

**MAKING
DIVERSITY
WORK:**
A COMPENDIUM
OF STRATEGIES,
TECHNIQUES AND
PERSPECTIVES
VOLUME 2



WOMEN
UNLIMITED, INC.

MENTORING
EDUCATION
NETWORKING

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Introduction: Dr. Rosina L. Racioppi



It's been almost two years since we published Volume 1 of our WOMEN Unlimited *Compendium*. Many of our Corporate Partners have been asking "for more." As CEO and CBO [Chief Blog Originator] I'm happy to provide you with Volume 2 of our *Compendium*.

This volume is filled with thoughts, ideas, strategies and suggestions not just from me and my team, but from guest bloggers who have been in the forefront of creating strategies that support gender parity in their companies and their industries.

As I look back at these blogs, I see a realistic mirror of both the strides companies and their talented women have made, as well as what they have learned from their setbacks on the road to gender parity. We at WOMEN Unlimited have been working towards gender parity since 1994. Our integrated development strategy delivers results before, during and after our programs for the talented women sponsored to attend and for their managers and their senior leadership. We work across the organization to help our corporate partners and their talented women make the cultural and behavioral changes necessary for gender parity to solidly take hold. That is our proven approach to ensuring that organizations will enjoy the bottom line benefits that come with sustained diversity at all levels.

You'll Find Blogs and More

While our blogs are the major feature of the *Compendium*, for your convenience we have included access to other resources developed by WOMEN Unlimited. You'll find links to our webinars and published materials. All have been extremely well received by the management community.

I truly enjoy sharing my thoughts and perspectives and those of our guest bloggers with you. My goal is to make sure we continue to address the broad spectrum of gender parity issues. To that end, I very much welcome your ideas for possible blog topics and possible guest bloggers. Just email me your suggestions at: rracioppi@women-unlimited.com.



Dr. Rosina L. Racioppi
President & CEO
WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.

GENDER PARITY: PERSPECTIVES FROM MULTIPLE VANTAGE POINTS



**GENDER
PARITY**

Developing Female Talent Part 1: The Manager Perspective

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** February 18, 2016

In my last blog, I talked about the “MEN” in our name “WOMEN Unlimited”, being deliberate because unless men are engaged in the process of inclusiveness, it is doomed to failure.

I also have a way of looking at the “M-A-N” in “WOMAN.” I see it as pointing to “MANagers,” both male and female, whose wholehearted involvement and support are essential to help women advance.

That’s why in helping top organizations attract, develop and retain female talent, we also help managers support their high potential women. Many managers tell us that as a result of their women attending our programs, their own learning curve is facilitated. As the women on their team progress through a program, the managers gain a better sense...of how barriers women experience influence their careers...of how to encourage their female talent to build on their strengths... and of recognizing where changes need to happen in themselves and in the corporate culture.

During our 22 years involved with developing female talent, we have frequently heard from managers on the challenges their women team members face. Among the most commonly cited:

- Navigating the corporate landscape to drive results and manage their careers
- Unwillingness to take risks
- Recognizing and seizing opportunities
- Building effective networks and business relationships
- Demonstrating strategic thinking

We have also gained a broad based, cross-industry perspective on best practices used by managers to develop their high potential women. Often, these best practices come out of the “secondary learning” gained by managers as a result of their female team member attending a WOMEN Unlimited program:

- Giving and getting honest feedback both in reviews and on an ongoing basis
- Understanding the perspectives and experiences of the women on their team
- Helping women take accountability for managing their careers
- Providing opportunities for growth that are not just about promotions
- Assessing their own attitudes towards women advancing
- Helping women move from a tactical to a strategic perspective

At WOMEN Unlimited, we address the issues facing both managers and their female talent with an organizational solution approach. We understand that inclusiveness won’t happen just because a woman attends a program, or a manager appreciates her talent. It happens when they and their organization are committed to growth and change company-wide.

With that in mind, this blog is the first in a three-part series. The next blog will focus on the perspective of mentors in developing female talent, and the third will take a look at how high potential women themselves see their journey to inclusiveness.

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**Developing Female Talent Part 2:
The Mentoring Perspective**

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. March 10, 2016

Since the inception of WOMEN Unlimited in 1994, we have pinpointed mentoring, along with education and networking, as one of our three pillars for developing female talent. Our involvement with thousands of high potential women and hundreds of mentors has helped forge our perspective on how key mentoring relationships can and should work for BOTH mentees and their mentors.

First of all, we have learned that mentoring works best for women when the mentee is clearly focused on her career and development goals, her strengths and her expectations... and when she prepares for the mentoring relationship by pre-planning and committing as she would for any high-powered corporate interaction.

In my independent research and based on numerous conversations with mentors and mentees, I have come to call this approach “being intentional.” It means that there is little chance of the relationship failing to provide the critical learnings necessary for the mentee’s development and career advancement. It means that the mentee leverages both the mentor’s time and experiences to forge her own career strategies.

To help mentees hone these skills, we incorporate mentoring as part of our formal development programs. In this way mentees build on their strengths and focus on areas in need of development in a safe, non-threatening venue outside the standard corporate environment. These skills are then transferable not only to finding and building internal mentor relationships, but also to a wide range of needed business relationships.

Why Mentors Find Value in Our Approach to Mentoring

Selection of effective mentors is crucial to the success of the mentoring relationship. We work closely with our corporate partners to help them find and nominate male and female executives to serve as mentors for women from other organizations. We provide guidelines for mentoring success. We factor in time for involvement both in person and virtually.

We encourage mentors to provide honest and constructive feedback to their mentees. According to research, this straightforward feedback is often missing in women’s interactions with their bosses and colleagues, creating an obstacle to talented women making the changes necessary to assume top leadership roles. Our mentors help close that gap.

While the mentoring experience is primarily about providing women a safe relationship in which to discuss their careers, both male and female mentors tell us that it has been a transformational learning experience for them as well.

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A few examples:

- Both male and female mentors gain new insights into the challenges women are facing today
- The insights they gain as mentors, can easily be applied to other organizational relationships
- They continue to hone their mentoring and coaching skills for their team members at work
- They have a clearer picture of how they can be stronger advocates for organization-wide diversity
- They gain a greater understanding of the impact of corporate culture on the advancement of women
- Because of their seniority in the organization, the mentors' new insights and commitment have far-reaching impact on their management and their teams

To summarize, in order for mentoring to “live up to its hype,” there are three basic rules of thumb:

- Mentees have to be intentional about the relationship
- Mentees need a safe environment in which to learn effective mentoring strategies and fine tune these career-building skills
- Mentors are most likely to continue as mentors when they see benefits for their mentees, for their teams and for their organizations and when they perceive themselves learning and growing from the process, as well.

To learn more about effective mentoring, [click here](#) to take a look at a synopsis of my independent research.

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**Developing Female Talent Part 3:
High Potential Women's Perspective**

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 19, 2016

This is the last in my series focusing on the three major players helping women achieve their full potential. We've previously looked at managers and mentors. In this blog, I'll focus on the women themselves.

Every year WOMEN Unlimited engages with hundreds of women who participate in our programs throughout the United States and in Asia Pacific. Plus we continue to provide development resources to our over 11,000 alumnae via The WUN - alumnae network. Through both formal and informal research, we identify the current opportunities and challenges women face as they strive to reach the highest levels in their organizations.

Over and over high potential women tell us that, as they look to advance their careers, they are seeking strategies to:

- leverage their existing talents
- develop new leadership skills
- deal with corporate culture and attitudes
- increase their corporate visibility
- ensure a work/life balance

Our development programs—with the help of our WOMEN Unlimited team and our participants' managers, mentors and peers in the program -address these challenges both by developing the leadership skills of talented women and by helping them deal with ingrained corporate cultures.

We ensure that what the women experience during formal program sessions is just the beginning. We help them understand how to apply their new insights and revamped strategies and how to look at themselves and their organizations from the perspective of a leader. As a result, the women become more empowered to reach their career goals by aligning with corporate ones.

High Potential Women Pinpoint Needed Changes

It is always so heartening for us at WOMEN Unlimited to hear from our participants and alumnae how they and their organizations have benefitted from our approach. For example, our alumnae have pinpointed these areas of growth and development as a result of participation in our programs:

- Drive business results by successfully navigating the corporate landscape
- Navigate the organization for successful career management
- Communicate effectively with people across the organization

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- Seen as a strong leader
- Understand how to shift behavior to be more successful
- Willing to speak up or step forward for opportunities
- Think strategically about business challenges and opportunities
- Cultivate a broad network of colleagues and mentors
- Understand how to establish relationships with key individuals

Additionally, we see that 50 to 60 % of our participants receive promotions or expanded responsibilities during the course of their program experience...with 70% reporting an expansion of their roles as well as promotions within a year of program participation.

In Their Own Words

Following each program, we ask our participants to let us know “how you are perceived differently as a result of the program.”

These are the areas most frequently mentioned:

- More confident in relationships at all organizational levels
- Greater executive presence
- More focused on the bigger picture
- More strategic
- More visible
- Less of a micromanager

To recap: Our approach of mentoring, education and networking achieves the results it does because it actively involves managers and mentors with the development of high potential women; while ensuring that the women themselves are engaged in shifting the attitudes and behaviors that may be holding them back. As a result, we have helped hundreds of corporations create a diverse pipeline of talented female leaders...improve decision making at all levels...and enjoy improved bottom line results that benefit all stakeholders.

