Elevating women in leadership
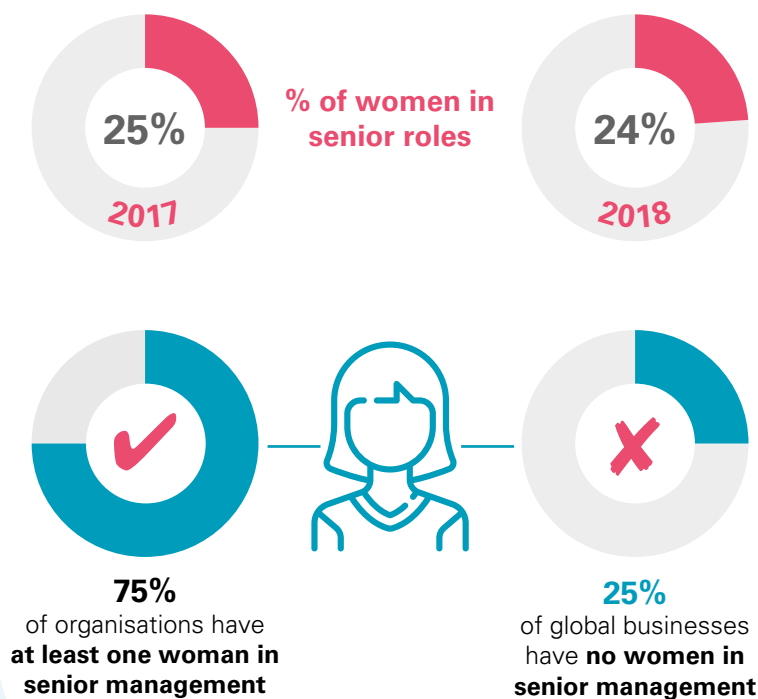
A European study

Introduction

Disappointing progress

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

It is reported that the percentage of women in senior roles is in decline (24% in 2018, 25% in 2017)[1]. Even though 75% of businesses have at least one woman in senior management, 25% of global businesses have no women in senior management. In 2017 women in executive roles in Fortune Global 100 companies were 22% in the Americas, 15% in Europe and only 4% in Asia[2]. 2018 has also seen a decline of women in leadership positions within the FTSE 100 to 9.7% and an even sharper drop to 6.4% within the FTSE 250[3].

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

There has been a slow and steady increase in female leadership positions since the 1970s. However, we are seeing this progress halt and, in some cases, move backwards. What will it take to really break through? What will it take to cause a true tipping point in organisations that are frustrated with battles yielding, at best, a few percentage points increase year over year? We were interested in finding out the answer to that question.
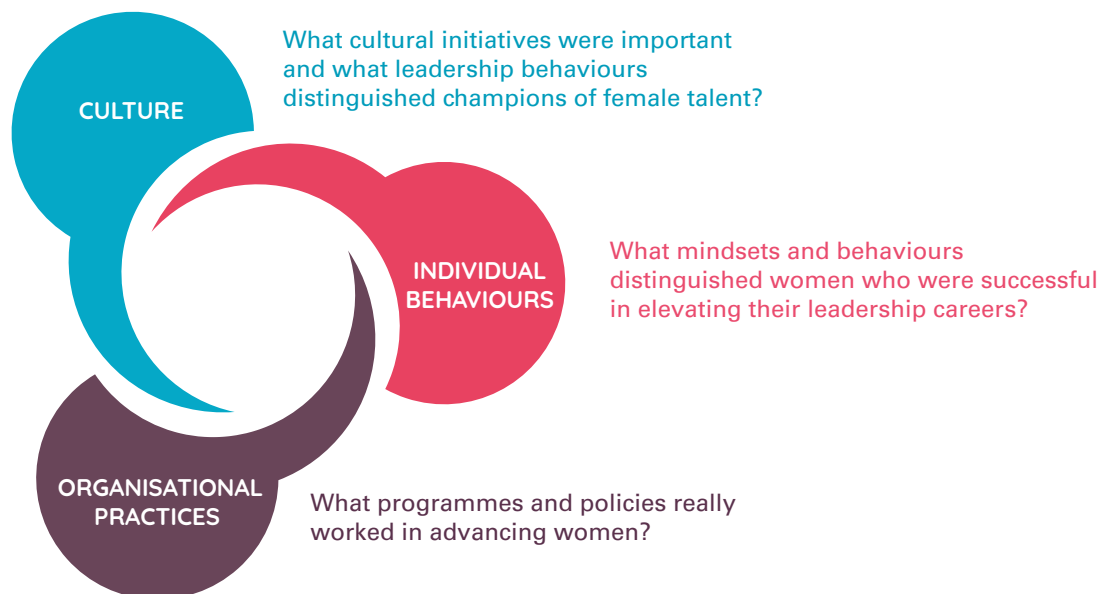
25%
2017

