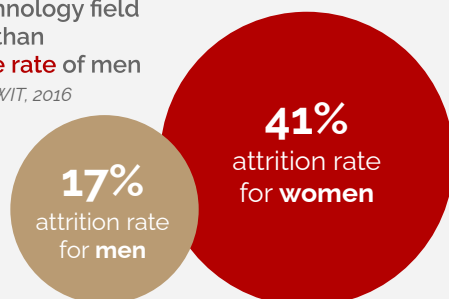
47%
Workforce

7.4%
Fortune 500 CEOs

Women CEOs in Fortune 500 Companies: 2000 – 2020

Source: Catalyst, 2020

Women leave the high technology field at more than **twice the rate** of men
Source: NCWIT, 2016

41%
attrition rate for **women**

17%
attrition rate for **men**

In 2018, women in computer, engineering and science were paid an estimated **80.7%** of men's annual median earnings.

WIDER GAPS FOR WOMEN IN STEM

Within the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), the gap in women's workforce participation is particularly striking. According to the latest data from the National Science Foundation, only **29%** of science and engineering employees were women, including only **11.5%** women of color.[8]

Unequal participation traces back to differences in educational attainment, as men continue to hold the vast majority of bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in most STEM disciplines.[9] The gap is further widened once women enter the workforce, as they are more likely than men to forego occupations related to their degree and the attrition rate of those who do is much higher than men's.[10]

intel.

BEST PRACTICE

Building the Pipeline of Female Leaders in Technology

Intel has been taking meaningful steps to support the advancement and retention of women for decades. Intel's stated purpose as a company — to create world-changing technology that enriches the lives of every person on earth — is underpinned by their cultural value of Inclusion. The company frequently states that their ambition is to be the most inclusive company in the world, and this cannot be accomplished without a laser-like focus on supporting their female employees through networking programs like the Women at Intel (WIN) Community and a strong commitment to empowering the next generation of the female tech workforce.

In 2021, the Women at Intel Network (WIN) will celebrate its 25th anniversary. Today, the community is home to over **7,500 members at 88 different locations** spread around Intel's global operations. Operating in parallel with WIN is Intel's Network of Executive Women (INEW), a council of the senior-most women and allies at the company, as well as other communities such as the Black Network of Executive Women (BNEW) and the Latin American Region Network of Executive Women (LARNEW).

Intel's commitment to women doesn't just cover its current workforce. The company has several programs in place, which work to build the global pipeline of young girls pursuing careers in STEM — empowering them through technology skills and hands-on experiences.

- In 2015 the Intel Foundation partnered with the U.S. State Department and the United Nations Foundation to create the Girl Up Women in Science (WiSci) program. WiSci seeks to bridge the gender gap in STEAM fields through access to education, mentorship opportunities, and leadership training — in part through STEAM camps, facilitated by Intel Employee Service Corps volunteers, which have been held in Rwanda, Estonia, Namibia and other countries.

- As part of the Intel® She Will Connect program, the Intel Foundation recently joined forces with several other organizations to launch Million Girls Moonshot, a transformative movement designed to help close the science and engineering gender gap by engaging one million school-age girls in STEM learning opportunities over the next five years across all 50 US States.

The future is bright for Intel's work to empower women — both inside and outside of the company. **As part of their 2030 RISE goals, Intel has committed to doubling the number of women and underrepresented minorities in senior leadership roles, in addition to reaching 40% representation of women in technical roles by the end of the decade.** A diverse workforce and inclusive culture are key to Intel's evolution and its ability to continue to attract the best talent to join the company for decades to come.

> " Being a part of WIN over the last decade has been a catalyst for amazing things in my career. My network has increased exponentially, as the work we do within WIN spans all business groups and campuses at Intel. WIN has connected me to amazing people and leaders across the company who I've leveraged as references for key roles — as well as coaches when I was in need of support. "
>
> *Shelly Lafree, WIN's Cross-Site Chair and longtime member*

Gender Bias in the Workplace

Compared to the explicit forms of gender discrimination and exclusion faced by previous generations of women, current barriers tend to be much more subtle.

- Gender stereotypes and biased beliefs still linger and have become institutionalized in our work structures, policies, practices, and expectations — oftentimes inadvertently — continuing to place women at a disadvantage. [11]

- For example, research has shown that women often face a trade-off between competence and likeability.[12] Those who display assertiveness and a take-charge approach are more likely to be seen as too aggressive and unlikeable, and may be poorly evaluated because of this. By contrast, women who display a more communal style are more likely to be seen as weak and less effective leaders, regardless of actual performance. Implicit or unconscious biases can create this double bind for women, which can negatively impact their opportunities for growth.

> "Our unconscious mind is a powerful thing. It makes 90% of our decisions without us even knowing it... we're wired to make cognitive shortcuts, using past experiences to make assumptions."
>
> PwC *Blind Spots* training program

Intersectionality Matters

Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other aspects of social identity are essential to consider when developing organizational interventions to help women advance.

