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The Sponsor Effect: Breaking Through the Last Glass Ceiling

By Sylvia Ann Hewlett, with Kerrie Peraino, Laura Sherbin, and Karen Sumberg

Center for Work-Life Policy

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RESEARCH REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women just aren't making it to the very top. Despite making gains in middle and senior management, they hold just 3 percent of *Fortune* 500 CEO positions. In the C-suite, they're outnumbered four to one. They account for less than 16 percent of all corporate officers, and comprise only 7.6 percent of *Fortune* 500 top earner positions.

What's keeping them under this last glass ceiling? What we uncover in this report is not a male conspiracy, but rather, a surprising absence of male (and female) advocacy. Women who are qualified to lead simply don't have the powerful backing necessary to inspire, propel, and protect them through the perilous straits of upper management. Women lack, in a word, *sponsorship*.

Spearheaded by American Express, Deloitte, Intel, and Morgan Stanley, the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force launched a study in the fall of 2009 to determine the nature and impact of sponsorship and examine just why women fail to either access or make better use of it.[1] We found that the majority of ambitious women underestimate the pivotal role sponsorship plays in their advancement—not just within their current firm, but throughout their career and across their industry. More surprisingly, however, we found that women who do grasp the importance of relationship capital fail to cultivate it effectively. While they're happy putting favors into others' banks, they're squeamish about cashing in on those deposits, lest they appear to be self-serving—or for fear they'll be turned down. Many feel that getting ahead based on "who you know" is an inherently unfair—even a "dirty"—tactic. Even as they're passed over for a plum assignment, a pay raise, or a promotion, they persist in believing that hard work alone will succeed in turning heads and netting them the reward they deserve.

But we also found that women's reluctance to seek out and actively engage senior colleagues as allies is amply justified. Sponsorship, which often involves an older, married male spending one-on-one time, often off site and after hours, with a younger, unmarried female, can look like an affair; and the greater the power disparity between the male and the female, the more intense the speculation becomes that the relationship is more than professional. If the woman is subsequently promoted, her achievement will be undermined by office gossip that she earned it illicitly. But the senior man does not walk away scot-free. If it appears he spent too much time with the junior female, he incurs the risk of a sexual harassment suit or even dismissal (just think of Mark Hurd, former CEO of Hewlett Packard). In short, because sponsorship can be misconstrued as sexual interest, highly qualified women and highly placed men avoid it.

Sex may be the most egregious tripwire women encounter, but the road to the top is set with other traps as well. We found that women invite greater scrutiny than men and must scale a higher bar on a number of fronts. They must have "executive presence" in their dress and bearing, but if they get it wrong, no one will tell them—least of all a senior male. Women must likewise navigate a minefield of unspoken judgments with regard to their personal lives. If they're married with children, their superiors and would-be sponsors presume they are less available, less flexible, and less dedicated to their work—a cascade of assumptions that often labels them as unsuitable for top leadership positions. And yet a woman who lacks a spouse or offspring is viewed by colleagues and supervisors as not quite normal, someone whom married males in senior management reflexively avoid because they cannot relate to her or find her threatening. It's a classic catch-22: a woman's private choices, whatever they may be, invariably brand her as "not quite leadership material."

What will it take to sow sponsorship in this difficult terrain? In 2010, leading-edge companies are stepping up to the plate. Successful initiatives are addressing the sponsorship shortfall by eliminating the very pitfalls we have identified in this study. In particular they are making one-on-one relationships between sponsors and protégés "safe" and transparent, and they are coaching and incentivizing the C-suite to put aside misperceptions and offer serious "heavy lifting" to high-potential males and females alike. Much work remains to be done, in part because sponsorship seems less of a corporate priority in sectors dealing with high and stubborn rates of unemployment. Yet companies that are making significant investments in creating pathways to sponsorship for their standout women (American Express, Cisco, Deloitte, Intel, Morgan Stanley, Unilever) understand that cracking this last glass ceiling will give them significant competitive advantage in talent markets the world over.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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PART I:

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Chapter 1: Why This Study?

Thirty-five years ago, with college-educated women entering the workforce in droves, no one doubted that the ambitious ones would eventually infiltrate the executive suite. With greater access to both educational and professional opportunities, women were ascending the corporate ladder in lockstep with men. Making it to the top was simply a matter of time.

But something's gone awry: they haven't arrived. They're awfully close—women comprise fully a third of senior management. They're especially concentrated in that talent-rich section right below the C-suite known as "the marzipan layer." Yet for all their qualifications, they're not shattering that last glass ceiling. Their careers are in a stall. *Why?*

In some ways, the answer is as obvious as female leadership is conspicuous. Look at Sarah Palin, former governor of Alaska. Would she have risen to international cognizance had not Senator John McCain anointed her as his running mate in the 2008 presidential race? Or consider Elena Kagan: as educated, accomplished, and experienced an attorney as she is, would she have found a seat on the nation's highest bench without President Obama's vigorous and proactive backing? Think of Katie Couric, manning the helm at CBS as the evening news anchor; or Ellen Kullman, CEO of Dupont. Behind every one of these highly visible women you'll find a powerful backer, usually male, who so believes in his protégé that he's put his own reputation on the line to promote her all the way to the top. Behind these women, in fact, you'll find a broad and deep network of backers, cultivated from inside and outside their industry or field over the course of decades.

The firepower of such a network is measurable. With it, the ambitious and highly qualified make it to the senior-most executive suite, no matter how stiff the headwinds. Without it, they languish in the lower echelons of power—no matter how hard they work, no matter how well they perform.

The Last Glass Ceiling

Women enter the white-collar workforce in even greater numbers than men: fifty-three females for every forty-seven males. Yet as all employees in large corporations move from entry-level to middle management, and from mid- to senior-level positions, men advance disproportionately, outstripping women nearly two to one. At the very top-most rungs of the career ladder, men outnumber women nearly four to one.

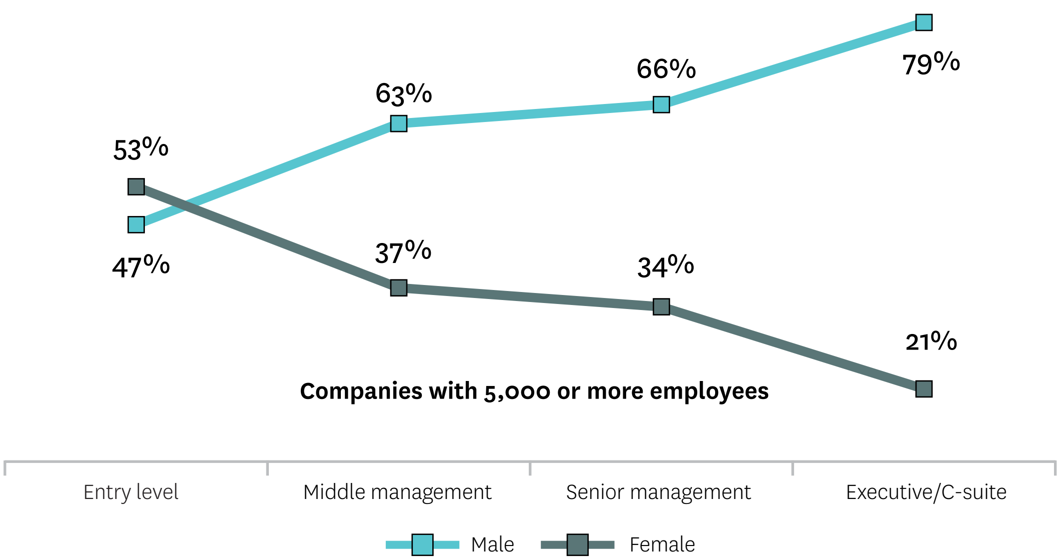
It's a pattern that prevails in every field, in every industry, across all sectors. In the United States, which leads the world in female employment, women comprise just 3 percent of *Fortune* 500 chief executives and 7.6 percent of *Fortune* 500 top earner positions.[2] The proportion of female *Fortune* 500 corporate officers, which nearly doubled to 16.4 percent in the decade ending in 2005, slipped below 16 percent by 2008.[3] Women's entry into political office follows a similar rise and fall: less than a fifth of members of Congress are female.[4] Across boardrooms and executive suites and along the corridors of political power, the absence of gender equity is striking.

Nor is the rest of the world managing to exploit women's full potential. At the largest multinationals, women hold less than 5 percent of chief executive spots.[5] In China, they are tapped for 5 percent of board seats and 17 percent of chief executive spots.[6] In the United Kingdom, women comprise fewer than 3 percent of CEOs at the nation's top 250 corporations, 12 percent of directors of the FTSE 100, and currently 22 percent of seats in Parliament.[7] Norway successfully expanded women's board presence to 40 percent with a far-reaching 2002 law, yet the proportion of its female chief executives has been frozen at 5 percent for nearly a decade.[8] "Study after study shows that in most countries and industries, women enter the workforce pipeline in representative numbers," says Insead's Herminia Ibarra, coauthor of the World Economic Forum's annual Corporate Gender Gap Report. "Then, something fails to happen."[9]

Women, of course, do advance. They succeed, too: although underrepresented at the very highest echelons of power, two-thirds of executive-rank women at *Fortune* 1000 firms cluster just below the top two rungs of leadership, according to a 2006 study led by Dartmouth's Constance Helfat.[10] They hold 34 percent of senior management positions, as our own data substantiates. In education and middle management, as researchers Diane Halpern and Fanny Cheung observe, women are even outstripping men, creating "an overflowing 'pipeline'

FIGURE 1-1

Women fall away at executive levels



of managers ready for advancement to top-level U.S. executive positions."[11] In other words, a rich pool of female talent lies right below the boardroom and C-suite, perfectly poised to take the reins of leadership. They're qualified. They're eager. They're ready and waiting.

But there they remain. Why?

Gender Fatigue

Perversely, it is this quantifiable progress of women at the lower, middle, and upper-middle rungs of the corporate ladder that obscures their getting stuck in the *marzipan layer*, the talent-rich tranche just below the executive suite. True, corporations have implemented a tidal wave of diversity and inclusion programs to wash away entrenched ideas of white male superiority—an initiative with quantifiable, enduring results. Yet as any woman or person of color can attest, certain aspects of that white-male culture persist in ways that resist concerted corporate correctives—and, because they can't be quantified, fail to spark further concern. As Heide Gardner, Chief Diversity Officer at Interpublic Group (IPG) observes, many companies with robust diversity and inclusion programs make the grade in terms of meeting numeric goals but nonetheless fall short of attaining the climate of inclusion that is the program's ultimate objective. "Companies need to move beyond 'the count' to *making it count*," Gardner says.

What Gardner identifies is the growing invisibility of bias in the business world—a trend that Elisabeth Kelan of King's College London calls "gender fatigue."[12] Male CEOs simply don't *see* the lack of women around them, conditioned as they are by decades of initiatives dedicated to correcting gender inequities. According to our recent survey, 56 percent of men (compared with only 39 percent of women) think that women have made considerable progress at their companies over the past ten years. The majority of men (58 percent) say that the reason for the progress is that their company has been trying harder to promote women. On the other hand, the majority of women (57 percent) say it is because women have made great strides in terms of performance and educational credentials.

Men are also far less likely to recognize that gender bias is still prevalent in the workplace. While 49 percent of women think gender bias is alive and well today, only 28 percent of men agree.

A recent Catalyst study found that twice as many male CEOs (40 percent) as senior women (20 percent) estimated the representation of women in upper management to be over 20 percent.[13] Another group of researchers studying the problem in the United Kingdom found that while male CEOs "recognize the problem of an inhospitable culture, they do not actually understand how this manifests itself in their organizations." Their study, *Breaking the Barriers: Women in Senior Management in the UK*, reveals that 80 percent of female U.K. chief executive officers but just 57 percent of their male counterparts cite stereotyping as a barrier to women's advancement to senior levels.[14] In Kelan's studies of MBA students and workers at tech firms, workers construe gender discrimination as a long-past problem suffered by individual women.[15] "Gender is no longer seen as salient," Kelan concludes, "even while it continues to shape the culture in significant ways."[16]

Fulfilling Female Potential

Yet for corporations that can shake off their gender fatigue, the solution to this distressing stall is at hand. What women need now, we're convinced, is what men have always relied on: sponsors. Sponsors are more than mentors, as we will see. Sponsors are powerful backers who, when they discern talent, anoint it with their attention and support.

Sponsors not only promote their charges, they also protect, prepare, and push them—all the way to the top. In fact, after surveying more than four thousand U.S. men and women with college educations working in white-collar jobs (see Appendix A for full methodology), listening intently to the discussion in our Virtual Strategy Sessions, a particularly effective online focus group, and interviewing the leaders of the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force, we're convinced that promotion to top jobs depends on sponsorship—which women have a hard time accessing. If today's female executives find themselves outside the inner sanctum, it's not only because they're removed from the crucial conversations that determine who moves up, but because they have no proxy. Sponsorship corrects that. By providing women the authoritative voice they lack, the backroom access they're often denied, and the advocacy they desperately need, sponsorship truly levels the playing field.

Progressive companies realize that creating a transparent, more equitable system of sponsorship is the starting point for highlighting the female talent pool on the CEO's doorstep. They're finding ways to institutionalize sponsorship, pioneering programs that match up subordinate women with superior colleagues. Nearly a third of *Working Mother*'s Best 100 Companies report having some kind of sponsorship program for women, and a quarter offer a program for multicultural women.[17]

That's a promising start. With this study, however, we hope to deepen the commitment that multinational corporations have made toward women and minorities, leveling the playing field for all team members. We intend to show that women's vast potential goes untapped for both individual and systemic reasons: they fail to cultivate key relationships, and would-be backers don't readily come forward. We intend to prove, in fact, that sponsorship is a win-win for all players. It provides women the team backing they're missing—the kind of support that gives them not only control of the ball but helps them drive it down the field to score. High-scoring companies, in turn, win more market share.

But we'd also like to emphasize that sponsorship is not just another promise to women on the part of those holding power: it's a serious *public* statement of a leader's commitment to equity and a measure of his accountability to change. Women make up half of the workforce and half of the world's talent, yet glaringly remain a minority of the global business elite. Sponsorship can alter those numbers. Sponsorship, as we will see, can unleash the female talent building up in the pipeline. Sponsorship, we're confident, offers women what exemplary talent and unflagging dedication cannot alone secure: the keys to the C-suite.

Women are ready. And they're waiting.

Chapter 2: What Is Sponsorship, and What Makes Sponsors Critical to Success?

How many of you believe you have a sponsor?

When Kerrie Peraino, head of diversity at American Express, recently put this question to a group of twenty Women's Interest Network (WIN) chapter members, four women raised tentative hands.

It wasn't that they didn't know what a sponsor was, Peraino explains: "It was rather that 'a-ha moment' when they realized, 'Yikes! Do I have one?!'"[18] In seminar after seminar, in fact, across all bandwidths of power, only one in five women will claim a sponsor; only one in eight lay claim to more than one. Peraino finds the implication of this especially troubling for senior women. "If you wait until the senior or pre-senior level to figure out who's backing you, it could be too late," she observes. "At this level, sponsorship is absolutely critical to advancement."

Building sponsorship has become something of a crusade for Peraino. Among the first to perceive "the sponsorship effect" on talent, she pioneered a program at American Express in 2008 that fosters powerful alliances across corporate ladder rungs. She hopes that, by 2015, high-potential women at the company will have two to three advocates pulling for them. "If all goes well, they will have a back-pocket tip sheet on what a good sponsor relationship looks like," says Peraino, who is working hard to make this goal a reality.

Still, at American Express, and at scores of other multinational corporations, women struggle with the very concept: *What exactly is a sponsor? How do sponsors differ from mentors? And why do I need one when I'm awfully good at my job and deserve to advance anyway?*

Sponsorship: Relationship Capital

A sponsor, as most diversity and talent officers will tell you, is not to be confused with a mentor. While a leader can be both a mentor and a sponsor, the roles are distinct.

To Deborah Elam, director of diversity at GE, the hallmark of sponsorship is its inherently public nature. Sponsors stick their neck out. They'll "put their name next to your performance," making their support highly visible. In contrast, says Elam, "You can mentor and coach someone who is *awful* without risking your reputation. A lot of mentoring can be done on the phone, behind the scenes."

Marilyn Nagel, Cisco's chief diversity officer, sees the difference in terms of time horizon. "A mentor can help you do a better job in your role or get you over a sticky situation," she says, whereas "an advocate (Cisco's term for sponsor) is really about your future." In addition, she notes, the driving force in a mentorship lies with the mentee, whereas in sponsorship, it is the sponsor who directs and fuels the relationship. "The primary role of the advocate," she explains, "is to open doors for the talent and to introduce opportunities for exposure, to demonstrate to a different or higher-level audience what you can bring to the company."

All agree, however, that a sponsor "has the juice," as Patricia Fili-Krushel, executive vice president of administration at Time Warner, puts it. That is, they're in a position to attend those roundtable discussions that can make or break your career. Their authority allows them to speak to your strengths, make a case for your advancement, and be heard in your absence. Where a mentor might help you envision your next position, a sponsor will lever open that position for you. A sponsor doesn't just believe in you; a sponsor believes in you more than you believe in yourself. "He'll toss your hat in the ring before you would," says Kerrie Peraino. "Sponsors take calculated risks on you."

The Limits of Mentorship

In important ways, of course, effective sponsorship builds on effective mentoring. In classic forms of mentoring, a more experienced person acts as a role model and close adviser to a mentee or protégé. Done well, the work is involved, dynamic, personal—and effective. People who are mentored garner more promotions, higher salaries, and more career satisfaction and even report being less stressed than those who lack such guidance. Mentors, in turn, report gaining creativity, career rejuvenation, internal recognition, and feelings of fulfillment and pleasure from grooming a future generation.[19] "Mentoring is an act of generativity—a process of bringing into existence and passing on a professional legacy," write W. Brad Johnson and Charles Ridley in *The Elements of Mentoring*, a metastudy of the practice.[20]

The value of this exchange certainly hasn't been lost on large corporations, most of which have mentoring programs in place. But with the proliferation of these programs—from mentoring circles to peer mentoring and virtual mentoring—a kind of fatigue sets in. The intensity of the mentoring relationship fades; what started out as a strategic investment initiative for long-term growth devolves into speed-dating tactics for acute crises. Accountability on both sides is lost.

Even when the mentoring relationship works as it should, it can at best offer backroom support, not front-and-center leverage. Sponsors indeed do a lot of what mentors do: they give career advice. They offer advice on how to improve your appearance. They enlarge your perception of what you can do. But they do much more: they make you visible to leaders within the company, and to top people outside as well. They connect you to career opportunities. And when it comes to opening doors, they don't stop with one promotion: they'll see you to the threshold of power. No mentor has *that* kind of juice.

"You can have a strong network, drive strong results, even know all the unwritten rules," concludes Kerrie Peraino. "But if you aren't sponsored by someone in a position to weigh in on your behalf at the decision-making table when you're not there, you're not getting the next opportunities."

Relationship Capital: The Currency of Power

The hard data, which we'll share in detail in the next chapter, corroborates Peraino's vision. Men and women who have powerful allies from above advance in ways that their unsponsored peers do not. But women have fewer sponsors, in part because they don't intentionally cultivate them.

It's not that women don't nurture relationships; it's that they don't proactively invest in *relationship capital*, the currency that all ambitious employees need to expend in order to advance beyond what talent and experience can alone secure. Women, as Marilyn Nagel at Cisco observes, keep up socially with their contacts; men tend to nurture just those contacts who are likely to yield favors or provide other important business contacts. Peraino agrees: women don't seem to know what to do with the favors accumulating in their bank, whereas men are much more accustomed to horse-trading. "It's all part of the game: negotiating, bartering, and winning," she clarifies.

Women's aversion to this kind of naked quid pro quo translates into a wealth of supportive peers but a dearth of relationship capital. Furthermore, it tends to manifest as a lack of leadership skill—a more serious oversight, according to Adam Quinton, a former managing director at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, who led the firm's 175-person Global Macro Research team. "As you advance in an organization, you start off doing what is typically a specific task, something with a relatively narrow impact, and you interact with a narrow group of people," he says. "As time goes by, however, your success is defined less by specific tasks and more by getting others to come together to execute those tasks. There's a crucial point in the business where you must go from that narrow, task-based role to becoming more of a broader contributor." And this transition, he adds, "is where I see women stumble."

To their detriment, women perceive cultivating relationships and mobilizing them on their own behalf as, at best, an occasional necessity rather than *the very exercise of leadership*. They fail to see that the practice of seeking out powerful people, cultivating their favor, and cashing in those chips *is itself a demonstration of leadership potential*.

Indeed, the exercise of such *emotional intelligence* is what accounts for 90 percent of the difference between captains of industry and above-average executives, according to EQ expert Daniel Goleman. Successful leaders "work under the assumption that nothing important gets done alone," he writes in *Primal Leadership*. "As the tasks of leadership become more complex and collaborative, relationship skills become increasingly pivotal."[21]

In short, finding, cultivating, and consistently leveraging powerful alliances offers women not just a career-advancement strategy, but an opportunity to practice, refine, and make visible their leadership potential. And for ambitious women, that practice cannot begin soon enough. As leadership expert John Kotter writes, "Extensive informal networks are so important that if they do not exist, creating them has to be the focus of activity early in a major leadership initiative."[22]

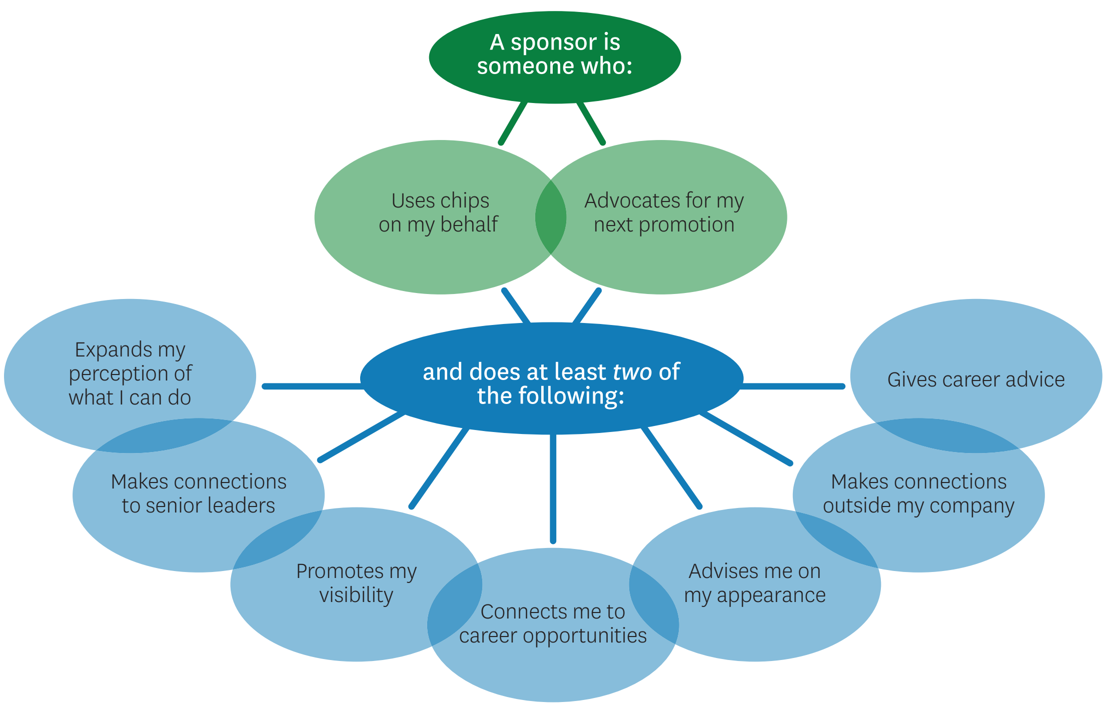
Sponsors: The Real Deal

Hence, alongside Kerrie Peraino's robust definition of sponsorship, we'd like to offer our own multidimensional definition (see figure 2-1).

As we will see in chapter 3, a sponsor makes a quantifiable difference in every measure of career success for both men and women. For women, however, sponsorship offers a unique opportunity to rise above some of the inequities intrinsic to gender—those factors that make the playing field inherently uneven.

FIGURE 2-1

The definition of sponsorship



Chapter 3: The Impact of Sponsorship

Like many senior executives at Lehman Brothers, Chief Diversity Officer Anne Erni was utterly blindsided by the firm's declaration of bankruptcy in September of 2008.

But unlike most of her peers, Erni landed squarely on her feet, securing her current position as head of leadership and diversity at Bloomberg within two months of vacating her office at Lehman. "I have Melinda Wolfe to thank," she explains, referencing Bloomberg's Head of Professional Development. "She was a real advocate for me with senior decision makers. She not only sponsored me for the role, but when it came down to getting an offer for full-time hire, she was the voice in the room that made it happen."

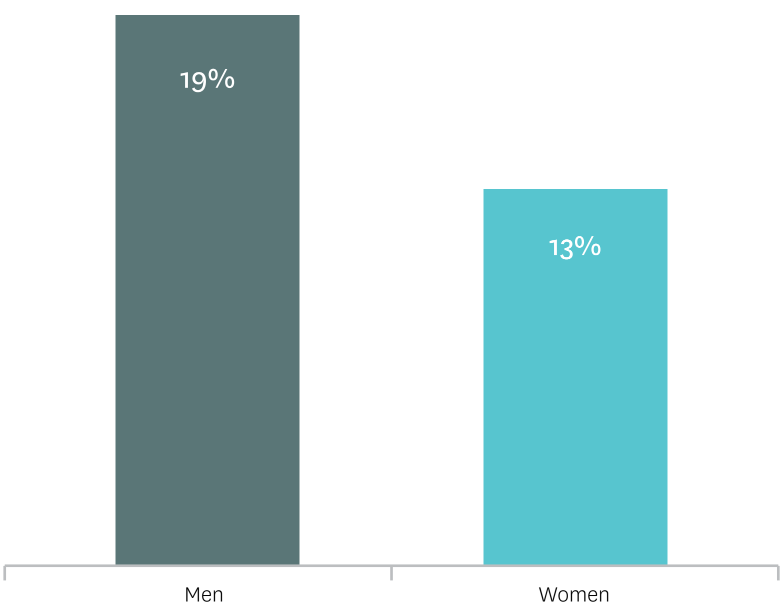
Oh, the difference a powerful booster can make in your career—especially when the floor drops away. "Melinda effectively said, 'I'm going to use my platform to help you because you're someone I really believe in,'" Erni recalls. "That proved critical."

Yet lamentably few women have such a person—let alone several. A mere 13 percent of full-time female employees at large companies (over fifty thousand employees) have sponsors or colleagues senior enough to help them step up the corporate ladder or sidestep disaster. Men are 46 percent more likely than women to have a sponsor—a gender gap, as we have seen, that manifests itself most markedly at the very top. Admittedly, the research shows that both men and women undervalue or fail to create a network of sponsors. But what our focus groups and interviews reveal is a profound difference in the way men and women perceive, cultivate, and capitalize on business relationships.

Women, in a word, don't *ask*.

FIGURE 3-1

Full-time employees in large companies who have a sponsor



The Real Gender Gap

An impressive body of research backs up this observation. Linda Babcock, coauthor of *Women Don't Ask*, launched the inquiry when, as a professor at Carnegie Mellon, she found that male graduate students starting out in their first job earned 7.6 percent more than female grads—a pay gap that worked out to a $4,000 difference, on average.[23] Digging deeper, she found out why: only 7 percent of female students had negotiated their starting salaries. In contrast, 57 percent of men had asked for more money than they were offered. Furthermore, students who had asked for more money increased their pay, on average, by 7.4 percent—a figure nearly matching the gender gap between men and women's starting salaries.[24]

Babcock and her coauthor Sara Laschever explain women's reluctance by pointing to an array of social and cultural forces reinforcing gender differences. They argue that girls are taught to be more other-focused, so grow up to sidestep or shirk roles of authority.[25] Second, women are satisfied with less, particularly in terms of pay; even young women focus on what they *need* rather than what they're worth. Third, both sexes subscribe to powerful stereotypes that keep women from asserting themselves—even if they repudiate the stereotype or feel immune to it.[26] Finally, women are caught in the catch-22 of assertiveness: if they don't speak up for themselves, they'll be completely overlooked, and if they do, they'll be resented or even thwarted because they're perceived as self-serving. In short, the authors conclude, women don't ask for what they want or feel they deserve because they're fearful they won't be liked, whereas men perceive asking as a "fun" and "exciting" game with little downside.