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Perceptions

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** July 1, 2015

MOOREEFFOC

There's an old story, first told by Charles Dickens, about how someone having lunch in a restaurant was dumfounded by a sign across the street that read: "mooreeffoc." For the life of her, she couldn't figure out what it meant. Then she stepped outside; crossed the street and it all became clear. She had been looking at the sign through a glass door. "mooreeffoc" was "coffeeroom" spelled backwards.

It's a great metaphor for how our perceptions can confound and confuse, and is especially applicable to how men and women perceive their workplace differently.

Different Experiences. Different Perspectives

Corporations and their hierarchical structure were produced, directed and designed by men—in most cases white men. The resulting organizational culture (with its stated and unstated rules) is one with which men have been comfortable from hunter/gatherer days. Not so for women. Their prototype tends to revolve more around community and joint interaction.

Fortunately, during the past few years, we have been seeing a change in this great divide. Men and women are starting to more clearly perceive where the other is coming from. Men are better understanding the challenges corporate women face and how to work more effectively with women at all levels. Women are becoming more attuned to merging their success with corporate goals and, as a result, more are reaching the highest corporate levels. We are increasingly moving towards the bottom line being the unified purpose that defines the corporate experience for both men and women. Still a long way to go, but definite progress.

Perfection vs. Excellence

In my more than 21 years of helping women advance their careers, I have noticed the tendency for women to be perfectionists about their work. They believe that because they have done such a great job, their work should speak for itself. It's a career-thwarting mental set. It can result in too much effort in the wrong direction. It can cause women to become burnt out early on. It can leave little or no time for the all-important work of building relationships through mentors, networks and sponsors. Perfectionism also draws women inward rather than outward, causing them to lose sight of ensuring that their work product supports corporate goals.

Men have a keener sense of where to expend their energy, whether it's at the keyboard or on the golf course. They know who to talk to and how to talk to them. As a result, they stay more keyed in to both industry developments and to the internal workings of the organization; and they have allies and alliances that watch out for them.

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Women are catching up and catching on, but there's a way to go, especially for early-career women. They need to grow their confidence and their relationships. They need to understand that work product is only one piece of their job; that visibility is the key to long-term career success and that connecting what they do to customer and corporate needs is a major route to that much-needed visibility.

The Feedback Challenge

It's very frustrating to see how feedback, the lifeblood of change and growth, can be so difficult for men to provide and for women to seek out. Male managers often find it challenging to level with their female subordinates. This reticence does women a terrible disservice, failing to give them the opportunity to make needed changes to grow their careers, or even keep their jobs.

Women on the other hand, often do not hear the more subtle feedback provided by their managers and colleagues. Furthermore, they fail to ask the outright questions like: "How am I doing?" "What could I have done better?" "Where is there room for improvement?" This barrier needs to be torn down on both sides. It's a huge stumbling block to women advancing their careers and becoming the major contributors their organizations need. For over 21 years, we at WOMEN Unlimited, have been working with both talented women and their managers to facilitate this vitally important feedback process.

One final piece of advice. The next time you come up against a corporate "mooreffoc," look at the situation from a different perspective. You're likely to find one or more solutions that best deal with the problem at hand.

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Soccer and Tennis: Why Corporations Need Both

Guest Blogger: Tom Dybro, Senior Talent Development Consultant, Robert W. Baird

May 3, 2016

Throughout the year, we invite guest bloggers to share their from-the-field perspectives on inclusiveness and diversity. I'm so pleased to provide you with a number of outstanding and actionable insights from Tom Dybro.

I am the father of two daughters, 12 and 14. As many of us parents know, siblings are often vastly different from each other. Both my daughters are athletic: one is on her school's soccer team; the other plays tennis. Both enjoy winning and contributing to their school's success. Just in very different ways.

It's a constant reminder to me of how organizations, in looking to develop their high potential women, have to accommodate different styles and personalities if they want to enjoy the success that comes from diversity at the top.

As I work with organizations to develop their high potential women, I am in a great position to look at how we can do a better job of helping female talent reach their full potential. Here are a few observations I hope you'll find helpful as you further your own inclusiveness initiatives.

Our solutions should be customized to women

Early career women are no longer given the time and space to grow their careers. We are not focusing enough on the "care and feeding" of these high-potential women. They are pressured to jump through hoops and are not consistently coached as they consider their various career paths. It's not just the women's loss, it's the organization's loss, as well.

Here's just one example of supporting high potential talent early on: So we wouldn't lose a promising early career woman, we re-located her over 1000 miles away to join her soon-to-be-husband. She has worked remotely for over two years and is as brilliant as ever. In the past, this kind of accommodation was restricted to more senior-level people. Not anymore.

We have to realistically address the work/life balance

All of us, but women especially, are caught in a vicious cycle that has robbed us of free time. Yes, things have changed a bit, but statistically women still carry a disproportionate amount of family responsibilities, coupled with the pressing requirements of job and career.

It is a disservice to the women themselves, their families and their organizations that women have little or no time for deepening their emotional intelligence, for growing their psychological agility and for reflecting on where they are and what they want. It's no wonder that rates of reported depression and anxiety among women are at an all-time high. We have to help women step back, take a breath and recharge.

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We need to mentor, but never be a crutch

I have been a mentor in a number of contexts including WOMEN Unlimited programs. I see 80% of my mentoring job as holding a mirror up to a woman's individual choices long enough for her to look at her assumptions and reflect on how and where to make required changes.

Mirroring through mentoring can be an important part of the much-needed process where women question old habits and substitute best practices for ineffective behaviors. When done well, the mirroring approach empowers the mentee and fosters a sustainable relationship, without it becoming a crutch.

These approaches, individually, but especially in tandem, can throw much needed heat and light on inclusiveness initiatives.

P.S. An excellent read: I highly recommend *Chained to the Desk: A Guidebook for Workaholics, their Partners and Children, and the Clinicians Who Treat Them* by Bryan E. Robinson, Ph.D.

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Inclusiveness: Wall Street vs. Main Street

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. August 2, 2016

I recently read an article in the New York Times, *How Wall Street Bro Talk Keeps Women Down* by Sam Polk.

As the head of an organization dedicated to the advancement of women, I had to ask myself “Is this really 2016?” The article highlighted the misogyny that still exists on Wall Street, where according to Polk, “a woman has never been the chief executive of a major investment bank. Only about 2 percent of hedge fund managers are women.”

Polk pinpoints two major causes for the absence of women in high places: a culture that disrespects women and uses “bro talk” to objectify them... and an unwillingness by men to attack that culture because they will pay a substantial price, both financially and socially, for not going along.

That may be Wall Street.

But how about Main Street?

When I reflected further, I started to compare my experiences working with executives in some of the world’s leading organizations. (Yes, they are mostly men.) Fortunately, what I see is a very different story. The majority of male business leaders are seeking to understand what they need to do to advance female talent. Yes, there is gender bias, along with other biases. At the same time, there is an increasing awareness of the problems these biases create and a commitment to develop new strategies. The stumbling block is that often male executives do not see their organizations through the same lens as women.

Specifically, here’s what’s different from the “force field of disrespect and exclusion” Polk outlined:

More men in high places are understanding that bias must be attacked; that evidence overwhelmingly points to the need for a more diverse C-suite; that developing a pipeline of talented women is not just the right thing to do... it’s the smart thing to do. What’s more, they are seeing to it that the inclusiveness message gets down to the level where the tapping of talented women begins.

Men who have it right

In our 22 years of helping organizations enjoy the benefits of advancing female talent, WOMEN Unlimited has worked with over 11,300 women and their managers, over 60% of whom are men. We have seen the veil of bias drop away as the managers witness first hand, the emergence of leadership talent in the women on their teams. We have seen more senior

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male executives choosing to mentor our participants and coming away with new insights on how to advocate for, and implement diversity initiatives.

Two specific examples

- 1. Bobby Rodriguez**, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, was recently interviewed by WOMEN Unlimited. From his perspective, and it is a bird's eye view, the over-all picture is a lot rosier than Wall Street: "I hope women know that there are many men - and women - who believe in them and who want to help them grow, develop and make it to the top."
- 2. Tom Dybro**, a long-time mentor to WOMEN Unlimited participants, posted a blog on our site and included this observation: "I see 80% of my mentoring job as holding a mirror up to a woman's individual choices long enough for her to look at her assumptions and reflect on how and where to make required changes."

It's Hard Work and It's Starting to Get Done

Of course, I realize there's a long way to go before true inclusiveness becomes ubiquitous. There certainly remain pockets of entrenched misogyny, like the ones Polk points out. But they're starting to loosen up. For reasons both ethical and profitable, more and more companies are embracing the reality that female talent is a resource to be nurtured, developed and retained.

So, leaning on an old cliché, I choose to believe the glass is half full.

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Election '16 – Moving Forward: A Corporate Perspective

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 16, 2016

It's been one week since Election Day and we've all had a chance to sit back, take a breath and look at where we go from here, whatever our political affiliations, whatever our points of view.