- Although women share commonalities due to gender, **there are distinct nuances in how women of different racio-ethnic backgrounds experience issues of sexism, racism, and classism in the workplace**.[13]

- For example, Black women report feeling uncomfortable addressing race issues at work and experiencing higher levels of scrutiny compared to other colleagues. This can create an emotional toll, as they feel like they have to constantly monitor and modulate their behavior.[14] Latinas also report having to modify aspects of their identity to fit in within traditionally white settings, and their particular challenges can greatly vary within their demographic.[15]

- Looking at women's advancement through the lens of intersectionality is more important than ever, as women of color are projected to be the majority of all women in the U.S. by 2060.[16]

TYPES OF BIASES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

Experts say that all humans have unconscious or implicit biases, or blind spots, that can influence decision-making. The following is excerpted from *Blind Spots*, an unconscious bias training program adapted from PwC's internal training program for outside organizations. PwC is using this training to raise awareness of potential blind spots, so that we can prevent them.

- **Blind spots** are unconscious biases, which all people carry and which influence decision-making. Experts say that it is important to identify them and "outsmart" or overcome them in order to make better, more objective decisions.

- The **"halo and horns effect"** of first impressions — reinforced by **confirmation bias** — causes people to make snap judgments that may favor some over others. Research shows that we can counteract our unconscious bias by "seeking out contradictory views and slowing down our thinking."

- **Prototype bias** describes implicit associations we make about people, which can influence whom we consider to be "the right fit." Unintentionally, we may alter the criteria we use to evaluate colleagues for promotion, for example. Experts recommend that we develop objective criteria ahead of time and double-check our objectivity along the way.

- **Similarity bias** can cause us to choose those who are like us, unintentionally giving opportunities to those who may be less deserving. Research suggests that it is critical to examine your network and include in your inner circle people who are not like you.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

"Female recession" threatens women's advancement

As we contemplate women's career advancement amid the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence is mounting that we are facing a "female recession", where women are at significantly increased risk for dropping out of the workforce and the gender gap in the workplace is likely to grow.

- In September 2020, 800,000 women - four times more women than men - dropped out of the workforce. And in December 2020, women lost 100% of the 140,000 net jobs lost during the month with unemployment rates higher for Black women (8.4%) and Latinas (9.1%) compared to women overall (6.3%).[17]

- According to the most recent *Women in the Workplace* report, prior to 2020 men and women were leaving their companies at comparable rates; now, "women are 1.3 times more likely than men to have considered stepping out of the workforce or slowing down their careers—particularly mothers, senior women, and Black women."[18]

- 3 out of 4 senior-level women cite burnout as the primary reason for downshifting or leaving the workforce.[19]

- The participation gap between men and women ages 25-54 is widening after "shrinking to the narrowest ever" right before the virus and millions of women may never return to the workforce.[20]

Women sustain deeper job losses and increased responsibilities for unpaid work

In the US, women sustained 55% of the job losses due to COVID-19, in part because they were overrepresented in occupations and sectors hit especially hard during the pandemic, such as accommodation, food, sales and manufacturing.[21]

Women are also dropping out of the labor force due to growing responsibilities of unpaid work at home during the pandemic. While men are taking on increased responsibility for child care and housework, women still do more. Moreover, women are taking on the newly added responsibility for homeschooling children far more than men.

- Mothers are three times as likely as fathers to take on the majority of housework and caregiving.[22]

- Women are twice as likely to be primarily responsible for their children's homeschooling.[23]

- Over 80% of US adults, who were not working because they were providing care for children not in school or daycare, were women.[24]

Men's careers are benefiting more from the shift to remote work, while women's stall

- In a study of more than 1,000 US adults, men with children at home are much more likely than women with children at home to report positive impacts of working remotely on their career:[25]

- Conversely, women – particularly senior-level women and women with children – are more likely to report consistent feelings of burnout and exhaustion, lower productivity, and a negative impact of working remotely on their career progression.[26]

Percentage of employees who have considered changing their work situation during the COVID-19 crisis
Source: Women in the Workplace 2020

16% Mothers
11% Fathers
Switching to a less demanding job

7%
4%
Leaving the workforce altogether
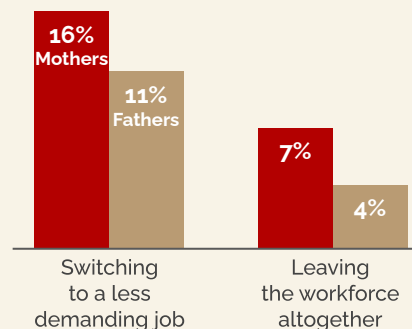
4X
more women than men **dropped out of the workforce** in September 2020

Compared to fathers, mothers are...

2X
more likely to be responsible for **homeschooling**

3X
more likely to take on majority of **housework and caregiving**

Percentage of parents with positive results of working from home
Source: Qualtrics/theBoardList

Pay raise	Fathers	26%
	Mothers	13%
Promoted		34%
		9%
Additional Leadership		29%
		10%
Responsible for important projects		28%
		10%
Recognition inside company		19%
		10%
Positive formal reviews		15%
		7%
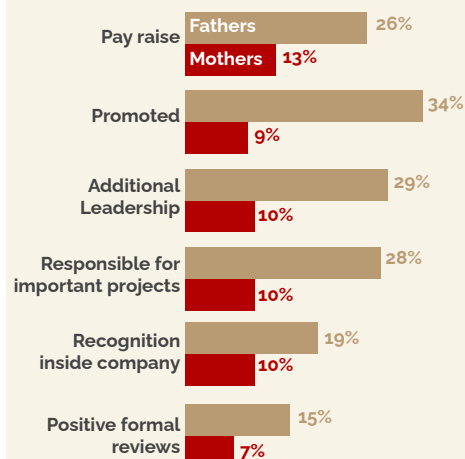
The Case for Diverse Leadership