A number of our Hidden Brain Drain Task Force members have observed, with some frustration, that women continue to need "an invitation to the party"—a party that men get to attend simply by asking. "In most interactions, I think you'll find women generally network for social purposes, whereas men network to compete and win," says Rosalind Hudnell, chief diversity officer and global director of education and external relations at Intel. "If a man is sitting next to a senior executive," Hudnell explains, "he'll see it as an opportunity to connect with someone who one day might help him win; so he'll deliberately attempt to build that relationship and take advantage of that moment of opportunity. He may even go about it in the most obnoxious way, but at least he'll ask and make the attempt to connect." Cisco's Marilyn Nagel concurs. "A man will have no problem saying, 'I'd like this stretch assignment. Can I have it?' And if you say no, they move on," she observes. "Women, however, tend to analyze and fret about the turndown as an indictment or an indication of something larger. That in turn makes them much more hesitant about asking another person."

Such insight clarifies not only why so few women have sponsors, but why so many need them: women unwittingly self-sabotage. They actually minimize their achievements and downplay their capabilities, according to one Deloitte partner. A seasoned recruiter, he says that male candidates typically insist they are the best possible choice for the job, while women protest to the interviewer that they aren't qualified for some parts of the job.[27]

And the impact, as the data demonstrate, is measurable.

The Sponsorship Effect

Career success, for both men and women, is no real mystery. Everybody wants to see their skills and hard work acknowledged and rewarded. Everybody wants to advance, but still have a life. Everybody wants the satisfaction of meeting challenges and performing meaningful work.

Our data show that more than half of all full-time employees at large firms feel good about their careers. Fifty-seven percent of men and women without sponsors believe they're advancing up the ranks as they should. The impact of sponsorship on these employees is, interestingly, nearly the same: fully 70 percent of men with sponsors and 68 percent of women report feeling satisfied with their rate of advancement, which translates into a 23 percent sponsorship effect for men and a 19 percent effect for women.

FIGURE 3-2
The bottom line: Sponsorship matters

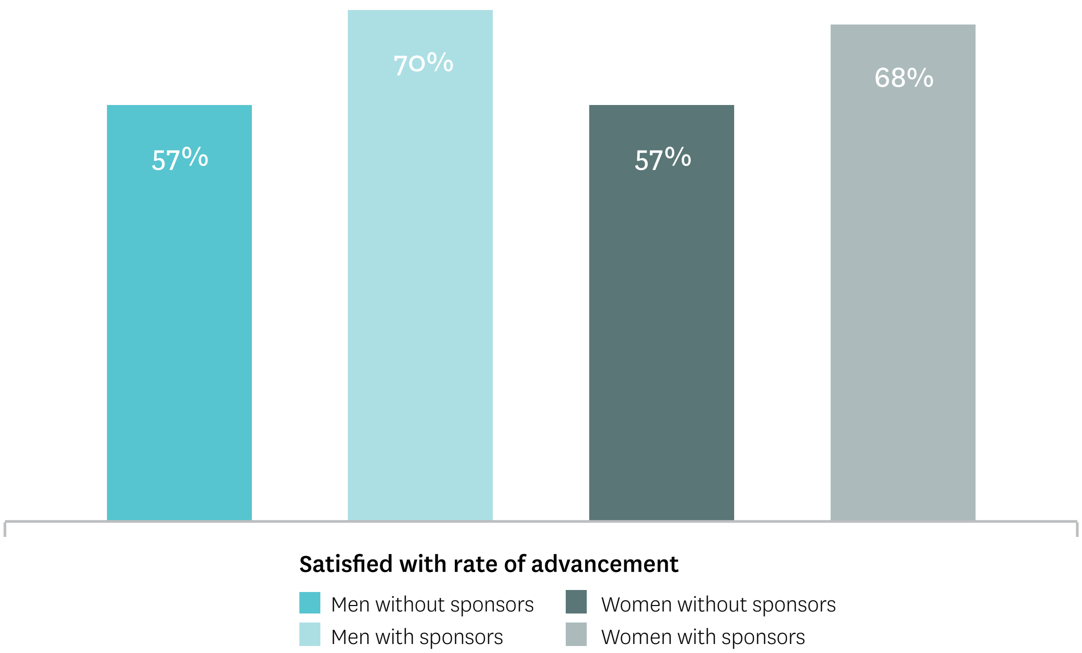
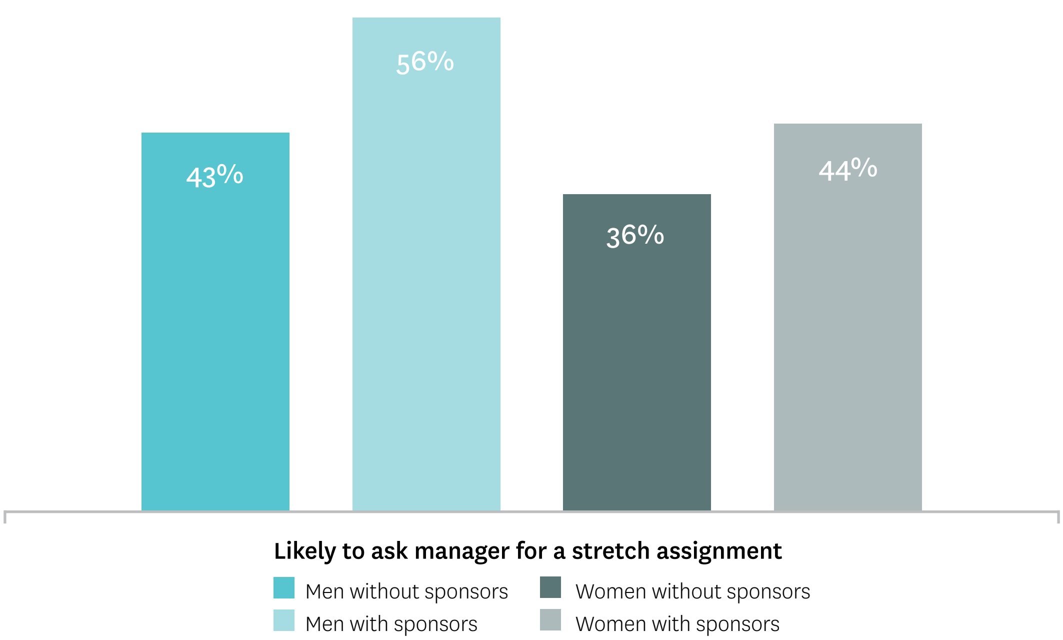


FIGURE 3-3
Sponsorship facilitates stretch assignments

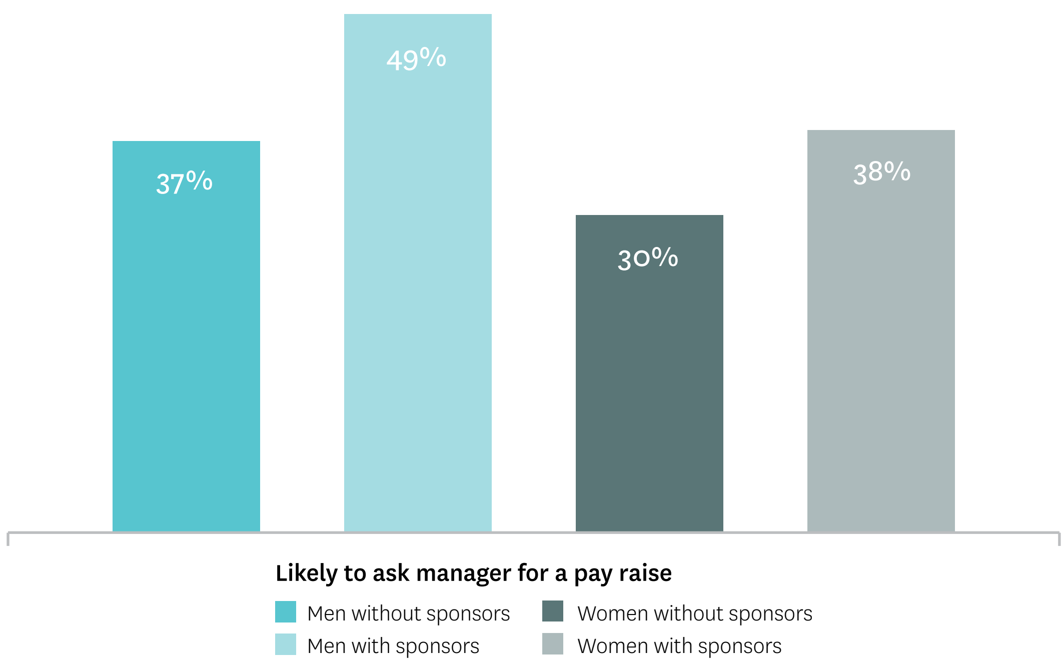


Indeed, the impact of sponsorship appears to be remarkably consistent for both men and women across all measures. Some 43 percent of male employees and 36 percent of females will ask their manager for a stretch assignment; when a sponsor gets behind them, the numbers rise, respectively, to 56 percent and 44 percent. When it comes to asking for a pay raise, the majority of men (67 percent) and women (70 percent) resist confronting their boss. With a sponsor in their corner, however, nearly half of men and 38 percent of women summon the courage to negotiate. A sponsor confers a statistical career benefit, in other words, of anywhere from 22 percent to 30 percent, depending on what's being requested (assignment or pay raise) and who's doing the asking (men or women).

Barbara Adachi can attest to that. She made the leap from overseeing Deloitte Consulting's human capital practice in the San Francisco Bay area to leading the firm's human capital practice for the entire West Region thanks to Mike Fucci, her fellow partner at the time, who put her name forward. "To many people, I wasn't the obvious candidate," says Adachi. "There were a lot of men who thought they should get the job." On top of that, Adachi didn't feel that she was ready to run a line operations business. But Fucci persisted, convincing the leadership *and* Adachi that she was the right person for the job. Now her boss, he even promised Adachi, "Don't worry, I will come out to California and teach you what you need to learn to be successful," she recalls.

FIGURE 3-4

Sponsorship creates upward pressure in pay

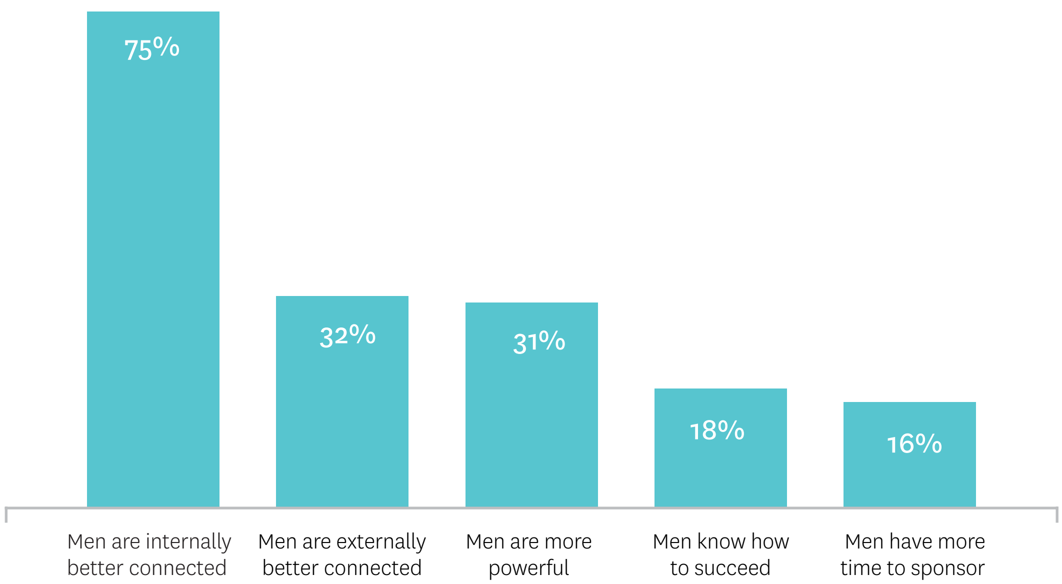


Why Women Prefer Male Sponsors

One glance at our data and it's clear that not all sponsors are created equal: 46 percent of our female respondents say that men make better sponsors. When asked why, they identified some excellent reasons. For starters, to this group, men appear to be better connected: 75 percent of them cited men's internal networks as the number-one reason to choose male rather than female sponsors, and 32 percent considered men optimal for their external networks. Other reasons to seek out a male sponsor included the perception that (1) men are more powerful; (2) they know how to succeed; and (3) they simply have more time to invest in sponsorship.

FIGURE 3-5

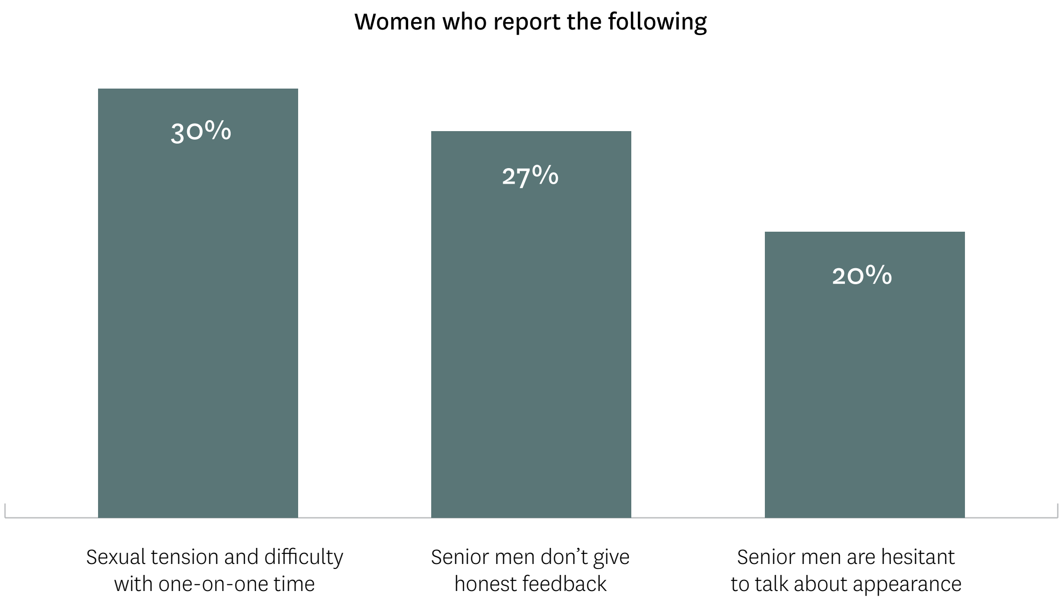
Why male sponsors are perceived to have an edge



What women believe male sponsors offer is not necessarily what male sponsors deliver, however. Thirty-one percent of our female respondents felt that senior men just weren't available or willing to spend chips on junior women. Thirty percent of them noted that the sexual tension intrinsic to any one-on-one relationship with men made male sponsorship too difficult to be productive (an astute observation, for reasons we'll explore in chapter 8). A fair number of women contended that men just weren't that communicative: 27 percent told us that men gave inadequate feedback, and 20 percent agreed that men hesitated to offer feedback on appearance.

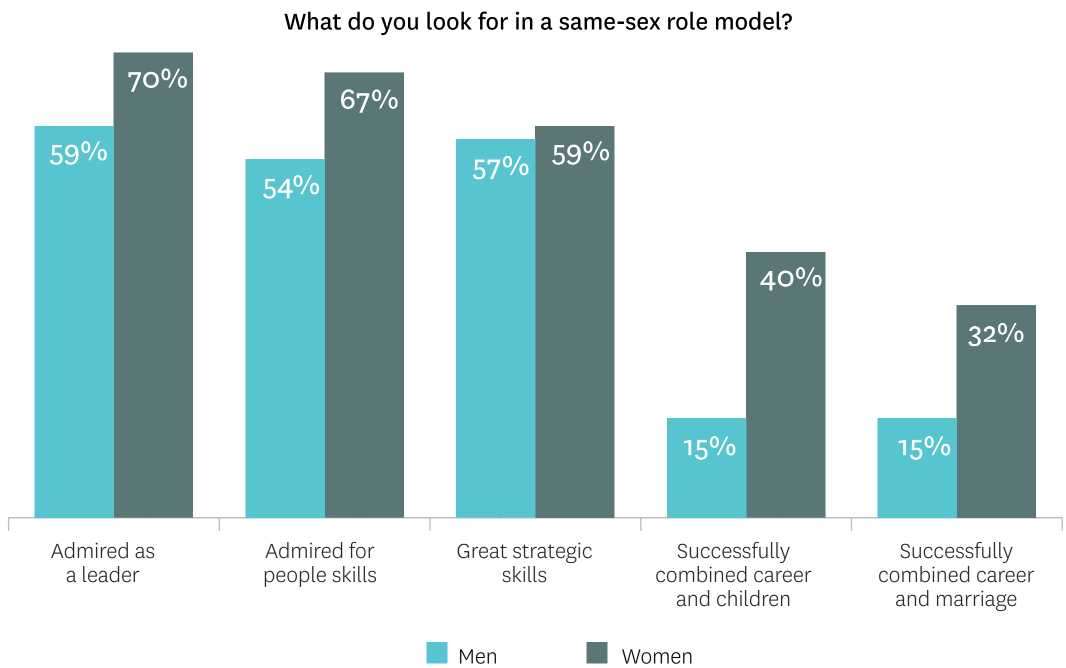
FIGURE 3-6

Senior men perceived as not readily supportive



The real issue may be that women feel they have no choice. If they seem to prefer male sponsors it's because they simply can't find any females—or rather, any females who measure up to their near-impossible ideal. Researchers who have studied women's choice of role models have uncovered a complex judging process whereby women choose as career templates either men, because males easily fit the "authentic self-made CEO" ideal, or women who combine contradictory traits and about whom they are deeply ambivalent. When management expert Elisabeth Kelan and sociologist Alice Mah asked ten male and ten female MBAs to name someone in business whom they "admired," all ten men and two of the women chose male CEOs; three women identified both male and female leaders; and five chose, and struggled to defend, "Janus-faced" women—female leaders who were somehow both tough businesswomen and dedicated mothers, both radical game-changers and quiet collaborators.[28] If female MBAs are inclined to choose men, then it's because female role models fall short of the masculinized ideal that many MBA students aspire to, theorize Kelan and Mah. And that's because "female role models are caught, like women in management in general, in the double bind of combining being an ideal manager, which means being masculine, with being an ideal woman, which means being feminine."[29]

FIGURE 3-7
"High bar" for female sponsors



Our research echoes these findings: unlike men, whose ideal of a same-sex sponsor is simply that he have real power, women shop for a female sponsor with a long checklist of "must-have" but mutually exclusive attributes. Women value power and efficacy in a sponsor, of course: 70 percent said it was important their sponsor be "admired as a leader" and 59 percent are looking for great strategic skills. But women also consider a host of other attributes. *Does she have good people skills?* Sixty-seven percent insist this matters most. *Is she well liked?* Thirty-nine percent need her to be. *Is she married?* Thirty-two percent consider this relevant. *Does she have kids?* Forty percent—and 54 percent of women who have children themselves—think she should.

Our female respondents are searching for a professional woman who has it all, does it all, and can show them how to be superwomen as well. What they find, however, is that most women in senior management are not superwomen; as we will see in chapter 5, upward of half of all senior female executives, unlike their male counterparts, have been forced to make difficult trade-offs, accessing power by sacrificing marriage and children. Our respondents don't care to make similar trade-offs, so these senior women aren't their role models. But according to Kelan and Mah, even those senior women who actually manage to meet all the contradictory parameters are dismissed as role models by other women, who feel they're either unapproachable "Queen Bees" or far too busy to offer meaningful guidance.[30]

Hence, women in the market for a role model choose men not because female models aren't available, but because men mirror the ideal they're looking for: power without personal sacrifice, leadership without the complication of femininity.

Earning and Asking for Sponsorship

An overwhelming number of respondents of both sexes—92 percent women and 89 percent men—agree that senior-level sponsorship should be earned: through exceptional performance ratings, ability to deliver results, exceptional work experience, great people skills, high levels of ambition, and proven success in the company culture. But there are paths to power that women lack, or invisible forces that men manage to harness but that women miss out on. Chief among these is what Gerard Egan calls the "shadow side" of office politics: the barroom conversations and golf-course decisions that have for decades propelled men into the corridors of power.[31] Sponsorship, as the data demonstrate, can in fact offer women the kind of springboard that compensates qualified women for their impaired access to these old-boy networks. So then the question becomes: How can women overcome their "asking problem" to acquire a network of sponsors?

In speaking to our focus groups and senior executives, a surprising answer emerges: women's tendency to collaborate rather than compete and their inclination to make everybody a winner rather than risk incurring dislike can actually garner them the relationships that will lever them upward—provided women are conscious and deliberate in applying these skills.

Melinda Wolfe and Anne Erni are prime examples of just such a purposeful collaboration. Prior to Lehman's collapse, they were competitors vying for the same talent. "Success was getting a top female from Harvard to come to Lehman instead of Goldman," Erni laughs. But, recognizing that a rising tide lifts all boats, she and Wolfe built a trust that enabled them to share best practices and collaborate on how to bring more talented women to Wall Street. The result, as both women see it, was a win-win-win: Erni won a job, Bloomberg won a talent, and Wolfe won the recognition attendant on bringing talent to her firm.

Interestingly enough, Babcock and Laschever reach the same conclusion. "A cooperative approach, aimed at finding good outcomes for all parties rather than just trying to 'win,' actually produces solutions that are objectively superior to those produced by more competitive tactics," they write, citing their own work along with other studies.[32]

But for relationships to evolve into sponsorship, Wolfe and Erni demonstrate that ambitious women must be both (1) aware of the sponsorship effect and (2) deliberate and strategic in the collaborations they form. It's certainly true, Wolfe says, that sponsor relationships happen for men more readily and easily, in a daily way—talking about sports, being on the golf course, having common things to bond over. Women don't often have those opportunities with other men. But that doesn't mean they need to read the sports column or hone their backswing, she says. Rather, women should think more consciously about whom to approach to help them. "You have to set your sights on the right person," she says. "Ask yourself, 'Who do I have to get in front of to prove I'm worth their time, effort, and credit?'"

Wolfe recalls her own early efforts at bridge building. Fifteen years ago, eager to move into the field of diversity, she approached a senior woman at her firm with whom she'd worked. "I expressed my interest in doing something different and my desire to expand my network and meet the people who could help to make this happen," Wolfe recalls. "I asked: 'Would you be willing to support me and to advocate for my abilities?' The sponsor made a call to a key individual, effectively pitching me for a key role. Through this introduction, I was able to leverage the opportunity to create a completely new direction to my career. While I was the beneficiary, I believe it was a good move for the company and, additionally, reflected well on her."

Seizing the Sponsorship Advantage

Among the paths to power, sponsorship is undervalued—and thus underutilized—by both men and women. But with men still reaping the benefits of the old-boy networks, women need to avail themselves of every advantage, every alternative path to the top—and sponsorship, the data confirm, confers precisely this advantage. Seizing it is, in part, a matter of women learning how to ask for more dedicated support—because with that support, they will definitely ask for more stretch assignments, greater recognition, more pay, and more leadership opportunities. Harnessing the power of sponsorship, however, is also a matter of women doing what women do best: establishing lasting bonds and negotiating win-win outcomes.

Still, sponsorship is no magic bullet. As we will see in part II, it must counteract a culture that systematically undermines even the most proactive and assertive of women. The bar remains higher for women, who must overcome not only punitive stereotypes of female bosses but also the perennial tripwires of being female—being seen as mothers, or mistresses, or daughters. And this higher bar, in turn, confronts their sponsors with fresh challenges. How can they create traction and propel their most promising female talent up the rungs of the corporate ladder? These are the issues we'll tackle in part II.

PART II:

PITFALLS AND TRIPWIRES

Chapter 4: Meritocracy or "Dirty Game"?

At the close of Time Warner's first-ever Breakthrough Leadership program, a retreat for senior female management at Simmons College, Lisa Garcia-Quiroz, then publisher of *People en Español*, received a tiara. "We all got one, as a reminder of who we *used* to be," Garcia-Quiroz explains.

At the beginning of the weeklong retreat, one woman admitted to the group that she had always believed hard work would be justly rewarded. "She told us, 'I thought somebody would come over and put a tiara on my head—like *poof*! Here's your next promotion, now you're queen!'" Garcia-Quiroz recalls. That metaphor so resonated with the class that one graduate took it upon herself to "crown" her classmates at the closing dinner. To this day, Garcia-Quiroz says, she and her fellow alums are referred to as "the Tiara Group."

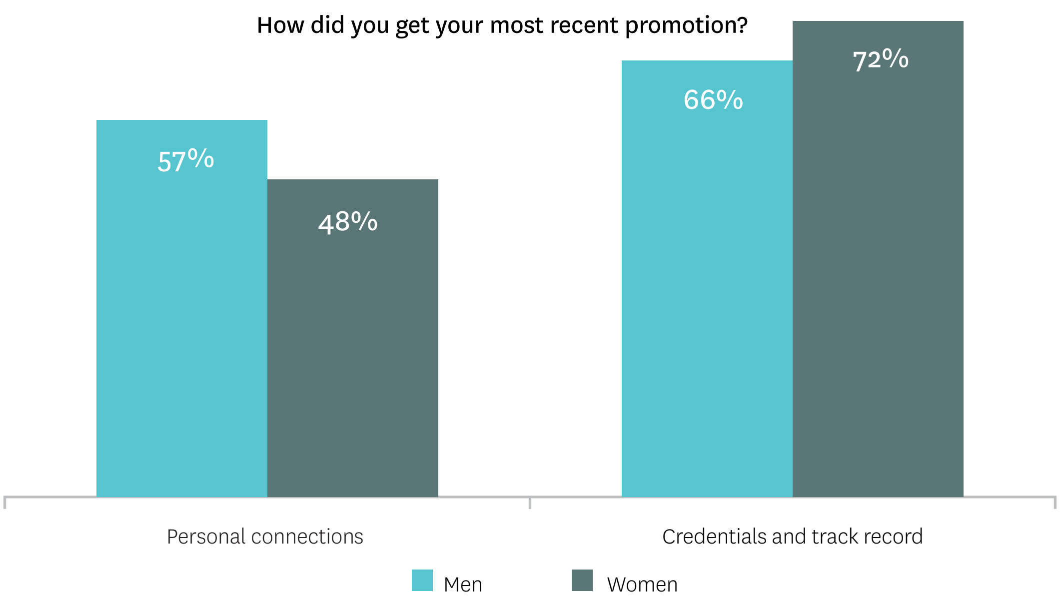
But Garcia-Quiroz took home from Boston more than a band of rhinestones. "What the seminar helped me realize was that I needed to be much more intentional about my networking," she reflects. "I came away from that session realizing that the 'inflection points' in my career had everything to do with some person making a difference in my life, helping me see what I couldn't see for myself, and helping me find a way to get there."

Since her stint at Breakthrough Leadership, which is now in its seventh year, Garcia-Quiroz has become very deliberate about her network, cultivating sponsors within and well beyond the realm of Time Warner. More importantly, she is sharing her leadership skills with those who report to her because, she says, "Most women and people of color still think if they work exceptionally hard, they'll be rewarded."

Our research corroborates Garcia-Quiroz's observation. To look at our survey data is to see that the myth of meritocracy dies hard among female talent—very hard. Fully 77 percent of female employees believe that what drives promotion at their firm is a combination of hard work, long hours, and education credentials. Of those women who have advanced, 72 percent point to their track record by way of explaining their most recent promotion, as opposed to 48 percent who credit personal connections. The vast majority of men (83 percent),

FIGURE 4-1

Getting to the next rung of the career ladder



on the other hand, readily acknowledge that "who you know" counts for a lot, or at least as much as "how well you do your job." Fifty-seven percent perceive their own recent advancement to be a function of personal connections, while 66 percent acknowledge the importance of credentials and track record.

What explains women's insistence that promotion be a function of merit? Our research reveals two forces at work simultaneously. First is attraction: women cling to their busy-bee credo because, in fact, hard work *works*—to a point, anyway. But they're also driven to buy into the meritocracy myth because, as we will see, they vehemently *resist* embracing its alternative.

Origins of the Myth

For at least the first two decades, life does seem to operate as a meritocracy. Those who work hard at school, who can sit still and pay attention, who study for exams and go the extra mile on papers—these are the students the system rewards. And they are mostly female. Study after study shows that girls outperform boys at school: they get better grades. They score better on standardized tests. They are disproportionately represented in top-tier graduate school programs. Entering the workforce, young women understandably imagine that applying the work ethic that won them top honors in school will garner them the plum assignments, the lockstep promotions, and the fast track to power. They "expect life to be fair and they often don't realize that it's up to them to make sure that it is," as Carnegie Mellon economics professor Linda Babcock observes.[33]

Reinforcing this behavior, in turn, are social and cultural expectations. According to Babcock, girls are rewarded for being unassertive and industrious, and are taught both directly and subtly that they do not control their fates. They are assigned household chores, such as childcare or cooking, that involve far less independence than boys, who mow lawns and wash the car. They are applauded for getting As, and scolded for questioning authority or bragging about their accomplishments. Peggy Orenstein, author of *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*, concurs. "By the sixth grade," she says, "it is clear that both girls and boys have learned to equate maleness with opportunity and femininity with constraint," hence the phenomenon of so many talented women toiling away, waiting for that tiara to fall on their heads.[34] They assume their work will speak for itself.