% of women in senior roles

24%
2018

75%
of organisations have **at least one woman in senior management**

25%
of global businesses have **no women in senior management**

About our study

Elevating women in leadership

In a recent study, Lee Hecht Harrison (LHH) explored what's working, what's not and what has the most impact to help companies create the inclusive workplaces required for women to advance.

We surveyed more than 500 individuals from France, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the UK, representing human resource executives and leaders who are responsible for helping their organisations build stronger leadership pipelines. There was a cross-section of over 20 industries represented and organisations that ranged in size from under 250 employees to over 10,000 employees.

THREE DIMENSIONS TO MAKE REAL CHANGE

CULTURE

What cultural initiatives were important and what leadership behaviours distinguished champions of female talent?

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOURS

What mindsets and behaviours distinguished women who were successful in elevating their leadership careers?

ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES

What programmes and policies really worked in advancing women?

What differentiates this research from others is that we have taken a comprehensive look at the three dimensions required to make meaningful change: individual behaviours, leadership culture and organisational practices[4].

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

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

• The behaviours of the people managers who are known champions of female talent;

• The aspects of their culture that shaped inclusivity;

• The practices that help support the advancement of women; and

• The behaviours and beliefs displayed by successful women.

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

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

Our findings

The gap in importance and action

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

We were interested in knowing how pervasive the shift in thinking around advancing women really is. The survey asked respondents what extent did they agree or disagree that advancing women in their organisation is a critical business issue, and 58% believed that it was a critical business issue. And of this percentage, 76% are unsatisfied with their organisation's ability to elevate women.

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

Think about your own organisation and reflect on the following:

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

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

58%

believe advancing women is a critical business issue

76%
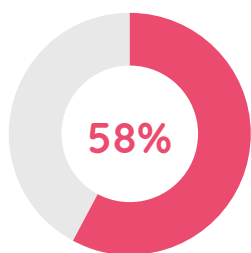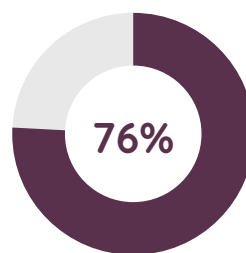
of which are unsatisfied with their organisation's ability to elevate women in leadership

The behaviours and beliefs that distinguish women who advance

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

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

Women in the extremely satisfied organisations demonstrated all of the behaviours more frequently than those in the unsatisfied organisations except one. They also held beliefs that were more helpful to their advancement.

THE DISTINGUISHING BEHAVIOURS AND BELIEFS

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

1 **Self-advocacy.** Results do not speak for themselves, and opportunities do not just fall in our laps. Self-advocacy is a critical behaviour to learn; unfortunately most women struggle with it. Successful women know how to own their strengths and accomplishments, share how they add value to the organisation, and ask for opportunities to grow and advance.

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

3 **Exhibit a high degree of confidence.** Self-assuredness and showing confidence was an important factor to all respondents. From our experience coaching thousands of women worldwide, we know that often what holds women back from stepping up or fully stepping into their leadership roles is their level of self-assuredness and how they demonstrate that to others to gain their confidence.