Working towards gender equality is a moral imperative, but mounting evidence also points to it as a business advantage. A number of studies have shown a strong correlation between organizations that actively develop and promote women into leadership roles and better business outcomes, including:

- A study by Catalyst, which looked at 353 Fortune 500 companies, found that return on equity (ROE) and total return to shareholders (TRS) was 35.1% and 34% higher, respectively, for companies with female board representation.[27]

- More recently, a report by Development Dimensions International (DDI) presents findings that organizations in the top 20% of financial performance have more women in leadership roles than those in the bottom 20%.[28]

- An ongoing study conducted by McKinsey & Company, drawing on a data set of over 1,000 companies globally, reports a similar trend. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability.[29]

Nonetheless, merely diversifying a workforce does not guarantee economic gains. In order to enjoy its benefits, **organizations must commit to shifting the culture and power structure of their organizations towards equality and inclusivity, adopting a true learning orientation that values differences**.[30]

Organizations with Better Financial Performance Have More Women in Leadership Roles
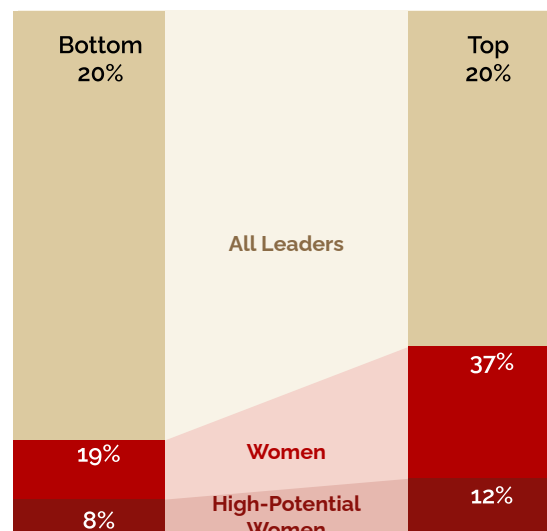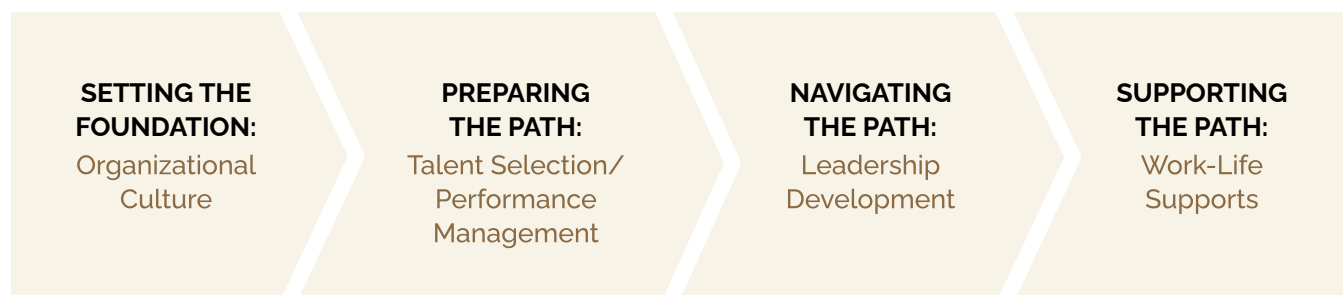

Source: DDI, 2015

"Companies will not reap benefits from diversity unless they build a culture that insists on equality. Treating differences as a source of knowledge and connection lays the groundwork for such a culture."

Thomas and Ely (HBR, Nov/Dec 2020)

Strategic Framework for Women's Career Advancement

Based on a review of both the research literature and the current landscape of women's advancement programs, we offer the following framework for the design and evaluation of a comprehensive women's advancement strategy. Organizations should consider a combination of practices and programs that are complementary to one another and that support each of these four categories:

SETTING THE FOUNDATION: Organizational Culture	PREPARING THE PATH: Talent Selection/ Performance Management	NAVIGATING THE PATH: Leadership Development	SUPPORTING THE PATH: Work-Life Supports

The following sections will provide an overview of some of the most salient initiatives and programs under each category.

SETTING THE FOUNDATION:
Organizational Culture

Understand the organization's culture and women's workplace experience.
Companies wishing to create transformational change that supports women's equality must be willing to examine their organizational culture — its deeply held values, underlying assumptions, and symbols that influence behavior — and actively listen to their women's workplace experience.[31]

- Employee opinion surveys can be a helpful tool for uncovering cultural norms, assessing inclusivity, and gauging employees' sense of belonging — all of which must become key metrics in evaluating progress towards building a diverse, inclusive, and equitable culture.[32] Utilizing focus groups, interviews, and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can provide even richer qualitative data.

- Leaders, as the architects of organizational culture, must play a central role in spearheading these efforts and ensuring follow-through on ensuing initiatives.

Mitigate unconscious bias. Unconscious biases, when left unchecked, can poorly influence decision-making around who receives opportunities and who gets left behind, which can place women at a disadvantage.

- In order to more effectively mitigate the effects of unconscious bias, efforts need to underpin the entire talent management process.

- Training initiatives aimed at helping employees to become aware of biases and develop strategies to overcome them must be rolled out at all organizational levels.

Engage men as allies. Norms of the ideal worker and work environment reflect a time when women were vastly underrepresented in the workplace, especially in positions of power. Given this, men, as the creators of the prevalent workplace culture, must be regarded as essential change agents for women's advancement efforts.