The "Dirty Game"

But women aren't just convinced their good-girl behavior will pay off. Rather, they're certain that getting ahead by any other means is *dirty*.

"I hear it all the time," says Dr. Annalisa Jenkins, senior vice president of Global Medical at Bristol-Myers Squibb. "The women I mentor tell me they're not keen to use their networks because 'it's not fair.' Over and over, that's what they say: *It's not fair*."

Women we interviewed echoed this. "At the end of the day, I want to be judged on the quality of my work and how I affect the bottom line—not by who I know or how well I manipulate those relationships," one female investment banker told us. "I see this whole mentoring, sponsoring, networking thing as demeaning and dirty. I mean, who needs it?"

Among our focus group participants, women not only wanted to be judged by the quality of their work, they were downright miffed at those who were doing the same job but seemed to be moving ahead more quickly. "It seems that some people here are being groomed," observed a junior woman at an investment bank. "One woman in my group is my peer in every way except that she is on some secret fast track that just got her a promotion ahead of schedule. I just don't get it. I think my work is a bit better than hers."

Part of the loathing women feel toward leveraging relationship capital may stem from a pronounced aversion to self-promotion. Women don't like calling attention to their accomplishments, observes Adam Quinton. He recalls that his last boss, who oversees a staff of a thousand, has often observed that she's never had a woman ask for a raise based on strong performance, while men step forward often. "Women feel that's dirty or cheesy," says Quinton, but in fact, at a certain senior level, "you have to be a very self-interested and aggressive person.

Maybe that's where a lot of women get turned off," he reflects, "and end up saying, 'I don't want to deal with that.'"

So averse are women to playing politics that, according to one study of Wall Street professionals, they'd rather switch jobs than have to engage in the relationship-capital game. But there's more to this aversion than a distaste for self-promotion or "games." For starters, women are not imagining the dirty aspects. As we will discuss in chapter 8, the road to the top is fraught with sexual peril: securing the ongoing interest of a senior man as a sponsor can provoke gossip, ignite passions, and destroy careers. For women, seeking out and securing sponsors entails gender-specific risks and sacrifices that make "the game" inconvenient or downright dangerous. They'd rather play it safe. They'd rather do what they know how to do well. They'd rather keep their heads down and wait for that crown.

What handicaps women most in the relationship-capital game, however, is a gender difference that, ironically, holds the greatest potential to vault them ahead: *women excel at relationships*.

What Are Friends For?

It's a curious paradox, really: relationships are a priority for women. They have more friends and maintain deeper networks than men do. So how come guys are good at politics and women aren't?

A bedrock of research suggests that men and women go about friendship—and perceive its value—very differently. For men, every contact they make, at work or outside of it, is potentially a buddy, even if that potential is never developed beyond the exchange of business cards. Even in their valuation of friendship, the sexes differ: men say they gain *advice* from friends, whereas women are more likely to say they get *support*, according to Geoffrey Grief, a University of Maryland professor and the author of *Buddy System: Understanding Male Friendships*. Itself an outgrowth of sports involvements where playing well, not talking, forged loyalties, the buddy system grooms men to be "fixers," as Grief terms them. They're not after personal relationships so much as a playing field where they can barter chips and broker power among contacts they barely know.[35]

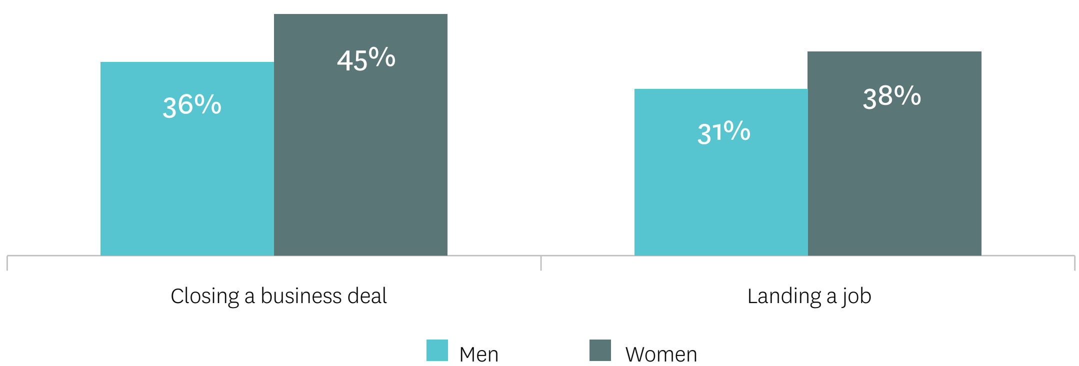
Women, on the other hand, are all about the players. Like men, they make a wealth of contacts, but are inclined to develop stronger ties, according to researcher Sharon Timberlake.[36] With their workplace buddies they share not just information but confidences, not just business but their feelings about business. And they'll keep expanding that circle, looking to invest in women outside their immediate environs, socializing with them outside of work in order to prolong and deepen the bond. "I just went to an executive women's forum where all sixty people want to stay connected," remarks Marilyn Nagel, at Cisco. "I keep seeing messages like, 'Want to go hiking? Want to have dinner?' Women are better at getting together socially. Men are less likely to follow up with other men unless it's a business deal."

So vested are women in these relationships that any ripple in the bond rocks their sense of self—and self-worth.[37] They see themselves as "interdependent," in contrast to men, whom they perceive as having more "independent" self-schemas. As a result, bestowing favors or jumping in to bail out a coworker, come naturally, even reflexively. But this effort on behalf of others is not made, and is seemingly not to be regarded, as a deposit in any sort of favor bank. Most women feel "squeamish" about asking favors in return. When it comes to asking for career help, good friends are off-limits.[38]

Respondents to our survey confirm this gender difference. Twice as many men as women admit to looking for friends at work who can help them get ahead or land better assignments. Women say they look for someone to confide in, laugh with, and lean on, but not *use*. Hence, when it comes to asking for help landing a job, say, or closing an important deal, the majority of men won't hesitate to turn to a friend (65 and 69 percent, respectively), but a significant number of women—upward of 45 percent—admit to feeling reluctant.

FIGURE 4-2

Respondents who have difficulty asking for concrete help...



Billie Williamson, a senior partner at Ernst & Young, thinks women just don't perceive relationship building on the job as work. "Because it's so natural for us, nurturing and caring for our friends and family and community, we don't think of it as *part* of our job," she says. "We're focused instead on *doing* a great job."

Similarly, Deborah Elam believes women simply need to be educated on the rules of the game. "I don't think they understand relationship capital and how it works: if I do something for you, you do something for me, and we all gain," she notes, observing that women's confusion in turn confuses men. "Women keep offering help to men, collecting chips without asking for any favors in return," she explains. "That leaves men suspicious about the future cash-in."

Bernadette, a senior operations executive, cashes in favors all the time—but she had to learn, the hard way, how the back-scratching business works. For her last promotion, she had to approach the man who would become her boss and ask him for it. "I was hesitant," she recalls. "How would that look? Why should I have to ask? Would I be able to ask my new boss for something again or would this be the last favor I could call in?" After a few more pushes from her sponsor, she set up a lunch to cash in her chips. "It was the most nerve-wracking day of my career," she relates. "I was sweating at the table. When I finally got around to saying what I wanted, my future boss's response was, 'It took you long enough.'"

Women's reluctance to call in their chits is something all of our executive women commented on. Amy Schulman, senior vice president and general counsel of Pfizer, noted that it is akin to hoarding airplane miles, saving them for the perfect trip. "I have thousands of miles. Sometimes I laugh at myself—asking, what am I saving them for?" Schulman notes that women can hoard chits, letting them "go stale" rather than spending them as men do. "When a man spends capital, he feels like he's getting *more* capital because calling in a favor shows that he's standing up for himself," she observes. "Men feel like that's how their supply replenishes."

However, Schulman, like many of her peers, has no difficulty calling in favors *for others*. "If someone on my team needs a raise, I have no trouble speaking up," she says. "I'm much more comfortable spending my political capital on that than asking for myself."

Selling Themselves Short

The paradox proves to be nothing less than a catch-22, really: despite generating a wealth of good will, women refuse to redeem any of it because they perceive colleagues as friends—and friends aren't to be used instrumentally. That is, the very people who can help promising women with their careers are the very people these women consider off-limits. Men, on the other hand, simply don't make the distinction between friend and colleague. They may have few close friends, but they have tons of acquaintances, and when it comes to mining that network for valuable resources, everybody's fair game.

Together, the two forces—clinging to the meritocracy myth while eschewing the relationship-capital game—conspire to keep women bunched up in the mid- to upper-middle sections of the power pipeline. "You'd think it was hardwired in women, this notion that 'if I just work hard enough, I'll get the promotion,'" remarks Billie Williamson, who admits she struggled against that wiring for years. "Well, no, you won't get the promotion. You have to build the relationships that go along with doing the work. It's not about how hard you work, how good you are at the job. That's not enough, and it never will be."

Chapter 5: Children: A Lose-Lose Proposition

Annmarie Neal, chief talent officer at Cisco, makes a conscious effort to meet with women she's mentoring during "the normal workday"—over breakfast, coffee, or lunch. "I'm not going to pull them away from their families," she says, "because I know they're shouldering more than their share at home."

The mother of a seven-year-old, Neal herself struggles to strike a balance nurturing her professional network and nurturing her family and personal life. Compounding that struggle is a job that imposes frequent after-hours demands and a commute that for most women would be untenable: Neal lives in Colorado and works in California. "But I have a fabulous partner to lean on," she explains. "For women who don't have that kind of support, or who, culturally, are in no position to say to their husband, 'Hey, could you pick up the kids, because I'm going to a networking event this evening . . . .'" She doesn't finish the sentence. Then she adds, "I think we have to be hugely sensitive to that."

Finding time to network—at work, after work, during the workweek, during the weekend—is a challenge for both men and women with families. But it's demonstrably harder for working mothers. They shoulder more of the parenting burden—and way more of the domestic-chore burden. Our data shows that 35 percent of full-time female employees assume 100 percent of the housework, and 60 percent do at least 75 percent. The figures are only slightly better with regard to child care: 28 percent of full-time working mothers assume 100 percent responsibility for the kids, and 56 percent assume at least 75 percent.

So it's hardly surprising men have more sponsors than women: they have more time to cultivate such relationships because they're less constrained by family and domestic responsibilities. At the same time, it's far more important for working mothers to cultivate sponsors, precisely because they *are* more constrained.

Fully 68 percent of working mothers we surveyed said they'd like to network with colleagues but cannot find the time. Nor are they the only women who miss out on extracurricular work events. Our research reveals that single and childless women also feel cut out of the loop—perversely, *because* they don't have children.

In short, women for whom sponsorship could make a key difference are caught in an intractable bind; if they have children, they'll be invited to networking opportunities but won't be able to attend, and if they don't have children, they'll be able to attend but won't be invited. It's a lose-lose proposition.

The Mommy Tax

Since 2005, the Center for Work-Life Policy has been measuring the cost of children on women's careers. Childrearing, as well as childbearing, frequently knocks women off track: 74 percent of women who leave their jobs today say they do so to look after children, a figure that has grown by 64 percent since 2005.[39] The average time-out has grown as well, from 2.2 years in 2005 to 2.7 years in 2010. Taking time out for children initiates a downward spiral that, for many women, proves inescapable. They never fulfill their earning or career potential. According to Columbia professor Jane Waldfogel, a first child produces a wage "penalty" of 6 percent of earnings, while two children produce a wage penalty of 13 percent.[40]

But these figures, revelatory as they are, fail to touch on the nuance that Annmarie Neal discusses: working women with families are likelier to stall out, or fail to fulfill their potential, *because they miss out on sponsorship*, the very catalyst they need to overcome the penalty children impose on their careers—and they miss out because tending to children comes at the expense of tending to professional relationships. Mothers with high-paying, high-profile jobs—or mothers who aspire to such positions—must go to extraordinary lengths (and have extraordinary support) to develop a network of career boosters. Female-to-female sponsorship may take place during the workday, as Neal suggests, but most women would rather go after male sponsors, since they perceive men to be in a better position to help them. And sponsorship as practiced by men tends to take place off-site and after hours—not necessarily during a golf game but perhaps at a sports arena; not necessarily over drinks but quite possibly at an out-of-town conference dinner; not necessarily at the water cooler but possibly at a poolside barbecue on the weekend.

However strong the inclination to rush home to the kids, capable women keen to fulfill their career potential can't afford to miss out on the schmoozing that constitutes a good part of sponsorship—as many of our co-chairs affirm. "I knew it was part of my job to build relationships with clients," says Billie Williamson of Ernst & Young. "What I didn't focus on was that I needed to be doing that with my peers and superiors. Only later did I understand I needed to be chatting informally with my boss, taking him out to dinner with his spouse and mine. For most women with children, that chitchat and socializing seems unimportant. But you've got to make that time available if your job is important to you."

The Third Shift

Networking for working mothers becomes arguably the *third* shift (on top of the usual work and family demands), a juggling act beyond the capacity of even supermoms. One female partner at a Boston-based law firm told us of confronting this very challenge. "You'd think I was all set," she says. "After all, I've made partner. But now I've got to swell our client roster. I've got to get out there and drum up business, whether it means I join a congregation or take on a visible role in the community." Already working sixty-five-hour weeks and pregnant with her second child, she's clearly an accomplished hand at both the first and the second shift. She says she's determined not to bite the bullet, as other female colleagues have, and scale back. "But I have no idea how I'm going to take on this new agenda," she admits. "It may be the straw that breaks the camel's back."

Other women we've interviewed concede they simply can't justify prioritizing the networking task over their families. In several of our focus groups, women told us they'd give their eyeteeth to be granted the 6:30–8:30 p.m. time slot to spend with their families. Gwen, a participant in our London seminar, said she didn't mind putting in another two hours late at night if she could just eat dinner with her spouse and children. One woman in a Los Angeles focus group said she would relocate thousands of miles if an employer would guarantee she could be home for her children's bedtime.

Working mothers who grasp the importance of networking and want to be invited and included in after-hours socializing remain effectively locked out, because they need advance notice to arrange a sitter or other coverage. "Some women are actually grateful for the after-hours invitation," Neal says, who tries to give them the notice they need. But after-hours socializing often occurs spontaneously, and sponsorship seems to thrive precisely on that serendipity. "I'll say, 'I'm going to hear a speaker at Stanford, wanna grab a drink afterwards?' or if I'm at a table with someone interesting, I may pull over some of my junior women," explains Neal. You can't really plan or program sponsorship, she insists. "It's more of an organic process."

The Childless Tax

For a variety of reasons, then, women with children cannot access sponsorship when needed. But motherhood and marriage confer immeasurable benefits on ambitious women, too—both in and out of the workplace. "I feel enriched by both," asserts Annalisa Jenkins of Bristol-Myers Squibb, who is married and has two teenage children. "There is a bind, I'm not denying that, but lots of women haven't done the heavy lifting about what they want their lives to be." Jenkins feels that having kids and a satisfying life outside of work keeps her "strong and empowered" in the workplace, and that her job, in turn, has granted her personal fulfillment and her family a lifestyle and a series of opportunities few of their peers experience.

Indeed, seen from the other end of the telescope—from the perspective of childless women—married women with kids enjoy some decidedly unfair advantages in the sponsorship game.

For starters, most mid- to upper-level male managers have kids and readily relate to conversations concerning them. Women who don't play golf, don't follow the NCAA basketball tournament, don't watch football, and cannot tell the difference between a Ford Mustang and Chevy Cavalier are nonetheless able to converse easily with their male colleagues, provided they have kids, especially kids involved in sports activities. One of our colleagues in the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force constantly references her kids' soccer and basketball games, a conversational tactic she's clearly developed as a means of navigating her all-male workaday world. Talking about their injuries and championships affords her the entrée with male superiors that she wouldn't otherwise have.

Secondly, as we will explore in chapter 8, a married woman with children enjoys a kind of sexual immunity among men that makes it natural and safe to converse and hang out with them—a protective armor single women, especially younger single women, are denied. There's nothing like a phalanx of family photos on the desktop to send a message that you are unavailable for any involvement that isn't strictly business. Unattached women, on the other hand, attract the wrong kind of attention: from certain men who sense their vulnerability, as well as co-workers who suspect they're trading sexual favors for promotion. Disproportionately, single women fall prey to sexual politics—a fact that prompted one single woman in a focus group to remark that "children are kind of a chastity belt" she wished she had.

Finally, motherhood clearly telegraphs to coworkers and superiors the existence of a life outside the office, a kind of force field that keeps at bay requests to "pitch in" after 5 p.m. or cover for coworkers on leave during Christmas or New Year's. Single women are presumed to have no family to tend in the absence of a husband or kids of their own, and no complicating relationships to consider. An African American woman at Johnson & Johnson told us of her recent relocation to the firm's New Jersey offices, a move based on a prestigious promotion. "Everyone just assumed I'd take the job because I had no 'issues,'" she explained, referencing her single and childless status. As a result, no one made any attempt to help her with the transition. "I had an awfully hard time," she admits. "Maybe because I didn't have that ready-made unit of husband and kids to see me through this, I missed my friends, my church, and my community even more."

The Cinderella Syndrome

Then there's the sheer stigma of the solo status. Childless women are suspected of being not normal, somehow—or "scarily single," as one of our co-chairs puts it. They're harder to absorb into social gatherings where everyone else is paired up. Most unforgivably, they're not viewed as good role models for younger aspiring career women.

A senior executive at a leading Wall Street investment bank told us of his delight in finding "the perfect woman" to head up their networking initiative—only to realize, belatedly, that as an unmarried childless woman, she was a less-than-perfect role model. "We wound up second-guessing ourselves," he confided, noting that it was critical for the bank that the choice of network head send the right message. Ultimately he appointed the most qualified woman together with a "co-leader" who had the requisite husband-and-kids profile.

Throughout our focus groups, unmarried childless women reported feeling isolated at work and less likely to be included in social gatherings than married counterparts with children.

The Upside of Isolation

The solution, as many ambitious women see it, is to be married but remain childless. Marriage removes the scarily single taint; marriage confers immunity from would-be sexual predators; marriage makes women socially acceptable. "Dual income without kids" also provides the resources that mitigate inequality on the home front: these couples can hire help with impunity. And without children to tend to, women can prioritize their careers in ways that maximize their earning potential and likely fulfill their career potential. They can fully engage in the networking that offers visibility, recognition, and promotion. They may go all the way to the C-suite.

The data give weight to this perception. Forty-one percent of ultra-high-earning women have no partner.[41] Forty percent have no children. Consciously or unconsciously, they have chosen not to have families because they perceive the impossibility of doing both things. In contrast, men at the very top arrive with a retinue of family, friends, and children. Indeed, the more senior the male, the more likely he is to have both spouse and offspring: 81 percent of ultra-high-achieving men are married, and 71 percent have kids. Consciously or unconsciously, these men have it all because their families represent support systems, not care liabilities—systems that enable them to work late, dine with colleagues at a moment's notice, attend out-of-town conferences and weekend events, and schmooze with superiors who are likewise unfettered by obligations at home.

As Neal suggests, companies that wish to retain and maximize female talent are going to have to be sensitive to that gender difference—hugely sensitive. We'll explore how in chapter 10.

Chapter 6: Ambition and Ambivalence

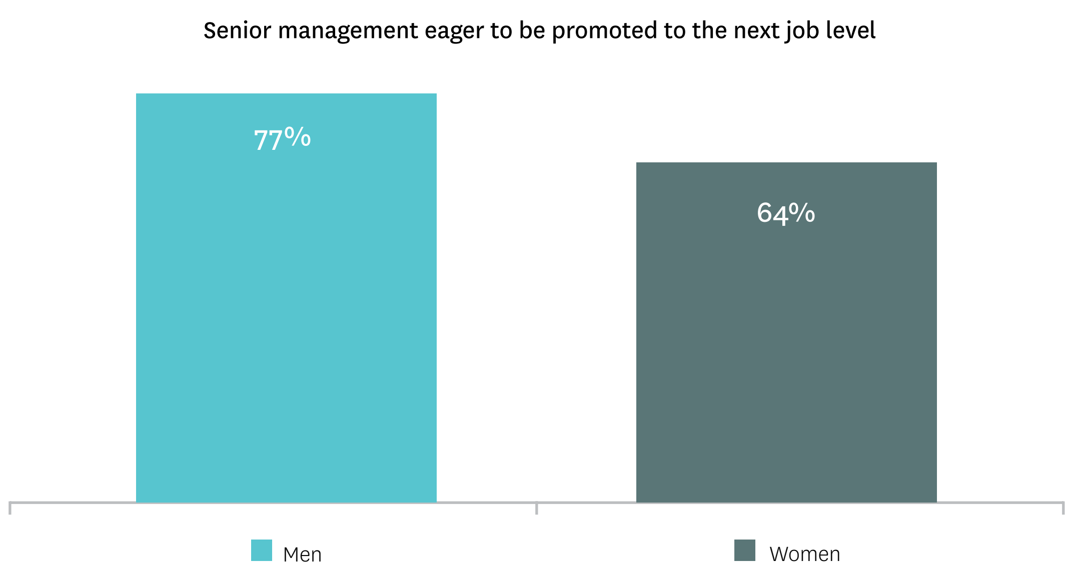
Would you describe yourself as ambitious?

In focus group after focus group, we put this question to female managers and directors—women who have clearly demonstrated they have the ability, drive, and commitment to advance to the very top of their firms. And invariably, we heard the same sorts of responses.

"I could be CFO if I wanted to," one senior exec told us. "But I don't want to. The job I have is more interesting." Another woman explained that she'd worked hard to achieve balance in her life and wasn't eager to take on a position that might destroy it. "I'm perfectly happy where I am," she said. More than a third of mid-senior-level women (36 percent) admitted they weren't eager to get promoted. "My next promotion would be to a country manager position," one senior vice president told us in a Virtual Strategy Session. "The job itself is appealing but there are too many drawbacks for my kids."

FIGURE 6-1

Appetite for promotion



It's astounding, really. After forty years of struggle to level the playing field so that women might have an equal shot at the brass ring, those who are ideally positioned to grab it seemingly don't care to reach for it. Certainly women hop onto the carousel eagerly: young female graduates readily admit to wanting all that their male counterparts aspire to in a career. In our 2010 Off-Ramps and On-Ramps research we found that 40 percent of young (age twenty-eight to forty) women in business readily describe themselves as "extremely ambitious," about the same number as men. But the longer they're in the game, the more inclined women are to downsize their aspirations.[42] Only 32 percent of women in business over forty years of age felt the same way. Instead of drawing attention to themselves, they try and stay off the succession planners' radar. Instead of taking on high-profile assignments, they look to do their job—and head home at 5 p.m.

Are women not wired for ambition? Or is something else going on here?

Recognition Can be Problematic

In her 2004 book, *Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives*, psychiatrist Anna Fels makes the case that ambition requires two critical components: mastery of a skill and recognition of that mastery.[43] "Doing a thing well can be a reward in and of itself," she points out in another article. "But the pursuit of mastery over an extended period of time requires a specific context: an evaluating, encouraging audience must be present for skills to develop."[44]

But the recognition piece, for women, falls away—or rather, as Fels argues, women yield it to men. Certainly throughout childhood, girls, like boys, seek to acquire a skill set, the mastery of which will bring them approval, acclaim, status, and honor. As their sexuality develops, however, girls seek to refashion themselves according to broadly accepted notions of femininity. In order to be seen as feminine, girls learn they must provide or relinquish resources, including recognition, to others.[45]

Hence the widespread phenomenon of women deflecting attention from themselves, however accomplished or deserving they may be of that attention. "They refuse to claim a central, purposeful place in their own stories, eagerly shifting the credit elsewhere and shunning recognition," Fels observes.[46] Women who refuse to demur, who do not reflexively cede recognition or who claim the spotlight for themselves, invite slurs on their sexuality. "They are caricatured as either asexual and unattractive or promiscuous and seductive," Fels notes.[47]

The High Cost of Success

Fels offers a compelling thesis for why women appear to lose their drive and forsake their career goals. But in fact, there is more to this phenomenon than issues around recognition: our research suggests that women downscale their ambitions because hard work *doesn't* pay—at least, not in the ways that would spur them on to the C-suite.

For highly skilled, hardworking, ambitious men, success at work will net them status and income. High-earning men attract and win, in turn, trophy wives. And trophy wives can afford to dedicate themselves to motherhood and the home front, further enabling the husband to fulfill his career and earning potential. For guys, ambition is what will win them the triple crown of fame, fortune, and family.

The same cannot be said for highly skilled, hardworking, ambitious women. On the contrary, a woman who distinguishes herself at work very quickly narrows her chances of finding a mate. Studies show that a woman's marriage prospects are inversely related to her career success: the greater her accomplishments and visibility, the fewer candidates find her to be "marriage material." This explains why, as we discussed in chapter 5, 41 percent of female senior executives will enter the ranks of high earners without an intimate partner while 40 percent will arrive childless.

Though a female CEO doubtless enjoys considerable status in the work world, she forfeits the family and support that men accrue in their pursuit of power. Given these very different cost/benefit scenarios, it seems eminently practical for women to downsize their ambitions. It isn't that women don't get the attention they've earned; it's that women don't get the personal life they deserve. As one headhunter put it, "If you think success might cost you your husband and children, you're probably going to make compromises."

What *Do* Women Want?

Lisa Garcia-Quiroz, senior vice president of corporate responsibility and diversity at Time Warner, is a driven risk-taker who has proven highly successful at leveraging brands. Garcia-Quiroz started out at Time Inc. in consumer marketing, where an interest in education prompted her to write a memo to then publisher Lisa Long outlining a weekly news magazine for students—what would become *Time for Kids*. Within a few years Garcia-Quiroz found herself spearheading the launch of another blockbuster, *People en Español*, now the largest-selling Hispanic magazine in the United States.

Ask Garcia-Quiroz if she considers herself ambitious, however, and she will demur. "A mentor of mine once told me that I was not *traditionally* ambitious," she offers, explaining that she's not vying for her next job six months into her current job.

However, Garcia-Quiroz will own up to being very hungry for more at Time Warner—just not the "traditional" rewards. "I have been fortunate to always be doing what I love," she concedes. "It is important to always be learning and engaging at a higher and higher level." She reflects a moment and then adds, "It's less about the title and size of my office, and more about the substance of what I'm doing. In that sense, I guess you could say I'm ambitious."

Garcia-Quiroz is typical of other smart, talented, hardworking women who invariably describe a package of motivations that do not include money and power. It's not that they don't care about compensation; they most assuredly do. But at least five other things trump a paycheck in their value proposition. Our Off-Ramps and On-Ramps research indicates that the number-one motivator for women (with 81 percent in accord) is the intellectual quality of their team: they want to work with other smart, capable, committed people.[48] The number-two reason, also with 81 percent in accord, is job security. Third (with 78 percent accord) is authenticity: women value highly the ability "to be myself" on the job. Flexibility in work arrangements, not surprisingly, won the number-four position, with 65 percent identifying it as a key attribute. Close behind that was recognition (60 percent). And 54 percent said it was important to have a job that enabled them to give back to society.

High income and a powerful position didn't even make it into the top five reasons, although women do value these rewards (47 percent valued high income and 15 percent prioritized power).

In marked contrast, men who answered the same question in a number of different surveys ranked power and income first and second, respectively, in their value proposition. International Survey Research, a global consulting and HR research firm, found in 2004 that the two top drivers for men were "career advancement" and "financial reward," whereas women's top drivers were "relationships at work" and "delivering a quality product/service to customers/clients."[49] In a 2006 set of in-depth interviews with forty successful men and women, Lorraine Dyke and Steven Murphy found that in defining success, women "highlight the importance of balance and relationships. Men focus more on material success." Indeed, only three in twenty women mentioned money in defining success. As one interviewee explained, "Success does not mean necessarily a promotion. Success can also be if your subordinates believe in you and support the work that you do."[50]

Our data shows that what motivates women in extreme jobs (sixty-plus hours a week) is challenge, not compensation. One "marzipan" woman told Peninah Thomson, executive coach and coauthor of *A Woman's Place Is in the Boardroom*, that being appointed to a board was not her overriding ambition. "I want to make a difference and add value. I don't want [a board seat] for the stripes, as some men do . . . Ego and land grabs are important to the guys, but I don't judge achievement that way."[51]

Yet what women want is not necessarily on offer. Most companies (Time Warner notwithstanding) structure the ladder of progress on rungs of power and money. The carrot dangled in front of employees is a better pay package and a more prestigious title, not a great team and more meaningful work. Those who can stay in lockstep on the ladder—who can put in ten-hour days at the office and who don't take parental leave or sick days or any significant time off—stand to benefit most, whereas those who require flexibility or can't put in the face time are likely to be shoved aside or overlooked. Locked into this paradigm, women eventually perceive the disconnect between what they want and what's on offer—and tailor their commitment accordingly.