I'd like to spend a little time focusing specifically on how we as individuals within a corporation can successfully move forward and help ourselves and others look to new opportunities for growth and development.

Wherever You Stand Politically—Turn Your Attention to Being Effective

In my experience, when a momentous event happens, whether it's personal, professional or political, there is a tendency for both "winners" and "losers" to go into self-righteous mode. Winners adapt an "I told you so. I knew we were right" stance. Those unhappy with the outcome, often turn to a "We've been wronged and we have to fix it" mentality.

Both sides believe they are justified in either touting their success or bemoaning their loss. However, both mental sets are equally counter-productive in pointing the way to future individual and corporate success. Both throw barriers in the path of effectiveness.

It is certainly important for all of us to learn from the past personally and professionally and to grow from what we learn. Just as in sports, we review past plays to play better in the future. However, the past is not our goal and remaining overly fixated on what we perceive as either past wins or past failures is a nail in the coffin of collaboration, creativity and ultimately, the bottom line.

Instead, as members of corporate America we need to channel our energies into pinpointing and implementing a path forward. That's what successful corporate life is all about, isn't it? Individuals and organizations forging forward-looking strategies that allow them to profit and grow amidst complex and constantly changing realities.

A Lot Was Learned. Pass On the Knowledge

I think we can all agree that there was plenty of acrimony to go around during this past campaign. But that's not what we should remember, especially those of us committed to developing a pipeline of talented women to take their place in leadership roles. There are positive lessons to be learned from the campaign and the election. Lessons that can be of important value to women seeking advancement, to leadership in their organizations and to future generations of both men and women.

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Let me give you a few examples:

- Shattering the glass ceiling isn't all about winning. It's about raising awareness, attacking biases and opening the door for future talented women
- Bias needs to be addressed politically and corporately. It exists in many forms in both sectors, sometimes overt and sometimes less obvious
- There are numerous similarities between women in politics and women in business. For example, on both fronts: women are under-represented in leadership roles.... they can have difficulty being heard in a largely male establishment...and they have few role models at the highest levels to turn to and learn from
- The voices of young women must be heard and addressed. We need to listen to their values and concerns while also mentoring them on playing the game as the game is played

This was indeed an election for the history books. They will be writing about it for years to come. It is my hope that in corporate America, as a result of Election '16, we will be making history as more women advance to the highest leadership levels.

STEM: PATHS AND OBSTACLES FOR FEMALE TALENT



STEM

Highlights: An Information Packed Webinar on STEM and Female Talent

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** October 17, 2016

On September 28th, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. sponsored a webinar on STEM: Developing and Retaining Female Talent. I had the privilege of moderating the discussion which featured two panelists with extensive STEM experience: Liz Borowsky, Senior Director, Akamai Technologies, Inc. and Jennifer Harnden-Koehler, Ph.D., Executive Coaching & Talent Management Consulting, Talent Acceleration Group.

They covered four important questions, punctuated with original research on women in STEM

1. Why are women not heading into STEM?
2. What are the specific barriers women in STEM face?
3. How do we “move the needle?”
4. What specifically can organizations, managers, mentors and HR do to make STEM more sought after by women?

A Few Highlights of Jennifer Harnden-Koehler’s original STEM Research

- Women hold less than 15% of senior management roles in pharma and biotech companies
- Women hold less computer jobs today than they did 23 years ago
- Women hold just under 10% of board seats industry wide in pharma and biotech
- YET...the business case shows that having women in senior positions improves financial performance

Hear more of [Jennifer’s research and the entire webinar](#)

The comments were fast and free flowing. Some of my favorite insights

- Create an environment of “conscious inclusion”
- The power of three: When interviewing, managers are charged to bring up three candidates, but “only two can look like you.”
- Management recognition of all styles, including quieter contributions, can maximize impact
- Women need to learn to assert themselves without fueling stereotypes
- Men in STEM, tend to be more black and white, which appears more decisive, while women tend to be more nuanced.
- Women need to be more emphatic within their nuanced perspective.

The Complete Webinar Is Now Available to You

Because of the powerful and actionable information presented during the one hour webinar, we wanted to make it available, in its entirety, to the management community. Please also feel free to share it with your colleagues. You have unlimited access to the download at no charge.

This webinar is just one of WOMEN Unlimited’s many resources provided to help corporations achieve and exceed corporate inclusiveness goals, especially in the challenging STEM environment. Please feel free to contact us at any time as you continue to attract, promote and retain high potential women leaders.

STEM

The Community Designing Technology Needs to Be As Broad and Diverse As the Community Consuming It!

Guest Blogger: Heidi Musser: Consultant, Recently Retired: USAA, VP & Division CIO November 30, 2016

STEM needs diversity. It is a business imperative.

With just about everything having a technology component, organizations need the brightest and the best minds across gender, race and ethnicity to sustain creativity, to foster innovation and to increase profitability. Unfortunately, it isn't happening for a number of reasons; but three stand out as particularly insidious to gender parity:

- Women are less likely to come into STEM than they were 20 or 30 years ago
- Unconscious bias is impeding the progress of women in STEM
- We have failed to create much-needed metrics to measure success and address shortcomings

Fewer women coming to STEM

Since I was at Michigan State in the 1980's, the percentage of women studying engineering at my alma mater has gone from 33% to slightly above 10%. Those were pre-Silicon Valley dot.com days. STEM didn't beckon with panache, high earnings and lucrative careers. Once interest and salaries in STEM started going up, men began to flock to it, seemingly disproportionately. As the balance shifted, entry for women became more difficult; STEM careers became less attractive for women, and more women began leaving mid-career. Women were feeling shut out. It's hard to be the only female in the classroom or the conference room, literally and figuratively.

And unfortunately, the dearth of women in STEM continues. In 2015, 25% of the computing workforce were women, and less than 10% were women of color.

Unconscious bias is taking a toll

Both men and women in STEM suffer from unconscious bias. It's cultural, it's pervasive and it's often ignored.

Unconscious bias is like death by a thousand paper cuts. One hurts just a little, so you ignore it. But the cuts keep mounting up over a career. And because each "paper cut", like being asked to get coffee or take notes, is seemingly insignificant, we tend not to make a big deal out of it. In other words, unconscious bias is made up of subtle acts that seem inconsequential in the moment, but over time create major barriers to a woman's success.

Unconscious bias has certainly impacted my career in a variety of ways. For example, I've often experienced male managers who were reluctant to give me direct feedback. I have had to be very emphatic, insisting they offer specific recommendations for improvement, rather than broad, "good job, you're doing fine" variety comments. It's very

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challenging to grow and advance in an organization without honest feedback and, without insisting on it, women are unlikely to receive it.

Metrics Aren't In Place

In IT, metrics are everywhere. We measure just about everything: time-to-market, quality, availability, return-to-service, total cost of ownership, IT spend ratio, etc.

That's why I find it ironic that some leaders in STEM have been reluctant to develop and track metrics for recruiting, hiring and retaining a diverse workforce. In my experience, if you don't measure it, you can't change it. Metrics drive both results and accountability; and the bigger the metric, the greater the change.

To truly achieve parity, we need to measure and discuss diversity in a variety of ways. For example, it's not enough to say, "we have increased the number of women we hired by "x%". We need to measure at what level they are in the organization...what areas they work in...how far they've advanced vis-a-vis male counterparts. Until we measure, we will not be giving inclusiveness the serious attention it deserves.

What Needs to Happen Next

There is no magic bullet to make diversity happen in STEM. And isolated, one-off efforts are not enough for sustained change. However, if I were to pinpoint one place to start, it would be this: Top management needs to really believe the business case for diversity and that it improves the bottom line. They must send a loud and clear message to their entire organization that gender parity is a necessity, not a nicety. Once they do, diversity will take a stronger hold across STEM and we will start to see an all-important sea change:

*The Community Designing Technology Becoming
As Diverse as the Community Consuming It!*

**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS:
ONLY ONE PIECE OF
THE WOMEN UNLIMITED
EXPERIENCE**



DEVELOPMENT
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The WOMEN Unlimited Way

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. January 15, 2016

As many of you know the “MEN” in our name, is an acronym for Mentoring, Education and Networking. These three pillars have formed the foundation of our strategy since we began over 20 years ago.

Also, fundamental to our strategy and to the success of our corporate partners is the integration of these pillars well beyond the women who are involved in our programs. By taking an organization-wide approach, our corporate partners complement their business and talent strategies and enjoy results that positively impact growth and profitability. We have a long track record of statistical and anecdotal evidence that shows how broad-based benefits accrue when Mentoring, Education and Networking are embraced organization-wide.