- Male allyship is not a strategy for men to "rescue the women," but rather a call to action for them to actively challenge the status quo. Authors David Smith and Brad Johnson provide practical strategies for men to become "courageous watch dogs" for gender equity in their organizations, which includes calling out instances of microaggressions and sexist behavior.[33]

- It is necessary for men to involve women in their learning process regarding how they can make a positive difference for their female colleagues.[34]

- A global study by Boston Consulting Group found that when men are actively engaged in women's advancement efforts, 96% of organizations experience progress compared to 30% of those where men are not involved.[35]

> "Confronting other men for sexism, bias, harassment, and all manner of inappropriate behavior may be the toughest part of male allyship. But it's also utterly essential."
>
> Smith and Johnson (HBR 10/16/20)

OBJECTIVES

▶ Engage leaders in building a culture that values gender equity and women's advancement

STRATEGIES

▶ Understand the organization's culture and women's workplace experience

▶ Mitigate unconscious bias

▶ Engage men as allies

KEYS TO SUCCESS

▶ Use data to assess culture and women's perceptions of the workplace

▶ Learn to identify and address unconscious bias

▶ Ensure adequate input from underrepresented groups

96%
of organizations experience progress **when men are actively engaged** in women's advancement

BEST PRACTICE

A Deep Commitment to Recognizing and Combating Unconscious Bias

TRAINING & EDUCATION GROUNDED IN SCIENCE

In 2009, in partnership with Harvard Professor of Social Ethics Mahzarin Banaji, PwC began to develop the foundation of its unconscious bias program *4 Real*, a series of brief videos geared at helping employees to recognize and combat unconscious biases — or blind spots — which they carry into the workplace. Grounded in the science of how the mind develops assumptions and stereotypes, the self-administered training aims to educate employees about different types of biases and the ways in which these influence decision-making about our networks and who to help, and can lead to less-than-optimal business outcomes.

Through a commitment from its new US Chairman at the time Tim Ryan, *4 Real* **unconscious bias training became mandatory for all new hires in September 2016 and a criterion for promotion at all levels in June 2017. To date 30,000 PwC employees have completed the training, including 99% (7,000 employees) of those eligible for promotion this year.** Elements of unconscious bias training are embedded and repeated frequently in many other PwC manager and leadership training programs, including cutting edge virtual reality "soft skills" training on inclusion and belonging.

PwC's unconscious bias training — along with career advancement programs Vanguard and Breakthrough Leadership — became the foundation for PwC's first annual Diversity & Inclusion Transparency Report released in August 2020. The report is part of a larger effort to move beyond "segmented programming" towards building a "culture of belonging" that is integrated into everyday behaviors and operations.

The report details the representation of PwC's workforce at all levels by gender and racially/ethnically diverse groups and highlights key milestones, including:

- **In FY20, 50% of the US Leadership Team was comprised of women and/or racially/ethnically diverse individuals;**

- **Female representation on the US Board of Partners increased 13% from 23% in FY18 to 36% in FY20;**

- **At the manager level, women's numbers grew from 45% in FY18 to 50% in FY20.**

IMPACT IN THE WORKPLACE AND BEYOND

In 2017, Tim Ryan co-founded CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ to help elevate the conversation about D&I in the workplace among business leaders at the highest levels within organizations. With 1,500 CEO signatories and counting, CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ requires signatories to share best practices and enables organizations to replicate leading edge women's advancement programs. As part of its pledge, PwC adapted its unconscious bias program to develop *Blind Spots*

Building on their work together on *4 Real*, PwC funded Banaji's Outsmarting Human Minds (OHM) project. Through a series of videos, podcasts, articles and tests, OHM offers learning modules for free to the general public on a range of topics related to uncovering and overcoming implicit, unconscious biases.

OTHER PWC WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT RESOURCES

UN HeforShe, Women unbound: Unleashing female entrepreneurial potential, PwC Women in Tech

> " When you include a diversity of minds in the decision-making process, you inevitably have a better and stronger result because the environment in the room becomes open. You start talking with people, rather than talking at them. "
>
> *Tim Ryan, US Chairman and Senior Partner, PwC*

PREPARING THE PATH:
Talent Selection & Performance Management

De-biased talent identification processes and performance evaluations. Gender norms and expectations influence perceptions of how women lead and, consequently, the ways in which their leadership is evaluated.[36] Specific ways in which organizations can actively challenge unconscious bias in their evaluation and selection processes include:[37]

■ Base evaluations on clearly defined leadership competencies and use structured interviews to allow for better comparisons across candidates.

■ Focus on specific actions and outcomes, not subjective descriptors (e.g. confident, aggressive, charismatic, helpful, unlikeable, etc.).

■ Utilize bundled decision-making to evaluate candidates jointly for promotion. Research has shown that when candidates are compared against each other, objective performance criteria take precedence over biased assessments.

Access to line experience and special assignments. Organizations must ensure that women are given access to either equal or equivalent opportunities as men that are critical for advancement. This includes making sure that they participate in important career path conversations and are always part of the talent pool being considered for key, high-visibility assignments.