Sponsorship: A Way to Restore Recognition

To recap, then, women's "lack of ambition" turns out to be anything but. Women are just as hungry as men, just as driven to succeed, just as eager to be rewarded for their hard work. The difference is, they don't necessarily want success at the price of a personal life—a trade-off men are not required to make. And success, as they define it, is not about money and power. Women's value proposition looks nothing like men's. They crave connection more than compensation, emotional satisfaction more than status. They want recognition but either resist the self-promotion necessary to win it or simply yield it to men, lest they come off as "unfeminine"—abrasive, assertive, and ambitious. Unable to get what they want, or unwilling to sacrifice what they value, women scale back on their career aspirations. Until the white male career model gives way to a more inclusive one, and more of what women want is on offer, the phenomenon of "downsized aspirations" is likely to persist.

Yet all is not lost with regard to reinvigorating female ambition if, as Anna Fels argues, women simply need more recognition than they're comfortable asking for. This is where sponsorship can make an enormous difference, conferring recognition on women who won't claim it (or who actively resist it) despite doing a masterful job. Sponsorship can drive the flywheel of women's ambition by reinstating the appreciative audience.

Garcia-Quiroz offers herself as a prime example of how this works. "My sponsors helped me embrace a much bigger vision," she reflects. "They encouraged me to pick up the phone and arrange a press conference, to go to the White House Correspondents' dinner, to be glamorous at the Emmys—to just think about myself in much bigger terms." Her getting in front of influential people helped *People en Español* gain legitimacy in the Hispanic community at a critical juncture in its development. "I just wouldn't have seen it that way, how my visibility could make such a difference," Garcia-Quiroz exclaims.

Knowing how unnatural it can feel to court the limelight—"like writing with your left hand if you're right-handed," as she puts it—Garcia-Quiroz tries to push more women into its glare: "We are such brilliant multitaskers that, given all we do in the course of a day, we can't perceive any one accomplishment warranting a full-court press," Garcia-Quiroz explains. "In the grand scheme of things, it just doesn't seem to be a big deal or important. In women's haste to move things off their desk and cross more tasks off their list they're simply not thinking, 'Gee, how do I make sure that I get visibility for what I accomplished?'"

"So I make sure the women on my staff get credit for all the incredible work they do," Garcia-Quiroz continues. "I'll give them a project that's hugely visible, one that makes them interact with executives across the division, working and presenting with them. I may have to push them, but they'll deliver." And then, once they're promoted to a position where they can do some real good, says Garcia-Quiroz, they'll come to realize what she realized: that *they just didn't have a big enough vision for themselves*. "That's our biggest pitfall," she comments about women. "But I can help women I know with that—as others have helped me."

Chapter 7: Leadership, Looks, and Executive Presence

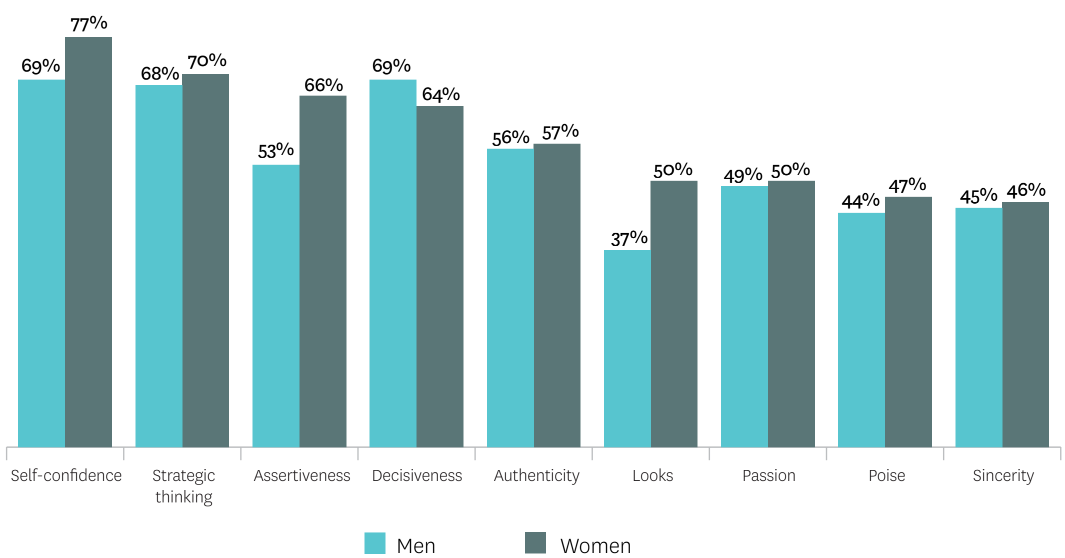
Do looks matter in a leader?

The Republican National Committee certainly thinks so. In late October 2008, during the feverish final days of the presidential election, it shelled out $150,000 to outfit vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin in designer suits; $10,000 to style her hair; and $22,800 to get her makeup just right—making Palin's appearance the single most costly expenditure of the campaign that month. And while the Obama campaign reaped the rewards of an indignant electorate, Democratic hopefuls had already shown themselves to be just as vested in their looks: Senator John Edwards made headlines for his $400 haircuts, and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton took the heat for spending $3,000 on two hairstyling sessions.[52]

Contenders for the most powerful seats in the United States government clearly understand that style and appearance matter—however scandalized they may act when their style expenditures make headlines. They know the public won't rally behind a leader who doesn't look or act the part. They realize what ample research has shown—that people derive more than half of their first impression of someone on appearance alone.[53] "People do business with people they know, like and trust, and avoid doing business with those they do not like. It's that simple," writes Sharon Saylor in *What Your Body Says (and How to Master the Message)*.[54]

FIGURE 7-1

What is executive presence?



But talented women tread a far narrower band of acceptability than men as they climb to power. They're told appearance matters, but they're considered shallow if they prioritize it. They're expected to conform to norms of femininity in style or manner, yet are condemned as "soft" or "indecisive" when they do. They're vilified for acting the part of a strong, assertive leader, yet are taken to task if their presence seems to derive from something *other* than "character, competence, hard work or achievement."[55] Consider the reaction to Hillary Clinton's slight show of cleavage on the Senate floor in 2007: Commentators exploded, discussing at length the appropriateness of "sexuality" from someone "so publicly ambivalent about style, image and the burdens of both."[56]

The guidelines, for women, are both ever shifting and contradictory: they're told to conform, but advised to "be authentic"; they're told to be conservative, but urged to stand out; they're told to downplay their sexuality, but warned not to be too threateningly mannish.

In her 2010 book, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law*, attorney Deborah Rhode finds that the beauty bias is not only pervasive, but "imposes penalties that far exceed what most of us assume or would consider defensible."[57] To cite but a smidgen of her research, we learn that attractive individuals are more likely to be viewed as smart, happy, interesting, likeable, successful, and well-adjusted; that their résumés get more favorable assessment; that they fare better in legal proceedings, earning higher damage awards and lighter sentences; and that they are more likely to be promoted and earn more than less-attractive people with the same cognitive ability and credentials.

Rhode is particularly attuned to the effect of this bias on women. Pointing out that women's self-worth is disproportionately based on appearance, she, too, notes women's unique double bind: "They can lose by being either too attractive or not attractive enough." In female-dominated professions, unattractive women are penalized; in upper-level male-dominated positions, beautiful women (especially ones with large breasts) suffer "the bloopsy effect," whereby they're judged less competent and lower in intellectual ability.[58]

Everyone judges women on their appearance, yet no one steps forward to offer guidance. And so—despite sterling credentials, proven capability, and a solid track record—female talent remains mystifyingly, maddeningly, outside the inner circle of leaders who exude "executive presence."

In Search of Executive Presence

Employees we surveyed at large companies are under no illusions as to the role appearance plays in career advancement. Fifty-two percent of men and 45 percent of women believe promotions to senior management are based on a candidate "looking and acting like C-suite executives." Indeed, our respondents had a highly developed sense of *executive presence*, enumerating some thirteen factors that contributed to it. Topping the list for both men and women was self-confidence, a trait very highly valued by women (77 percent), although 69 percent of men likewise ranked it of utmost importance. Strategic thinking and decisiveness were considered number-two and number-three traits in leaders, with men and women in close accord as to their importance. Assertiveness ranked number four—although again, women accorded it more value than men (66 percent versus 53 percent). Interestingly, both men and women ranked authenticity among the top five traits. Close behind were such leadership plusses as passion, sincerity, and poise.

But our respondents also considered appearance—being well put together, well dressed, and attractive—a critical aspect of executive presence. In fact, 50 percent of women and 37 percent of men considered appearance and "EP" to be intrinsically linked. They perceived that looking good engendered self-confidence, which, as noted, they considered the bedrock trait of leadership. At small, medium, and large companies, that is, all people seem to understand that presenting the right appearance can help them be perceived as a leader—a perception critical to their promotional prospects.

Our results were recently corroborated by a *Newsweek* poll of 202 corporate hiring managers (most of them male) as well as 964 members of the public. Asked to rank nine traits on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being "most important'), survey respondents put looks at number three, with a mean score of 7.1—after ranking experience number one (with a score of 8.9), and confidence a close second (8.5). Looks mattered more, in fact, than where the candidate went to school. Fifty-seven percent of hiring managers asserted that unattractive job applicants would have a harder time getting hired; 59 percent of them suggested applicants spend as much time making themselves attractive as polishing their résumé. And 60 percent of them admitted women would benefit from wearing clothes that showed off a good figure (although 47 percent said women who look *too* good could lose out—more confirmation of the double bind).[59]

A Paucity of Guidance

Because they fully understand the beauty bias, women who aspire to leadership roles seek out style guidance. When they get it, they clearly benefit. But many women don't get that kind of guidance, or get it too late.

One focus group participant, just back from three months of maternity leave, told us how a media training workshop that filmed her giving a presentation revealed a style misstep that someone should have brought to her attention. "I can honestly say I have no idea what my tics or annoying speech patterns were because I could not stop looking at how badly my shirt fit," she relates. "My chest, a bit larger thanks to breastfeeding, was pretty exposed. No one had said anything to me about getting more appropriate shirts for my new body. I was mortified."

According to our data, in fact, women are 41 percent less likely than men to get feedback on their appearance. When it matters so much, and makes such a measurable difference—why don't they?

Sponsors tend to be male, since those in power tend to be men. And senior male executives hesitate, as we've seen, to meet one-on-one with junior women, let alone talk to them about their hemlines and hairdos. Twenty percent of male executives admit they think twice before giving appearance feedback to subordinate women, fearing that it will be perceived as harassment or an impertinent sexual overture. "That's the downside to affirmative action," says Steve Richardson, president of Diverse Outcomes and a former senior vice president at American Express. "Men's natural tendency is to give feedback, but they're now so legally scared of what their position is, they pull back to blandness: they won't go left, they won't go right, they'll just stick to the safe course."

Even those who aren't concerned about hitting the third rail hold their straight-and-silent course, lest in making a remark they inadvertently hurt a woman's feelings. "Women are so hypersensitive about their appearance already," a male financial executive shared in a focus group. "I told one of my directors I thought her skirt was on the short side—that's all I said—and she never wore a skirt again! She totally overrotated on that bit of advice."

For a fact, men find it far easier to advise other men. A senior male will tell a male subordinate he needs to polish his shoes, get a decent haircut, buy a better suit, lose a few pounds, or even improve his personal hygiene. "Man on man, we can always make it a joke," says Richardson. "*Not that I'm one of your best friends, mate, but your breath's a bit off today. Might want to take a mint.*" So casually, even unconsciously, do men exchange style pointers that some cannot even fathom why the style component of executive presence is such a conundrum for women. "Joining a firm is like joining a football team," one male Deloitte manager told us. "You're issued a uniform and, starting on Day One, you wear it."

But if there's a team uniform, female rookies don't know what it is—and senior females aren't any more likely to tell them than senior males. "You don't want to be catty," explains a female senior manager at a professional services firm, pointing out that "women often make back-handed compliments." For this very reason, Patricia Fili-Krushel at Time Warner recalls agonizing over how to approach women who have worked for her in the past, women who dressed too provocatively or casually for an aspiring senior executive. "Style can many times be a woman's downfall," she added. Fili-Krushel has had to offer pointed suggestions, and she has met with appreciative responses from the women she has had to coach.

Other female execs may resist making suggestions to women they sponsor because they're unsure themselves what "the uniform" should be, especially where "office casual" has superseded the stodgy-but-safe dress code of suits. A regional vice president for a pharmaceutical company in Boston we spoke with acknowledges that there are fewer jackets and ties on the men, but suspects that a different code applies for women. "I think you've got to dress the part," she says, explaining that she recently hired a style consultant to ensure she had the look of senior management. She comments that "power dressing" telegraphs to the group in power that you're one of them—that you belong. "You'll always advance if you're 'in the group'" she observes.

What *Not* to Wear

Everyone agrees, in short, that there is a look, a style, an executive appearance that telegraphs "I'm in charge, or should be." It's just that no one can agree on what that look is for women, or won't risk sharing it.

For Intel's Rosalind Hudnell, leadership presence isn't about looking *like* those in power; it's about standing out. At one of the firm's annual women's network conferences, Hudnell wore a pastel pink suit. "First the keynote speaker discussed how you shouldn't wear colors and serious presentations required black or blue and I thought that was 'the old dress-for-success model,'" Hudnell recalls. "When I walked on stage I said, 'I think what's great about being a woman is that we can do whatever we want to do. I like color. Five years ago, I wore this color into a senior executive staff meeting to present my recommendation for Intel's global diversity strategy. I wore it because I knew I would be going into a tough room, discussing a tough topic, and I wanted to soften it up a bit. I also wanted to feel good, and I feel good when I wear pink. I told the audience: I went in with confidence, I had my presentation together, and this little woman in pink delivered it with power. I wanted to give them permission to be themselves." According to Hudnell, "the room exploded."

However uncertain women may be on what style will get them promoted, they're in accord as to what styles will hold them back. Forty-eight percent of our female survey respondents (and 42 percent of men) at large companies report that female managers commit at least one of the following blunders: their waistlines bulge, their skirts are too tight, their necklines dip dangerously low, and their fingernails are too long or too red. In other words, women whose look is sexual or provocative will be in men's offices "for all the wrong reasons," as Fili-Krushel puts it.

Our respondents are also certain that toeing a conservative line is a far safer strategy than pushing the limits of self-expression. Fifty-three percent of women (and 41 percent of men) at large companies feel that aspiring female execs should observe at least one of the following rules: conservative suit jackets, coiffed hair, well-put-together accessories, and subtle makeup. In other words, make the mistake of looking too casual, and you may be mistaken for someone in a junior administrative position.

For women of color, observing these guidelines can prove especially important. One African American female attorney told us in a Virtual Strategy Session that she always dressed in designer suits, despite the office-casual dress code, because when she first started at the firm other employees mistook her for a secretary. Additionally, she said, as an African American woman she knew that no one would dare approach her with any remotely critical feedback, let alone advice on either her appearance or her performance, for fear of sounding racist. "My boss keeps telling me, 'Relax, you're doing great, you don't have to be so formal,'" she says. "And I have brought it down a notch. But I still dress nicer than everyone else. I can't afford not to."

The best advice may be to simply dress "two jobs ahead." "I tell the women in my office that we've got to dress two levels up or others will think, 'Hey, that must be new Latina they hired to be so-and-so's assistant!'" Lisa Garcia-Quiroz relates. "And we cannot have that thought cross their minds."

Executive Presence and the Sponsor Effect

Style doesn't make an executive. Attractive clothing, makeup, and accessories do not confer executive presence in the absence of other key traits. Executive appearance is not to be confused with executive presence.

"It's important to distinguish between them," Steve Richardson cautions. "Presence isn't a bigger title at work: it's an energy, an air, an aura that people notice." People *want* to be around a leader, Richardson explains, because of the energy he or she throws off. "Presence is about the environment you create before the dialogue even begins," he observes.

For these reasons, executive presence is the same for a man or a woman. "It's not always a three-piece suit or a glamorous look," asserts Intel's Rosalind Hudnell. "Can you stand up to leadership and effectively argue and drive home your point? Can you articulate your strategy and get a group of people to understand and follow it? Can you command a leadership presence?"

Yet as Deborah Rhode documents in *The Beauty Bias*, thousands of survey respondents affirm, and presidential candidates fully grasp: in any contest of leadership, looks matter. They matter more for women, both because they are judged on appearance to a greater degree than men, and because they derive so much of their self-esteem from how they look. But where guidance on grooming, clothing, and manner could make or break a woman's career opportunities, it's rarely forthcoming. Men can't broach the subject for fear of being misinterpreted; women can't agree on what advice to give, confused themselves by the double bind of needing to look good but not *too* good.

And so in the absence of robust sponsorship, the beauty bias, which already punishes women disproportionately, exaggerates a difference between men and women that *should* be only skin deep—which in turn adversely affects a woman's confidence, assertiveness, and vision for herself. Hudnell concurs: "The difference I see between men and women," she reflects, "is that many women have not had the sponsorship or constructive feedback that allows them to understand what it takes to take command of a room. To understand how to wear pink and not how to wear it in the full context. Leadership presence isn't what you wear, of course—but what you wear, in any color, can sure enhance or detract from it."

Chapter 8: Sex—The Third Rail

Last year, at a *Fortune* 100 financial services firm, a senior executive we'll call Warren took under his wing a very promising female talent whom we'll call Annette. He was married; she was not. He oversaw her client services team, which for months had been working on an initiative that put key members, including Warren and Annette, on the road together for days at a stretch. Over the course of the project, in recognition of her ability, Warren promoted Annette to senior account manager. He also brought attention to her accomplishments at succession planning meetings and closed-door talent conversations. Within months, thanks to her enhanced visibility among the firm's elite, Annette broke free of the midlevel management band to assume an executive position as managing director.

Was this sponsorship at work? Or something else?

Sponsorship is a necessarily close, even intimate, relationship. For sponsors and their protégés, getting to know each other demands regular encounters over a period of months, possibly over the phone but more typically in person, sometimes at work but more often outside of it. Working together on a large project definitely facilitates sponsorship, but so does grabbing a coffee in the company cafeteria, or going out to lunch, or meeting for dinner. Some of the executives we interviewed describe catching up with their sponsors on the company shuttle or at out-of-town conferences.

Strictly business though these one-on-one meetings may be, they often are misconstrued. And since even the illusion of a sexual liaison, let alone its reality, can torpedo a career, many men and women hesitate to engage in a sponsorship relationship, especially when several bands of power separate them. Our research indicates that the *majority* of senior men (64 percent) at the level of vice president and above are reluctant to have a one-on-one meeting with junior women—and half of junior women likewise avoid seeking out such contact. This certainly helps explain the gender gap we discussed in chapter 3: if men are 46 percent more likely than women to have powerful backers, it's because male-to-male sponsorship is far less fraught than male-to-female (with female-to-female sponsorship rarely occurring, for reasons we've explored). It also sheds new light on why women persist in clinging to the keep-your-head-down-and-work-harder career advancement strategy, however ineffective it ultimately proves: cultivating relationship capital can indeed be risky—"dirty" in more ways than one. For both men and women, sex, or even the specter of it, is "the third rail" on the fast track to success. And sponsorship seems to amplify, not mitigate, its dangers.

Tolerated—but Toxic

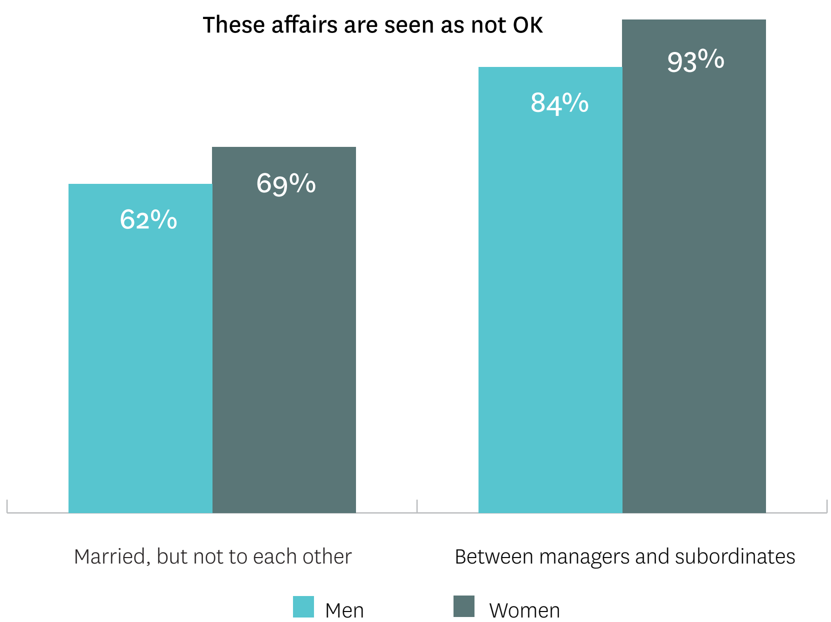
Thirty years ago, office affairs were strictly verboten, though of course they occurred. Ambitious women drew a firewall around themselves. "You just didn't have sex with people at work," asserts Denice Kronau, the chief diversity officer at Siemens AG and a former CFO who entered the workforce in 1982. "It was the worst thing you could possibly do."

But attitudes have eased, in part because there remains little distinction between the workweek and the weekend, the office downtown and the office at home. With the Internet linking everybody, everywhere, to each other at all times, it's harder to have a life outside the office—and harder to tell where business relationships end and personal ones begin. As a result, emotional entanglements have become not only more frequent but increasingly tolerated. Survey after survey points to a strong likelihood of interoffice dating: 40 percent is the average statistic, a figure that has held steady since 2005.[60] According to a Vault.com survey, 20 percent of office affairs were between superiors and subordinates.[61] Ten percent of women surveyed cop to sleeping with the boss. Certainly quite a few employees *know* someone who is sleeping with the boss: our own research reveals that more than a third of women (34 percent) and more than a quarter of men (26 percent) can "name names."

However, the majority of our survey respondents said they were "okay" with only certain kinds of entanglements. They frowned upon dalliances between employees who were married but not to each other: 69 percent of women and 62 percent of men take issue with these flings. But what our respondents found really problematic were relationships between managers and subordinates. Eighty-four percent of men, and 93 percent of women—quite a consensus—disapprove of affairs where the power of the players is wildly disproportional.

FIGURE 8-1

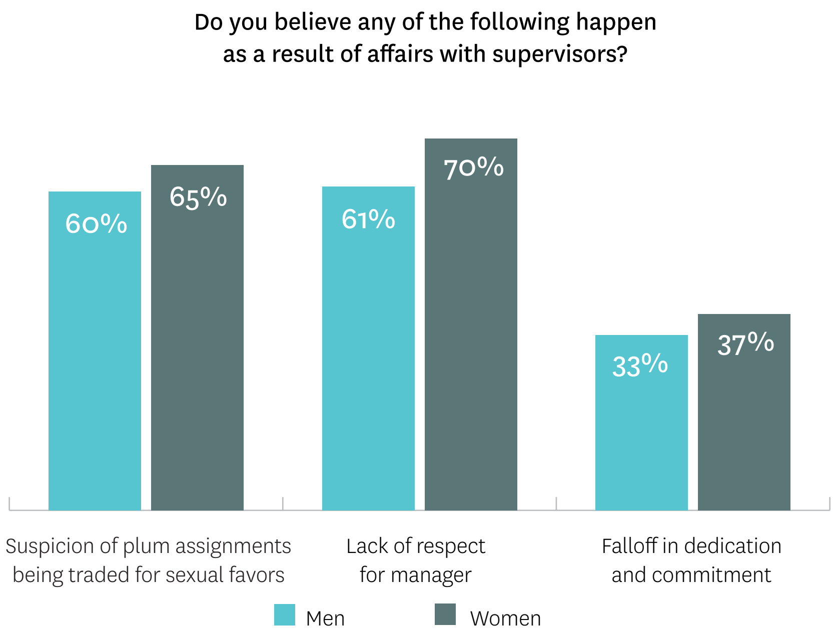
Which affairs are illicit?



And they disapprove for precisely the same reason that, thirty years ago, Kronau's generation disapproved: an affair is toxic to not only its parties but everybody who reports to them, manages them, or invests in them. Our survey respondents agree. In the wake of an affair that involved a supervisor, about a third (33 percent men, 37 percent women) agreed there was a fall-off in team dedication and commitment. A significant majority (70 percent of women, 61 percent of men) believed respect for that supervisor had plummeted. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent of women, 60 percent of men) felt that they had been passed over for plum assignments they deserved, with those assignments going to the *amour* instead.

That is, an "in-line" affair between manager and subordinate doesn't just jeopardize their own careers: it unleashes a treacherous dynamic that poisons morale, sows distrust, and stymies communication. "Suddenly you have to watch your words," observes Kerrie Peraino. "You're not as candid and constructive as you might be, because you worry about what she may be telling him, who's also your leader. And you can't talk about her work to him, without risking his reaction. The team's ability to work together is severely impaired as a result."

FIGURE 8-2
Collateral damage



The Problem of Perception

Office affairs leave a debris field that can stretch for miles. However, the *perception* of an affair proves often to be just as catastrophic.

Earlier in 2010, a shake-up at the *New York Times Magazine* made headlines for what was an implied impropriety between its editor, Gerry Marzorati, and Megan Liberman, a young female editor he promoted from front-of-the-book to story editor, then to Web editor, and in 2008, to his side as deputy editor. When a few longtime members of the *Times Magazine* team tendered their resignations, Marzorati, an editor once popular for his hands-off management style, came under fire for delegating too much power to his deputy.

Were Marzorati and Liberman having an affair? Was her career rise attributable to sexual favors? Or was their relationship, as Marzorati maintains, a textbook example of how sponsorship should work? We may never know. But in the end, it doesn't matter what the truth is. Key members of the *New York Times Magazine* team *perceived* something special working for Liberman, beyond her track record and performance, and that special something, as they saw it, got her promoted over them.

That such a perception is common, and that it has the power to bring a mighty empire to its knees, is substantiated by our data. Men and women perceive sex to be an effective promotional lever and, as a corollary, believe that people who advance are likely having sex with somebody powerful. For example, of the 34 percent of female respondents who claimed to know someone having an affair with the boss, 37 percent of them insisted that the coworker had received a promotion as a result. Men were somewhat less likely to know about a sexually involved office mate, but 33 percent of those in the know also believed the coworker had gotten a career boost as a result of the affair. Among women who admitted to being sexually involved with the boss, 12 percent also admitted that they got a promotion out of it.

FIGURE 8-3a

Illicit affairs seem prevalent

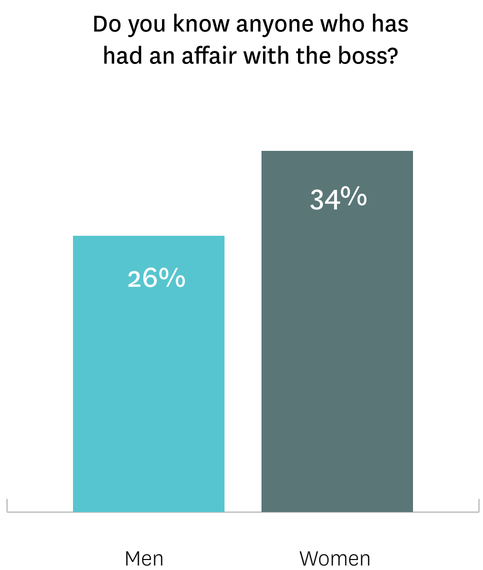
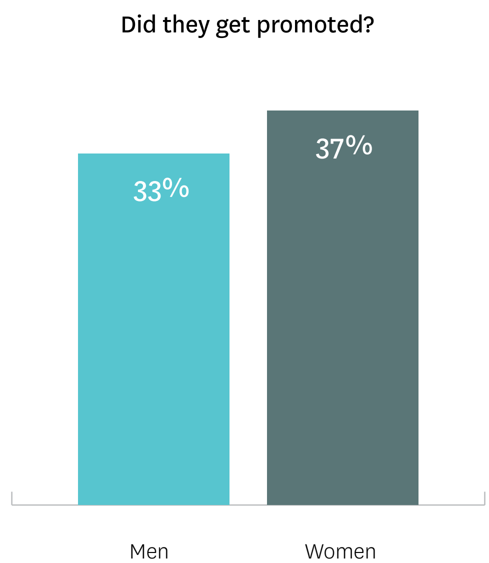


FIGURE 8.3b

Illicit affairs and career traction



So it isn't merely a *perception* that sex works; in fact, it apparently does, which in turn feeds the perception that successful women must be sleeping their way to the top.

The Double Bind

For a talented, ambitious woman, this data merely confirm what she already suspects: *I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't*. In other words, a woman who opts to play the relationship capital game in order to secure an effective sponsor (that is, a *male* sponsor) risks inviting the perception, and the ensuing gossip, that she is using her feminine wiles in unfair and possibly illicit ways—a perception that can provoke team members to protest and even leave, thus forestalling or throwing off course her own advancement. Yet the alternative—to knuckle down, work ten-hour days, steer clear of potentially incriminating social encounters, and avoid sponsor relationships—most surely condemns her to a career stall. She will languish in the marzipan layer—where, indeed, we find so many talented women.

