



INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP

BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT

WLI

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LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE**

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WHY IT MATTERS

INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP

There have been significant strides in overall workplace gender equality.
That's the good news.

The bad news is there is less significant progress in diversifying senior-level positions in recent years. There is a disconnect between women having a seat at the table and women actually in a position to lead the discussion around the table. And it affects a company's bottom line.

As part of the ElevateHER™ Challenge, the Women's Leadership Institute presents a toolkit of best practices to assist in increasing the number of women at the table in senior leadership positions in your organization.

Some of these can be implemented in a relatively short time period while others may be practices to adapt over time.

For a complete collection of best practices in all areas of the ElevateHER™ Challenge, visit: WLIUT.com/toolkit.

35 %

Companies with the highest gender diversity had **35.1% higher return on investments.**¹

34 %

Companies with the highest gender diversity had **34% higher return to shareholders.**¹



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WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT AWAY

- Require a diverse candidate pool** for all senior-level positions.

When it comes to overcoming mindsets that cause the leadership gender gap, one of the best practices is to require recruiters (internal and external) to deliver diverse slates of candidates for key positions.

Scholars at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Harvard Business School found that people who evaluated candidates singly were highly influenced by the candidates gender. As explained in a Wall Street Journal article, the study demonstrated that when various employees were considered for promotion at the same time, however, gender didn't affect assessments.²

This suggests that **for optimal organizational performance it is important for HR to present gender diverse candidates for positions at all levels, not just for positions at the top.**

Three tips to help your organization present and capitalize on diverse candidates:

1. **Financial incentives:** Offer bonuses when your recruiting firm presents a gender diverse slate of candidates.
2. **Anonymity:** Have recruiters or hiring managers present candidate resumes/CVs without names.
3. **Up the ratios:** Set a target of finding one suitable female candidate for every two male candidates. If the target isn't met, require a reasonable explanation for not meeting the target.

Identify High-Potential Employees.

It is essential that companies identify their high-potential employees (HiPos) and create a strategy to retain them. According to research from Bersin by Deloitte, there's a serious lack of companies with strong high-potential programs.³ This means that there is an opportunity for your company to make itself stand out with a strong program for your most talented employees.

HR should work with business leaders to effectively identify their HiPos. Many believe that high-performing employees are HiPos; however, this is not always the case. **High-performing employees and high-potential employees are not necessarily the same people.** According to SHL Talent measurement, only one in seven high performers is a HiPo. *The HR Guide to Identifying High-Potentials*, provides guidance on how to effectively identify your HiPos. They include three attributes:⁴

1. **Aspiration** - To rise to senior roles.
2. **Ability** - To be effective in more responsible and senior roles.
3. **Engagement** - To commit to the organization and remain in challenging roles.

91% High potentials are 91% more valuable to organizations than non-high potential employees.

Approximately **55%** of high potential employees with low engagement are prone to leave. **55%**

Enlist men.

The Women's Leadership Institute knows that men are a critical part of the solution. Much of the success of the Women's Leadership Institute can be attributed to the engagement of men as allies, advocates and sponsors of women. The correlation is collaborated by numerous other institutions.

One example of such is the Male Champions of Change (MCC) Institute which was established in 2010.⁵ It began with eight male champions and today there are about 130. Members are required to share their experiences and strategies for advancing gender equality across corporate, government and community sectors, and to be spokespeople for the promotion of gender equality. Success is measured through annual progress reports and regular business forums.

With men still occupying the majority of senior-level positions, and thus making most hiring decisions for senior roles, **mens' full participation is necessary to see any movement in increasing women in senior leadership roles.**⁶



"You can't just have women working at your company. They have to be working in leadership roles in your company."

Nate Quigley, CEO & Co-founder Chatbooks

The Women's Leadership Institute believes men are essential allies and advocates in the advancement of women.



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PRACTICES TO ADAPT OVER TIME

Complete a diversity assessment.