■ A study by Deloitte, focused on the financial services industry, found that women leaders were poorly represented in business, finance, and operations roles — with 9%, 21% and 11%, participation, respectively — all of which are considered the main grooming paths for executive leadership.[38]

■ A 2019 report from the Working Mother Research Institute found that 48% of men versus 15% of women surveyed had received detailed information on career paths to P&L jobs.[39]

■ To advance gender equity, organizations must address women's particular challenges to take on special assignments, instead of letting them become an obstacle. For example, international assignments can be reimagined or crafted in a way that minimizes the known challenges faced by many female expats.[40]

Sponsorship. It has been found that women tend to be over-mentored and under-sponsored relative to men. Having a sponsor not only facilitates women being included in the candidate pool for top roles, but also provides encouragement, enhancing their confidence to pursue higher-ranking or more challenging roles. [41]

■ Sponsorship can take many forms along a spectrum, as shown below. In its most robust form, a sponsor is not just a trusted guide and advisor, but is also a public advocate for their protégé's career advancement. As such, they must be leaders with significant status and influence in the organization.[42]

Mentor	**Strategizer**	**Connector**	**Opportunity Giver**	**Advocate**
Provide advice, support, or coaching.	Share "insider information" about advancing; strategize getting ahead.	Make introductions to influential people, talk up with peers.	Provide a highly-visible opportunity.	Publicly advocate a promotion; fight for her in settings where she can't fight for herself.

Private relationship ◄───────────────────► Public relationship

Source: Herminia Ibarra, HBR 8/19/19

OBJECTIVES

► Redefine and expand the paths and criteria for advancement

► Ensure equitable evaluation & rewards

STRATEGIES

► De-biased talent identification processes and performance evaluations

► Access to line experience/special assignments

► Sponsorship

KEYS TO SUCCESS

► Objective criteria focused on outcomes

► Access to experience valued for advancement

► Access and visibility to senior leaders

NAVIGATING THE PATH:
Leadership Development

Mentoring. Mentoring has long been shown to be a robust leadership development tool. While the efficacy of informal mentoring is strongly supported, evidence on the usefulness of formal corporate programs (where mentoring dyads are assigned) is not quite as conclusive, due to limited research.[43]

- When implementing a formal program, careful design considerations must be given to issues that can reduce its effectiveness, such as a mentor-protégé mismatch, lack of depth in the relationship, and infrequent contact.[44]

- Organizations must aim to cultivate a mentoring culture — one that fosters the creation of these important relationships and that genuinely supports learning and development. Mentoring should be considered a foundational leadership competency.

- Women may need additional support making connections with possible mentors, as they may not have access to high-ranking leaders with whom they can share an immediate connection based on gender or racio-ethnic background. Ensuring access to influential mentors who can become vocal advocates is critical for facilitating career advancement.[45]

Developmental networks. Rather than relying on a single mentor, research has shown that it is highly beneficial for individuals to have a variety of trusted advisers who can fill different development needs.[46] These networks can also expand women's circle of influence and can be valuable sources of organizational and/or industry knowledge.

- In a Boston College Center for Work & Family study of millennials' attitudes toward employer career support strategies, access to informal mentors was both highly rated and used. As for networking opportunities, women rated these slightly higher than men — close to 62% found it helpful to extremely helpful.[47]

- Organizations need to provide formal opportunities for women to build their internal and external networks. Women's advocacy groups or women's leadership institutes can be useful external sources.

- Employee resource groups (ERGs) — with adequate support from top leadership — are a type of formal network that can help foster developmental relationships and offer a source of support for women and underrepresented groups. [48]

Leadership training. Women-only leadership trainings have shown promising potential in promoting outcomes that can support women's career advancement, including: increased self-awareness, confidence, a sense of belonging, and networking opportunities.[49] Programs usually consist of training modules that integrate other development tools, such as 360-degree feedback and coaching.

- The objective of these programs is not to "fix the women". Rather, the single-gender learning environment allows participants to be more at ease to explore commonly-shared issues that affect their development as leaders.[50]

- Company-wide training programs can provide a unique setting for internal networking, as participants from all across the organization can quickly build rapport over the course of just a few days. Executive involvement can also give participants an opportunity for exposure and visibility.

- Programs should be supported by complementary interventions (e.g. coaching, career path conversations, etc.) to maximize impact on career advancement.

OBJECTIVES

▶ Create a culture that supports learning and development

▶ Enable women to expand their networks

▶ Build leadership skills, organizational knowledge

STRATEGIES

▶ Mentoring

▶ Developmental networks

▶ Leadership training / women-only training

KEYS TO SUCCESS

▶ Broad participation from the top

▶ Formal and informal mechanisms

▶ Meets the needs of a diverse workforce

In a 2015 study of millennial men and women,

access to informal mentors and networking opportunities

were the most highly rated employer career support strategies.

BEST PRACTICE
A Holistic Approach to Gender-Diverse Leadership

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S JOURNEYS

In 2015, drug maker Eli Lilly conducted a workforce analysis which identified major gaps in women's representation at senior leadership levels (20%) despite the fact that nearly half (47%) of the workforce were women. Under the leadership of now CEO Dave Ricks, **Lilly adapted its "Patient Journey" market research process to develop the "Women's Journey" to better understand the experience of high potential women** — and barriers to advancement they might face — as they progress in their careers.

Through anonymous surveys, focus groups, journal entries, and recordings, senior management learned that some women felt they had to act like men to be successful, and that gender bias limited the career support they received and factored into promotion decisions. In addition, the process revealed that women of color had been overlooked and their pipeline was limited. Lilly repeated the project to understand the journeys of African-American, Asian, Latinx and LGBTQ employees as well.