Many of the executives we interviewed commented on this double bind, having experienced it themselves or watched it torment the women they coach. "Every senior woman has a story to tell along these lines, and if she doesn't, then she's not telling the truth," says Annalisa Jenkins of Bristol-Myers Squibb. The stories inevitably catalog the duress of choosing to stay in the game despite hurtful office gossip, social isolation from team members and peers, and the moral isolation of fending off unwanted sexual advances.

Women in our focus groups and Virtual Strategy Sessions felt that the whispering intensified as they moved up the ranks. As one female in financial services put it, "If I'd had sex with as many people that rumors said I've had it with, I would never have had time to do the actual work of getting the promotions." One beleaguered manager told a senior executive, "I just want to put up a big sign that says, 'I'M NOT SLEEPING WITH ANYONE!'"

So toxic can suspicion be, in fact, that even women who've endured unwanted sexual advances have elected, despite robust sexual harassment policies designed to protect them, to keep mum about the transgression. One manager at a professional services firm, whom we'll call Elizabeth, described several such encounters, most of them occurring when she was traveling five days a week with the client services team, or obliged to show up at events where drinking unleashed what she terms "the power effect." "A director pulled me into his lap and gave me a kiss," she recalls. "It was public, so I raised it with my boss. 'The reality is,' he told me, 'if you raise this topic you will not work in Silicon Valley again.'"

The End of the Affair

Given the social costs of engaging with male superiors, let alone cultivating them as male sponsors, it's perhaps not surprising that some women go ahead and have the fling that everyone suspects them of having anyway. There can be, as our respondents insist, some distinct career benefits in choosing this course. At Scholastic Corporation, for instance, Helen Benham's affair with CEO and president Richard (Dick) Robinson—a married man—culminated in her becoming one of his senior executives—as well as his second wife. Benham, an editorial director at the children's publishing firm when she caught Robinson's eye, steadily rose within the ranks: to vice president and publisher of the Early Childhood Division in 1990, to division director in 1992, and to corporate vice president and early childhood advisor in 1996.

By and large, however, affairs between unequals do not culminate in marriage, stock dividends, board seats, and a C-level title. Quite the contrary: to hear our interviewees tell it, everybody loses, either in terms of losing the job they have, the job they deserved, or the legacy they've built. But they tell us something else: no matter how the affair is handled by the higher-ups, it's the female half of the couple who really pays the price, both short- and long-term. Seventy percent of women say that junior females disproportionately bear the brunt of an affair, which is perhaps not too surprising—but 53 percent of men agree. Certainly junior women fear reprisal: 67 percent anticipate some sort of backlash, studies show. While most corporations will hold responsible the more senior member of the pair and dismiss her or him, the woman invariably endures a two-pronged barb: first, her career trajectory changes, either because she requests a change or one is forced upon her; and second, her reputation takes a dive. "It's different for women than men," Annalisa Jenkins observes. "Men don't pass emotional judgment on the guy; they'll say, 'Well, that's just who he is or these things happen.' Whereas the woman is perceived as something of a prostitute or somehow lacking in social and moral values."

Other diversity leaders whom we asked agreed that only the woman suffers from "the scarlet letter." This may compel her to find another job, usually outside the firm. Sometimes such moves constitute a career boost. But changing jobs isn't that easy, even for a senior woman who has cultivated several sponsors. As Kerrie Peraino at American Express observes, "Her network may not kick in because her sponsors may not want to step forward and risk linking their reputation with hers."

Or it may be that women seem to pay the steeper price because men more often get away with their indiscretions. As Elizabeth's story demonstrates, blowing the whistle on bad behavior can backfire, ruining the whistle-blower's career, not that of the offender. Corporate policy cannot effectively discipline men whose behavior isn't called to the attention of human resources. "Once we hear, we can take action," one senior executive told us. "But there are plenty of men who've risen and wrecked a few careers along the way against whom we have no recourse, because there's been no scenario where someone stepped forward to raise our awareness."

The Male Perspective

Indisputably, men pay a terrible price, too. Being involved in an affair that goes public carries stiff penalties, including dismissal, for executive men who run afoul of corporate policies. Not even the CEO is immune. Harry Stonecipher, chief executive of Boeing, was shown the door in 2005 for his extramarital fling with a vice president. Most recently, Mark Hurd, CEO of Hewlett-Packard, stepped down after the board found that he'd fudged his expense reports to cover an avowedly nonsexual relationship with Jodie Fisher, an outside contractor.

And while men do have the advantage of tapping a "boys' network" that won't pass judgment or withhold favors, Peraino maintains that those who are dismissed for sexual impropriety do not easily land on their feet. "It's not like they can go down the street to another firm and have it be okay," she explains. "Everybody in the industry is going to know why they have been excommunicated, and other firms don't want to take on that liability."

The combination of stringent corporate policies, strictly enforced, accounts for what one of our male co-chairs describes as "a degree of intentionality" governing male conduct with younger females in the office. "Whether it's a man, a woman, or a Martian sitting across the desk, I'm not going to treat them any differently," he explains. "I'm not going to shut the door, I'm not going to be seen showing favoritism." He adds, "You might call that subconscious risk mitigation."

It helps, too, to display photographs of the wife and kids, and to make a point of scheduling male-female meetings during the day, on site, in plain sight. But this sort of intentional behavior, observes Adam Quinton, formerly of Bank of America Merrill Lynch, is nothing other than professionalism. "It's not just about avoiding litigation," he says. "You simply don't want to be seen as being preferential or playing favorites. It's important to treat everybody with respect, and conduct yourself in a way that's neutral and nonthreatening."

Quinton acknowledges that in some environments, especially where women are prevalent, senior men might think twice about sponsoring a female subordinate. In his own environment, however, he sees a very different dynamic at work. "In any male-dominated firm, not just financial services, nobody hesitates to help out women or underrepresented groups, because the organization is so obviously deficient," he says. "Nobody is tagged for doing it for predatory reasons. It's just the right thing to do."

Policy Is No Panacea

A sizable number of executives work for progressive companies like Quinton's, where diversity is of paramount importance and sponsorship is perceived as essential. These employers have robust policies in place, and while employees can recount a tale or two of office romance gone bad, most seem to feel as though interoffice sex is a problem their company has aggressively and effectively addressed. Kerrie Peraino, for example, is justifiably proud of how American Express—a company with a high number of employees who are married to each other—spells out the company's expectations of its leaders and makes available a number of confidential outlets for whistle-blowers, such as an ombud's office. At Bristol-Myers Squibb, Annalisa Jenkins says that employees read and sign a standard of business conduct and ethics, one that obliges them to bring forward information about a conflict of interest in workplace relationships so that HR can help employees navigate what are often very difficult situations.

But the existence of contracts and policies doesn't necessarily translate into changed behavior—especially when no one knows about them, or are confused about what they say.

Indeed, when we turned to our respondents and asked about policies at their firms, we uncovered considerable uncertainty. While a third of men and women believed their company had policies on office romances and one in five believed their firm did *not* have policies, upward of 46 percent admitted they simply didn't know. That category swelled when we asked if their company had consensual relationship contracts: two out of three respondents had no idea. Where men and women seemed more informed of their company's policy was in knowing what constituted an illicit affair. Fifty-two percent of men and 47 percent of women believed their firm prohibited relationships between managers and subordinates. However, again, a fair number—upward of 38 percent—weren't at all sure.

This suggests a troubling disconnect between what companies think they are doing to address the problem of sex in the workplace, and what they've actually accomplished. Further, a corporate policy that identifies inappropriate relationships but fails to spell out the consequences is in some ways worse than no policy at all, because it sends a very mixed message—one that helps keep women in their punitive double bind. "It's as though HR's advice to women is, 'Don't do it; if it happens, try and stop it; and if you can't, move on and don't say anything,'" one diversity chief told us. "What kind of message is that?"

Worst of all, policies that are less than airtight or are differentially enforced send a message that some employees are valued more than others, and so must be excused from punishment should they overstep. "HR can only read from the rulebook, so if it isn't spelled out what happens to the parties involved, then it's up to the manager to decide which situations warrant punishment," one of our chairs observed. "That kind of vagueness condemns women to putting up or shutting up."

FIGURE 8-4
Does your company have a policy on office romances?

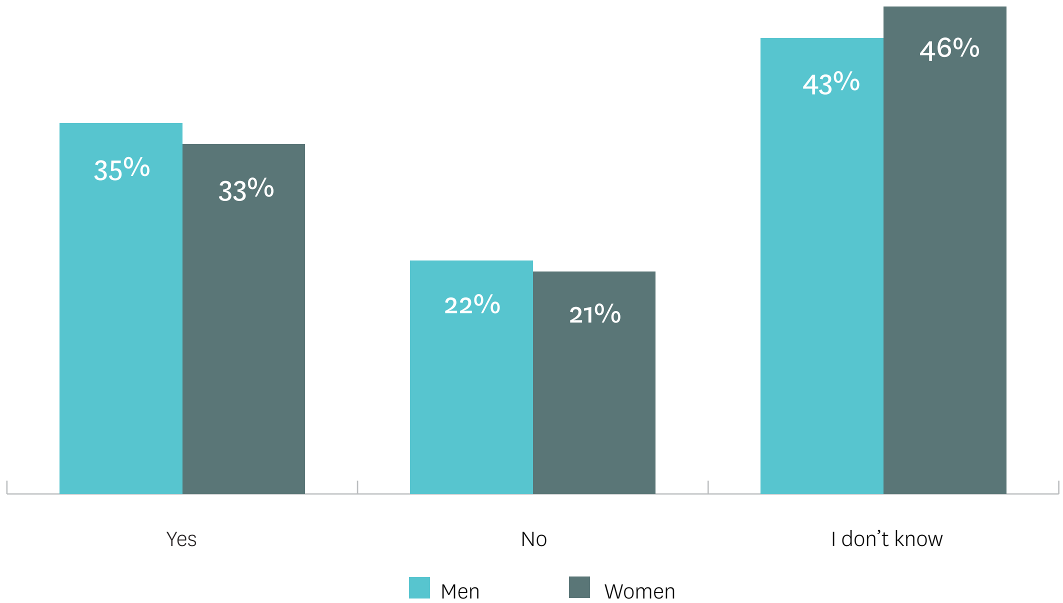


FIGURE 8-5
Does your company prohibit relationships between manager and subordinate?

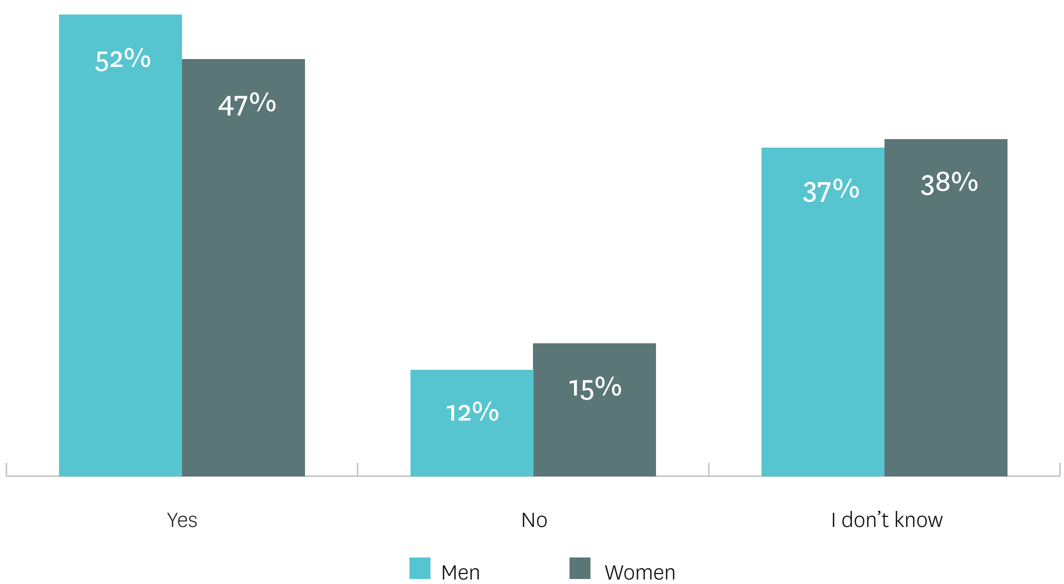
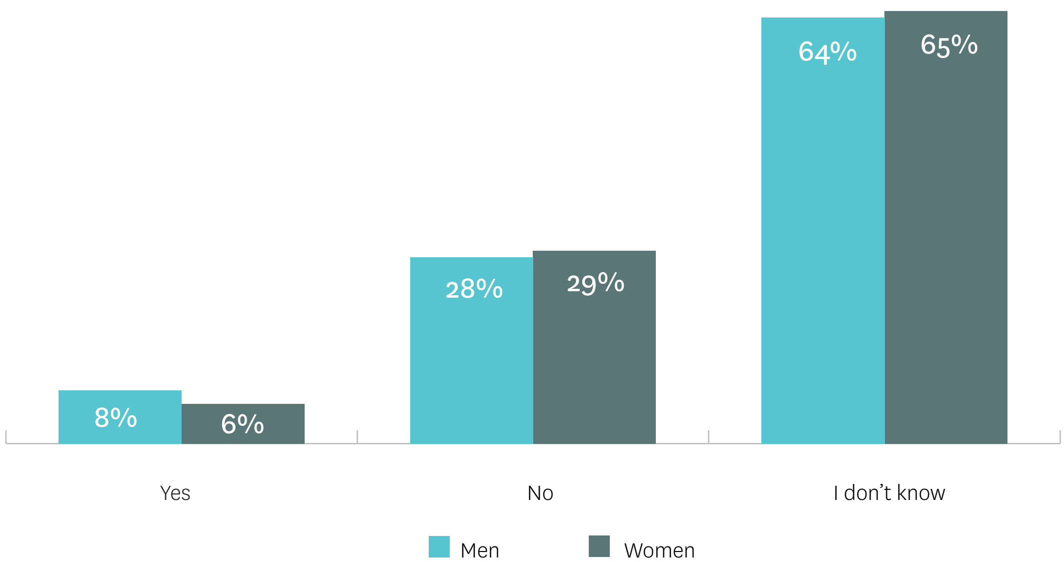


FIGURE 8-6

Does your company have consensual relationship contracts?



At the end of the day, says Jenkins, how serious a company is about punishing its sex offenders says a lot about its culture. "It's very important [that] a firm's policies are in line with its overarching mission," says Jenkins. "If you want to drive equality of opportunity and drive the notion of justice in your organization, you cannot be vague in terms of how you handle these transgressions. The tighter the policy, the more women benefit."

The Sponsor Impact

Office affairs aren't going away anytime soon. With a global recession spurring men and women to put in even more hours away from home and family, there is less time for an emotional life outside of work, adding to the pressure to develop one within the office hierarchy.

Our research found that 95 percent of men and 93 percent of women say that they found it easiest to give and receive guidance in a one-on-one setting. Yet few women will initiate, let alone cultivate, a one-on-one with a male superior that may subject them to off-site, after-hours meetings, lest their motives be misconstrued; and for similar reasons, male superiors won't initiate a sponsorship relationship with them. Our data confirm this: 64 percent of senior men (vice president and above) and 50 percent of up-and-coming women admit they're hesitant to initiate any sort of one-on-one with each other.

How, then, to go about networking with the opposite sex? If to break out of the middle-management band women must court a superior, and that superior is male, how do they establish an ongoing relationship, ask for and cash in career favors, and advance without invoking the specter of an illicit affair? How can relationship capital work for women if in cultivating it they stumble up against the third rail?

These are questions we'll address in part III, with answers for both individuals and companies seeking to maximize the sponsor effect.

PART III:
SOLUTIONS

Chapter 9: Has Sponsorship Changed During the Recession?

Ana Duarte McCarthy, chief diversity officer at Citigroup, fosters sponsorship as the leader of a team of human resources professionals designing "Women Leading Citi," a proactive pairing of sixty high-potential senior women with advocates at the executive level. Duarte McCarthy recognizes the importance of giving qualified women the visibility and networking opportunities they need to fulfill their potential. The program, launched during the peak of the financial crisis, complements another sponsorship initiative Citi offers in conjunction with UCLA's Anderson School of Business, all under the auspices of Women4Citi, the company's global focus on women's development and advancement. That both initiatives have survived the economic downturn is a testament to Duarte McCarthy's commitment, along with diversity champions at Citi, to sponsoring others, seeding sponsor relationships, and cultivating a culture of outreach and advocacy.

Yet at a luncheon with members of the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force—itself "a wonderful collegial group of sponsors," Duarte McCarthy says—she admitted to some concerns about fostering mechanisms for advancement in the midst of an unrelenting recession. "I have to wonder, what are we grooming these people for?" she mused aloud. "Sure, the worst of the recession may generally be behind us, but in the wake of the market downturn, the opportunities for advancement across industries for both men and women may not be there."

Many at the table nodded. Duarte McCarthy was voicing a widespread but unarticulated fear shared among diversity officers: in a contracting universe, what are the benefits of oiling the machinery of promotion? Why build networks for up-and-comers when there's the perpetual threat of downsizing?

Some companies, in fact, are simply no longer going to the expense—or have cut back on formal sponsorship initiatives as a cost-savings measure. At one company, a sponsorship-type program went from a high of sixty participants to a streamlined roster of twenty.

Among the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force members, however, what's remarkable is how their sponsorship initiatives have endured despite the downturn. Ernst & Young, for example, continues to fund its model Career Watch program. "We see this as a business imperative, to have a diverse partnership," says Ernst & Young partner Billie Williamson. "When the recession hit, we didn't cut back on our programs. We might have cut back on the wine and cheese," she adds, "but we still have the meetings." Citi's Women Leading Citi program persists full-bore, too, thanks in part to the senior champions of Women4Citi: Lisa Caputo, managing director and senior coverage banker in the Public Sector Group (part of Citi's Institutional Clients Group), and Debby Hopkins, chief innovation officer and chairman of Venture Capital Initiatives. "As expenses have been carefully considered around the company, they have been advocates to support our funding for this effort," Duarte McCarthy explains.

This begs Duarte McCarthy's question anew, however: why fight to keep sponsorship programs going and talent moving when the pipeline may not lead anywhere?

The Sponsor Crunch

Unquestionably, the 2008 global financial collapse has constrained the exercise of sponsorship. Simply put, it's a lot harder to secure backing today—especially if you're female. Our survey responses indicate that women struggle more than men: 52 percent of female managers, as compared with 35 percent of male managers, say it's hard to find a sponsor due to the recession—and 56 percent, as compared with 32 percent, say it's harder than it was two years ago. Gender differences fade, however, as we put this question to men and women at the senior vice president and director levels. In upper management, it would appear men are as likely as women to be struggling to put in place a network of powerful backers—if not for promotion, then for protection.

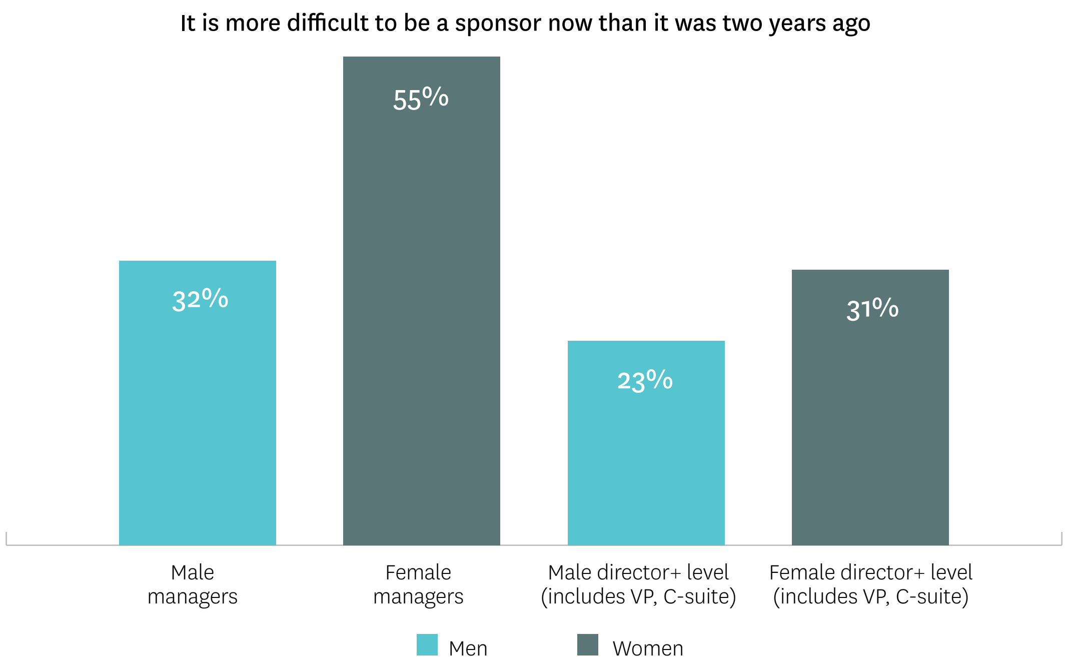
Duarte McCarthy can attest to that. After market dislocation, structural reorganization, and headcount reduction, she watched her long-term network, cultivated over fifteen years at the company, shrink. "Many of the leadership team whom I had worked with for a number of years had changed," she explains. "You feel you've potentially lost the equity you've built up over the years—people knowing what you do and how you perform." As a result, she felt to some extent that she was starting from scratch—despite being in a senior role—building relationships with new leaders who would attest to her value in the organization. Today she is very pleased with the buy-in and support from senior management, including leadership's strong endorsement of Women Leading Citi.

However, because senior management is scurrying to create that protection for themselves, they're less available to the cadres of middle management who look to them for support and advancement. What makes finding a sponsor more difficult in a recession, our respondents indicate, is primarily that "sponsors are just too busy to find the time." A close second reason: "Sponsors fear for their own jobs." And the third reason? Twenty-four percent of female respondents and 17 percent of male agreed that there was simply a "paucity of senior positions due to layoffs."

For precisely these reasons, not just finding a sponsor but *being* a sponsor proves much harder during tough economic times—particularly, again, if you're female. More than half of female managers (55 percent), and nearly a third (31 percent) of women at the senior vice president/director level admit they find themselves hard-pressed to extend their support to more junior colleagues, according to our data. Men apparently find it less difficult: only 32 percent of male managers, and 23 percent of executives, think it's harder now to be a sponsor than before the downturn.

FIGURE 9-1

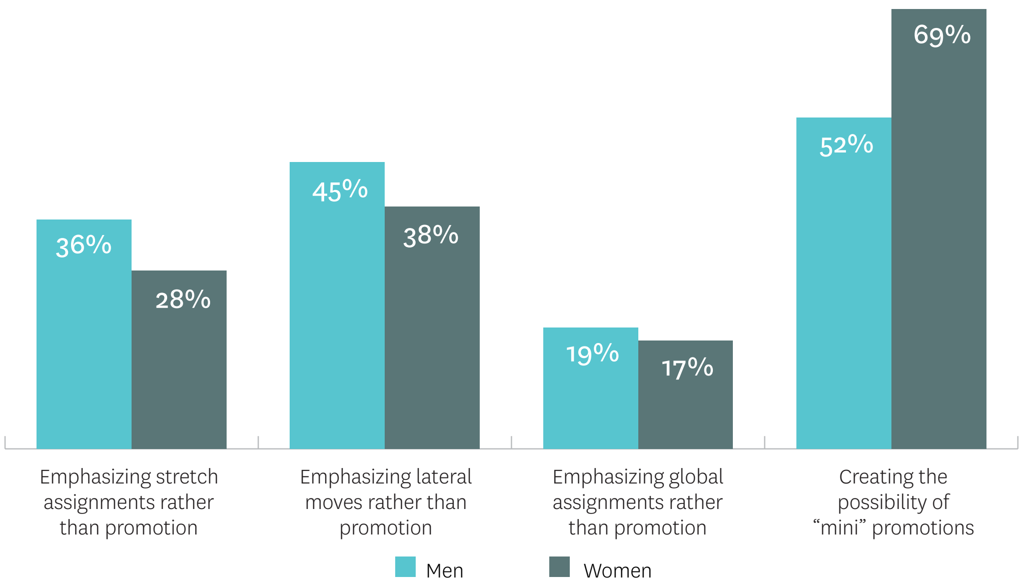
Sponsorship: More difficult in 2010



Despite the constraints of a tight economy, sponsors still have plenty of options to offer in lieu of a promotion. Interestingly, male and female protégés differ in their preferences: if they can't nail that new title, female junior colleagues overwhelmingly say they would take a "mini" promotion while their male counterparts markedly prefer the stretch assignments and lateral moves.

FIGURE 9-2

Alternatives to promotion



Sponsorship: Now More Than Ever

Indeed, even as the recession puts the squeeze on sponsorship programs and dries up the liquidity of available advocates, it becomes vividly clear that sponsors are the key to surviving economic downturns and market uncertainty. The likely evaporation of one's internal "shield," in today's rapidly changing organizations, as Ana Duarte McCarthy describes, only further attests to the importance of building and maintaining a broad and deep base of support, with advocates in other firms or in the same multinational but in different sectors or locations. Annalisa Jenkins, of Bristol-Myers Squibb, credits the network she cultivated while serving in the British Navy and beyond for opening her eyes to a new horizon of opportunities beyond the consultant cardiology track in the U.K. National Health Service; so began her exciting, global fourteen-year career journey at BMS. Anne Erni, as we discussed in chapter 3, leaped from the flames of Lehman Brothers to land in an executive position at Bloomberg thanks to her networking with Melinda Wolfe, an erstwhile competitor who became Erni's sponsor when she needed one most. A number of our Hidden Brain Drain Task Force members tell a similar story: when times were tough, a sponsor stepped in to secure them a new post, one that proved to be not merely a safe haven but a powerful boost in their career trajectory.

Hence, to perceive sponsorship as merely a promotional lever, one whose value is diminished as soon as recession limits internal mobility, is to overlook its critical value as a safety net—a net with enough bounce to put the protégé into an even better position than that from which she fell.

How many sponsors is an optimal number? Attesting to their comfort with the concept of trading chips, 58 percent of men claim it's best to have multiple sponsors; only 47 percent of women concur. Despite the ravages of the recession, 25 percent of women still think they don't need a sponsor. Surprising? In the light of our research, perhaps not. But certainly shortsighted, if not downright risky.

Even to perceive sponsorship as a hard-times safety net, however, is to sell it short. Steve Richardson of Diverse Outcomes accords sponsorship a high priority in any company's arsenal of talent-building programs, because the recession is masking an imminent exodus of mature talent. "What appears to be a lush work pool is in reality drying up," he observes. "Baby boomers have held onto their jobs a little longer, because their retirement shrank in the downturn. As the economy rebounds, however, we'll see the departure of those boomers—and that translates into a surge of opportunity for women and minorities." Rather than mothball sponsorship initiatives, companies need to gear up and groom management, he says, lest they be blindsided.

Yet he also emphasizes that sponsorship is typically misunderstood as a three-to-five year internal promotional dynamic. "True sponsorship isn't self-serving," he says. "It's not just for the immediate jobs in the current company, but about the big picture, the long-range goals." Richardson has experienced the power of such a relationship first-hand: while senior vice president at American Express, he confided in senior leaders his plan to launch Diverse Outcomes, his own consultancy business, and his desire to spend more time with his partner in Canada. And he was met with enthusiastic support. "[They said,] 'We'll back you one hundred percent, as long as we can be one of your first clients!'" Richardson recalls with pride. While some senior leaders would consider this risky, Richardson notes that in his long career across four continents, he has attracted and kept talent by insisting the discussion encompass long-range plans and personal aspirations. He does anticipate losing some talent in the current cycle to small business; women in particular, he says, are drawn to opportunities that grant them more control over their lives and business model. "But it's a cycle, and in time, they may come back," he points out. "What keeps my mentees loyal is the trust I create with them, not handcuffs."

Richardson is hardly alone in perceiving sponsorship as the ultimate recessionary counteragent. Succession planners and diversity officers all recognize that, however short on promotional slots their company may be at any given moment, it cannot afford—least of all in a recession—an exodus or demoralization of high-potential employees. "Developing talent should never take a back seat to economic conditions," asserts Anthony Carter, chief diversity officer for Johnson & Johnson. "Since we can never really know how good or bad those conditions are, companies still have to strive for competitive superiority—and to achieve that, they've got to build intellectual capital. Human capital is what drives outcome. So in any downturn, companies that remain committed to developing it are the ones who will stay ahead of the game."

Certainly Ana Duarte McCarthy doesn't disagree. But as she rebuilds her own network at Citi from the ground up, she is more conscious that robust sponsorship begins with the individual. "You need to know what you want," she reflects. "If you see things changing, it's important to perceive how your role fits into the new universe. Then a sponsor can help you either to sustain your position or grow and shift it. But you've got to be clear on what you want before anybody else can help you get it."