While this area is tougher to develop through group development programmes, one-on-one coaching can assist with this greatly. Take risks to learn new skills. Women who are seen as successful in advancing have made bold and sometimes uncomfortable moves to fulfil new roles, worked on high profile projects, made important presentations to senior stakeholders or made geographic moves. These opportunities have provided exposure, profile and invaluable skill development. While these are often seen as significant stretches, they are necessary to succeed longer term.
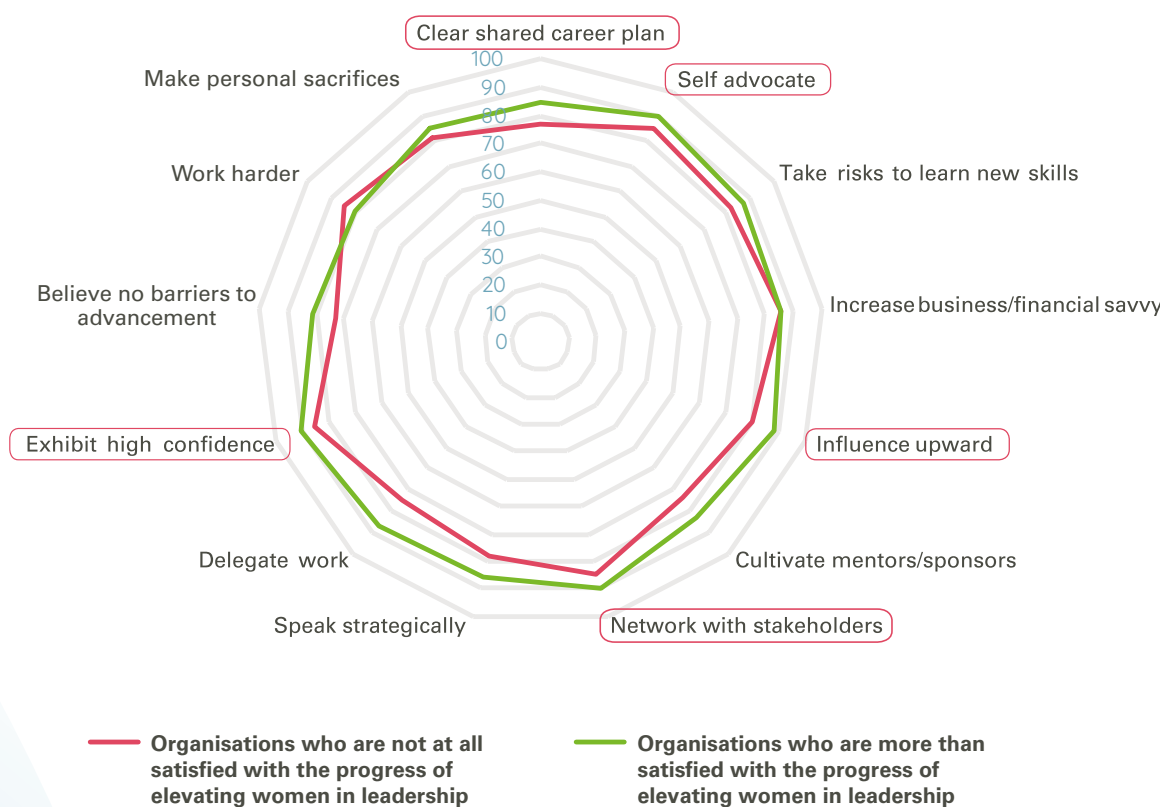

The five most distinguishing behaviours & beliefs in women who advance

1. Advocate on own behalf

2. Network with important stakeholders

3. Exhibit a high degree of confidence

4. Influence upward in the organisation

5. Have a clear career plan

4 **Influence upward.** Research has shown that women are quite skilled at influencing, especially down and across an organisation. Women face a bigger challenge, however influencing upward with more senior stakeholders. Women who are successful in moving upward use exposure through projects, roles and purposeful networking to better understand important stakeholders and more successfully influence how things get done.

5 **Clear, shared career plan.** Compared to men, women tend to have less clear career goals that are shared with others, which then results in receiving less sponsorship for growth and development. Women do take more breaks in their careers than men due to child rearing and family responsibilities. However, women who are successful in advancing upward plan their careers with a longer time horizon in mind, continuously share their plans, and get the support they need along the way to continue to progress.