"It was the stories Lilly women told that really connected senior leadership to individual people. I think if we'd only had the quantitative data, it wouldn't have created so much change," Steve Fry, Senior VP of HR and Diversity, told Gallup in December 2019.

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

In response, Lilly's senior leaders committed to a range of initiatives aimed at recruiting, developing and supporting high potential women at all levels, including a formal sponsorship program in which

Executive Committee members personally sponsored women and people of color and a Women in Leadership training program aimed at providing high-level executive skills and networking opportunities for women poised to become vice presidents.

In addition, CEO David Ricks conducted an intensive 2½-day workshop called **EMERGE** with the top 15 African American women leaders at the senior director level. This program, which has since been replicated with Asian and Latina women and Multicultural Men Leaders, enabled women to be heard and gain visibility at the top of the organization — and reinforced the organization's commitment to advancing a diverse set of women.

MEASURABLE PROGRESS AT THE TOP

While Lilly does not have specific quotas for women in leadership, they have aspirational targets and have seen significant improvement.

- **As of September 23, 2020, women comprise six of 15 Executive Committee members and four of 13 positions on the Board of Directors. The Board also includes five members from underrepresented groups (minorities and LGBTQ).**

- **Since December 2016, women in management increased from 38% to 44% and those who report directly to the CEO have increased from 29% to 40%.**

- **Women of color at the VP/senior VP level has grown from 3% to 9%, outpacing the 4% industry average.**

> " While many companies are trying to build more gender-diverse leadership teams and workforces, progress remains slow. We knew it would remain slow at Lilly, too, unless we took a different approach. So we sought to do something difficult: to understand and address our blind spots. Only then could we hope to grow our pipeline of potential women leaders. "
>
> *Joy Fitzgerald, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Lilly (HBR 10/23/18)*

SUPPORTING THE PATH:
Work-Life Supports

Flexible work arrangements. Creating a culture where flexible work arrangements are encouraged and used by all employees is critical for women's advancement, as women's higher utilization of these benefits can lead to a negative perception of their commitment to their careers.

- Promoting a culture that views flexibility as a more agile way of working, rather than a perk, has many positive results. It enables employees to better deal with work-life challenges, can reduce real estate costs, eliminates low value-added time (e.g. long employee commutes), and allows companies to maintain business continuity in the event of a crisis.

- Cultures of chronic overwork (where long hours are expected and rewarded) are especially detrimental for women's careers. Biased beliefs around work-life balance usually lead organizations to treat flexibility as mostly a women's issue, when the focus should be on alleviating the onerous work demands faced by all employees.[51]

- Shifting from an "opt-in" to an "opt-out" approach, where flexibility is the default, or allowing work teams to collectively design their own rules around how work will get done, can help create a better culture for all employees by making flexibility the norm, rather than an accommodation.[52]

Parental/Family Leave. Implementing gender-neutral parental leave and support programs that encourage a more equal approach to caregiving is critical to promoting gender equality both at home and in the workplace.

- While work-family issues are increasingly relevant to all employees, it is still the case that women more often take FMLA-protected leaves, assume the majority of caregiving responsibilities, and are more likely to report negative impacts on their career after becoming a parent.[53]

- In a 2019 Boston College Center for Work & Family study, new mothers reported the most significant drop-off in support when returning from leave (84% before vs. 42% after). Women also reported greater concern that taking leave would delay their career advancement and were much more likely to perceive fewer opportunities for promotion following leave.[54]

- Creating a culture that better supports working mothers in their careers will require senior leaders to actively endorse that all employees take full leave, men to be equally open about the challenges of working parenthood, and the implementation of robust programs to help ease the transition for new parents — including paid leave, gradual return-to-work, new parent coaching, and manager training.

Return-to-work programs. Women, more so than men, tend to have more flexible / interrupted career paths that do not conform to traditional patterns. For those who leave and try to come back into the workplace, the path can be quite challenging.[55] Return-to-work programs allow organizations to tap into a talented and experienced pool of women who have taken significant breaks in their careers.

- Often structured like an internship, these programs provide a quick and supportive way to on-board participants back to the workforce.[56]

- Increasingly, organizations view these programs as an innovative way to recruit experienced women into more senior positions and help achieve a more diverse, gender-balanced workforce.[57]

OBJECTIVES
► Recruitment and retention of top talent
► Engagement and productivity
► Business continuity

STRATEGIES
► Flexible work arrangements
► Parental/Family Leave
► Child/elder care benefits
► Return-to-work programs

KEYS TO SUCCESS
► Meets the needs of employees at various life stages.
► Programs/benefits equally available and utilized by women and men
► Adequate manager training/support

"...managers and employees are primed to associate the subject of family with women. This makes it more likely that what's really an overload problem will be treated as a women's issue."

Kelly and Moen
(MIT SMR, 4/27/20)

2X
more women than men perceived a decrease in promotion opportunities following leave

BEST PRACTICE
Innovative Supports for Employees in Transition

Morgan Stanley

Embedded in Morgan Stanley's core values is a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Through their various backgrounds, perspectives, ideas and experiences, the Firm's employees help cultivate a workplace that is resilient, results-driven and effective.