Chapter 10: Sponsorship at Work

Someera Khokhar is a partner in asset finance at White & Case, one of the world's top ten law firms. A mere eight years ago, making partner wasn't even on her career radar. "The thought had never even crossed my mind," she says. "I thought something like that was completely out of my reach—not necessarily because I was a woman, but because I didn't think it was what I wanted and no one had ever discussed the possibility with me." In 2002, working for a British firm as an associate and pondering a relocation to New York for personal reasons, Khokhar called a partner at White & Case with whom she'd worked to explore employment opportunities.

She interviewed with Jim Hayden, a tax attorney. And not only did he liaise internally within the firm for six months to find her a position, he became her sponsor, fulfilling the role in model ways. "I suppose I was drawn to Someera because her skills complemented my own," Hayden reflects. "It's a mistake as a sponsor, I think, to pick someone who's just like you." Khokhar's skills in handling clients, he says, won him over the very first day. "Legal work is team-based," he adds, "and I could see she'd be a strong addition."

Khokhar's transition into the White & Case culture was challenging. "I felt out of place when I first joined," she recalls. "I spent the first six months rethinking my decision to join the firm for a number of reasons, but Jim convinced me soon thereafter that there were opportunities for me to grow into a much broader role within the firm both internally and externally."

Although integrating as a senior associate into any firm is difficult, Hayden made sure that work and other opportunities came her way and ensured that she managed to navigate her way through the inevitable challenges of joining any institution with supportive phrases like "I have a plan for you." "One thing I realized quite soon after my arrival was that Jim was not just guiding me through the ropes of the firm," Khokhar says. "It was as if he had made it his mission to make sure I succeeded brilliantly, and there is no question that without that kind of support and investment I would not have had the opportunities and exposure that I had."

Wherever her work took her, in fact, Khokhar discovered Hayden had paved the way ahead of time, talking her up to partners in other offices "to convince them that I was worthy of being invested in." Throughout 2005, he actively helped her build a client base, shadowing her on client lunches or events or picking up the phone to anoint the relationship with his approval. "Every time I needed something, he made it happen, whether by his presence or his influence," Khokhar observes.

That year, she estimates she worked somewhere between thirty-five hundred and four thousand hours. By year's end, it was clear to Khokhar that she was going to be put up for partner. And in 2006, when that became a reality, following the New Partners Lunch, Hayden came over, put his arm around her shoulder, and said, "I told you I would make this happen for you."

Hayden insists that Khokhar's hard work and native talents won her the promotion. "I didn't make Someera a partner," he says. "I just pointed out her skills to the managing partners." Khokhar, however, begs to differ. "Yes, I put in a tremendous amount of hard work," she says. "But it was all Jim: he was the one who galvanized every other partner to ensure that I got the support I needed."

Today, five years later, Khokhar and Hayden still speak virtually every day, although they don't have the same working relationship. "He continues to guide my career," Khokhar explains, "and I rarely make important career decisions without taking his counsel. I do a lot of recruiting, and I always say to people that I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for Jim's personal investment. I would never have thought I could be a partner. And even now he continues to guide and invest in my career. Since he's so well regarded, and because the people around him see him back me, they're willing to make an investment in me, too."

"I guess I'm lucky enough to work with people who believe in me," she concludes. "And I get constant encouragement and support that makes all the difference in navigating the firm. That continued encouragement and support is critical in order to continue and grow and develop my career at the firm. And because of the difference it's made for me, I now provide that for other people. That's the way you create a culture of support and sponsorship. That's also the way you grow a practice in the direction you want it to grow—by investing in particular people who will promote the values and culture that you value. I am very lucky because I work with some of the smartest people in the world, doing some of the most challenging legal transactions, and I work in a firm that actively fosters a culture of investing in its people and clients."

The Dynamics of Sponsorship

In this report we have defined sponsorship as well as explored the difference it can make, the ways it should work, and the reasons, for women, why it too often doesn't. In this chapter, however, we'd like to show how sponsorship *does* work—how it takes root, how it grows, and how it seeds itself anew to spread a culture of advocacy once the spons*ee* succeeds to the degree that she can become a sponsor to others.

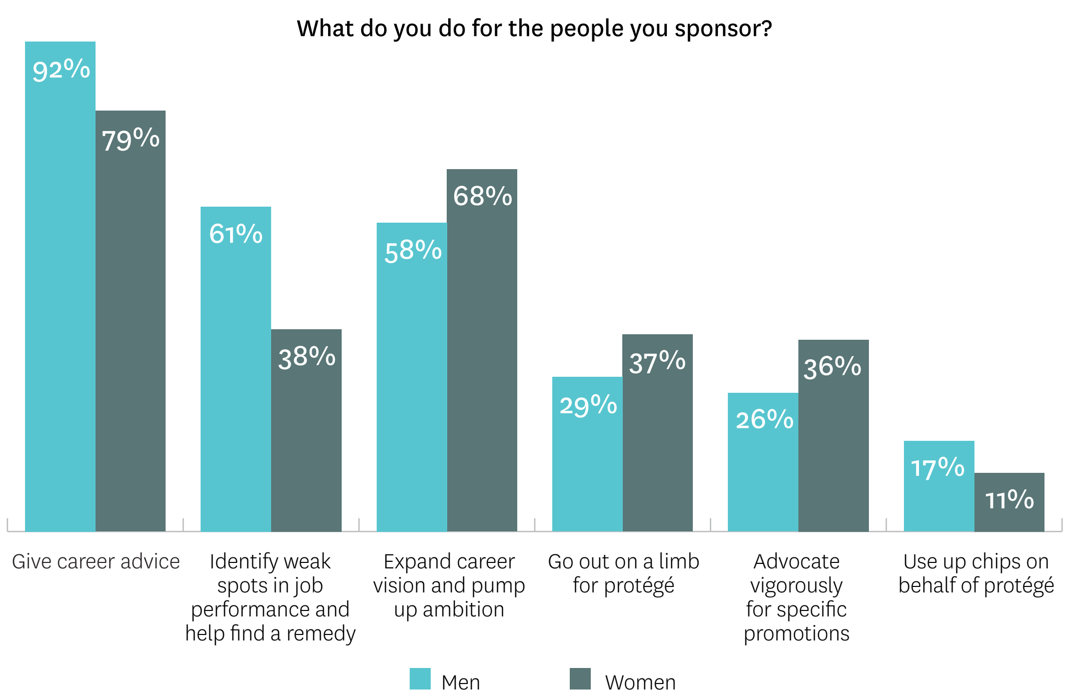
By our definition, Someera Khokhar is a poster child for sponsorship: early in her career, hungry for a career transition, she put herself under the scrutiny of someone who, perceiving in her a potential she couldn't see for herself, committed to fulfilling that promise both for her and the firm. Likewise, Jim Hayden is a Sponsor with a capital *S*, the kind of advocate we all wish we had, the leader who would take notice of our hard work and take us under his wing until we took flight.

Yet it must be said that sponsorship in a law firm differs from sponsorship in a corporation; indeed, in our research across industries and hierarchies, it becomes clear that the practice of sponsorship varies from field to field, from firm to firm, and from individual to individual.

Interestingly, while many business and HR leaders we interviewed agreed with what makes for robust sponsorship, our data shows, across the board, senior executives are not delivering the goods. Although 42 percent of women and 31 percent of men at director level and above identify themselves as sponsors, the level of support they offer would appear to qualify them as mentors rather than sponsors. For example, only 17 percent of men and 11 percent of women actually use up chips on behalf of their sponsees. Just 37 percent of women and 29 percent of men will go out on a limb for their protégés. Men are far more likely to identify

FIGURE 10-1

What sponsors do for sponsees



a junior colleague's weak spots and help find a remedy (61 percent versus 38 percent); women, in turn, more often "pump up ambition" and expand their career vision. Sponsors, in short, need guidance, too.

Task Force members and diversity officers also differ in their conceptions of how robust sponsorship might best be achieved or sustained. To do justice to their ideas, it behooves us to share here the questions we put to them. Their responses, while by no means uniform, nonetheless coalesce into an actionable plan for how sponsorship might be sown, cultivated, harvested, and spread by both sponsor and sponsee in any environment.

Sowing It and Growing It

In chapter 3 we highlighted one of the principal reasons why women lack sponsors: they don't ask. Either they underestimate the importance of such a person in their career, or they think they can accomplish their goals through hard work alone, or they're just loath to play the relationship capital game.

But among women who have sponsors, quite a few have told us that, like Khokhar, they had no need to ask: sponsors simply stepped up to the task, quietly but assertively anointing them with protection, guidance, and opportunities for promotion.

Many of our co-chairs and chief diversity officers acknowledge that, as junior women, they, too, didn't find sponsors: sponsors found them. Marilyn Nagel at Cisco believes this is sponsorship's natural dynamic, and that corporate programs should encourage advocates to be more proactive, rather than insist women learn to ask. "Unlike mentorship, where the mentee drives the relationship, the energy of sponsorship should come from the sponsor," she says.

Still, even our co-chairs who have benefited from serendipity admit that, as they rose through the ranks and the competition for fewer slots heated up, they became "more thoughtful," as Joan Amble, executive vice president and corporate comptroller of American Express, says of her own learning curve. Amble got her big break after making a presentation to the chief financial officer at GE on a very controversial project. He was so impressed that he invited her to interview at GE. With his support, Amble left her then employer to take a job at GE. "You need to be focused both inside and outside the company, no question," Amble elaborates. "Every time you're in front of someone, think of it as an interview and put forth one hundred percent. They'll observe your talent and most people want to help—it's human nature."

A certain amount of tact is essential. "You can't just go up to people and say, 'I'd like you to be my sponsor,'" says GE's Deborah Elam. "Instead, you've got to think, 'How can I set myself up to be in the strike zone?'" Elam tells how she did exactly that at the company's annual top management weekend at a Florida golf resort. She didn't know how to play, but, determined to join the game, she took lessons for several months and bought clubs in anticipation. At the last minute, she nearly backed out. But, screwing up her courage, she joined the guys—150 of them—on the golf course as the only African American woman. That evening at the cocktail reception, she confronted "a sea of khaki slacks and navy blazers." Then the senior white men began to approach. "I'm Joe, I was in the foursome behind you," one said. "I'm Mike, I saw you out there today, and you played great," another remarked. Recalls Elam, "It hit me: golf was the icebreaker, a way to make me 'safe.' It had nothing to do with my skill in playing. It was all about getting out there." And that's how sponsorship works, she adds: "The way you gain sponsors is to get out there and play with the group."

Sponsorship can't be forced, agrees Annmarie Neal at Cisco—but it can be fostered by setting up the playing field. "I'll create opportunities for a junior woman to work on a project or assignment that will get her in front of the executive I think might sponsor her," she explains. "That way, the executive can see her in action, yet it's not contrived." Providing an opportunity for a potential sponsor to observe the sponsee provides the depth of knowledge critical to any meaningful or effective relationship. "It's an evolution," adds Joan Amble. "People have to get to know you on a couple of different levels, not just in a professional dimension. I might *ask* someone to be my mentor. But I have to *earn* the ability to have someone sponsor or support me."

What reconciles all these views on the dynamic of sponsorship is the fact that for all high-achieving women, the need for advocacy never goes away; indeed, it intensifies as they vie for the topmost positions. Sponsorship may well "happen"; it usually does. But it absolutely must be cultivated, since one benefactor cannot be counted on for the duration of one's career. As many of our co-chairs can attest, sponsors leave or fall out of favor; if you've failed to grow your network beyond one or two backers, one exodus can leave you frighteningly vulnerable. "You've got to build a network of decision makers who are not in your line of business and are at the level you want to get to, not the level where you are," Marilyn Nagel says. Find a business reason to get to know them, she adds, because people will promote the careers of the people they know. Then, when your key sponsor leaves, you've got ten people in your network. "That was a big lesson for me, because when my sponsor left, I had to start building from the ground up," Nagel notes. "I knew I wasn't going anywhere until I did."

And then there is the argument Siemens' Denice Kronau makes—one that echoes a point we stressed in chapter 2: building networks *is what leaders do*. Getting people to follow and support you isn't a means to an end, a way to secure power, she says: it is the *very exercise of leadership*. Kronau exercises that skill set at every opportunity. "I go out of my way to talk to everybody," she says. "It's a big company, but I know everybody. I'll extend a hand because I know, over the long term, there will be a return. Not tomorrow, but eventually."

If our interviewees differ in their views on how sponsorship takes root, they're considerably more aligned in their opinions on what keeps it robust. "You have to treat these relationships as projects, as among the most important business relationships you have," asserts Gail Fierstein, managing director at Goldman Sachs, who puts sponsor calls on her calendar as a means of staying connected. "You would never go too long without picking up the phone to call a client, so you schedule this into your day."

Billie Williamson, a partner who carries a full client roster at Ernst & Young in addition to her diversity officer duties, insists that women can and must do it all: work, maintain a home and family, and cultivate their networks. "You don't have to socialize with the guys at work every night of week, but you do have to make time available for that black-tie function, or that sporting event, or that company client dinner," she says. However, she also feels Ernst & Young could do a better job of coaching women on how to maintain both client and sponsor relationships. "We ought to talk about it more," she muses. "Women say, 'Oh, I don't want to have to do all that socializing'—but to be a success, they've got to."

What to Expect—and What's Expected

The benefits of "doing all that" can be tremendous, as we endeavored to show in chapter 3. Sponsors make the impossible, or the unimagined, happen. And they aren't fair-weather friends: as Someera Khokhar's story demonstrates, they're invaluable when the chips are down, offering reassurance, going to bat for you, getting adversaries to back down or clients to step up. Underlying this support is a conviction in the sponsee's talents that she herself may lack; the best sponsors believe not only in the sponsee but in who she can become. Jim Hayden's "big plan" for Khokhar at White & Case is only one example we've examined in this report; virtually every one of our co-chairs had a similar story to tell of sponsors' impact on their life and career. "There's absolutely no doubt in my mind, that I'm sitting where I am, in this capacity, because of certain people's belief in me," asserts Anthony Carter of Johnson & Johnson. "My ability to do my job is key, of course, but no way in the world this would have happened by itself."

But does such life-changing impact translate into a debt? Do sponsees "owe" their sponsors? And if so, what should they be giving in return?

We got a variety of responses on this. On one level, according to Anthony Carter, all that sponsors really demand of their sponsees is honesty, passion, and a willingness to grow and learn, however painful or difficult the journey. "I can help you better as you attain the maturity to know who you are, what you want, and what you stand for," he says. "You don't have to have it all clear, or know where you want to wind up, but you've got to be in touch with your passion—because where that leads may not be in the direction you originally identified." Carter himself had no intention of going into diversity, he says, but his mentor and sponsor perceived that as "the shape and direction my passion fit in."

On another level, our co-chairs agree, there is definitely an underlying dynamic of *quid pro quo*. According to Carolyn Buck Luce, global life sciences sector leader at Ernst & Young, sponsorship relationships can be enhanced when viewed as critical strategic alliances, and by nature, such alliances are transactional. "This is not a love relationship," Buck Luce notes. "When I ask people for favors or I know they have gone to bat for me, I always ask if there's anything I can do for them in return."

Sponsor relations must be two-way, stipulates Jeff Siminoff, managing director and global head of inclusion at Morgan Stanley. "When I've talked to people who've come to me for advice, particularly junior people whose expectations regarding feedback are high, I've said, 'It's great to want feedback and it's important to get feedback, but if you're going to ask to be managed, you must also find ways to constructively accept feedback and act on it. Demonstrate that you've heard what's said. Take action steps to address the feedback. Otherwise, your request will fall flat.'"

At the very least, sponsees owe their powerful backers their absolute best effort. "It's about making your boss look good, since he's put his reputation on the line by supporting and promoting you," says Time Warner's Pat Fili-Krushel. This is not to say sponsees can't afford to screw up—they can, and they do. For example, Someera Khokhar failed to pass the bar the first time, but Hayden continued to have faith in her. But as Denice Kronau points out, sponsorship is very much based on merit. "I won't sponsor you if you don't do well," she says. "If you do a terrible job, I may try to help you to correct it. But if you continue not to thrive, you won't be my first choice to put forward."

A corollary to this is to make a sponsor's job easier by taking work off his plate, or covering for him when he's in need of back-up. One of Kerrie Peraino's sponsors took a risk by helping her work three days a week after the birth of her second child, a move that won her a promotion to vice president during her three-year, part-time stint. Peraino observes, "No one works harder for a sponsor than his or her sponsored talent."

But on the highest level, according to Annmarie Neal, sponsorship isn't at all a quid pro quo. "I give to the ecosystem, not the individual," she says. "I may not get the chance to give back to my sponsors, but I take very seriously my debt to the next generation. I don't expect anything from them. It's just the right thing to do."

Seeding It Anew

Interestingly, some of the most impassioned sponsors among our co-chairs attribute their commitment to an absence of supportive relationships in their own careers. Billie Williamson describes the lessons she learned working for her father, a first-generation American, in the family business from the age of fourteen: "He taught me a practical way of doing things, which served me well in addition to my great education. But he was someone who told people what to do. I didn't know a lot about working with men as colleagues. If I'd gotten mentorship, good lord, I can't imagine how much more successful I could have been," she reflects. "That's why I teach back."

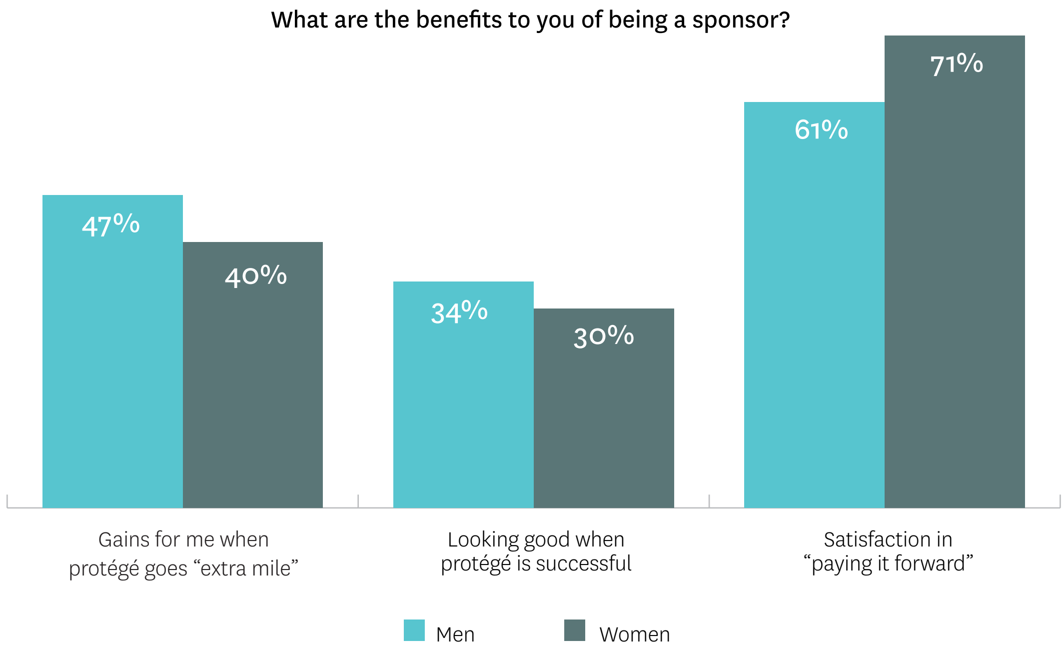
For these leaders, becoming sponsors isn't about paying anybody back, but rather, a way to pay it forward. This is a significant difference between men and women. According to our data, 47 percent of men cite one of the key benefits of being a sponsor as "having a protégé who is willing to go the extra mile for me." Only 40 percent of women agree. Instead, 71 percent (compared with 61 percent of men) find the greatest benefit of being an attentive, proactive, dedicated advocate for others as a means to ensure that successive generations of new hires never stumble as they did. They also see, as Someera Khokhar articulated, that practicing robust sponsorship sows a culture that makes companies great places to work and consequently magnets for top talent—which in turn makes them industry leaders.

Being an effective sponsor, or pairing others in nurturing career relationships, doesn't depend on the framework of a formal program. Neal, for one, believes institutionalizing sponsorship is overkill. "You don't want to boil an ocean," she says, explaining that her efforts to pair juniors with seniors—"my match-dot-com thing"—is effective precisely because it isn't mandatory. "If you make it compulsory, then it's one more thing on people's plates," she points out. "Don't make sponsor-making such a big deal, and people will do it."

The majority of our co-chairs, however, favor formalizing the networking process as a way to sow sponsorship where it is unlikely to seed itself—among women and minorities—that is, where it would make the most measurable difference in talent outcomes. As we will see in the next chapter, the programs they have launched (and in some instances designed) build a consummate argument for corporate sponsorship initiatives—initiatives that not only benefit a diverse workforce, but in fact quantifiably reward a company for its commitment to diversity. Robust sponsorship, as we have argued throughout this report, is a win-win relationship. And our corporate partners can prove it.

FIGURE 10-2

Benefits of being a sponsor



Chapter 11: What Can Companies Do?

The business case has been made, and the facts are compelling. Companies need their best talent to rise to the top; and women need the powerful effect of sponsorship to help ensure they are among those who do. The call to action for companies, large and small, is clear. Using the strength of existing talent management, succession planning, and leadership development processes as a foundation, companies are well positioned to foster an environment where sponsorship can be earned and nurtured.

Leading companies are already making progress. And that progress is not just good for women in their talent pipelines—the rising tide of sponsorship is also helping to float many boats. People of color—men and women alike—are getting that sponsorship matters, and they're learning ways to earn it. Senior white men in particular are recognizing the power of sponsorship they've enjoyed and the potential of sponsorship they give. In talent conversations in boardrooms across the globe, you can hear sponsorship in action as more and more companies embrace the fact that relationships matter—perhaps most at the top.

The data confirm that it's less likely for a woman to have a sponsor than her male counterparts. Through innovation, commitment, and a focus on bottom line results, a growing number of companies are creating sustainable approaches to nurturing sponsorship relationships.

What Top Companies Are Doing

Each of the initiatives presented below illustrates programmatic elements that can create pathways to sponsorship for talented women. These sponsorship initiatives have been bucketed into four main areas:

- Make sponsorship robust
- Lead from the top
- Pay attention to the pipeline
- Make sponsorship safe

Make Sponsorship Robust

Sponsorship in isolation may not work. That's why companies like American Express, Cisco, Citi, Deloitte, and Time Warner are creating comprehensive approaches to building and leveraging the sponsorship relationship. In the following real-world examples, you'll read about end-to-end solutions that incorporate senior leader support, enrichment, and education for women and a structured approach to ensure that sponsorship grows as a function of proactive talent management.

- American Express: *Women in the Pipeline and at the Top*
- Cisco: *Inclusive Advocacy Program*
- Citi: *Women Leading Citi*
- Deloitte: *Leading to WIN*
- Time Warner: *Breakthrough Leadership*

Lead from the Top

In most best practices on sponsorship, you'll find that engaging the C-suite is a critical success factor. Visible and active support from a company's most senior leaders—women and men—often signals the difference between good intent and real outcomes. Here we showcase four initiatives across several industries that demonstrate how one ingredient—senior leader advocacy—can be the secret in the sauce.

- Deutsche Bank: *ATLAS*
- Novartis: *Executive Female Leadership Program*

- Unilever: *Senior Leadership Mentoring Program*
- FTSE 100: *Cross-Company Mentoring Programme*

Pay Attention to the Pipeline

The seeds of sponsorship can be planted at all levels. In fact, smart companies understand that women need sponsorship most at each career transition point—which can be as early in her career as when she joins the company or moves from manager to director. Creating the conditions for success is how Bristol-Myers Squibb, Morgan Stanley, and Turner Broadcasting System are helping sponsorship to grow in their organizations.

- Bristol-Myers Squibb: *Women in Science*
- Morgan Stanley: *Leadership Program for Newly Promoted Women Managing Directors*
- Turner Broadcasting System: *KEYS*

Make Sponsorship Safe

Sometimes the solution is simpler than we expect. Barriers to sponsorship for women come in many forms, not the least of which is comfort in seeking advice and counsel from someone who does not look like you. As an entry point for creating an inclusive workplace where sponsorship can be earned by all, programs that make it safe and simple for new relationships to form help to bridge a gap.

- Intel: *Extending Our Reach Program*
- Ernst & Young: *Career Watch*
- PepsiCo: *Power Pairs®*

Make Sponsorship Robust

American Express: *Women in the Pipeline and at the Top*

American Express has long been an industry leader in workplace gender balance. Women represent more than 60 percent of its sixty thousand employees worldwide and more than 30 percent of the company's executives. In 2008 American Express pushed forward on its diversity journey, proactively taking a segmented approach to workforce analysis to better understand how the company might surpass the long-standing industry average of 15 percent women at the top. The research yielded conclusive evidence that American Express has a strong depth of midlevel female leaders, and that if these were capitalized on, the company had the potential to increase the number of women occupying the most senior roles.

To achieve this goal, American Express' Global Diversity and Inclusion team launched Women in the Pipeline and at the Top. The initiative was developed to encourage sponsorship opportunities for women with senior members within the organization and create a community for women that enables idea and experience sharing and networking. With the full support and funding from CEO Ken Chenault, Women in the Pipeline and at the Top aims to create an atmosphere of opportunity for women by creating a more gender-intelligent organization, fostering Pathways to Sponsorship and hosting the first-ever American Express Global Women's Conference.

To begin, the company conducted focus groups and individual interviews with senior women and men to identify barriers and opportunities at American Express that impact female advancement to seniormost positions. The research revealed seven central themes:

- Access to networking opportunities is more difficult for women.
- Women want and need more informal and direct feedback.
- The leadership culture at the top is characterized by male behaviors.
- Work-life balance is less available for men or women as they advance.

- A limited number of role models for women aspiring to senior positions makes it difficult to know what success looks like.
- Some women report that style requirements narrow as they ascend the career ladder and that to succeed they have to fit a specific mold.
- An absence of clear road maps has left many senior women confused about how to chart their careers.

The themes are guiding the design and execution of the clearly linked and sustainable solutions.

- *Gender intelligence* education and action planning for all senior leaders to raise their awareness of the different ways that men and women think, communicate, negotiate, and resolve conflicts.
- *Pathways to Sponsorship* offers women a suite of options toward earning sponsorship and tailored career management. "We can create opportunities for women to get exposure where the leadership team can see them in action," explains Kerrie Peraino, American Express' chief diversity officer.
- In September 2010, 160 top women leaders from around American Express's global workforce participated in a two-day meeting designed to foster connections among each other and the senior leadership—the *American Express Global Women's Conference*. "We expect increasing engagement from our senior female talent, so they will feel the power of their peers," says Peraino. CEO Ken Chenault and senior leaders attended, increasing the odds of creating meaningful sponsorship relationships.

2010 has been designated as the year to achieve measurable action on these short-term solutions. "Because of the strength in our pipeline, we're one of the companies best positioned to realize the benefits that gender balance can provide," says Peraino. "We know we have women who don't have natural sponsors at the decision-making table, and we have to become more intentional about creating opportunities."

The creators of this effort know that not every match will come out a winner. They're looking for long-term success. "We believe sponsorship has to be earned," says Peraino. "But we can do something to plant a seed, and that's what we're doing here." When the seed bears fruit, American Express will not only have effected a fundamental workplace transformation but, by doing so, will reap a harvest of top female talent for years to come.

Cisco: *Inclusive Advocacy Program*

Cisco is a truly global company, with nearly two-thirds of its 70,714 employees working outside of the San Jose, California, headquarters. Yet a large percentage of the senior leadership team grew up within Cisco, often within the same function, and mainly consists of individuals from the U.S. and Western Europe. These leaders don't always know people from other functions and geographies, and they typically don't have exposure to a diverse talent pipeline within other parts of the business. Cisco realized that this dissonance needed to be resolved, so that the company reflects its global customers and understands the solutions and services they most need.

Mentoring and coaching can only go so far. In November 2008, Cisco launched the *Inclusive Advocacy Program* (IAP) to open doors, create new networks, and enable the organization at a very senior level to develop a diverse talent pipeline across the enterprise. Two years later, the pilot has become a full-fledged program, with richer and more robust components and surprising results.

Under the aegis of the Global Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) team, the program has slimmed down from thirty to twenty-six of the company's highest-potential diverse talent, each paired with an "advocate" in a different function and at the vice president or senior vice president level. Smaller numbers encourage more open dialogue and deeper relationships among the four cohorts of talent/advocate pairs. This strategy supports the program's larger vision of building networks across geographies, generations, cultures, and business functions. Although there are fewer pairs, they are as diverse as ever: the talent comes from six different functions in every theater of operations; their advocate partners are located in Australia, Canada, France, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The time line of the program has expanded from nine months to one year, with required monthly meetings among talent/advocate pairs and periodic get-togethers for the cohorts and entire group. But program leaders Randall Lane and Stacè Millender say that many pairs connect on their own even more frequently, either through business travel to each other's country or by taking advantage of Cisco's TelePresence technology. The I&D team provides a plethora of tools to encourage robust conversation and enable the pairs to get to know each other, envision possibilities for working together, and establish goals and agreements.