Let me give you just a few examples

- **Managers:** When male managers (who comprise over 60% of those to whom our participants report) are actively engaged in the development process for their high potential women, they gain critical insights that help them understand the problems that women undergo as they transition to leaders. They become “educated” to a new way of thinking. They gain a better understanding of the differences in how women perceive and are perceived by the organization. Additionally, during their engagement with the program, managers may become aware of their unconscious bias and discover how to provide feedback that women can understand. Bottom line –managers learn how to more effectively develop the high potential women on their team.
- **Mentors:** Women in our programs develop the critical business skills of cultivating mentors and of actively creating relationships that are truly productive to their careers. As a result, they learn how to form strategic business alliances in a variety of contexts and, following graduation, continue to seek out these career-supporting relationships. However, it is not just our women participants who benefit. Over and over, both male and female mentors have told us that being involved in the mentoring process has been a growth and education experience for them. They have a better understanding of how to engage future mentees. They learn about the specific hurdles women face. They leverage these findings into better managing and developing female talent back in their own workplaces.
- **C-Suite Executives** — A recent study of CEOs found that while the CEOs were committed to creating an organizational environment supporting women’s advancement, middle managers were unclear on the specific actions they needed to take. Often, when realizing this disconnect, CEOs and C-suite executives have taken a more defined role in making their position clear, including requiring metrics on female talent development and advancement.

That’s why at WOMEN Unlimited our approach to Mentoring, Education and Networking is an inclusive one. We work with Human Resources to help pinpoint the best candidates for our programs...we have regular calls and conversations with our participants’ managers to support the manager’s continued development...we encourage executives to become mentors and help them effectively mentor and guide emerging and mid- career women...we provide ongoing support to our alumnae so they stay connected to their network of multi-functional, multi-organizational peers.

It is our pleasure to provide resources, and to be seen as an organizational solution, to our corporate partners as they seek to ensure more women make their way to the highest levels of their corporations. Leveraging these resources creates an impact across the entire organization and reward them. Transforming from employee to supervisor...supervisor to manager...and manager to leader is full of both “Aha” and “Oh no” moments. let’s say a woman poised for a career transition requiring new skills and new behaviors) the person needs to “make meaning” in order to learn, develop and transform.

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What's In a Name?

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** January 27, 2016

WOMEN Unlimited – The **W**omen's **O**rganization for **M**entoring, **E**ducation and **N**etworking

Whenever I facilitate one of our WOMEN Unlimited programs or speak at a Conference or workshop, one question invariably comes up and usually with a look that suggests the person asking has uncovered an interesting irony:

“Do you know that MEN is in your name?”

My answer is: *“Yes, we do know and it's no accident. It's deliberate.”*

The “men” in our name

The MEN in our name is full of meaning. It's an acronym for the three-pronged approach we take to transform high potential women into talented leaders. It stands for Mentoring, Education and Networking.

And it's more...

It stands for “men”, the men who remain the movers and shakers in corporate America; who more than 60% of the time, are the managers of women in our programs; who make up 74.9% of C-suite executives and 80.8% of S&P 500 corporate boards. (Catalyst. Pyramid: Women in S&P 500 Companies. New York: Catalyst, December 14, 2015.)

Without the support, involvement and commitment of men, nothing happens for the advancement of female talent. Our name reflects that corporate reality, a reality we've worked with since our founding over 21 years ago, when even fewer women were found at the top levels of leading corporations.

More than just a name

The “men” in our name is emblematic of our philosophy to engage male executives, help them to understand the barriers women face in corporations and to utilize techniques and strategies to advance their female talent to the benefit of the organization as a whole.

A few examples:

- Prior to a woman starting one of our programs, we actively involve her manager. We fully brief them on what the program covers, what to expect from her, how to support and guide her before, during and after the program. We emphasize that program participation is just the start, and that on the job, with the manager's help and guidance, is where her true transformation to leader will happen.
- We help male managers improve their ability to provide honest feedback to the women on their team. We

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continually hear from both men and women, how difficult it is for male managers to give feedback, which is a crucial stumbling block to advancing female talent. Without feedback, women do not receive the guidance they need to play on their strengths and confront their weaknesses.

- Mentors are key players in helping women advance to higher corporate levels. We continually ask our corporate partners to engage both male and female mentors. Our experience has shown that the benefits of male mentors are two-fold. The women mentees gain a better understanding of the male point of view. The male mentors start to see more clearly the challenges women face and apply that new learning to help advance women across their organizations.
- At a time when most organizations are looking to feed their pipeline with talented women, we help CEOs, executives and managers at all levels pinpoint and address the aspects of their corporate culture that contribute to holding women back. Often subtle biases are at play without men or women realizing it. Sometimes, it's necessary to take a look at "old school" attitudes that need to be abandoned. Through involvement with WOMEN Unlimited, these impediments to advancing female talent get on an organization's radar screen... and plans to combat them get underway.

So, yes, the "men" in our name is there deliberately. We want it to send a clear message that working side by side, women and men will put into play multiple long-term benefits for themselves and their corporations.

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Onward and Upward

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 4, 2015

I've always loved the New York State motto: Excelsior: Onward and Upward. It's especially apt for us at WOMEN Unlimited as we move forward following the milestone of our 20th Anniversary Year.

Past. Present. Future—With the Accent on Future

Our 20th Anniversary year was marked by a number of events, activities and innovations that both celebrated our successes and laid the groundwork for advancing our contributions to diversity at the highest levels of corporate America. Here are some of the highlights that will define where we're heading:

An integrated approach to developing high-potential women: Through Executive Forums, one-on-one interactions and surveys, our corporate partners reinforced the importance of programs and strategies that allow them to develop company-wide, integrated approaches to achieving diversity. We intend to continue helping existing and future corporate partners achieve this objective in a variety of ways:

- Offering programs that provide learning and development for high potential women, their managers and executives, company-wide.
- Serving as a thought leader to Human Resources executives and top management on best practices for insuring that managers across the board are on the same page when it comes to diversity plans and objectives
- Providing advice and counsel on the most effective methods for changing attitudes that may be knowingly or unknowingly impeding diversity
- Developing strategies that strengthen mentor relationships at all corporate levels, with emphasis on best practices for BOTH mentors and mentees.

Expansion to Asia Pacific: On May 21st, we launched our first TEAM program in Singapore. After extensive research and input from our corporate partners, we chose to expand our offerings to this region because of its unquestionable importance to both individual corporations and the global economy. In the fall, on September 10th, we will launch TEAM in Shanghai.

In the months and years ahead we will continue to carefully expand our programs geographically, while remaining critically aware of never spreading ourselves too thin.

Evolving our Programs: Businesses and their people change and evolve. It has always been our strategy at WOMEN Unlimited to monitor these changes and ensure that our programs are aligned with the accompanying changing needs.

To that end, we have completely restructured TEAM, our program for early-career women. This new program will cover six key areas that today's global marketplace demands for individual and corporate success:

- Owning Your Career: Focus, Awareness, Agility
- Savvy Relationships: Expanding Your Influence and Increasing Your Impact
- Developing "Brand You": Confident, Visible, Vocal
- Bolstering Your Business Impact: Personally and Virtually
- Beyond Your Department: Broadening Your Business Acumen
- Change and Innovation: Your Career Catalysts

This new program is currently piloting in New York and San Francisco and will take complete hold in September.

To all who contributed to our successes so far, a resounding "thank you." To the successes that lie ahead, an excited "I can't wait."

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Women – Conspicuously Absent From this “Guide”

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. January 15, 2015

From time to time, as those of you who follow these blogs know, I find it necessary to take issue with articles related to women’s career advancement. [Women at Work: A Guide for Men by Joanne Lipman](#) recently caught my eye and I felt the need to respond to a number of points.

In terms of the bottom-line benefits of women in C-suites, Ms. Lipman and I are in total agreement. She accurately points out that “companies with more women in leadership posts simply perform better.” Absolutely and proven out in research by Catalyst, Fortune and many others. She also indicates that “there is too much man-shaming” and that “life at work, like life everywhere is messy. There are no one-size-fits all solutions.” Couldn’t be truer.

Here’s where Ms. Lipman and I part ways

Ms. Lipman’s strategy for getting women to the top varies dramatically from my point of view and from WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.’s proven approach with world-class organizations for over 20 years. Her premise is to tell men how to deal with women. Ours is to show women how to grab hold of their careers, prove their worth and work WITH their corporate leadership to make their mark.

Let me give you a few specifics on major points of difference:

SPEAKING UP. Ms. Lipman provides men with guidelines to encourage women to speak up more definitively. Yes, it’s true that women can be more tentative than men in making their opinions known, for a variety of reasons, corporate, cultural and individual. However, the woman herself must take charge of the change. That will happen when she understands and acknowledges her talents and her worth to the organization. It’s a process and a learning curve SHE must undertake. Additionally, women must learn tools, techniques and strategies to deal with the reality that what they say is more likely to trigger a backlash than if male counterparts said the same thing.

PROMOTION. Ms. Lipman encourages men to “not believe” women when they say they are not ready for a promotion. That’s way too general and doesn’t take into account the needs, wants and requirements of the individual. Yes, there are times when a woman doesn’t see her value to the organization or feels insecure about moving ahead. It’s why women need to have both mentors and networks to help them objectively assess their talents and their potential. However, when a woman says “no” to a promotion, she may also be realistically looking at her whole life and realizing now is not the best time, either personally or professionally. At the end of the day, the individual woman is responsible for her growth and development, orchestrating it when and how she sees fit.

RESPECT. As Ms. Lipman points out, sometimes women have a harder time being immediately respected by male peers and superiors. At WOMEN Unlimited, we help women overcome that issue by “showing up” with a voice of authority and with confidence in their ability to contribute to the organization. We help them develop an “Internal Presence” which makes them both more comfortable and more confident. While I certainly see Ms. Lipman’s point that bosses can help by “providing more feedback,” it’s only a small part of the solution.