SUPPORTING NEW PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Promoting diversity encompasses many dimensions. In the Americas Institutional Securities Group (ISG), this includes a keen awareness of the needs of parents, who require a differentiated level of focus and sensitivity from management. In response, **Morgan Stanley last year created a new role to sit within ISG Management, Head of Family Advocacy,** appointing Allyson Bronner, a former Sales and Trading Executive Director, to lead the effort. Bronner partners closely with colleagues Firm-wide in supporting new and expecting parents, managing transitions around parental leave, and addressing work/life challenges specific to parents.

Already, **ISG's parental networking group has attracted close to 800 members in the U.S.,** primarily new or young parents. **Nearly 300 members have accessed the breadth of available services —** from events and manager training sessions to a nine-step check-in plan for expectant caregivers.

GLOBAL RETURN TO WORK INITIATIVE

Supporting those who may have stepped away from their professional paths is a separate but related emphasis. Launched in 2014, Morgan Stanley's Return to Work initiative is a 12-week program designed to give experienced men and women an opportunity to restart their careers. Having been away from the workplace for more than two years, recruits complete internships that best match their backgrounds and experience, while participating in various networking and enrichment activities.

The program, which began in New York and London, now includes cohorts in Mumbai, Glasgow, Budapest, Baltimore, Hong Kong, Bengaluru and Tokyo. **Nearly 350 people have participated to date—with approximately 70 percent hired full-time and positive upward mobility as alumni grow within the organization.** Case in point is Suzanne Lindquist — a 2014 graduate of the Return to Work initiative and its first to rise to Managing Director almost five years to the day she started.

A corporate culture that is open and inclusive is fundamental to Morgan Stanley's role as a global leader. Above all, it allows the Firm to better serve its clients while helping employees achieve their professional objectives.

> " The Firm's recent work in educating managers and supporting employees with parental leave has impressed me. When members of my team were preparing for leave, they accessed one-on-one guidance on what to expect and how best to successfully transition, both before and after. It's really strengthened our culture. "
>
> *a Fixed Income Managing Director*

Key Recommendations

We appear to be at an important inflection point in addressing women's advancement in organizations. Especially in the current uncertain climate, it is imperative for companies to not lose sight of the critical nature of these efforts. To summarize, we invite organizations looking to make transformational and sustained change in how they approach women's advancement to take the following steps:

Begin with a clear understanding of where the gaps are in your pipeline. Track women's advancement at all levels in order to nurture a robust pipeline of future leaders. Make sure you are tracking numbers for underrepresented groups. Analyze your data to uncover patterns and guide decision-making.[58]

Avoid guesswork — listen to women's needs and experiences. Intentionally listen to your employees' perspectives and seek to understand the particular experiences of underrepresented women. Understand how certain groups might be differentially impacted and address the complex, intersectional identities of women employees in the design of your programs.

Pay attention to the influence of culture and ensure leadership commitment. Uncover and challenge your organization's culture. Ensure that all levels of leadership are committed to mitigating bias on an ongoing basis. Carefully articulate and clarify expectations around what the desired culture looks like. Focusing on the desired behavioral changes will more successfully lead to changes in attitudes.[59]

Develop a cohesive women's advancement strategy. Take into account selection, development, and support mechanisms to determine where the gaps are in your programming and make sure initiatives complement each other. Ensure that efforts to mitigate bias and advance culture change underpin all initiatives and programs.

Align women's advancement efforts with strategic business objectives and regularly communicate on goals and metrics. Clearly define both quantitative and qualitative indicators of success, as representation alone is not enough. Building a diverse, inclusive, and equitable culture starts with employees feeling comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. Utilize employee survey or focus group data to continually monitor progress. Make DE&I efforts part of an ongoing conversation, not just an occasional topic.

"...companies need to dive deeper into their beliefs, norms, practices, and policies to understand how they position women relative to men and how the different positions fuel inequality. Seriously investigating the context that gives rise to differential patterns in the way men and women experience the workplace—and intervening accordingly—can help companies chart a path to gender parity."

Tinsley & Ely (HBR, May/June 2018)

