



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

WOMEN
UNLIMITED, INC.

MENTORING
EDUCATION
NETWORKING



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DR. ROSINA RACIOPPI**

Introduction: Dr. Rosina L. Racioppi



A few years ago, my team suggested that I start a blog on our [website](#) covering what I was thinking, what I was reading and what was happening around diversity for female talent. I thought it was a great idea and have been posting frequently ever since. The blogs have received excellent readership and excellent feedback.

However, sometimes it was tough for our corporate partners and our web visitors to quickly pinpoint information on a specific diversity-related topic. That's why I thought it would be of value to pull together the blogs by major subject areas.

This compendium consisting of 43 blogs is the result.

I hope you'll find it a helpful resource and that you will share it widely. Please feel free to email me at rracioppi@women-unlimited.com with your comments and/or with your suggestions for future blogs.



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

**II.
DIVERSITY:
THE BUSINESS CASE**



Diversity—It ADDS UP

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 18, 2013

Not so long ago, a discussion about diversity or gender equality in the workplace would center around social awareness or corporate good citizenship.

...Then the numbers started coming in...

And slowly but surely the conversation shifted from corporate responsibility to corporate profitability.

The findings have been conclusive, extensive and global. Here are just a few examples from the myriad of evidence supporting the correlation between diversity and improved numbers:

- A study by Michael Ferrary of France's Skema Business School tracked companies on the Parisian stock exchange. Over-all the CAC40 lost 34.70% of its value from 2007-12. However, during that same period, companies on the exchange with 35% or more women on their management team lost only 5.28% of their value.
- A Pepperdine University study tracked 200 Fortune 500 companies over a number of years. According to the lead researcher, Roy Adler: "the correlation between high-level female executives and business success has been consistent and revealing."
- A McKinsey Report compared the top quartile of companies in terms of women on executive committees vs. no-women on executive committees. McKinsey found that companies with women surpassed no-women committees by 41% in return on equity and by 56% in operating results.
- Over the past five years, nine Indian companies run by prominent women managers have out-performed in year-on-year growth the 30 leading firms listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange.
- According to a Catalyst Bottom Line Report, Fortune 500 companies with the greatest number of women on their boards "attained significantly higher financial performance"— 53% higher return on equity, 42% higher return on sales and 66% higher return on invested capital.

Additionally, Harvard, Wharton, the Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times and numerous other leaders in their fields have either researched this corporate reality or reported on it in detail. Why do women make such a difference? To my mind, the major reason is simple—diverse groups provide diverse points of view which make for better decision making. Research conducted by Anita Woolley at Carnegie Mellon sums it up this way: "if a group includes more women, its collective intelligence rises." That's not to say women are smarter than men, but that the group itself, when diverse, becomes a smarter, more impactful one.

At WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. we are heartened by the continually growing body of quantifiable evidence that corporations need talented women at their highest levels. It inspires corporate leaders to develop effective strategies for increasing their number of C-suite female executives. And it makes our mission of getting them there even more rewarding.



77 Cents is Only the Tip of the Iceberg

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. February 6, 2014

Since President Obama delivered his State of the Union address on January 28th, there's been a lot of back and forth on whether women really earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn...how that number was arrived at...and whether it's the right stat to be bandying around. To my mind, it's a distractor. No matter how you slice it, women earn less than men (with the highest number I've seen at 81 cents).

As someone whose job and passion it is to help women navigate corporate America, I have a bigger concern—a concern that we have to get to the underlying reasons why inequity exists, not just inequity in pay, but inequity in opportunity. And, of course, they're linked. To start, both women and their organizations benefit when more women are at the top levels of corporations. Women account for 54% of the workforce, but for only 14% of top positions. The consequences of this disparity are monumentally damaging

- Being sorely absent from C-suite positions, also makes women sorely absent from the highest salaries, bonuses and perks that come with these positions. Additionally, women tend to be in roles that do not have bottom line responsibilities. Traditionally, these positions pay less, are valued less and lead to top jobs less often. It's a vicious cycle.
- Corporations are missing out on the "higher intelligence" decision making that comes when there is a heterogeneous grouping in C-suites and on Boards. As I've said before, research has shown that teams that include women, have smarter and more innovative approaches to solving problems and grasping opportunities. It's not that women are smarter. It's that diverse groups with women in them ARE.