BIAS. Ms. Lipman and I agree that women are impacted by unconscious bias. However, perception of bias is very individual. What one woman views as bias, may not bother another. I have more confidence than Ms. Lipman in a woman’s ability to confront the bias that troubles her and move forward. Women can learn to say something in a way their male colleague will understand. They needn’t be strident to be convincing. Often, men don’t get what they are doing wrong, or its impact. Gentle, but frank reminders can turn the tide of unconscious bias.

Let’s be clear. There is much truth in Ms. Lipman’s suggestions to males in power; they are just not enough. Without putting women front and center, she is engaging in a one-sided conversation, which is unlikely to produce the change we both wish to accomplish.

Judge for yourself. Take a look at Women at Work: A Guide for Men and let me know what you think.

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Introducing IMpower

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. August 10, 2015

GROW THE TALENT THAT WILL GROW YOUR COMPANY

I am thrilled and excited to announce that as of September 1st, WOMEN Unlimited is launching a brand new learning experience for early career female talent. It's called *IMpower, Grow the Talent That Will Grow Your Company* and replaces TEAM as our cornerstone offering for talented entry-level women.

- **IMpower** has been meticulously structured to meet the changing needs of both early career women and their organizations. I'd like to share with you a few of the highpoints of this ground-breaking development program:
- **IMpower** will provide a fresh and engaging learning experience for emerging female talent that will foster career-long benefits for the women themselves and for the organization as a whole
- **IMpower** is the direct result of both feedback from our Corporate Partners, and of extensive research by the WOMEN Unlimited team. It addresses a variety of changing needs including: the switch to more matrixed organizations... lattice rather than ladder career advancement and the need for agile learners, competent communicators and confident contributors early in the career cycle.
- WOMEN Unlimited will guide organizations in selecting the high potential, early-career women who will most likely benefit from **IMpower** and contribute to the organization for the long-haul
- Organizations have the option of selecting senior leaders to participate as mentors. By doing so, they create a cadre of men and women who better understand the challenges facing early career talent and how to retain this vital resource.
- **IMpower** will be held throughout the year in the United States and Asia Pacific. Please check the website [Program Schedule](#).

This synopsis is only the "tip of the iceberg" in terms of the benefits and features of IMpower. We recently offered a webinar to our Corporate Partners detailing this all-new development program. To get a more complete picture of how IMpower can contribute to your organization's long-term success, I suggest you view the [presentation slides](#), from the webinar. Please feel free to share it with your colleagues and to [contact us](#) for more details.

WOMEN Unlimited serves as an organizational solution to leading global corporations, and *IMpower* is just one of the many resources we provide. Through partnering with us, these organizations establish an integrated talent management strategy, which positively impacts bottom-line results. The wide range of development programs and initiatives available through WOMEN Unlimited ensures that talented women, their managers and their corporate leaders have a unified approach to achieving and exceeding corporate goals.

We at WOMEN Unlimited are delighted to launch *IMpower* and hope your organization will take full advantage of this powerful opportunity to develop tomorrow's much-needed talent today.

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IMpower Defines a Clear Path for Early-career Women and Their Employers IMpower

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 7, 2016

It's much harder to scale a lattice than to climb a ladder.

In many organizations today, the only path for career advancement is a matrix that has no discernible line of direction. Unlike the easy-to-follow career ladder, the lattice doesn't offer bright signposts detailing the next stop, nor does it clearly point to people who can advise and describe at each level.

The lattice is marked even less clearly for early-career women. Companies' hearts may be in the right place, but the constant demand for short-term progress diverts attention elsewhere. So women and their employers are left to figure it out on their own.

Women need adaptability, agility, confidence and originality – and even more – as they step onto the career lattice and start their ascent. While self-reliance is vital to professional success, so, too, is the ability to network and learn from those who have successfully traversed the ladder and the lattice.

Helping Improve Corporate Productivity for Two Decades

For 22 years, WOMEN Unlimited has provided such a platform for female professionals. We've helped unearth the talents of women and introduced them to male and female senior leaders who continue to serve as long-term mentors. In turn, alumnae of our programs often become mentors later in their careers.

But that's only half the story. WOMEN Unlimited supports leading corporations' integrated talent management strategies that not only makes the lattice a well-defined path but also improves corporate-wide productivity and the bottom line. Women and their employers simultaneously achieve their goals.

We've successfully partnered with top global organizations – including Adobe Systems, Bayer AG, Bridgestone Americas, Colgate-Palmolive, John Deere, Raytheon and Prudential – in three WOMEN Unlimited development programs that have empowered nearly 12,000 women and produced numerous benefits organization-wide as well.

IMpowering Awareness and Change

In this blog – the first in a series of three that will review these programs – I'd like to offer a snapshot of *IMpower: Grow the Talent That Will Grow Your Company*, the cornerstone program for early-career, emerging female talent.

IMpower puts into play the research conducted by WOMEN Unlimited's corporate partners and other leading corporations. Knowing exactly what corporations require to develop and retain female professionals, IMpower fully prepares participants to contribute to corporate goals and objectives.

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Over six months, participants attend six sessions – which are held in 7 U.S. cities and in Asia Pacific – with a focus to advance their careers and meet corporate goals and objectives:

- Owning a career through focus, awareness and agility
- Relationship building: Expanding influence and increasing impact
- Developing as a confident, visual and vocal contributor
- Bolstering business impact, personally and virtually
- Broadening business acumen beyond one department
- Becoming a catalyst of change

Additionally, each woman has the unprecedented opportunity to work closely with male and female leaders, learning from their successes and mistakes and asking direct, personal questions that will help advance her career. Mentoring along with Networking and Education – are the three pillars of all WOMEN Unlimited programs.

Managers and Colleagues Also Benefit

IMpower – and its previous iteration, TEAM – has supported 4,830 women taking charge of their careers through interactive sessions and unparalleled mentoring. Additionally, more than 70% of alumnae enjoyed an expansion of their roles within one year of their participation in a WOMEN Unlimited program.

But it's not just women who benefit from IMpower: When a woman participates in IMpower, so does her direct manager and her colleagues. This wide level of commitment means organizations clearly see the challenges facing early-career talent and better understand how to retain this vital resource.

With everyone involved in such impactful change, an organization not only has shaped one developing leader; it also has turned the lattice into a clear pathway for many others.

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Like a Girl...Like a Woman

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** March 23, 2015

I've been so impressed and so moved by the recent Always #Like a Girl campaign. The point is a simple one: Don't use the phrase "like a girl" as an insult. Girls run, throw, play and kick just as well as boys. To demean or diminish an adolescent girl, at a time when she is especially vulnerable about herself and her self-image, is at best annoying and at worst bullying.

Well, guess what? Things don't change when the girls and boys are all grown up and working in corporate America. An underlying, often unconscious sentiment that "like a girl" is not good enough to lead...that "like a girl" means too emotional, too personal, too vulnerable still pervades the fabric of many corporations, from mom and pop operations to multi-national organizations. Certainly, all too many men consciously or unconsciously feel that way. And sadder still, many women themselves internalize a "second best" attitude about their corporate roles.

Yes, things are changing. As evidence mounts for the profit and growth link to diversity, more organizations are actively promoting women. As more women see their female colleagues defy the glass ceiling, they are asking "Why not me?" As more CEOs make it clear that managers at all levels will be measured by the inroads they make in diversity, increasing numbers are finding and developing their female talent.

I am very proud of the role WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. is playing in that progress and has played for almost 21 years. We've known the power of diversity for a long time. We've known where the hang ups and the holdups are. We've known that it's not just corporate culture and the "old boy network", it's also the women themselves who need to grasp the importance, their importance to corporate profitability and shareholder results.

That's why we take the multi-faceted approach we do:

- We carefully screen our potential corporate partners to ensure they are either already committed to diversity or are willing to make the changes that will get them there.
- Our programs are for women only. In this safe, non-threatening environment participants can face and debunk the attitudes and behaviors that may be standing in their way. They can transform "like a girl" in their minds and actions from a negative, to the powerful statement it ought to be.
- Although our programs are for women, our reach is to both men and women. We actively engage male panelists, male mentors and our participants' male managers, a strategy vital to both the men and the women. The women gain insights on how to work with male colleagues at all levels. Male managers develop an understanding of how women experience organizations, and become more effective at managing their female staff and at providing needed support, guidance and feedback. In this way, the workplace becomes the real classroom, the real laboratory for individual and cultural change.
- We encourage our participants to keep learning, growing and developing. The program is only the beginning. As a result, we link our graduates with a powerful alumnae network, currently over 10,000 strong, which they can use as they see fit to air questions, seek advice, and share insights.

So once again kudos to the sponsors of Always #Like a Girl and their role in getting the wheels of change started early. I think of them as an advance team. Hopefully, their initiative will help more girls and boys grow up to be the powerful, actualized, gender-blind adults our society and our corporations will need in the years ahead.