DISTINGUISHING BEHAVIOURS & BELIEFS IN WOMEN WHO ADVANCE

Make personal sacrifices

Clear shared career plan
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Self advocate

Take risks to learn new skills

Work harder

Believe no barriers to advancement

Increase business/financial savvy

Exhibit high confidence

Influence upward

Delegate work

Cultivate mentors/sponsors

Speak strategically

Network with stakeholders

—— **Organisations who are not at all satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership**

—— **Organisations who are more than satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership**

THE OTHER IMPORTANT BEHAVIOURS AND BELIEFS

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

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

Belief in no barriers to advancement. There is no doubting that there are many deep-seated societal and organisational barriers to the advancement of women. Well engrained stereotypes are present in both men and women, which impact advancement opportunities. However, women in the extremely satisfied companies differed markedly in their own mindset. They believed that there were no barriers for themselves. There may have been factors all around them that could have prevented their success, but they didn't let that get in the way of their own beliefs around what they could personally accomplish.

Delegate work. In order to move into new roles, advance into senior positions, or make time for projects and development that will help with growth, women have to leverage the skill of delegation. Women in our study were more apt to delegate or distribute work to free up time for strategic initiatives. They did not get mired in the weeds; rather they knew how to leverage others to get work done.

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

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

Belief that they must work harder. The women in the study who were successful in advancing upward demonstrated a belief that they had to work harder than their male and female peers. While barriers may certainly exist, they did not fall prey to them. Women must first believe in themselves and their abilities, and then put in the time and work to fine tune those skills to realise and display the full extent of their potential.

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

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

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

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

Part 1
Audit your organisation

The behaviours and beliefs women need to advance

Please rate each question
(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

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

Create and communicate a clear career plan?

Advocate on their own behalf?

Influence upward in your organisation?

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

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

Network with important stakeholders internally and externally?

Speak strategically about the business?

Gain access to mentors and sponsors?

Increase their business and financial savvy?

The definition of a gender inclusive culture

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

1 **The organisation is known as a good place to work for females.** Successful organisations have a brand inside the organisation as a great place to work because it is supported by an inclusive culture, a safe environment, family friendly policies and opportunities for growth. This permeates outside the organisation through partnerships with community groups and associations furthering women in leadership.

2 **Leaders provide equal opportunities and create a consistent experience for all employees.** Successful organisations have a culture of strong talent management. People leaders are skilled at attracting, retaining and growing their employees. In this environment, everyone feels that growth and development is possible.

3 **The organisation recognises and leverages senior female leaders as role models.** Organisations making progress have women already in senior leadership roles and they are not token roles. Successful organisations use these roles as examples of possibility while not burdening solely the senior women to carry the mantle of gender equality.

4 **Leaders are committed to gender diversity.** The extremely satisfied organisations had leaders who were visibly committed to increasing the number of women throughout the organisation. Leaders didn't pay lip service; they took action on it.

The top four aspects of a gender inclusive culture

1. The organisation is known as a good place to work for females

2. Leaders create equal opportunity and a consistent experience for all employees

3. Your organisation recognises and leverages senior female leaders as role models

4. Leaders are committed to gender diversity

Diversity and inclusion strong part of culture and values

Organisation recognises and
leverages senior female role models

Leaders committed to gender diversity

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Organisation is known as
good place to work for females

Leaders held accountable for gender diversity

Organisation clearly communicates business reasons
to advance women

Leaders create consistent experience for all

Leaders create environment to challenge biases

—— **Organisations who are not at all
satisfied with the progress of
elevating women in leadership**

—— **Organisations who are more than
satisfied with the progress of
elevating women in leadership**

THE OTHER IMPORTANT GENDER INCLUSIVE CULTURE FACTORS

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

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

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

Diversity and inclusion are a strong component of our culture and values. The extremely
satisfied organisations described themselves as having diversity and inclusion baked into their
DNA. It wasn't something new that they were working on, it was consistent with how they
operated.