Working with many of the world's leading organizations and many of their most talented women, I see that the days of deliberate discrimination are largely gone. Instead, there is a more subtle, and because it is less obvious, a sometimes more insidious staller of women's careers and opportunities.

I have come to call it "gender fatigue" and it's pervasive.

- There is gender fatigue on the part of organizations who believe they are doing the right thing hiring more women, only to find them leaving in large numbers at the mid-career stage. Possible solution: organizations need to more actively combat the ennui and frustration that women feel at mid-career level when they begin to sense the inevitable—that their careers are stalled in place.
- There is gender fatigue on the part of women who enter the workplace optimistic that their opportunities are the same as their male counterparts only to "wake up" and realize that, despite their talents, they have been passed over, underpaid and overlooked. We still hear in our programs that women are frustrated because doing a good job—even an outstanding job—is not enough to advance their careers. Possible solution: women at all levels (most especially mid-career) must develop and use the mentors, the networks and the competencies that will transform them into powerful leaders who cannot be ignored.
- There is gender fatigue on the part of male managers who are trying to do the right thing, but often don't understand that women's corporate experiences are different from men's and therefore their view of the organization is different. Possible solution: A greater willingness to support their female subordinates and to acknowledge and combat possible hidden perceptions such as feelings that women will leave to start a family... or that business relationships with women may be misconstrued.

So let's move past the 77 cents debate...focus instead on another quote from the President's State of the Union Address... and make it our individual and corporate call to action:

"When women succeed, America succeeds."



I Admit It. I'm Angry...

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. August 19, 2014

Blog after blog, article after article, research study after research study highlight the gloom and doom of the impending labor shortage and its accompanying talent dearth. They agree that during the next ten years, companies are going to be scrambling to find the talent they need, not just to stay competitive, but in many cases to stay alive.

Yes. It appears we're heading into the human resources equivalent of a depression. I've addressed some of the major causes in previous blogs: baby boomers retiring, population decline and absence of the right skills.

So why am I angry? Because among the plethora of solutions offered, most articles and blogs fail to SPECIFICALLY mention a potential solution that's right under their noses—nurturing and developing female talent. Of course, it's implied in catch-all phrases like; “treat your current employees well...” “look at ways to retain your talented employees.”... “competitively recruit new talent.” But that's not been enough up until now; and there's no reason to think it will be.

I can't say this too many times. Women make up 46.8% of the workforce, but only 14.6% of upper management ranks. That's an unacceptable statistic under any circumstances, but in the face of the looming “perfect storm” of unavailable talent, it's disastrous. Additionally, the evidence keeps mounting that more C-suite women make for more profitable corporations. Studies by both Catalyst and MIT show that organizations with women on their top teams make smarter decisions. It's not that the women are necessarily smarter; it's that the diversely-populated team is smarter.

So, it's clear. Companies must start looking to their talented women as their most promising resource. Why would they start anywhere else?

I've discussed previously the main reasons companies often overlook their female talent: second generation gender bias... failure of women to be their own best advocates... lack of mentors, sponsors and networks focused on women. The point is that all of these issues are addressable and fixable, provided there is a corporate commitment to change.

Some companies are doing exactly that. Their CEO's and top management are getting the word out that finding, developing and retaining female talent is no longer an option. It's a corporate imperative. Among their key strategies:

- Corporate-wide searches for internal female talent
- Long-term strategies for advancing talented women
- Re-aligning corporate culture away from “old boy” mentalities
- Diversity awareness for both men and women
- Focus on mentoring, networking and sponsorships specifically for female talent
- Metrics and accountability at all levels

I know this works, because I've seen it work with Fortune 1000 companies who partner with us at WOMEN Unlimited. For years they have understand and embraced the benefits to their companies of developing female talent.

I regret the crisis ahead. However, I can only hope that it will serve as the impetus for more and more companies to look to the talented women that have been there all along.