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Proud of our Alumnae

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** December 21, 2014

On December 2nd, it was my great pleasure to moderate a webcast for our alumnae, Celebrating 20 Years of YOUR Success. Over 300 alumnae participated, including our four high-powered alumnae panelists:

- **Jenny Liu**, Global Product Manager, DuPont Chemicals & Fluoroproducts
- **Dovie Majors**, Director, Performance Improvement & Interim General Manager, Indiana Harbor Operations, SunCoke Energy
- **Laure E. Park**, Vice President Customer Experience, Quest Diagnostics, Inc.
- **MeMe Rasmussen**, Chief Privacy Officer, Vice President & Associate General Counsel, Adobe Systems Inc.

The comments, the questions, the back and forth that filled the hour were in keeping with the thinking, the analysis and the observations I have come to expect and enjoy from our program graduates.

Here are a few highlights:

Networking and Relationships

- Consistently nurture relationships so you have them when needed.
- Remember networks can happen anywhere and be anyone, from a corporate VP to a fellow parent at a Lacrosse game.
- Be intentional about your growth and development. Seek new experiences that complement your background and prepare you for future opportunities.
- Have a concrete plan for each networking/mentoring session. Identify specific requests and do homework.
- Think about how you provide value to the relationship both personally and professionally
- Schedule time for networking every week. It can be as easy as a quick note on Linked-In

Making Your Mark as a New Leader

- Understand your need to rely on others
- Dig down into the details; then come back out. Understand people, goals, strategies and frustrations
- Start with a broad picture. Look at the next 90 days and build momentum one interaction at a time. Make sure your direct reports get to know you and you them

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- Build a staff who know more than you do
- Develop your own voice and use it to earn a seat at the table

Managing Up

- Never commit to a project when you don't have the resources OR be certain to negotiate for the resources you need to succeed
- Always have the facts, figures and findings necessary for the interaction OR know the numbers that are important in your business and how to incorporate them into the discussion
- Be willing to push back when needed
- Forge internal alliances: several alliances at several levels
- 5-point system: Metrics. Roles and responsibilities. Key events. Action plans. Sequential review strategy.

If You Could Go Back, What Would You Advise Your 25 Year Old Self?

- Focus on surrounding yourself with talent—people with skill and will.
- Understand the sweet spot between interests and strengths - that's where you passion lives!
- Look at longer time horizons - How does your current role/opportunity prepare you for your longer term goal (three to five years out)
- Choose assignments that have a business impact
- Maintain a balance between your personal and professional life and keep your work life in perspective. Remember work can be like a mistress. Sooner or later she may leave you for someone else.

GENDER PARITY: MAKING IT WORK ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION



GENDER
PARITY

Performance vs. Potential: Time to Break the Cycle

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 3, 2016

Once again, research and reality confirm an unhappy obstacle on the road to gender parity: *Women have to prove they can succeed in a position before they are promoted to it; while men are often promoted based on their perceived potential.*

This potential vs. performance barrier, often the result of unconscious gender bias, is taking a heavy toll on both women and their organizations. According to Caroline Simard, Director of Research at the Clayman Institute such hidden biases lead to a: “cumulative disadvantage over a woman’s career over time, resulting in lower access to key leadership positions and stretch assignments, advancement and pay.” From the corporate perspective, research shows that the absence of diversity at the highest organizational levels negatively impacts both profits and competitive advantage.

Who Has to Change? What Has to Change?

In my role as CEO of WOMEN Unlimited, I see problems and solutions from multiple vantage points across an organization: diversity and talent managers, women participants in our programs, their managers and top executives. As a result, I have come to some conclusions about how to start leveling the performance vs. potential playing field.

Quite simply: All the key players have a role to play in bringing about needed change.

Here are a few examples that can go a long way to achieving a more balanced approach to promoting men and women.

- **Male Managers:** Management remains predominantly male; and men often have a difficult time providing honest feedback to the women on their teams. Research shows that male managers are less likely to be honest with their female employees, making it difficult for women to understand specifically where they need to improve in order to advance. Additionally, men tend to use different terms in reviews of female subordinates. For example, statistically “aggressive” is a word that rarely shows up in reviewing men, but appears frequently in assessing female performance.
- **Vague Feedback is Holding Women Back** by Shelley Correll and Caroline Simard in the Harvard Business Review outlined strategies to equalize the feedback process including: using the same criteria for all employees...tying feedback to business goals and outcomes...equalizing references to technical accomplishments and capabilities.
- **Women Themselves:** I continue to be amazed at how many women believe they need all the competencies for a higher position before they take it on. It is the chicken and egg metaphor gone mad. Men don’t see it that way. They are confident they should be given a promotion based on what they’ve achieved to date and what they believe they have to contribute. Until women move more towards that attitude, we will be hard pressed to make significant progress in closing the performance/potential gap. Additionally, women need to be more active in seeking out all-important honest feedback from their managers.

Women are most successful when they don’t try making these attitudinal shifts alone; rather, when they reach out to mentors, sponsors and their managers for advice and support.

Organizational Culture

In order to achieve promotional parity, organizations need to evolve. Not drastically, but pervasively. Male managers need to become more aware of unconscious bias and how it impacts promoting women. Standards and metrics to equalize performance reviews and encourage honest feedback need to be put in place. Organizations need to take the long view so they aren’t deprived of female talent at their highest levels in the years ahead.

If male managers become more aware of the inequalities in assessing men and women...if women become more willing to risk being promoted...if organizations provide a culture that fosters a policy of conscious inclusion, we will be well on the road to removing the potential vs. performance barrier to inclusiveness.

**GENDER
PARITY**

Happy (or not-so-happy) Ground Hog Day

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** February 1, 2015

“What would you do if you were stuck in one place and every day was exactly the same?”

That was the premise behind the Bill Murray movie, Ground Hog Day. No matter what he did, he just wound up reliving February 2nd over and over.

Sometimes, that seems to be the case as we work to combat gender-based bias in the workplace. How do we make progress? How do we avoid having the same conversations next year, the following year and the year after that?

I'd like to share this infographic with you. It's a great summary of both the problem and the solutions.

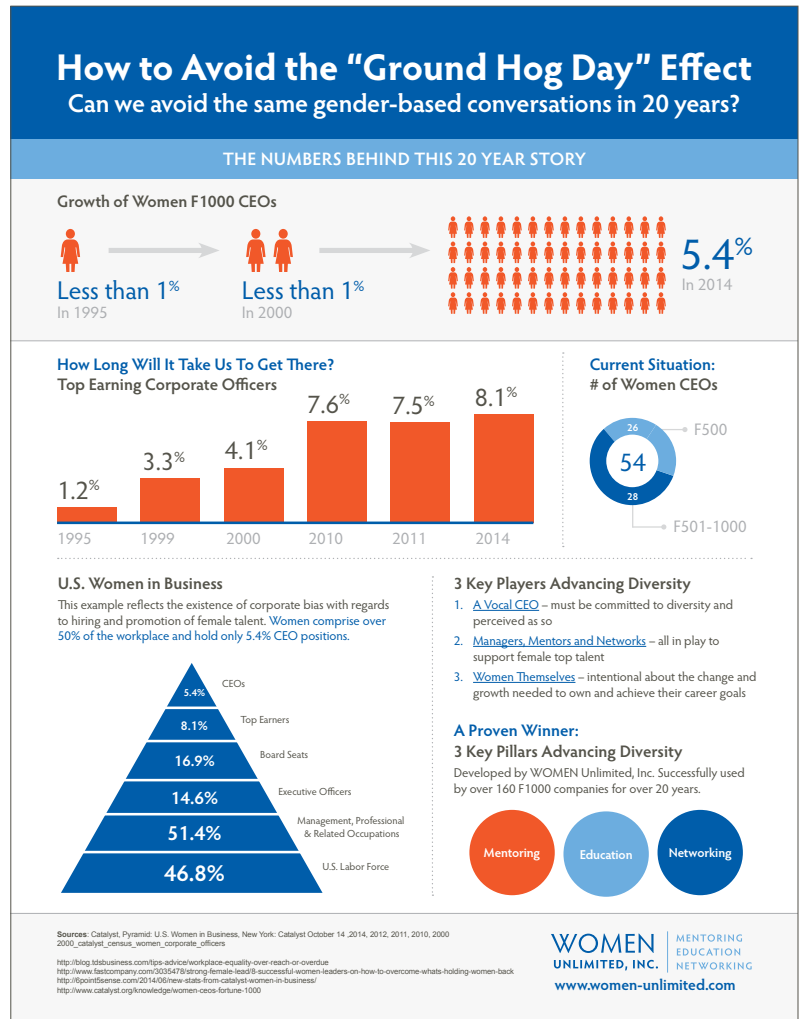
The graphic pretty much speaks for itself, but let me quickly highlight how we can get past Gender-Bias Ground Hog Day:

Three Key Players - Working In Tandem

- CEOs are committed to diversity; understand their roles and responsibilities to impact change and their commitment is conveyed throughout the organization
- Managers, mentors and networks all support female talent from the earliest stages of their careers
- Women themselves are intentional about what they need to do and change to achieve their career goals.