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

Part 2
Audit your organisation

The dimensions of a gender inclusive culture

Please rate each question
(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

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

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

Leaders are committed to gender diversity?

Leaders are held accountable for increasing gender diversity?

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

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

The organisation recognises and leverages senior female leaders as role models?

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

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

What champions of female talent do differently

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

Below are the five behaviours that differed the most between organisations that were extremely satisfied and extremely unsatisfied.

1 **Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen.** We know coaching and feedback are critical fundamental people leadership skills. Champions of female talent not only understand how to engage in these skills, they also understand the nuances that come into play with females. Studies have shown that not only do women receive less feedback, the feedback they do receive is much less focused on their impact on business objectives. Gender champions are deliberate about coaching women to increase their business acumen and provide feedback that discusses their impact on business metrics, not just communication or style.

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

3 **Stretch assignments and projects that are tied to strategic business imperatives do just that.** Champions of female talent ensure that these opportunities don't always go to the same people or people that remind them of themselves. They ensure that all team members get equal opportunities to grow and gain the experiences they need to advance. Take the initiative to mentor female talent. Champions of female talent don't sit around waiting for a formal mentoring programme to act as a mentor. They take it upon themselves, proactively, to mentor females.

4 **Give females exposure and profile to senior leaders and decision makers.** Advancing to more senior levels requires that a broad set of stakeholders know and have confidence in an employee's ability to lead. Champions know that providing exposure and profile through meetings, presentations, or project or committee work is essential. This includes ensuring that credit is given and advocating for individuals in their physical absence as well.
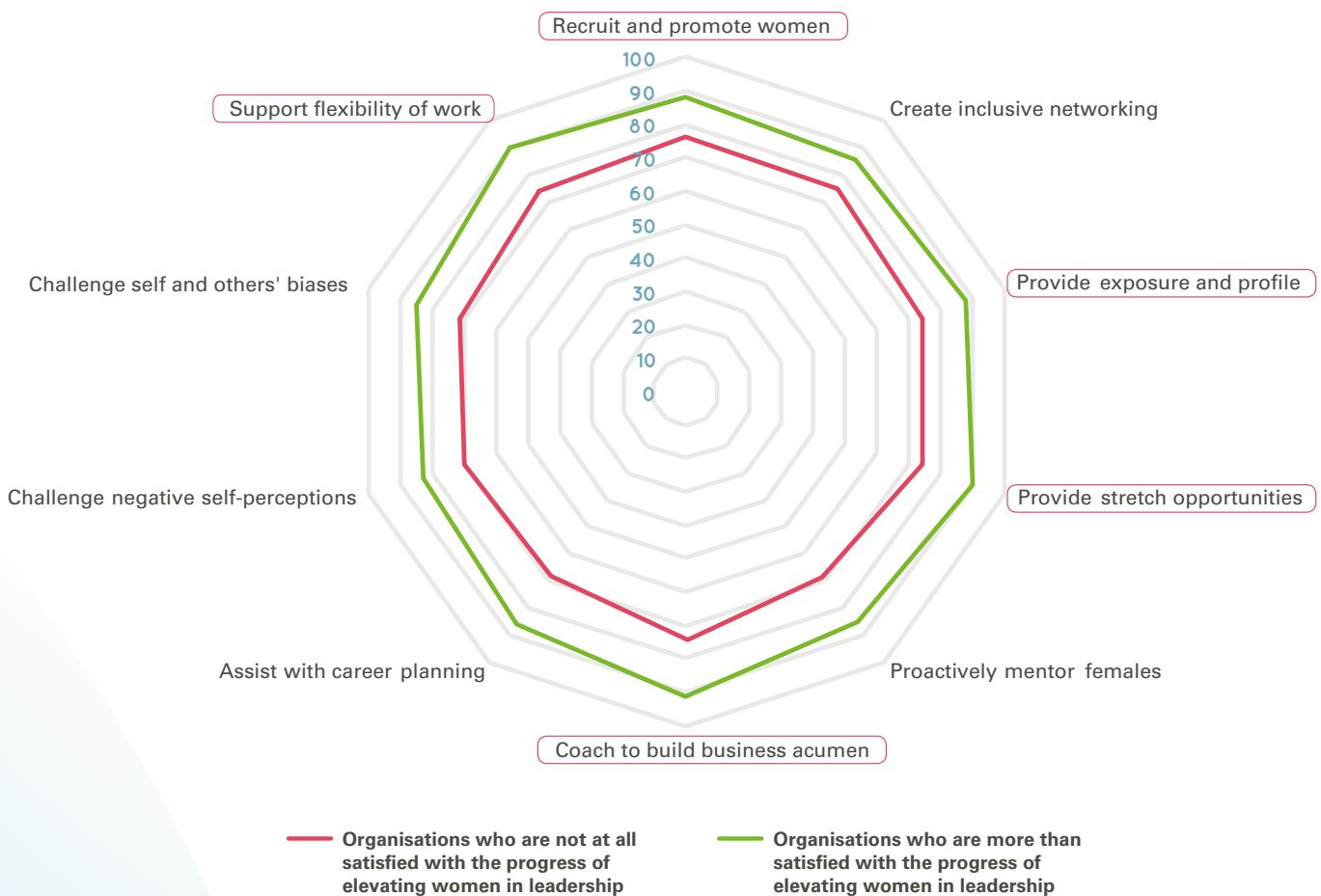
The top five differentiators of champions of female talent