An Argument (or Ten) For Starting Early

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

As CEO of WOMEN Unlimited, Inc, I experience firsthand a variety of training and development “pushbacks” from large corporations. Most often, the concerns circle around investing in talented early-career women.

The hesitancy is understandable. Will early-career women stay with the company long enough to justify the investment in their training and development? Aren't monies better spent on more seasoned employees? Are newer employees experienced enough to gain the needed insights to benefit the company?

The numbers and the realities do not justify these concerns. Perhaps the best analogy comes from pain management. If you wait too long to take the aspirin, the Tylenol, the Advil or the Aleve it doesn't do much good because the cycle is too far along. If companies wait too long to start feeding the diversity pipeline, they will be hopelessly back pedaling to catch up.

Here are just a few of the many findings that point to the importance of early career development for both retention of prized employees and for increased profitability:

- “Top performing organizations now recognize that the earlier potential talent is identified and put into the pipeline, the sooner the entire organization reaps the rewards.” Workinfo.com
- “By addressing the mind-sets holding women back, corporate leaders can reshape the talent pipeline...making it likelier that women will retain their ambition.” McKinsey Quarterly
- “Fortune 500 Companies with the best records of promoting women...report 18 to 69 percent higher profits than their competitors who have not been as successful promoting women” Corporate Retention of Women Engineers
- An American Management Association (AMA) survey of 352 HR executives found “Investing in employees’ future is more important than immediate compensation,”
Eric Rolfe Greenberg, AMA’s Director of Management Studies

At WOMEN Unlimited, we have long recognized the correlation between developing early-career talent and corporate success; and we address the issue through our TEAM [Transforming Emerging and Aspiring Managers] program.

Over the years, our corporate partners and our graduates have cited a variety of benefits resulting from TEAM participation. Most notably:

- TEAM graduates understand how to leverage their strengths in new and productive ways
- TEAM allows companies to increase the number of women in their talent pipeline
- TEAM is effective in increasing retention because (1) women value their company’s investment in them and (2) they see themselves on a promising career path
- TEAM participants gain insights for utilizing their skills and expertise to make positive (profitable) contributions to their companies
- TEAM provides high potential talent with external, as well as internal, perspectives to enhance their business acumen
- TEAM offers an opportunity for sustainable development since it is an on-going process

[Click here](#) for full details about why and how TEAM works.



Why Is 15 Out Of 16 Not Good Enough?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. October 17, 2013

In the last few months there has been a lot in the news about women and leadership. I'm really happy this subject is starting to get more of the attention it deserves. One recent online article by Will Marre, *Three Reasons We Need Women Leaders Now*, especially captured my attention.

Marre points out that according to a research study, women surpass men in 15 out of 16 top leadership competencies. These competencies include: initiative, integrity, team building, teamwork, problem solving, innovation, communication, and technical and professional expertise. Only in one competency did men out-score women: "develops strategic perspective."

And here lies the "chicken and egg" dilemma.

Marre points out that according to the September 13th issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, larger corporations tend to offer men projects with larger staffs and larger budgets. Women also tend to be seriously under-represented in "positions with profit and loss responsibility." All of these areas require a strategic perspective and are stepping stones to positions that require even more.

So to summarize the dilemma: In 15 out of 16 areas, women are superior leaders. Yet, the one area in which they fall somewhat behind is the one that continues to be underdeveloped and that significantly sabotages their rise to upper management. Despite their many superior leadership skills, the lack of a strategic business perspective prevents women from integrating those skills into a strategy that will propel them into key corporate roles.

What to Do?

We at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. have been working for almost 20 years to help women navigate their way out of this problem. It's no surprise to us that women are so good at so many things. If they weren't, the over 160 Fortune 500 companies who work with us, would not continue to send their talented women to our programs. We have a 96% repeat rate from the world's most savvy businesses. Like us and like Marre, these corporations know the talent is there—the talent to lead and succeed in the years ahead.