Enlist your Human Resources Department to begin the process or engage with a company (such as Instructure or the Gender Intelligence Group) that can assist in developing a tool for you.

This is a business imperative that yields significant rewards. For something so important, accountability needs to sit with the CEO. Gender diversity should not get walled off within HR or a diversity and inclusion function. **The CEO needs to lead by example, signal the importance of gender diversity, monitor progress, and ultimately generate improvements.**

Forward-thinking companies see achieving greater diversity as an integrated business goal and craft their policies to drive the organization toward carefully conceived targets rather than meeting quotas or regulatory requirements.

Measurement systems used to collect and share data across business units on a regular basis are often called impact assessment tools, global or D&I scorecards, or diversity indexes. These systems use quantitative tools to measure the success of recruitment efforts and qualitative tools to elicit employees' perceptions about the inclusiveness of the culture.

The companies that have achieved the greatest success identifying a solid ROI for D&I initiatives take an aggressive approach to ensuring management commitment.



"There's a strong business case for diversity inclusion programs. I think any company who expects to be long-term successful, has to have some type of diversity inclusion program. In the talent market we're in today, it's truly a business necessity"

Jeff Weber, SVP, People and Places
Instructure



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Companies trying to improve Diversity & Inclusion often find themselves at a loss of where to start. Before jumping into resource-intensive initiatives, consider an inclusion survey as an early step for your D&I program.⁷

Inclusion Survey Tips:⁷

- 1. Getting buy-in** from key stakeholders early on will help ensure the success of the survey initiative.
- 2. Focus on the delivery.** How you communicate the survey to the company is just as important as the actual questions you'll be asking.
- 3. Analyze the data.** While company-wide numbers will undoubtedly be insightful, the most valuable data often comes from disparities in employee experience.
- 4. Follow-up.** Once you release a survey asking for people's honest thoughts, you *must* demonstrate that you're listening and able to take steps toward progress.
- 5. Repeat the survey** and track your progress, usually every 6-12 months.

For the full guide, visit inclusionatwork.co/inclusion-survey-guide/



"What gets measured gets done. Therefore, if we want our organizations to accomplish our inclusivity goals, it is imperative to measure the efficacy, impact, and ROI of diversity initiatives to demonstrate how D&I initiatives contribute to overall organizational performance."

Michael Bach, Founder and CEO
Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion



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Implement Succession Planning and Build the Pipeline.

Women experience a workplace skewed in favor of men. On average, women are promoted at a lower rate than men. The biggest gender gap is at the first step up to manager: entry-level women are 18 percent less likely to be promoted than their male peers. This gender disparity has a dramatic effect on the pipeline as a whole.⁸

Building the pipeline begins by identifying the best female leaders, providing them with a clearer pathway to the top of the organization and equipping them with the skills and knowledge to pave the way. **When conducted correctly, succession planning should increase the availability of experienced and capable employees who are qualified to take up a senior role.**

If your HR department does not have succession planning tools, there are many online resources with free templates for succession plans.⁹

**18 %
LESS LIKELY**

Entry-level women are
**18 percent less likely
to be promoted**
than their male peers.⁸



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RESOURCES:

1. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/the-bottom-line-connecting-corporate-performance-and-gender-diversity/>
2. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323706704578229891743848414>
3. <https://www.bersin.com/lexicon/Details.aspx?id=12845>
4. <https://www.ucop.edu/human-resources/management-development-program/2014/Donna%20Handout.pdf>
5. <https://malechampionsofchange.com/>
6. <https://www.intheblack.com/articles/2018/03/05/more-women-executives>
7. <https://inclusionatwork.co/inclusion-survey-guide/>
8. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2017>
9. <https://fitsmallbusiness.com/business-succession-planning-template/>

For more resources
and blog posts on all
six ElevateHER™ Challenge
topics, visit:
wliut.com/elevateher-resource-center/