The fundamental goals remain the same. Foremost is to expand the advocates' network of new sources of knowledge capital and the talents' network of influential contacts. Equally important, though, is the development of the talent candidates' global leadership qualities, increased exposure throughout the company, and, ultimately, career enrichment and advancement either in the form of cross-functional movement, new assignments, more touch points, and/or promotion.

When the program was launched, the expectation was that it would take eighteen months to produce any measurable result. Instead, within a year—and despite the tough economy—one of the participants received a promotion and another earned a new geographic posting. More than 60 percent of the talent participants agreed that "because of IAP, I have achieved tangible progress toward meeting my career advancement goals." One woman said, "I feel this program gave me the exposure I needed to get promoted."

"There's really nothing like this program out there," says Marilyn Nagel, chief diversity officer. "Thanks to IAP, each advocate and talent gains a network of 1,326 potential new relationships, enabling them to connect with people around the world in ways they never would have before."

Citi: *Women Leading Citi*

As anyone who's ever watched *Survivor* knows, alliances matter. Designed to bolster Citi's pipeline, Women Leading Citi matches female managing directors with senior executives who serve as "career advocates," expanding the managing directors' networks, championing them in talent discussions, and helping them to score senior management-level positions.

Kicked off in November 2009 with a global group of fifty-nine managing directors, the eighteen-month program was strongly influenced by Ernst & Young's Career Watch initiative (in which firm partners mentor female managers). With Citi's participants potentially looking forward to directing lines of business, advocates are chosen on the basis of their influence and seniority, as well as the degree to which they have a line of sight into the women's function groups. Ana Duarte McCarthy, Citi's chief diversity officer, estimates that 80 percent of all advocates are men; and because some may never have sponsored a woman at the company before, all received extensive training.

Matches are carefully selected to ensure a good fit between advocate and participant. Pairs meet quarterly to delve into the women's career aspirations, unearthing the areas that they need to work on refining and/or collaborating on the creation of a targeted development plan. Many women shadow their advocates; others might ask for a referral to gain entrée to meetings they otherwise wouldn't attend.

"The expansion of the participant's network into other leaders' sphere of influence is critical," Duarte McCarthy asserts, noting that managing directors must raise their visibility if they want to be promoted within two to three years.

Managing director Jo Diamond, head of EMEA Client Delivery, says she's the "luckiest person in Citi" for being paired with Jane Fraser, CEO of Citi Private Bank. Fraser has prepped Diamond on the best ways to present herself at meetings with senior executives and discussed with her how to calibrate her response to professional challenges so that she comes across as more effective. As Diamond ponders an internal move, Fraser is showing her how to address questions of salary diplomatically and explaining how shifting into a new job would reflect on her reputation. She reminds Diamond to be more assertive in directing her career.

Diamond isn't the only one who benefits from the relationship. "As someone in a senior management role, learning about another part of the business is very useful," notes Fraser, praising the innovations of Diamond's client service-focused team. "It keeps me up-to-date for my own business."

In just eleven months, twenty of the fifty-nine participants have been promoted or witnessed a significant expansion of their job responsibilities. To keep the motivation going, in June 2010, Citi held a one-and-a-half-day conference for program participants, keynoted by CEO Vikram Pandit. "In their countries, many of them are the *most* senior women—and to meet their peers was wildly exciting," enthuses Duarte McCarthy. "They felt more confident about self-promoting and raising their hands. It was a big catalyst for them to see that their progress matters to Citi."

Deloitte: *Leading to WIN*

Like many good initiatives, Deloitte's Leading to WIN program was inspired by a nagging question raised by Chet Wood, chairman and CEO of Deloitte Tax: "Where are all the women?" Despite the firm's award-winning Women's Initiative (WIN), which had long been committed to retaining and advancing these employees, female leaders remained in short supply on key committees, and there were no women among the seven regional managing directors of the firm.

This strategic eighteen-month program focuses on female partners, principals, and directors near promotion in the tax division, offering them the fundamental training, coaching, and sponsorship they need to increase their representation in Deloitte's top tier. "We wanted to tackle what we thought were the traditional barriers to women succeeding," says Barbara Adachi, national managing director, human capital, Deloitte Consulting LLP.

Participants first draw up a Leadership Action Plan, outlining what they need to do to advance. They receive guidance from private sessions with an executive coach, meetings with their personal sponsors (usually senior partners and/or members of the executive committee), and six two-day conferences, at which they talk with other participants and learn from executive speakers.

To broaden their awareness of the firm's scope, participants also spend a week in a foreign office. "A lot of tax work is done in India," notes Adachi. "They might meet the leadership, learn what happens there and how that fits into the operating model."

Participants need to be ready to be promoted to a new leadership role by its end. "The intent is to find people who can be groomed and, following the course, to find a position for them," explains Adachi. But many move up or experience an expansion of responsibility before they've even completed it. Of the twenty-one participants in its pilot class, eighteen have since been promoted; women in the program have become service-line leaders and members of the tax board—and there's even a regional manager.

An annual conference for program alumnae helps reinforce its valuable relationships. "No one anticipated how close everyone would get over this eighteen-month period," reflects Adachi, who adds that many other Deloitte programs last just a week. "It's a very tight circle of women who are there to support each other. They use each other as sounding boards."

So successful has Leading to WIN been that in June 2010 Deloitte launched a copycat program known as Leadership Acceleration, aimed at twenty-five to thirty female partners, principals, and directors from all of the firm businesses (audit, consulting, financial advisory, tax).

The message of both programs, Adachi notes, is about building confidence. "Even if they don't get a role right away, they know the firm is invested in them, and we have a customized career plan."

Time Warner: *Breakthrough Leadership*

A number of years ago Patricia Fili-Krushel, vice president, administration, and her team created Time Warner's Breakthrough Leadership program, which brings together the high-potential vice president and senior vice president women from across Time Warner. Fili-Krushel is often asked, "Why a women's leadership program?" Despite the tremendous progress made over the last twenty years, most organizations today don't represent a level playing field and often still reflect men's values and life situations. These gender inequities are subtle but nonetheless pervasive, since they are embedded in work norms and practices that appear gender neutral on the surface, but affect men and women differently and can inhibit women's achievements and career success.

When Fili-Krushel and her team talked to their most senior women about their success, they found that moving into leadership takes a combination of factors: a well-developed business network, mentors, the ability and courage to take risks, the awareness of individual strengths and areas for development. Time Warner created the Breakthrough Leadership program to support the advancement of women leaders by: exposing the participants to senior leaders and their keys to success at the company; giving participants feedback on leadership strengths and development needs; providing a forum for participants to learn the principles and application of critical skills; and building a strong network of women leaders within Time Warner.

Over the past seven years, there have been thirteen Breakthrough programs and 352 attendees. The program has helped build a strong community of women within Time Warner. As these women grow as leaders, they will not only help the company achieve extraordinary results but also continue developing a culture that is supportive of women's career advancement.

Alumnae are invited to attend subsequent Breakthrough Series events that provide participants with an opportunity to continue building leadership skills and position them for continued success at Time Warner and in their career. This seminar series, which addresses topics critical to women leaders, provides training, exposure, and networking opportunities for senior high-potential women. Four sessions were held in 2010 with a total of one hundred participants, and an additional two were planned for fall 2010. Breakthrough Series included skill-building workshops on Challenging Conversations—Creating Productive Dialogue and Managing Your Performance, a guest speaker sharing current research on How Remarkable Women Lead, as well as individual executive coaching sessions using a variety of leadership assessment tools. Additionally, alumnae are given the opportunity to attend a Not-for-Profit Board leadership training that ultimately works to match them to boards of their choosing.

Time Warner is piloting a program in fall 2010 targeting director-level high-potential women. This program will develop these women in a number of ways including building skills for proactive career management and greater effectiveness in current roles, providing insight into various aspects of the business and leadership, and growing a cross-divisional network of high-potential women leaders.

As a result of the program and follow-up events, Fili-Krushel has been able to get to know these exceptional women who work at Time Warner and monitor their progress. Her vision has been that women in the company consistently support one another, collaborate on business issues, and serve as role models for leadership in our organization and industry. Breakthrough alumnae are more effective at navigating the current organization. They are also better networked with each other and thus better able to position themselves as leaders. In fact, these alumnae are promoted at greater rates than the rest of the population, and Time Warner has had a strong track record of retaining high-potential women executives.

Lead from the Top

Deutsche Bank: *ATLAS*

In July of 2009, Deutsche Bank launched a new leadership development program called Accomplished Top Leaders Advancement Strategies, or ATLAS. ATLAS is global and cross-divisional and is a central part of a larger effort by Deutsche Bank to get more women into top management positions. ATLAS is sponsored by CEO Josef Ackermann, and he, together with the Group Executive Committee (GEC), is responsible for its success.

In the first year, twenty-one extraordinarily talented female managing directors were selected to participate; an additional ten women were selected in July 2010.

Each ATLAS participant is assigned a formal sponsor from the GEC. The sponsor's task is to develop a one-on-one working relationship and provide her with practical career advice and exposure to senior leaders and to recommend next career steps. Progress of the ATLAS participants is reviewed quarterly at the GEC. Although the participants are all managing directors, they are drawn from all divisions and offices within the company. Another component of ATLAS is an in-depth assessment of each woman with the goal of helping her crystallize her career plan.

The sponsor/participant pairs meet one-on-one at least four times a year. In September 2009, Deutsche Bank held a group meeting for the women and GEC members to get to know one another. The meeting resulted in a wide-ranging and open discussion on opportunities for women within the firm and how to remove biases. The first cohort attended a senior management conference at which they were given an exclusive opportunity to network with a wider group of Deutsche Bank leaders.

Throughout the first year, the participants also met with Josef Ackermann on several occasions to discuss Deutsche Bank strategy in detail. A recommendation from the women on implementing a lateral induction program for new senior hires was made to Ackermann, and he took it to the management board.

Feedback from the GEC is that ATLAS has changed the dialogue in the firm and given the firm greater access to talented women. Many GEC members have used ATLAS as a launching pad to get to know their female pipeline. Feedback from the ATLAS participants is that it has provided broader opportunities, exposure, and a tight-knit global network that "looks like them."

Since the inception, one-third of ATLAS participants have moved into broader roles, and the remainder are in the succession pool for senior positions. They have taken an active role as mentors, role models, and sponsors for other women in the organization; are involved in recruiting and mentoring newly promoted female MDs; work with groups of high-potential women one level down to give practical career advice; and have helped to restructure the firm's women's networks and conferences to make them more business-focused.

Novartis: *Executive Female Leadership Program*

According to the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association reports, just 17 percent of senior-management jobs at pharmaceutical, healthcare, and biotechnology companies are currently held by women.[62] Novartis's goal: to see its female professionals fill more general management positions and ultimately bring more balance to the company's executive committee, where one of twenty-three current members are female.

"We wanted to be innovative in coming up with methodologies to create a program that not only gets women to the top of the house, but addresses the visible and invisible barriers that preclude them from reaching the senior-most levels of the organization," reflects Michelle Gadsden-Williams, vice president and global head for diversity and inclusion at the Novartis Group and Novartis Pharma AG.

In May 2010, with the sponsorship of David Epstein, division head of Novartis Pharmaceuticals, and the company's executive committee, Gadsden-Williams and her team launched the twelve-month Executive Female Leadership program.

Executive committee members nominated thirty high-potential women at the level of vice president, all with proven track records in the commercial or technical side of the pharmaceutical division. They represent a global swath of talent, stretching from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and South America. "We wanted the best and the brightest," says Gadsden-Williams.

Real-world training is at the program's core. From the outset, participants divide into six groups (meeting virtually or at a central location) to work on high-level projects that are real business priorities for the company. They complete relevant tasks on their own time and provide their executive committee member with updates on a regular basis. After one year, they must present a final report.

Participants receive mentoring from senior leaders who serve as members of the executive committee. In addition, they are matched by geographic region with executive coaches from an external group, with whom they meet monthly via teleconference. This relationship is a "safe space" within which they can discuss any personal concerns, challenges, or career barriers.

Every three months, the participants spend a week refining their leadership skills at company headquarters in Basel, Switzerland. There they are joined by executive committee members and Epstein, whose high-profile involvement in the program reinforces its importance.

Getting support from the executive committee while on the program really makes a difference, says vice president Dagmar Rosa-Bjorkeson, head of the company's multiple sclerosis business unit. "Their involvement symbolizes a true commitment to developing more women so they will end up on the global executive committee," she explains. "Without that, this would be just another development program."

Rosa-Bjorkeson also singles out the coaching she receives, which helps her address leadership issues and manage personnel. "I have not had such consistent coaching before, in such a dedicated way."

"We give women the tools, skills, and resources to make them more effective than they currently are," confirms Michelle Gadsden-Williams. Ideally, she would like to see at least three women from the program be promoted into the corporate executive group (the leadership tier at Novartis) when they graduate. She also intends to launch an alumni association to keep participants and executive committee members engaged in the cumulative effort to help women advance.

Rosa-Bjorkeson says she would definitely sign up for their meetings: "There's a wealth of support, knowledge and real business value in just knowing this group of women. That, to me, was the best part of the whole thing."

Unilever: *Senior Leadership Mentoring Program*

With clear metrics around the advancement of women, Unilever wanted to ensure that its female leaders (vice presidents or directors) are better equipped to move into top roles, where they can add their valuable perspective to leadership teams. To accelerate the process, the company matches them with a senior or executive vice president or director who can mentor them through each of the steps that they need to take. "For many of our male colleagues, these relationships have happened for years and years," says Helen Wyatt, senior vice president, HR Category and Global Functions.

With that in mind, Unilever launched its Senior Leadership Mentoring program in 2008, starting with a class of twenty-two women who were at least eighteen months to two years away from their next lateral move or promotion. To create a baseline for progress, these participants were asked to draw up a development plan that would outline their path toward that position.

Each woman was then paired with a mentor with the experience to help her meet those milestones. "We very consciously said that we wanted this mentor program to be outcome oriented," Wyatt notes.

Ideally, pairs meet monthly, either in person or via Web conference. Before their first meeting, both get a guide that spells out best practices for their relationship. Ensuing conversations delve into the mentee's work output and performance, assessing what she needs to do next to progress further.

Having 50 percent of the company's leaders serve as mentors—nearly all of them male—means that these discussions engender change. "What it's done is helped them build knowledge of people they wouldn't ordinarily come across in the normal scheme of things," Wyatt notes.

Of the initiative's first group, six women have already been promoted. The second group, which included men and women, launched last year; a third group has been scheduled. An alumni program is also on the horizon for former participants.

From the program's inception, Unilever recruited INSEAD Professor Herminia Ibarra to study its effectiveness. The research compared and contrasted the experiences of high potential men and women eighteen months out from promotion. Not surprisingly, it found that men were more likely than women to say they had sponsors, senior people who helped them land promotions or new assignments, whereas "many of the women didn't feel they had that," Wyatt recalls. "They felt they were managing their own careers."

Some women also divulged that they feared the demands of senior positions on their personal lives; others had concerns about navigating what they saw as an old-boy network. As a result, Unilever started a Transitions Program, which will provide continued career planning and networking long after the initiative ends. "The first six months in a new role is critical," Wyatt points out. "Any help and support we can give is a real plus."

FTSE 100: *The FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme*

Started in 2003, the FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme has worked to increase the number of women on FTSE 100 boards. When program director Peninah Thomson, coauthor of *A Woman's Place is in the Boardroom*, looked at the work that was being done around women on boards, all she saw was work being done on the supply side, and that work tended to define women as the problem. According to the accepted wisdom, they were the biggest obstacle to their own career progression and in being appointed to boards. Thomson was baffled as to why there was no look at the demand side—why male CEOs and chairmen were not appointing women executive directors or nonexecutive directors (3.7 percent and 11.8 percent of the total number of directors, respectively, in 2003) to their boards.

Thomson got to work. She wrote a paper after interviewing eight board chairmen and getting their input about what they saw as the issues. The paper was circulated to ten more chairmen. All eighteen came together for a breakfast at Shell to discuss the issues raised in the paper. The chairmen of Rolls-Royce and Anglo-American took the initiative and proposed that Thomson and her colleagues design a program to "get these women on boards." Thus the FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme was born.

A chairman nominates a woman from the "marzipan layer" just below the board (where, in U.K. companies, women tend to stagnate) to participate. Thomson interviews the women. She asks the same three questions in each interview: why do they want to participate? What do they want to get out of it? What are their first thoughts on what to work on with a mentor?

Thomson then matches the candidate with a mentor, the chairman of another FTSE company. To avoid potential conflict of interest, the mentor is not in the same industry as the mentee. Nearly all mentors have been men with the exception of one woman—simply the nature of who is at the top. It falls to the mentee to set up a "chemistry meeting" to make sure that the partnership will work. The match lasts for one, or sometimes two years. Meetings must take place once a quarter, but Thomson has found that the pairs often meet more than that. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and the results are impressive.

Thirty-nine women have gone through the FTSE Programme, with an additional thirty-five currently taking part. Fifteen have been appointed to the executive committee or main board of their own FTSE company. Eight have been appointed to a non-executive director position in a FTSE company. Fifteen have been promoted at their own company or have moved companies for a promotion. Three women have been named as chief executive of a FTSE 250 or other company.

The key to the program's success, according to Thomson, has been "one-on-one attention over a sustained period of time. Plus, the mentors have been very generous with their networks. It seems we have found one of the keys to moving women up the ladder."

Pay Attention to the Pipeline

Bristol-Myers Squibb: *Women in Science*

Women in Science (WIS) is a networking, resource, and advocacy organization that encourages and enables women scientists to advance to leadership positions in Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS). Its origin, mission, structure, methods, and sustainability are largely shaped by its grassroots nature, which is the main source for its rapid success and growing effectiveness.

WIS began early in 2008 when a small number of women at BMS—mostly scientists and physicians in medical affairs—decided to take on an important challenge: give women in scientific roles the same opportunities as their male counterparts by building the skills necessary to achieve successful and satisfying careers.

The founding members understood the circumstances behind the challenge well, as those circumstances were or had been barriers for them. Scientists are traditionally taught to focus on the science and the data: if you do good science, you will have a successful and rewarding career. This is appealing but inaccurate. Moreover, many women scientists in the pharmaceutical industry, where work is often organized by disease areas, functions, sites, regions, or by phases of product development, feel *isolated*. In fact, they *are* isolated, since they lack consistent opportunities to meet, network, mentor, or be mentored. In addition, many women scientists are not given opportunities for business or leadership experience, because the focus is on the science or data. At the same time, they often face interruptions in their careers as they raise children or care for aging parents. For the women who teamed up to create WIS, the bottom line was clear: while BMS women in scientific roles were delivering strong results, they needed to develop their leadership and broader organizational skills in order to advance.

From the beginning, WIS focused on two main areas to deliver on its mission "to create networks among women working in scientific environments to empower leadership and advancement":

1. Identify developmental gaps/skills and provide innovative programming and tools to enhance them.
2. Create networking opportunities across and up/down BMS to enable WIS participants to meet and learn from Senior Leaders, and share experiences and best practices with each other.

Over the next couple of years, rapidly increasing numbers of women either joined the initial chapter or helped start new ones. Each chapter area is supported by a committee, a committee chair, and an executive sponsor. This year, through the leadership support of Dr. Annalisa Jenkins, senior vice president for Global Medical Affairs, WIS created an overarching global steering committee to support the chapters and grow the network worldwide.

The WIS initiative is a win-win situation for the company. Women today make far more healthcare consumer decisions than men, so companies with strong, visible female senior leadership are better able to respond and appeal to women in the marketplace. From an internal perspective, WIS is a plus, as well. In recent years, the company has made a conscious effort to develop its people as scientific and managerial entrepreneurs. Today, when women make up more than 50 percent of BMS employees and 30 percent of executives, having WIS provides the platform for women scientists to learn the leadership skills to advance positions.

Jenkins captured this point early in 2010 as she helped launch the WIS SharePoint site: "Success brings with it new responsibilities. We are all having to deliver more industry-wide, and our internal environment requires ever-greater efficiency. The bottom line is that women in scientific roles need to help one another develop and deploy smart tactics in such critical areas as work practices, professional development, communication skills, and work-life balance."

Morgan Stanley: *Leadership Program for Newly Promoted Women Managing Directors*

Attaining managing director rank on Wall Street is a cause for celebration. For newly minted women managing directors at Morgan Stanley, this milestone is equally important for intensive assessment and networking, and creates an opportunity to further develop leadership skills.

The firm's Leadership Program for Newly Promoted Women Managing Directors is a platform to enable female talent to become the kind of leaders who will both attract senior sponsors from above and sponsor junior professionals, notes Priya Trauber, an executive director who leads Women's Initiatives. The program helps female managing directors become acclimated to the new role and recognize it is the beginning of a new phase in their careers.

Begun in 2007, the program at first targeted existing women managing directors. But after participants expressed feedback that this program would have been valuable earlier in their MD tenure, the program shifted to focus on newly promoted women. Becoming a managing director is "really just the beginning," says Trauber. Once promoted, women are expected to take on greater leadership roles within the firm and understand their changing responsibilities mentors and sponsors of talent.

The program begins in January, at the company's global conference for all newly promoted managing directors. As part of this program, the women managing directors attend an introductory networking dinner with a senior member of the management committee. Participants network and meet their "class" of fellow female managing directors. At the close of the evening, each participant is asked to stay in touch with two or three of their peers.

Six months later, participants are asked to undertake a rigorous 360-degree leadership assessment and the core daylong section of the Leadership Program is held. After a dinner with senior leaders and a further networking discussion, each managing director works directly with a coach on the findings of her assessment. They benchmark their results against leaders within and outside the firm, and draw up an action plan to focus on needed areas of development. A second, one-on-one coaching meeting is held six weeks to three months later.

The women managing directors next meet in groups of four or five for peer coaching facilitated by a senior, established woman managing director. "The beauty of the peer coaching is that it helps them build intimate relationships with each other, but also gives them access to senior women in the firm," says Trauber. A networking lunch with existing female managing directors follows.

Simply connecting with other senior women is intensely meaningful for the new managing directors, said Trauber. "So often, they are not in a room with other women. Giving them opportunities to connect with other women—that's powerful."

The final key components to the day are workshops on personal branding and executive presence. "There are practical ways that you can ensure that you are communicating effectively, from taking up the right amount of space at the table to choosing the right time to speak during a meeting," said Trauber. "These are things that women need to think about as they're trying to project power in a room."

The initial feedback from participants has been glowing. They especially appreciate the chance to forge new contacts with their peers and with senior leaders. One female managing director, who was originally skeptical about the need for the program, became a convert after meeting the firm's dynamic chief financial officer, Ruth Porat. The new managing director loved "hearing firsthand the way Ruth Porat had made it to the top, and the ups and downs of her career," said Trauber.

In response, Trauber challenged the participant to follow up and build the relationship. "And she said, 'I'm already on it—we've set up coffee for next week,'" said Trauber. "By giving her the opportunity to see that the CFO is a very real person, the new MD felt comfortable calling her."

Turner Broadcasting System: *KEYS*

"An inclusive culture makes employees feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work, which leads to creativity and innovation," explains Michele Golden, vice president of global diversity and talent management for Turner Broadcasting System. That's the appeal of KEYS (Knowledge Energizing Your Success), an intensive ten-week development program that uses a series of classes, projects, and sponsorship sessions in an effort to help female employees achieve their full career potential and to strengthen the pipeline of potential women managers. Since its 2006 pilot, one hundred women below the vice president level have participated.

Large classes led by company executives educate this cadre's twenty-five women and one man about Turner's core competencies for leadership and performance. Participants additionally work in small groups to develop a business idea for the company. "The first year, there were six business proposals made, with revenue ideas," recalls Veronica Sheehan, senior vice president for network operations at Turner Entertainment Group. "Suddenly, it wasn't just a 'nice program' for high performers any more. Eyes lit up."

Participants are also directed to find executive sponsors from another part of the organization, with whom they will meet each week to support their journey through the program. They can seek out people they know, cold-call someone, or peruse a list of leaders. "Part of the training was forcing them into contacting someone, and making that connection," notes Paige Lillard, Turner's vice president of business excellence.

It's an intense program, most of which is conducted during participants' free time. A rigorous application and interview process identifies the most highly motivated candidates. Unlike programs designed for executive-level women, KEYS seeks to be an outlet for untapped talent yearning for development and a significant personal growth opportunity. "We want to discover people who have not had visibility, who need a champion to push them forward," says Sheehan. Out of the twelve participants in the pilot group, ten were later promoted or given an extension of their responsibilities.

Former KEYS participant Betsy Holland, director of corporate responsibility, says the program fulfills that mission. “It’s a door-opener in terms of giving you the opportunity to explore the rest of the company,” she says, praising the program for introducing her to leaders she hadn’t known and for providing her with a new network of classmates. “I now have twenty-five people on speed-dial that I can call for answers.”

To keep the momentum going after KEYS ends, in 2009 Turner Women Today introduced the Journey Map program, a professional booster shot for past participants. Users create a new mission statement, write an internal résumé, explore potential professional opportunities within Turner, and select a “board of directors” (comprising other employees and executives) to advise them and build bridges within the organization. It helps Turner gauge retention and evaluate KEYS’s real benefits. “The biggest impact we saw [post-KEYS] was that participants’ confidence increased because they understood the industry as a whole, and Turner as a company, better—and they could express themselves in the language of the business, which their bosses appreciate,” asserts Lillard. “They spoke with confidence, really understood their potential, and were better able to sell their ideas.”

Make Sponsorship Safe

Intel: *Extending Our Reach Program*

As technology expands from bits, bytes, and ’bots to a wider perspective, Intel CEO Paul Otellini recognizes the need for diverse points of view to propel the company’s prosperity. Intel has already built a robust mentoring operation that metamorphoses high-potential women into high performers. Its new Extending Our Reach program confronts the next challenge: pushing those high-performing women into high-level leadership positions where they can, in turn, support and expand a pipeline of talented women.

The Extending Our Reach program plans to do so in a novel way: by developing female vice presidents into a strong cohort of sponsors. “We want to have executive women teach other senior level women,” explains chief diversity officer Rosalind Hudnell. “We’re looking to increase their visibility, encourage them to step into leadership roles, act as role models, and not only increase but accelerate opportunities and advancement.”

A key element in the program is clarifying the difference between mentoring and sponsoring. “Mentoring serves a very important purpose, but it alone isn’t sufficient to move great talent into leadership positions,” says Hudnell. “When you get to the level where decisions are made about your career that are not just up to an individual manager’s decision, feedback from other leaders about whether you’re ready becomes crucial. Having a sponsor [who] can provide that broad visibility and endorsement is crucial.”

The Extending Our Reach program works closely with the Intel Women’s Leadership Council (IWLC), which champions internal efforts around the development and retention of women. Currently, there are twenty-seven women vice presidents from various business groups and three female Intel Fellows on the council who serve as a passionate voice for women at Intel. “Many times the next great opportunity is not in your current organization,” Hudnell notes. “Because the IWLC crosses many organizations, they can play a key role in identifying and guiding great talent to good opportunities.”

The program has identified a select initial group of women to with whom to pilot the effort initially. Its goal, says Hudnell, is “to take this group of women and help them move from where they are to where they desire to be.”

Although many programs successfully match female protégés with male advocates, having executive women sponsor their junior female colleagues adds extra resonance. “Women need to learn in an environment where they can develop their image without fear of failure, where they can get really constructive feedback in a safe space,” says Hudnell.

The Extending Our Reach program builds on connections fostered in existing programs such as Command Presence, a one-day workshop in which senior technical women train up-and-coming women to communicate like leaders. “It’s not just about how to make a formal presentation,” Hudnell explains. “It’s how to command a room, how to command the respect of leaders, how to implement constructive confrontation, to defend and sell your ideas with confidence and superb preparation. People who can do that are seen as leaders with a vision. They're the ones who get promoted."

As more executive women learn to excel at sponsoring, the hope is that their expertise and examples will cascade down a few levels and across business units and functions. A female senior vice president may not see what midlevel women need or have opportunities to offer them. "We see where our most senior women need to sponsor those immediately beneath them, but those underneath them need to be sponsoring those underneath *them*," says Hudnell. "Being a good leader is about producing great leaders. When you identify talent, put it forward, and have it go on to do great things, you look good."

Ernst & Young: *Career Watch*

Even when women perform at a high level as they progress in their careers, a lack of proper guidance often prevents them from going further. First piloted in the 1990s, Ernst & Young's Career Watch provides women, LGBT and ethnically diverse individuals, and people with disabilities with the same valuable mentoring their white male peers so often take for granted.