How can women and the organizations who need their outstanding leadership capabilities, hone strategic skills? Let me give you a few examples from our WOMEN Unlimited "play list:"

- Change starts with the women themselves. They must understand that developing a strategic perspective requires a shift in their attitudes and behavior. As Marre puts it, they must focus more on the "what" and the "why" and less on the "how." Both in our programs and on-the-job, WOMEN Unlimited helps women make these shifts.
- Networks and mentors are crucial resources for women in their development as leaders and in advancing their careers. Networks and mentors help talented women understand how to act strategically by pointing them to the factors at play—both within themselves and within their organizations. In addition, mentors are invaluable allies and realistic sounding boards, providing effective feedback on career-limiting behaviors and skills. Effectively developing and using networks and mentors are key components in all our programs.

(cont'd)



Why Is 15 Out Of 16 Not Good Enough?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. October 17, 2013

- When women are in a safe environment, they can learn to role-play and to get past potential career barriers. As they gain confidence and expertise, they become more likely and more willing to take on the high-visibility projects that will hone their strategic perspectives. At WOMEN Unlimited, we provide exactly that environment.
- Research has shown that organizations with women in senior leadership roles are more profitable and innovative. Such success can be achieved when corporate strategies to advance women are coupled with development practices that support women's understanding of what they need to do to become effective senior leaders. Our approach involves all levels of the organization in this change and growth process.

In short, neither talented women, nor their organizations, can afford to stand back and let the proven leadership talents women possess fall by the wayside. As that old saying goes:

"If not us, who? If not now, when?"

III.
BEST PRACTICES
FOR CORPORATIONS



20th Anniversary Reflections

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 1, 2014

April 18th marks WOMEN Unlimited Inc.'s 20th anniversary. That's when the dream of our founder, Jean Otte, to help talented women reach the top of their corporations became a reality. The first LEAD program was attended by 18 women from AT&T, PSEG, Colgate-Palmolive Company, and Volvo to name a few. And today, thanks to our more than 160 corporate partners and over 10,000 talented alumnae, the successes keep racking up. You'll be hearing more about those successes in the months ahead.

I couldn't be prouder of this phenomenal organization and of our corporate partners. We have worked together diligently, many from the earliest days of WOMEN Unlimited, to be true partners. Our relationship is an on-going give and take where we adapt and update our programs to align with their corporate needs and with the growth and development of their talented women. But it's not in my DNA to rest on our laurels. I am excited to look at what still needs to be done and how we can continue to help talented women and their corporations achieve new levels of success.

3 Ways the Corporate Landscape Needs to Change—And How We Plan to Help

WOMEN Unlimited has never shied away from being in the forefront of productive change. Starting with Jean, we have continually advocated for diversity and inclusivity, because it was the right thing to do and the smart business thing to do. In the near future, I see three areas where we will continue to push the envelope of opportunity for talented women and the global corporations for whom they work.

1. **Help organizations embrace the power of diverse styles and opinions**

In studies from Catalyst, Harvard, the Wall Street Journal (and the list goes on and on) the numbers keep reaffirming that diversity at the top improves the bottom line. For the past 20 years, WOMEN Unlimited programs have proven to be successful vehicles for helping organizations find, develop, promote and retain their talented women. We will continue to reach out to organizations both nationally and internationally so that more of them reap the benefits of diversity at the top.

2. **Change forever the conversation around women "having it all"**

It's arbitrary and it's a distraction. I would like to see the conversation reframed (and we do it during our programs) so that women focus on what they want for their careers; on what makes them feel fulfilled both personally and professionally. Focusing on goals and the areas that support those goals is key to a woman's professional success and to her having an integrated life. We will continue to stress, more fervently than ever, that success is not about having it all; it's about having what you set out to accomplish.

3. **Help develop expansive mind sets at all corporate levels to fuel growth and innovation**

When employees, managers and leaders rely solely on their own view, they not only miss understanding how others see the world, they miss the opportunity to leverage the "power" different points of view can have on organizational as well as personal growth. Because the stakes are higher and the consequences of myopia greater, clinging to a limited point of view at the top levels of corporations is especially detrimental. It's our on-going goal at WOMEN Unlimited to support our participants, our alumnae, our existing partners and our potential ones in abandoning outdated pre-conceived notions, and in developing instead an authentic appreciation of different styles, strategies and approaches.