IMPACT OF COVID-19

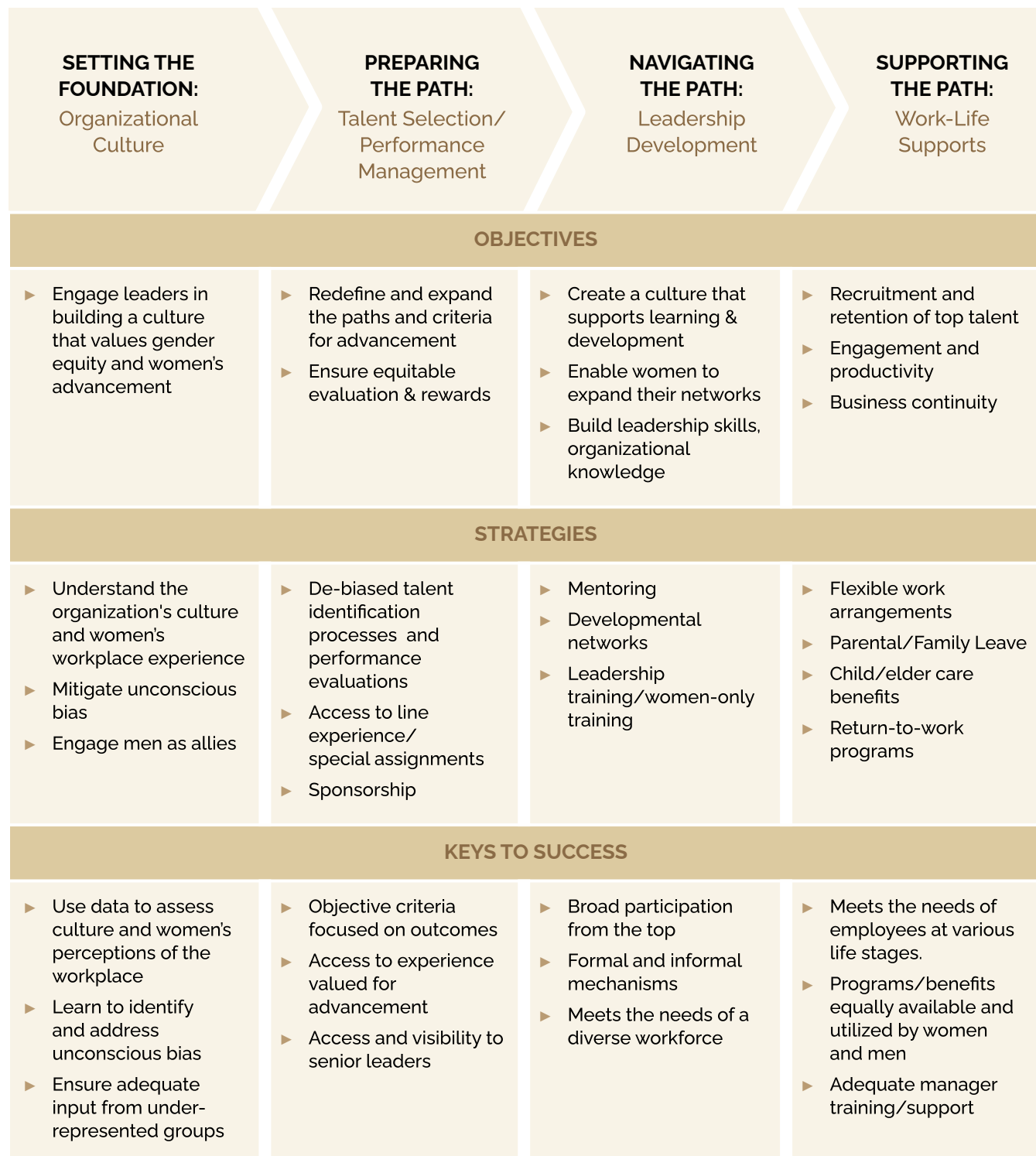#### Implications for employers

Redouble the focus on mitigating gender bias. For working mothers, having their childcare responsibilities more visible to their colleagues and supervisors — as they may be quite literally juggling caregiving during work meetings at home — may heighten existing biases. If these biases are not actively countered, the blurred boundaries between work and home life may exacerbate the effects of the "motherhood penalty."

Recalibrate productivity and performance expectations. Make sure these are sensible and feasible under the current crisis and be keenly aware of how biases against working mothers can impact perceptions of commitment and performance. According to McKinsey, less than one third of companies have adjusted performance review criteria during COVID-19.

Adapt leadership development initiatives. While the delivery methods for leadership development programs must adapt to the new realities of working from home, now is not the time to put a moratorium on these highly valuable programs. Virtual opportunities for sponsorship, mentoring, and networking both inside and outside the organization need to be intentionally crafted rather than left up to chance.

Openly discuss workplace norms around flexibility and mental health. Check in frequently with employees to understand the challenges they are facing — particularly mothers of young children, senior women, and women of color, who are most at risk for burnout — and work on strategies to promote flexibility and mental well-being. This may include flexible start and stop times, additional time off for self-care or caregiving responsibilities, and backup or crisis care for dependents.

SUMMARY: Strategic Framework for Women's Career Advancement

SETTING THE FOUNDATION: Organizational Culture	PREPARING THE PATH: Talent Selection/ Performance Management	NAVIGATING THE PATH: Leadership Development	SUPPORTING THE PATH: Work-Life Supports
OBJECTIVES			
▶ Engage leaders in building a culture that values gender equity and women's advancement	▶ Redefine and expand the paths and criteria for advancement ▶ Ensure equitable evaluation & rewards	▶ Create a culture that supports learning & development ▶ Enable women to expand their networks ▶ Build leadership skills, organizational knowledge	▶ Recruitment and retention of top talent ▶ Engagement and productivity ▶ Business continuity
STRATEGIES			
▶ Understand the organization's culture and women's workplace experience ▶ Mitigate unconscious bias ▶ Engage men as allies	▶ De-biased talent identification processes and performance evaluations ▶ Access to line experience/ special assignments ▶ Sponsorship	▶ Mentoring ▶ Developmental networks ▶ Leadership training/women-only training	▶ Flexible work arrangements ▶ Parental/Family Leave ▶ Child/elder care benefits ▶ Return-to-work programs
KEYS TO SUCCESS			
▶ Use data to assess culture and women's perceptions of the workplace ▶ Learn to identify and address unconscious bias ▶ Ensure adequate input from under-represented groups	▶ Objective criteria focused on outcomes ▶ Access to experience valued for advancement ▶ Access and visibility to senior leaders	▶ Broad participation from the top ▶ Formal and informal mechanisms ▶ Meets the needs of a diverse workforce	▶ Meets the needs of employees at various life stages. ▶ Programs/benefits equally available and utilized by women and men ▶ Adequate manager training/support

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