Three pillars to Advancing Diversity - All In Play

- Mentoring: Pinpointing and utilizing the right mentors with the women themselves actively engaged in the process
- Education: Women and their managers learning how talented females can impact corporate success
- Networking: pinpointing and engaging corporate-savvy executives to help women achieve their full leadership potential



With these players and these strategies in place, Ground Hog Day could wind up being ONLY about Punxsutawney Phil and Bill Murray. Can't wait!

**GENDER
PARITY**

Interview with Visael “Bobby” Rodriguez

Guest Blogger: Visael “Bobby” Rodriguez, VP, Human Resources & Chief Diversity Officer Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island July 11, 2016

WOMEN Unlimited recently interviewed Bobby Rodriguez for his perspective as a Chief Diversity Officer on inclusiveness and developing female talent

Why is it important to you to help women achieve leadership roles?

My support for women advancing is personal and comes from my background. My mom divorced my father when I was two. She was mentally and physically abused. She didn't have a high school diploma. She became a “self-made” woman. I was six years old when she graduated from college and I was there. I am also a father who encourages my daughter to feel comfortable being a leader, and my son to feel comfortable accepting women as leaders.

How do you see diversity in terms of your organization and in terms of corporate America at large?

Diversity is a change of culture. It is about making underrepresented people comfortable where they were formerly uncomfortable. I don't see diversity as counting people. I don't see it as affirmative action. I see it as changing cultures—and it needs to start at the top. Cultures only change when people see high-level change and when you explain the “whys” for change. For example, if women and men only see men leading, it can be difficult for them to imagine women leading. We have to change the perception of what leadership looks like.

What are the big “must dos” for diversity to take hold?

I see two big “must dos” for both managers of female talent and for those of us in human resources. First, always give a person an opportunity. Second, challenge both your conscious and unconscious biases. When a person isn't successful, it is often because they aren't being given an opportunity to be a leader. We all have biases and we can't let them stand in the way of offering someone a chance to shine.

Both personally and professionally, I feel a responsibility to challenge the status quo to help make those opportunities happen. In my position, it is important that I be a disrupter. I do it with a lot of humor and it's because I want the best for the people working for us.

What has to happen for more women to get ahead?

First, all of us, including women, must recognize that today women are not treated equally in the workplace. There still exists a glass ceiling and we all have more work to do to shatter it. Second, women must take the conversation to the top. Opportunity only comes when you say: “I am here and I want to be taken into consideration.” Women and other groups are not asking enough. We need more women saying: “I want to be the next director. Tell me what steps I can take to get there.” And we need more men open to listening to women.

How have you been involved with WOMEN Unlimited?

We started three years ago. I was looking for programs to develop women. I selected IMpower because I wanted something to help our early-career women become leaders. One important aspect of IMpower is that after the women complete the program, our CEO hosts a breakfast where the women tell their stories. They not only gain visibility, but also access to leadership.

What haven't we covered, that you'd like to share with our blog readers?

Three things. First, leadership programs are incredible because they teach women the rules of the game. Second, organizations must value different perspectives and ways of thinking. All of us currently in leadership positions in organizations should ask ourselves: what barriers are preventing women or other underrepresented groups from succeeding?

Finally, I hope women know that there are many men – and women—who believe in them and who want to be their mentors and help them grow, develop and make it to the top. I hope women seek out these mentors. Those in positions of power should be proactive in helping women achieve professional success. Equality and diverse leadership skills are proven keys to strengthening organizations.

**GENDER
PARITY**

Fall in Love with the Problem

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** November 2, 2015

I was recently reading an article in Harvard Business Review which urged leaders to “fall in love with the problem instead of the solution.”

The argument was a compelling one. When leaders fall in love with their own solutions instead of the underlying problems, they look for evidence to support those solutions, whether or not they’re the best solutions or even good ones. It’s human nature to justify our own ideas.

On the other hand, by focusing on the problem...by falling in love with it, every solution becomes subject to a reality check. By keeping the emphasis entirely on the problem, leaders can objectively assess the solutions they come up with to make sure they are truly addressing the issue at hand.

I think this “problem loving” strategy is especially important in dealing with advancing female talent in an organization. Unfortunately, for the most part, organizations continue to go for the “solution loving” approach which usually includes:

- Flexible work arrangements
- Training programs for women
- Creating women’s networks
- Sponsorship programs
- Mentorship programs
- Recruiting more women for key roles

This list encompasses just about all the “to do’s” we read about and hear about to achieve gender equality at all corporate levels. But it’s not working. While good intentioned, these strategies have resulted only in a trickle of talented women reaching the highest corporate levels. The main reason for the failure to date is that most organizations hit on one or two of these much-loved solutions and run with them. Same thing is true with the articles on gender equality. They focus on one piece of the problem and posit one solution that promises to fix the situation.

The problems underlying the lack of gender parity are far too complex to respond to one or two fixes. The absence of women at higher corporate levels is a pervasive and complex problem and requires solutions that are equally so. By “loving the problem,” organizations and their managers will see that:

- there is an underlying corporate culture that needs to be dealt with
- women themselves have to address their own reticence to take risks and advocate for their advancement
- male mentors are needed and have to be educated to understand the attitudes and behaviors of their female mentees
- development programs are useless unless the development is supplemented and reinforced in the workplace.

My point is this: If we fall in love with the problem, we will better understand its hydra-like complexity. We will become more willing to take a holistic approach rather than a simplistic one. We will see that the solution is usually not “a” or “b” but “all of the above.”

At WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. our partners view us as an organizational solution because we offer this holistic approach to developing female talent.

**GENDER
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Harnessing the Power of Women Leaders

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 20, 2015

About a month ago, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. hosted another of our Executive Forums, this one focusing on Harnessing the Power of Women Leaders. Jeanie Coomber, WOMEN Unlimited's Northeast Regional Director, was our co-moderator.

As always, I was thrilled and impressed by both the attendees and the level of expertise and discussion that ensued from bringing together high-powered executives to focus on fostering and developing female leadership talent. Participants represented a cadre of leading organizations including: JP Morgan Chase, DuPont, Prudential, Bayer, Bank of America, GlaxoSmithKline and Viacom.

Participants came to the Forum prepared to delve into three key questions:

1. What is the top challenge your organization faces in developing and retaining high potential women?
2. What implications does this type of diversity strategy have for your organization?
3. What will your business be requiring of its talent in the next one to three years?

Not surprisingly, the discussion was fast-paced with ideas, best practices and "to do's" shared across a variety of talent development areas including:

- Taking risks on behalf of women – a requirement across the board for BOTH men and women
- Championing potential leaders – starting with the CEO who sends a clear message that managers will be measured and held accountable for implementing diversity initiatives
- The vital role of men in the advancement of women – with the overwhelming majority of leadership positions still held by men, it is crucial that men understand the bottom-line importance of developing and retaining female talent
- An enlightened management – who focus on the best ways to support their female talent and the most effective approaches for doing it
- Integrating diversity strategies and practices into the business – making sure that diversity is not just a "sometime" program, but an integral part of short and long-term corporate plans and goals

To help them better make the "business case" to their corporate leadership for developing female talent, each participant received a copy of the [WOMEN Unlimited 20th Anniversary Corporate Partner Survey](#) which I'd also like to share with you. The survey contains many strong metrics, as well as highly-helpful commentary on the tangible benefits of supporting and developing high potential women.

For example, a majority of the corporate partners surveyed pinpointed the following retention strategies:

- Provide more opportunities for women to develop leadership skills on the job
- Offer development opportunities early in a woman's career
- Create formalized mentoring programs
- Have a well-defined succession planning process
- Invest in external development that compliments organizational practices and goals

Please take a look at [The Survey](#). I'd also welcome your posts about the diversity strategies that are working for your organization; and would love to make them the focus of a future blog.

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Highlights: An Information-Packed Webinar on Fostering Female Talent

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 6, 2016

On March 17th, WOMEN Unlimited sponsored a webinar on What Every Manager Should Know About Fostering Female Talent. I had the privilege of moderating a panel of three distinguished executives, each with years of experience helping women on their teams reach their full potential.

Our webinar panelists were: Jeffrey B. Fischer, Vice President of the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies...Laura Mezey, Vice President of the Bayer Company ...and Palani Palaniappan

Vice President & Head, Global Biologics CMC at The Takeda Oncology Company

They covered four important questions

1. The differences between managing female talent and male talent
2. Mistakes to avoid
3. Strategies both companies and managers should espouse
4. Their “Big 3” for retaining and promoting talented women

The comments and insights were fast and free-flowing with ample time for participant questions. Here are a few examples of the insights shared by our panelists:

- “Good is the enemy of great.” Managers should encourage women to leave their “comfort box”
- Managers can play a key role in helping women develop both formal and informal corporate relationships and in assessing their networks. For example: Are the relationships and networks diverse enough; or are they restricted to peers? Do they include senior leaders from a cross-section of industries?
- Managers need to help women be aware of how their words and their body language may be conveying lack of confidence
- Managers must create an environment which helps women get over perfectionism and fear of making mistakes. Mistakes can be great learning opportunities for them.

The Complete Webinar Is Now Available to You

Because of the powerful and actionable information presented during the one-hour webinar, we wanted to make it available, in its entirety, to the management community. To hear all our panelists’ valuable thoughts, ideas and insights, [click here](#). Please also feel free to share it with your colleagues. You have unlimited access to the download at no charge.