It Takes a Corporate Village

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. July 31, 2014

What interactions are necessary for corporations to enjoy the proven bottom-line benefits of a diverse team at the top? It is never a one-man or one-woman show. It is a unified effort that permeates the organization to its core. As one of our WOMEN Unlimited clients puts it, for diversity to take hold “it has to be both federal and local.”

It Starts At the Top

The CEO must be committed to diversity; and must be perceived as so. Executives and managers at every level must know that efforts and initiatives are not niceties; they are necessities...that promoting women and advancing diversity are not a “plan de jour” but a long-term commitment by which managers will be measured and held accountable.

If employees at all levels understand the seriousness of top management’s commitment to diversity, it will happen. Old biases, old cultures and old stereotypes will slowly start to fade. Everyone, including the talented women themselves, will know that there is not just room at the top for them; there’s a C-suite waiting.

The Key Players in Advancing Diversity

Once top management has made its message clear, three groups play a necessary role in fostering diversity: male managers, mentors and networks.

- **Male Managers:** The male manager is the front line in making sure that the talented women on his staff understand there is serious top-level interest in female advancement...that he will help them gain the training and development they need to get ahead... and that he will provide honest feedback about performance, behavior and changes needed to advance. Additionally, research shows that male managers often experience growth and development of their own attitudes and competencies when they engage in this process. Of course, talented women need the support of female managers as well, but the reality is that the current power structure (especially at upper-mid management and higher) is male dominated and their role in female advancement is unequalled.
- **Mentors,** male and female, are significant players in helping women advance. Most talented women are savvy enough to know they need mentors, but fall short in how they leverage the relationship. In the mentoring process, women must intentionally prepare for the relationships... intentionally put their mentor’s suggestions into action and intentionally build internal relationships based on these insights. Research shows that mentees who act in this intentional way enjoy significantly higher career success than those who don’t.
- **Networks:** The term network has become an all-encompassing cliché. For the purposes of fostering diversity, a network must encompass talented men and women from inside and outside the organization, with different cultural backgrounds and different corporate points of view. The network should also include people outside of regular contacts and those at leadership levels. A network is NOT a group of friends or a gathering of like-minded thinkers.

Pulling It All Together—a Diversity Trifecta

To summarize, this is the kind of corporate village that makes diversity at the top happen:

- A vocal, pro-diversity CEO
- Managers, networks and mentors, all in play to support female talent
- Women themselves open to the change and to growth needed to achieve their career goals



Why Do We Keep Asking the Wrong Question?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. October 22, 2012

Recently, there's been a lot of press around the question: "Can Women Have It All?" Much of the buzz has been ignited by Ann-Marie Slaughter's Atlantic Monthly Article, "Why Women Can't Have It All" and by Yahoo CEO, Marissa Mayer's decision to continue working after her child is born.

In my opinion, it's the WRONG QUESTION—a question that invites frustration and confusion among young women in business aspiring to top corporate positions. I've seen it over and over in the faces and attitudes of potential managers in our TEAM program. Let's not forget that it's a sexist question, as well. No one seems concerned about whether men can have it all. When Jeff Immelt became CEO of GE, no one asked or cared.

In my mind, the question we should be addressing instead is "Can Women DO it All?" and the answer is a resounding "No!" Not only can't they do it all. They shouldn't do it all... and they shouldn't want to.

Yet, talented, motivated women in business seem obsessed by Perfectionism. Too many of them believe they have to do it all 100% — personally and professionally—or they're not good enough. It's an invitation to failure and an attitude we at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. are determined to eliminate through our business mentoring programs. The talent drought created by women throwing in the towel because of impossible expectations has potentially devastating consequences, not just for the women themselves, but for their organizations.

To overcome this striving for perfection, it's crucial to reconcile: "Can Women have it All?" with "Can Women Do It All?" They are in fact intertwined. At our WOMEN Unlimited business mentoring programs, women learn a variety of skills that bring these two questions together. We show them that by prioritizing goals and expectations —both personal and professional—they CAN achieve them. Throughout our business mentoring programs, we help women in business develop alliances, within and outside their companies, so they know how and where to turn for guidance and support. We help them learn that doing it alone is counter-productive to corporate success.