Women make up just 18 percent, and ethnic minorities 9 percent, of Ernst & Young partners, while white men hold 70 to 75 percent of those roles. As a matter of course, managers tend to mentor those from a similar group."It is, I think, human nature to mentor someone who is just like you," theorizes partner Billie Williamson, the Americas inclusiveness officer, explaining why a targeted program is so necessary. "In a client meeting, for example, a young person might misstep—and if the men are friends, or are similar, they may feel comfortable with direct guidance: 'Try it *this* way.' That doesn't necessarily happen with women and minorities."

Candidates for Career Watch are selected through a review by their individual business units, who consider whether they have the potential and performance to achieve partnership within the organization. "We look for people who are technically capable, have passed the CPA exam, have self-confidence and interpersonal skills, and are not afraid to try new things and take some risks," Williamson explains. They are assigned to high-visibility engagements and coached through identifying and addressing development gaps. "Just being technically competent doesn't get you to partner," says Williamson. Potential partners must also demonstrate interpersonal skills.

The program is highly tailored to the individual needs of the participants. If gaps are identified, a diverse candidate is assigned to a partner at the organization who serves as her or his "Career Watcher," helping to address specific problems. (Each Watcher may have several Watchees.) A participant who lacks experience with business development, for example, might shadow someone proficient in this area, possibly going out on calls together or working through a call while being observed by the Watcher, who later gives feedback pointers.

Because it's so customizable, Career Watch can just as easily suit managers who are nine years away from the partnership as those who have just two to three years to go. To accelerate things for the latter group, some business units have developed more intensive, fast-moving programs that feature executive coaching, 360-degree reviews and sponsorship from more people and at a higher level (the firm has dubbed these "Career Watch Ultimate").

The Career Watch experience can also be a smart way for a person to kick-start a stalled career. "One young woman who worked for me started out in health sciences, but we knew there were no partner opportunities at the time there," remembers Williamson. "When she said, 'Well, I first started in the tech industry,' we decided to move her there and worked on getting her to build up her skills. She ultimately made partner in tech, not in health sciences."

Above all, Career Watch serves as a place where women can ask questions they might not otherwise ask. In best-case scenarios, it fosters a sense of trust that allows both members of the pair to tackle uncomfortable (though important) topics. If a woman's informal dress is holding her back, for example, a Watcher might advise a Watchee, "You know, your dress is a little casual; take a look around at how our senior women are dressing."

On many fronts, the program is a business imperative. "Over 50 percent of accounting graduates are female," Williamson points out. "If they come here and don't see enough women in our partnership, guess how many women we are going to retain? Not many."

A recent uptick in promotions suggests the program has an impact. "When we checked last year, about 70 percent of the women and minorities who were promoted [to partner] had been in Career Watch," Williamson marvels. "It used to take women several more years than men to make partner. Now they are making partner within the same time interval."

PepsiCo: *Power Pairs®*

Creating diversity in its top ranks was a major priority for PepsiCo back in 2004, when it first launched Power Pairs, a one-day discussion program focused on women of color. Designed to facilitate an honest dialogue between female middle managers and their bosses, it promoted mentoring and sponsorship and is not only helping fill key slots, but drastically reducing turnover.

In one-on-one meetings led by an external facilitator, each year's cohort tells their bosses about their goals, experiences, and challenges, and in turn learns what PepsiCo needs from them. While establishing mutual trust, both parties outline their workplace agenda, which makes Power Pairs equally impactful for new hires, recently promoted employees, and anyone needing more guidance.

For many, Power Pairs creates a safe space in which to discuss personal issues, future hopes, even worries about office bias. "It's about getting to know that person in a different way," says Rachel Cheeks-Givan, PepsiCo's senior manager for global diversity and inclusion. "But it's only as good as what you're willing to share."

Shawna D. Wilson, vice president of enterprise risk management for PepsiCo, is a three-time Power Pairs participant. She praises the program's ability to accelerate her relationships with unfamiliar managers. "You spend the day together, and don't always talk about business," she explains. "You establish a commonality. That's something you don't always get in an organization going 200 miles a minute."

Before meeting, each pair completes a survey to generate their Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument, a psychological assessment of how they view the world. Twice, the Hermann survey showed Wilson she was a big-picture thinker who was working for detail-oriented bosses. Her entire communication style changed after that: "I learned to talk to them in a way that was meaningful to them, instead of just meaningful to me," she recalls. "I learned how to persuade them, to get them on my side. If I gave them numbers, they would understand me better."

Bosses, too, benefit from Power Pairs. "Bosses might learn that an employee is good at strategic thinking, for example, where they themselves are not," notes Wilson. "As a result, management may figure out new ways to use that employee in their organization."

Before the day ends, each participant's "two-up" manager (usually the manager's own manager) joins the conversation. Doing so allows the "two-up" manager to judge how well his direct report is working with the participant in question and creates another level of investment in her success.

So far, there have been two hundred Power Pairs. It was almost immediately obvious that women who elected to join the program had less than half the turnover rate of their peers. Flash forward to 2010, when so many want to repeat the initiative that PepsiCo is piloting a group version. If it flies, employees may be able to participate every time they switch managers.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The research consists of two surveys, seven Virtual Strategy Sessions, eleven focus groups, and numerous one-on-one interviews.

The first U.S. survey was conducted online in January and February 2010 among 2,952 U.S. women and men between the ages of 21 and 62 and currently employed in certain white-collar occupations, with at least a bachelor's degree.[63] Data were weighted to be representative of the U.S. population of college graduates on key demographic characteristics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, household internet access, metro status, and region). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base. All numerical figures in this report refer to the subset of respondents in this survey who were working full time in companies with 5,000 or more employees unless otherwise noted.

The second U.S. survey was conducted online in June and July 2010 and interviewed a total of 1,085 respondents employed full time in companies with 5,000 or more employees in addition to satisfying the same sampling criteria from the first survey.

The national surveys were conducted by Knowledge Networks under the auspices of the Center for Work-Life Policy, a nonprofit research organization. Knowledge Networks was responsible for the data collection, while the Center for Work-Life Policy conducted the analysis. In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple response answers from respondents.

APPENDIX B: THE HIDDEN BRAIN DRAIN TASK FORCE

Founded in 2004 by Sylvia Ann Hewlett (Center for Work-Life Policy and Columbia University), Carolyn Buck Luce (Ernst & Young), and Cornel West (Princeton University), the mission of this private-sector task force is to identify, develop, and promote a second generation of corporate policies and practices that support the ambition, work and life needs of highly qualified women and minorities. The 60 global companies that comprise the task force—representing 4 million employees and operating in 190 countries around the world—are united by an understanding that the full utilization of the talent pool is at the heart of competitive advantage and economic success.

The Sponsor Effect is the ninth piece of research completed by the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force. The first cycle of research, "Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success," was published by *Harvard Business Review* in the form of an article and a research report in March 2005. The second cycle culminated in "Leadership in Your Midst: Tapping the Hidden Strength of Minority Executives," published by *Harvard Business Review* in November 2005. A companion report, *Global Multicultural Executives and the Talent Pipeline*, was released in April 2006. A follow-up study of Latinas, *Sin Fronteras: Celebrating and Capitalizing on the Strengths of Latina Executives*, was published in October 2007. A third cycle of research, "Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek," was published in *Harvard Business Review* in December 2006. A companion report, *Seduction and Risk: The Emergence of Extreme Jobs*, was released in February 2007. The fourth cycle, "Stopping the Exodus of Women in Science," was published by *Harvard Business Review* in June 2008. A companion report, *The Athena Factor: Reversing the Brain Drain in Science, Engineering, and Technology*, was also published by *Harvard Business Review* at the same time. A sequel to *The Athena Factor*, focusing on women in tech in the financial sector, was released in December 2008. *Bookend Generations: Leveraging Talent and Finding Common Ground*, the fifth research study, was published in June 2009. A companion article by Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Laura Sherbin, and Karen Sumberg, "How Gen Y and Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda," was published in the July/August 2009 issue of *Harvard Business Review*. The sixth study, "The Battle for Female Talent in Emerging Markets," focused on women in the BRIC countries and the UAE, was published by *Harvard Business Review* in May 2010, and a companion report was published in June 2010. The seventh Hidden Brain Drain Task Force study, "Off-Ramps and On-Ramps Revisited" was published by *Harvard Business Review* in June 2010, and the eighth, "Off-Ramps and On-Ramps Germany," was published as an article "Letzte Ausfahrt Babypause" in *Harvard Business Manager* in April 2010.

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL FIGURES

FIGURE C-1

How did you get your most recent promotion?
Personal connections

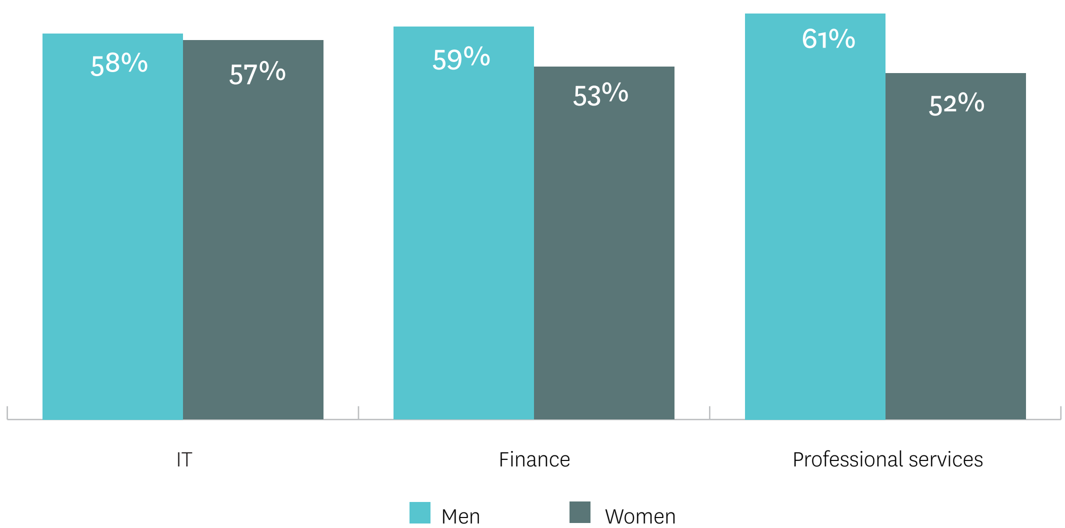


FIGURE C-2

How did you get your most recent promotion?
Exceptional qualifications

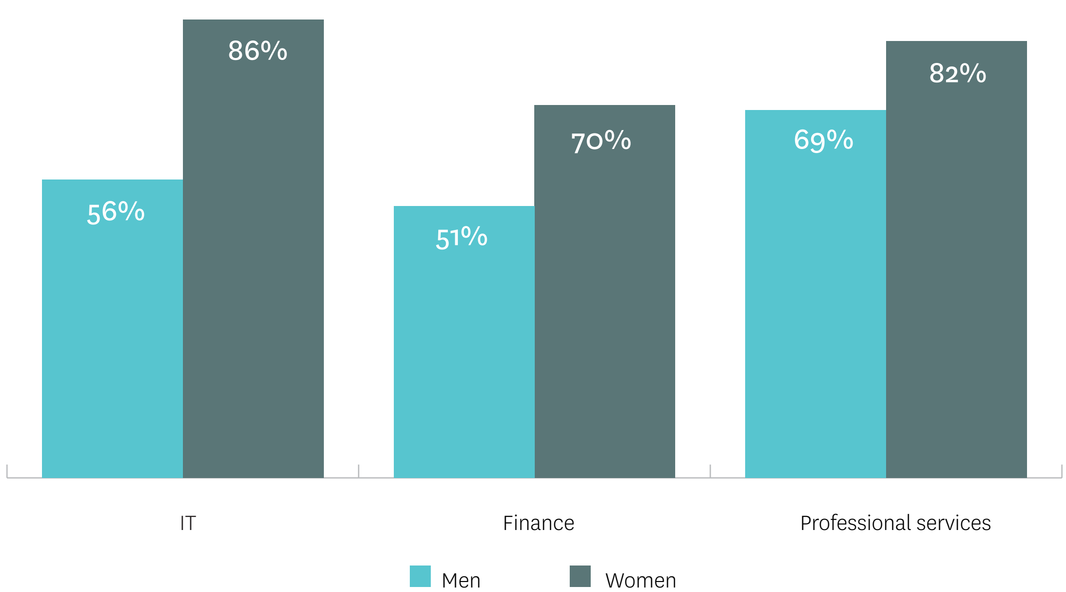


FIGURE C-3
What drives promotion at your company?
Hard work, long hours, and education credentials

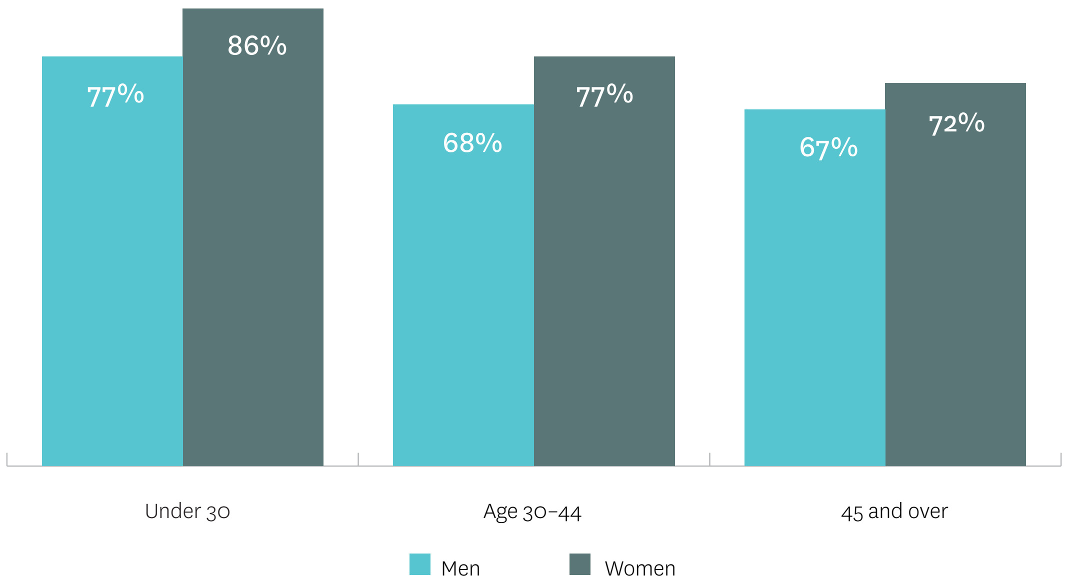


FIGURE C-4
What drives promotion at your company?
Senior-level support, visibility, gravitas, bottom-line success, and people skills

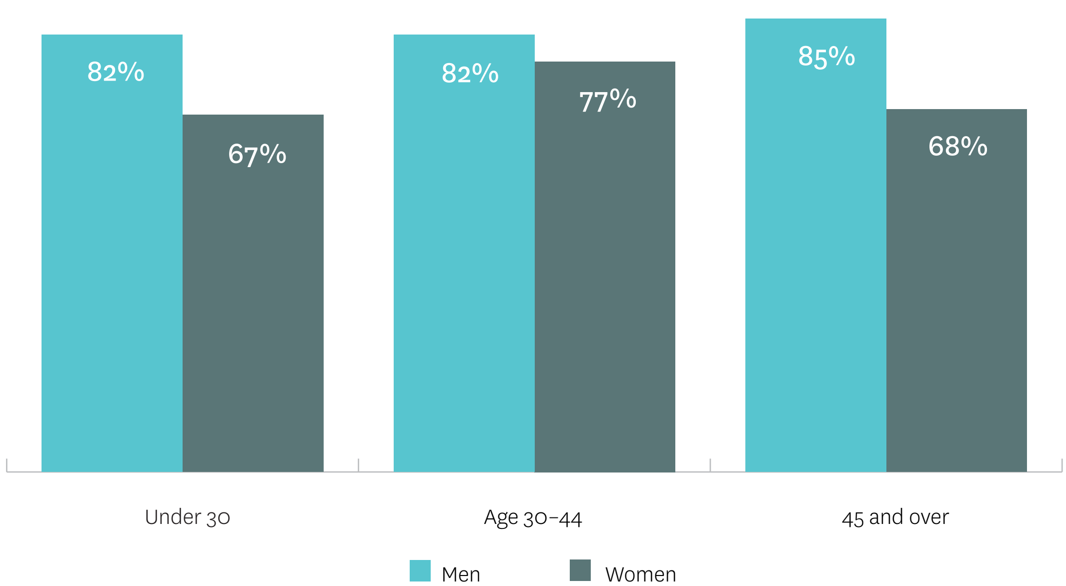


FIGURE C-5
Respondents who have difficulty asking a close friend for help landing a job

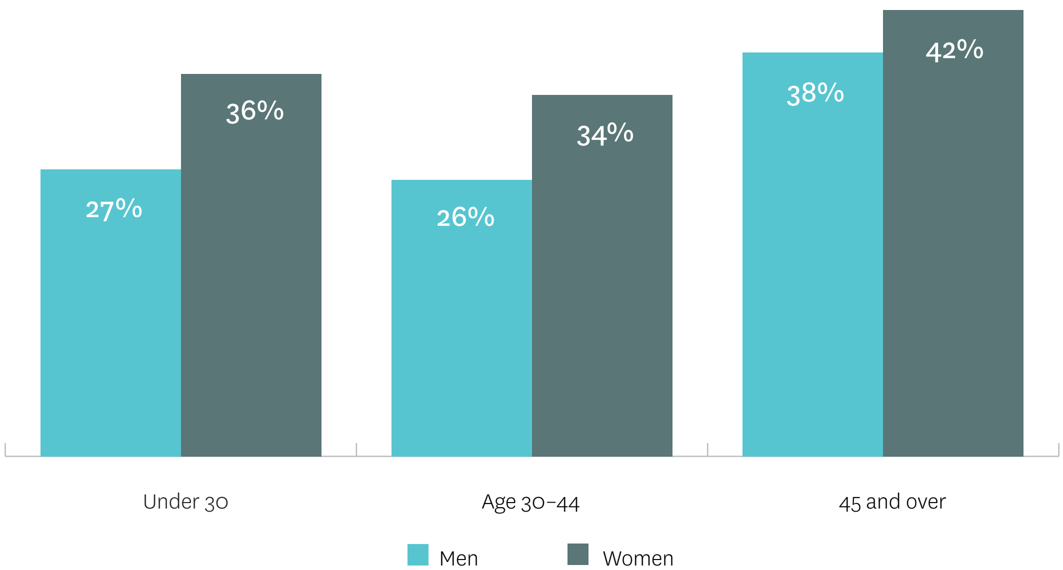


FIGURE C-6
Respondents who have difficulty asking a close friend for help closing a business deal

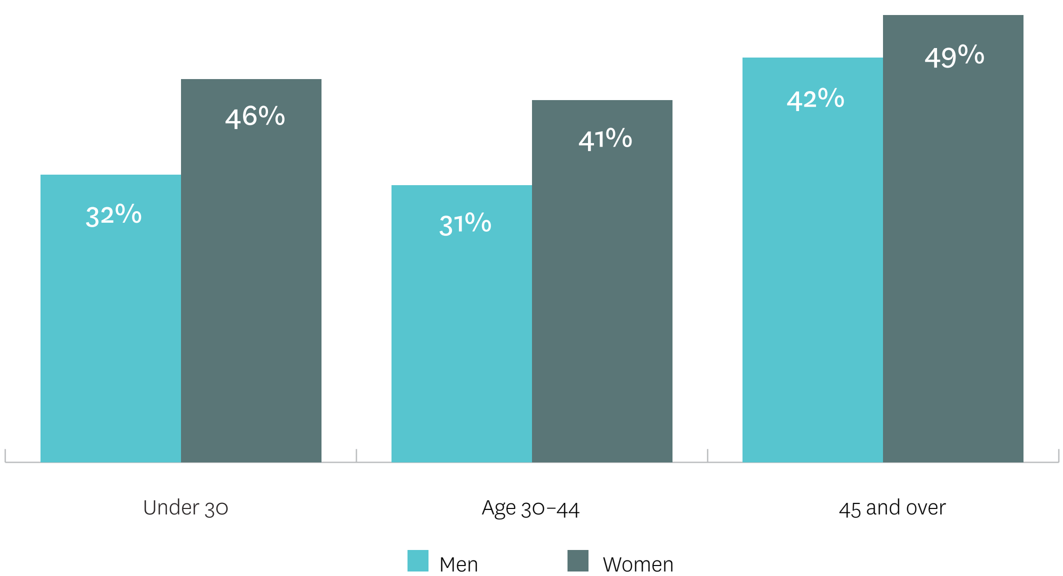


FIGURE C-7

Women who are not eager to be promoted

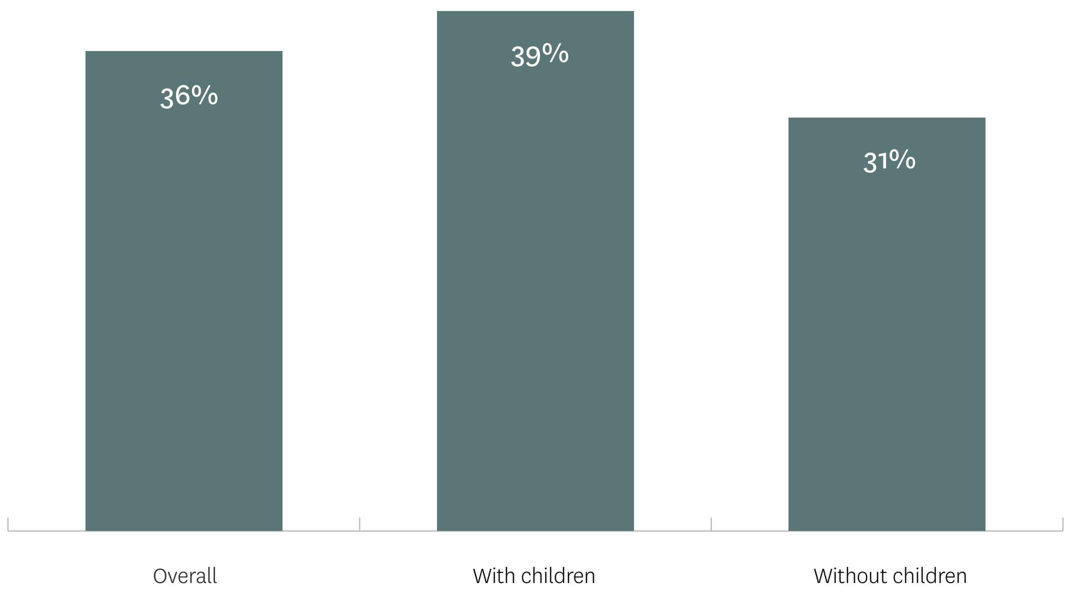


FIGURE C-8

Do you believe any of the following happen as a result of affairs with supervisors?

Suspicion of plum assignments being traded for sexual favors

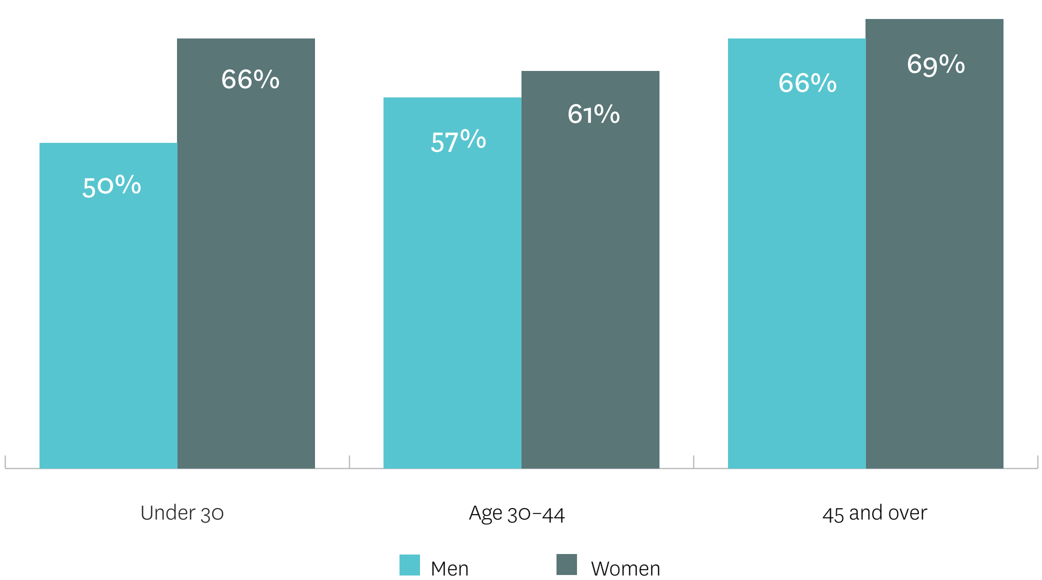


FIGURE C-9

Do you believe any of the following happen as a result of affairs with supervisors?

Lack of respect for manager

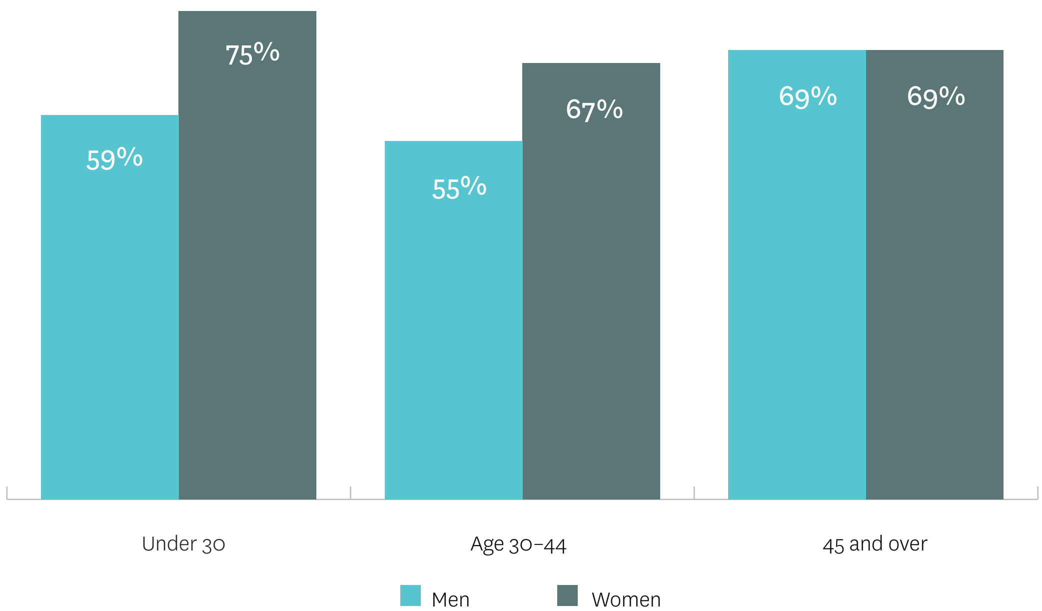
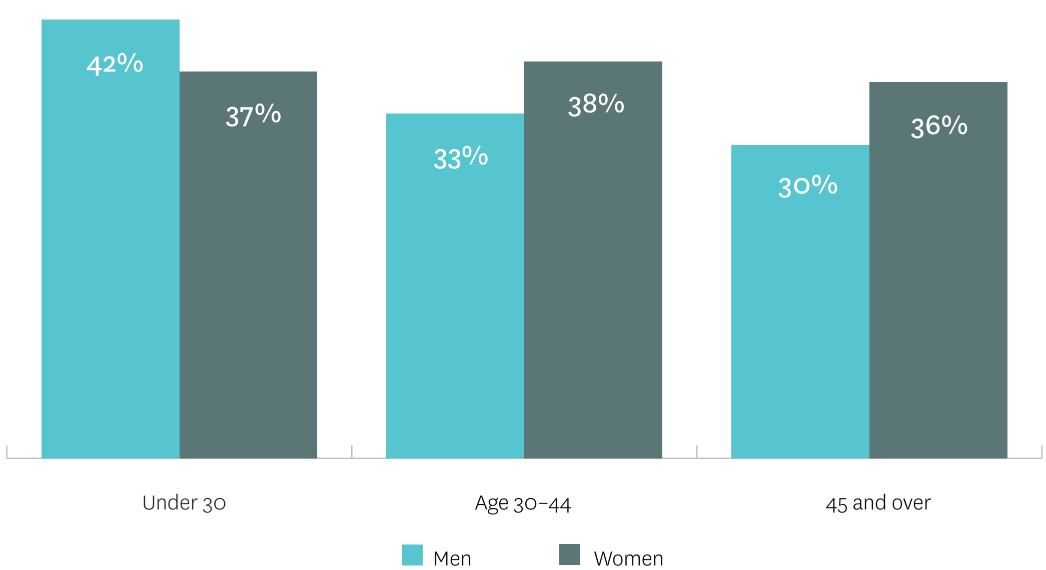


FIGURE C-10

Do you believe any of the following happen as a result of affairs with supervisors?

Falloff in dedication and commitment



ENDNOTES

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