Please also enjoy...

Additionally, I am happy to provide you with our newly-released, Manager Playbook: [What Every Manager Should Know About Fostering Female Talent](#). The Playbook is an exclusive publication of WOMEN Unlimited featuring from-the-field experiences of executives who have continually helped high-potential women, at all levels, advance their careers, with long term benefits for both the women and their organizations

Executives from Prudential, Colgate and DuPont join Jeff, Laura and Palani in providing their points of view on what to do and what not to do in developing female talent. As with the webinar, we are happy to make the Playbook available to you and your colleagues at no charge.

The webinar and the Playbook are just two of WOMEN Unlimited’s many resources to help corporations achieve and exceed their corporate inclusiveness goals. Please feel free to contact me at any time [[hot link](#)] as your organization strives to attract, promote and retain high potential women.

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**Attracting, Developing and Retaining Female Talent:
Making It Happen**

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, **WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.** September 15, 2015

WOMEN Unlimited recently interviewed Audrey Goodman, who as VP of Organizational Development at Medco Health Solutions, was a long-time WOMEN Unlimited corporate partner. She currently heads up her own consulting practice and is an Executive Development Consultant for our FEW program, exclusively for women at top corporate levels.

Audrey is one of the most knowledgeable people we know when it comes to best practices for attracting, developing and retaining female talent.

- **WOMEN Unlimited (WU)** Would you highlight what you see as most important for attracting, developing and retaining female talent?
- **Audrey Goodman (AG):** First of all, you can't have a one-size-fits-all corporate culture. Women are looking for companies that provide flexibility. Telecommuting and flexible work hours are extremely important to women who often are juggling a great deal personally and professionally. Companies need to have a philosophy that says "We don't care where you do the work as long as you do the work."

Another aspect of flexibility is helping high potential women get back on the fast track if they need to take a career break for personal responsibilities such as parenting, illness or caring for a loved one. This approach doesn't just happen. It has to be planned and thought out by both the women and their organizations.

Flexibility also applies to job assignments. For example, a lot of global companies want their high potential women to take on international assignments, often in their late 30's—when life/work balance is most challenging. Why not put women in international jobs earlier, after a few years, when they have fewer obligations?

Additionally, to attract and retain female talent, companies need to have a pro-active development strategy that includes: formal development programs, stretch assignments, strategic (not just operational) roles, exposure to senior staff and senior women as advisors.

Finally, in terms of retention, the single most important strategy is for high potential women to look up and not see just men. They need to see women who look like them, who have lifestyles similar to theirs. If an organization wants to keep its female talent, the top can't keep looking like it has always looked.

- **WU:** What recommendations do you have for engaging men more actively in attracting, developing and retaining female talent?
- **AG:** Organizations have to make their male managers at all levels realize that attracting, developing and retaining female talent is a priority. Specific responsibilities need to be spelled out and managers have to understand they will be held accountable for results. Part of a male manager's review needs to include whether he's hired and promoted female talent.

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Also, we can't presume men understand gender bias. We need to teach them how to be inclusive and to help them realize what it feels like from a female perspective when a bunch of men do something together. We have to work with them so they lose their pre-conceived notions of what success looks like.

- **WU:** What are the ROI benefits to an organization of attracting, developing and retaining female talent?
- **AG:** At so many levels, it makes good business sense to attract, develop and retain talented women and help them find career opportunities that benefit both them and the organization. Women make up half the population. Organizations must tap into that talent pool. If they don't, high potential women will find other outlets, very likely with a competitor.

I recently read an interesting article that said it's estimated by the year 2025, women will make up 50% of entrepreneurs. These will be the brightest and the best, creating a major talent drain for leading corporations.

- **WU:** Anything else you feel is germane?
- **AG:** Yes. Two thoughts. First, mentoring is wonderful and needs to happen, but it's not enough. A Harvard Business Review article a few years back pointed out that women were being "over-mentored and "under-sponsored." I think that's the case. Mentoring helps women gain insights into their actions and into the actions of others. Sponsoring is about having an advocate who knows both the woman and the corporate landscape. The sponsor is a direct connection to advancement who understands the woman's career goals; helps her find appropriate opportunities and speaks up on her behalf. We need to focus EQUALLY on mentorship and sponsorship.

Finally, I want to share an interesting story from my daughter's MBA experience. The program included creating teams of five students to work together. Faculty would never put just one woman on a team because previous experience showed that if they did, women would wind up in traditional roles like note taking or calling the meeting. When more than one woman was on the team, they became more equal to the men.

I think that's an interesting lesson for all of us to learn.

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2016—“It Was A Very Good Year” for WOMEN Unlimited

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. December 22, 2016

I've always loved that Sinatra classic.

I'm happy to say the title nicely defines how 2016 shaped up for us at WOMEN Unlimited, our corporate partners, their participants in our programs, and the managers and the mentors who support them.

It was a very busy year as well, with a number of changes, enhancements and innovations that have been very favorably received by the management community. Here's a look at some of the year's highlights.

Our program for early career women, IMpower, hits the ground running

Based on feedback from our corporate partners, we revised our development program for early career women and introduced IMpower in 2015. In 2016, we rolled out programs across the country and throughout the year. They have met with resounding success and have generated positive impact on both participants and their managers.

We are thrilled that IMpower is helping corporations feed their talent pipeline by developing female talent early in their careers. Here are just a few of the hundreds of comments we've received about IMpower.

- **Participants:** “My enhanced visibility led to a new position in the company.” “I have received positive recognition that leadership has noticed a difference in my confidence level and willingness to accept challenging tasks.” “My manager confirmed that I am an even bolder leader.” “I was promoted shortly after Session 6.” “I received an offer for a position and will be starting shortly after graduation.”
- **Managers about their participants:** “She is much more confident and aligned with corporate strategy.” “Senior management has noticed her taking leadership initiative.” “She is more comfortable with ambiguity in managing people and projects.” “The program is exciting for both of us. I see bigger picture thinking in her.” “She has blossomed. She is more articulate and participative at meetings.”

Two major WOMEN Unlimited publications help corporations embrace and expand gender parity

During 2016, WOMEN Unlimited released two major publications. The first, [What Every Manager Should Know About Fostering Female Talent: A Playbook of Proven Strategies](#) is a from-the-field look at the tools, techniques and strategies that executives from Prudential, Colgate, DuPont, Bayer, Chubb and Takeda Oncology use to support and advance the talented women on their teams. Executives answered four major questions about managing their female talent, as well as adding their own experiences and anecdotes. The Playbook continues to be downloaded frequently and requested often.

A little later in the year, we released [Developing Female Talent: A Story of Positive Change... A Story of Creating Sustainable Change](#), literally a publication only we could do. It highlights our unique contribution to inclusiveness based

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on our thousands of interactions with C-suite executives, senior HR/talent officers, women program participants, their managers, and mentors. It's the story of our continual first hand observations and learnings from all the key players who need to be engaged if gender parity is to take hold. Based on continuing requests for it from companies across industries, it is also a story of singular interest to the management community.

Webinars bring a range of perspectives on diversity to corporate leaders

In 2016, WOMEN Unlimited hosted two webinars. The first in March, Fostering Female Talent, was a direct result of the interest generated by the [Playbook](#) and showcased three of the executives interviewed. They spoke freely about their strategies for developing the talented women on their teams and the challenges both they and the women face. [Click here](#) to listen to the one-hour webinar in its entirety.

Then in late September, we sponsored a webinar on STEM: Developing and Retaining Female Talent featuring two panelists with extensive STEM experience. It focused on why women are not entering STEM, the barriers they face when they do and how organizations can “move the needle.” [Click here](#) to listen to the one-hour STEM webinar in its entirety.

...And then there was “business as usual”

In addition to these new initiatives, we held our core development programs...enhanced The WUN (alumnae network)... attended and spoke at a variety of conferences and seminars...actively engaged in social media...embarked on new research initiatives...and began revising LEAD, our program for mid-career women to ensure its continued applicability to the 21st Century workplace.

So yes, it's been a very good year... and we're looking forward to an even better 2017.

Happy New Year!

ABOUT WOMEN UNLIMITED

Since 1994, WOMEN Unlimited has been the “go to” organization for major corporations to develop their women leaders. We work with key players across the corporation, including managers, mentors, senior executives and human resource professionals, to build an environment conducive to attracting, developing and retaining female talent.

Our three-pronged approach of Mentoring, Education and Networking is the heart and soul of our development programs for women at all organizational levels. Over 11,000 women have completed these programs and continually credit the programs with building their confidence levels and heightening their understanding of how to contribute to organizational success. Additionally, managers of program participants are quick to see positive changes in the women who attend, while gaining a better understanding of how they can support and nurture their female talent. As a result more than 96% of our Corporate Partners maintain an ongoing relationship with us.

To learn more about WOMEN Unlimited and our full range of initiatives, visit our website or email us at corp@women-unlimited.com.

Website: www.women-unlimited.com

Email: corp@women-unlimited.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/WOMEN-Unlimited-Inc/89519844328

Twitter: [@womenunlimited_](https://twitter.com/womenunlimited_)

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/women-unlimited



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