In other words, our participants discover that by defining what they want, focusing their talents on those goals and eliciting the help and support of others, **they can have all they've set out to accomplish without doing it all by themselves.** If they make mistakes along the way – they're learning experiences, not character flaws.



Nationally-acclaimed HR expert pinpoints best practices

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 19, 2014

I had the good fortune to meet and get to know Peter Cappelli when I was attending the doctoral program at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. I found Peter to be absolutely spot on in terms of how HR professionals need to look at the corporate landscape in order to implement diversity at all levels. Recently Peter answered a few questions for us to share with our WOMEN Unlimited readers. But first here are some highpoints of Peter's background and accomplishments.



Currently Peter is the George W. Taylor Professor of Management and Director of the Center for Human Resources at The Wharton School, as well as Professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. He was recently named by HR Magazine as one of the top five most influential management thinkers and was elected a fellow of the National Academy of Human Resources. He has published extensively and his book, *Talent Management: Managing Talent in an Age of Uncertainty*, which outlines the strategies that employers should consider in developing and managing talent was named a "best business book" for 2008 by Booz-Allen. Peter's recent research examines changes in employment relations in the U.S. and their implications.

Peter Cappelli on Best Practices for Forward-Thinking HR Professionals

What 3 key strategies will help HR professionals and Talent Development leaders foster the advancement of women into the top-management pipeline?

I tend to think they are the same strategies that should be used to advance anyone:

1. Focus on giving people the opportunity to take on tasks that help them develop. These are stretch assignments that challenge by requiring new behaviors.
2. Make people responsible for outcomes. It's especially important for career advancement inside the same organization. To get ahead, people need visibility. It is important to be able to say, "I did this."
3. Mentoring and social support systems are important for helping everyone's career and most especially women's. Historically, women and minorities faced special problems in the workplace not only because of discrimination but because of being cut off from social networks that provided information and advice on how to get ahead.

What significant barriers do you see standing in the way of advancing female talent?

The big one is that in most organizations it is hard to get opportunity. Executives and managers usually have their heads down, focused on achieving today's results, and not really thinking about developing the people around them. Getting that needed opportunity will likely require negotiating and asking to do something new and different. It always helps to do the negotiating and the asking in a way that benefits the boss.

What advice would you give HR professionals/Talent Development Leaders to help them motivate management AT ALL LEVELS to actively support diversity?

Creating special programs for developing a diverse talent pool isn't a very good strategy. It's likely people won't take them seriously enough because many initiatives and programs come and go.

The biggest thing to do is to make the appropriate behaviors visible and on-going. Recognize people who have helped develop talent and reward them.



The Unmistakable Power of Potential

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. July 16, 2014

In an article in the June issue of Harvard Business Review, Claudio Fernández-Aráos, senior advisor at a leading global search firm, states unequivocally: “I now consider potential to be the most important predictor of success at all levels, from junior management to the C-suite and board.” He goes on to say that potential trumps “brains, brawn, experience and competencies” when trying to spot talent.

I couldn't agree more. Leveraging potential is what will make or break corporations in the years ahead. Without finding it, developing it and embracing it, corporations are going to find their pipelines depleted of the talent they need to compete and prosper because, by all accounts, the years ahead will bring with them an unprecedented scarcity of talent. Two factors are particularly at play.

First, demographics—the percentage of people in the prime age group for rising senior executives is declining, while more and more of the population-rich baby boomer generation are retiring. Second, globalization will require corporations to stretch beyond their local markets and find talented people who can engineer the expansion both domestically and internationally. These factors are literally screaming out for corporations to find new ways to pinpoint the leaders of the not-too-distant future.

In this quest to find and retain talent, potential needs to be front and center. Admittedly, it is more elusive than a check list of competencies, but it is nonetheless becoming increasingly more important.

A Goldmine of Potential

In our work with Fortune 1000 companies, WOMEN Unlimited is finding that more and more leading organizations are accepting the reality that the talent they need is right under their noses. Women employees, from entry level to mid-career, are literally a goldmine of often untapped potential.