1. Provide coaching and feedback that includes better understanding of broader business goals and metrics

2. Support flexibility to manage work schedules or location of work.

3. Provide equal access to meaningful stretch projects that are tied to strategic business objectives

4. Give females exposure and profile to senior leaders and decision makers

5. Recruit and promote from a diverse pool of candidates

5 **Recruit and promote from a diverse pool.** It stands to reason that organisations that are successful in advancing female talent have leaders that consciously start with a broader pool both in who they hire and who they promote. Recent research published by Harvard University shows that if at least two females are presented in a shortlist of candidates, a female is 50% more likely to be chosen as the final candidate. When there is only one female candidate, she stands virtually no chance of being selected. Provide equal access to meaningful stretch assignments. The only way for employees to really prove potential is for them to tackle situations they have not previously encountered.

DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOURS OF FEMALE CHAMPION PEOPLE LEADERS

— Organisations who are not at all satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership

— Organisations who are more than satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership

THE OTHER IMPORTANT FEMALE CHAMPION BEHAVIOURS

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

Create opportunities to network informally that are inclusive of interests and schedules.
We hear many women say that building relationships and connecting informally with team members and their managers is difficult given it often happens during times when they need to be present at home. Champions of female talent know that informal networking builds better working teams and is important enough to do during regular working hours and inclusive of broad interests.

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

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

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

Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen. We know coaching and feedback are critical fundamental people leadership skills. Champions of female talent not only understand how to engage in these skills, they also understand the nuances that come into play with females. Studies have shown that not only do women receive less feedback, the feedback they do receive is much less focused on their impact on business objectives. Gender champions are deliberate about coaching women to increase their business acumen and provide feedback that discusses their impact on business metrics, not just communication or style.

Part 3
Audit your organisation

The behaviours of female champion people leaders

Please rate each question
(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

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

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

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

Provide coaching and feedback that builds business acumen?

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

Challenge self and others around unconscious biases?

Recruit and promote from a diverse pool?

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

Take the initiative to mentor female talent?

Assist females with longer term career planning?

Support flexibility to manage work schedules or location of work?

Organisational practices that elevate women

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

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

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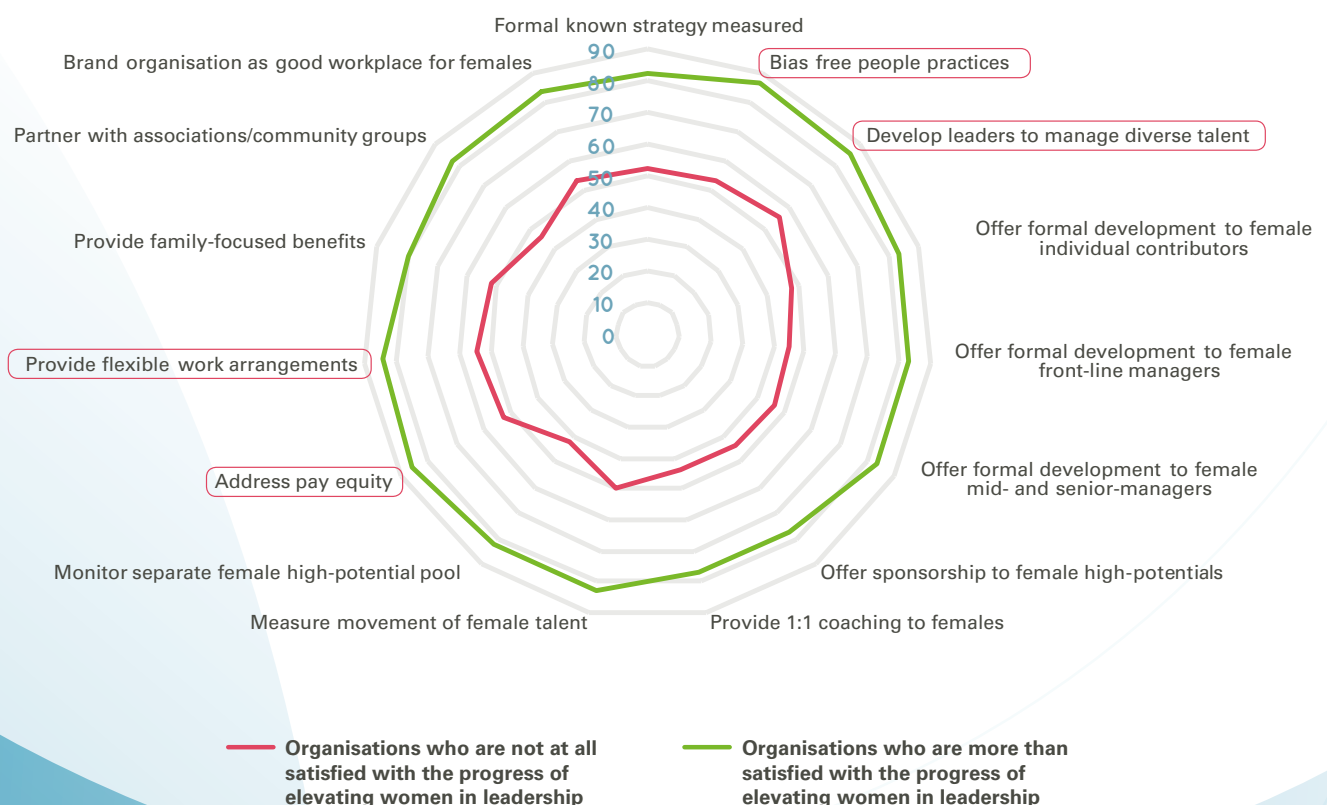4. Provides flexible work arrangements (hours or location of work)

> **Four organisational practices that elevate women**
>
> 1. Gender bias-free people practices
>
> 2. Develop people leader skills to manage diverse talent
>
> 3. Address pay equity
>
> 4. Provide flexible work

Existence doesn't guarantee benefit

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

ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES THAT ADVANCE WOMEN

Organisations who are not at all satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership

Organisations who are more than satisfied with the progress of elevating women in leadership

Part 4
Audit your organisation

Organisational practices that support female advancement

Please rate each question
(1 = not at all, 5= to a great extent)

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

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

Building a more gender diverse organisation

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

The call to action for your organisation and its leaders

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

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

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

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

Part 5
Audit your organisation

INSIGHTS AND ACTION PLAN

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

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

About Lee Hecht Harrison Penna

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

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

Sources:

1. https://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/1.-member-firms/global/insights/women-in-business/grant-thornton-women-in-business-2018-report.pdf

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