However, the challenge of pinpointing and nurturing talented women with the potential to take leadership roles can be daunting. Studies have found that there is still a great divide in corporate America. Men tend to be recognized and paid for potential, while women tend to be compensated for existing competencies. Additionally, a recent Catalyst study found that women are still playing catch-up in having the mentors, sponsors and networks they need to make sure their potential is spotted and developed.

Tapping the potential of Female Talent

Right here and right now, organizations can begin to take a more active role in pinpointing and developing female talent. These are just a few of the best-practices currently in play by top corporations who understand the importance of tapping a talent pool that comprises half or more of their workforce:

- Look at your corporate culture honestly and assess if it is conducive to nurturing female talent at every level. If not, develop a game plan for change, including the attitudes of the women themselves.
- Start early. Make sure talented early-career women know they can advance in your organization and give them the tools they need to do it

(cont'd)



The Unmistakable Power of Potential

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. July 16, 2014

- Find development programs that are in synch with your corporate goals to tap female talent and who can customize their approach accordingly. Our partners at WOMEN Unlimited have often said that working together we have achieved ground-breaking results in finding, developing and retaining women with C-suite potential
- Ensure that HR professionals and hiring managers look beyond the normal resume-based qualifications to traits that define potential. In his article, Fernández-Aráos pinpoints them as: curiosity, insight, engagement and determination.

The writing is on the wall for the 21st Century: potential “trumps” performance in combatting a continually-diminishing talent pipeline.



The Double-Edged Benefits of Intrapreneurs

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. March 14, 2014

I'm always on the lookout for approaches and strategies that benefit both corporations and their talented women. It's the focus of WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. partnerships: helping women move forward so both they and their companies reach new levels of success.

Intrapreneurship is definitely a win-win strategy and especially effective for career-focused women. It dovetails perfectly with the changes in attitudes and behaviors they must embrace if they are going to make it to the highest levels of their organizations.

Intrapreneurship: A Quick Overview

There's nothing new about intrapreneurship. It's been around for 40+ years with some great accomplishments behind it. For example, intrapreneurs are credited with the creation of new airplane designs for Lockheed Martin...Post-It Notes for 3M...and Gmail and Google News for Google.

Before we go any further, let's define what we mean by an intrapreneur. It's "a person within a large corporation who takes direct responsibility for turning an idea into a profitable finished product through assertive risk-taking and innovation" (Wikipedia)

Two Sides to Intrapreneurial Success

As obvious as it sounds, if an intrapreneur is to be successful, the corporate climate in which she is operating must be conducive to the concept. Many intrapreneurs fail, not because they or their ideas are not up to speed, but because their current corporate environment is not suited for intrapreneurship.

So here's a quick checklist of the corporate characteristics most conducive to intrapreneurs:

- Continually seek out new ideas and input from employees at all levels
- Foster inter-departmental collaboration
- Monitor customer attitudes and opinions about products and services
- Create an environment where employees are free to speak up
- Set aside an in-house venture capital fund
- Reward "genius" ideas monetarily
- Hold classes and seminars to encourage and spark employee creativity
- Encourage employees to have fun in an environment where creativity and innovation abound

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On the other side of the coin, not everyone is suited to becoming an intrapreneur. These are the key characteristics most often found in those who succeed at it:

- Sees opportunities others don't
- Has a high comfort level with risk
- Creative and innovative
- Passionate about change
- Establishes a network that expands her thinking and her perspectives
- Effective team player
- Talent for selling ideas to others
- Organizationally savvy

When the right organizational climate and the right intrapreneurial talent align, the potential for innovative products and services is almost limitless. As women (especially millennials) continue to find their voice and move up the corporate ladder, we are likely to see more of them weighing in as heavy-duty intrapreneurs. I can't wait!



6 Strategies For Holding On To Your Talented Women

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 17, 2014

I've talked a good deal in these blogs about how to develop female talent, but not so much about how to retain that talent. Admittedly, it's not always easy. Frustration can run high among talented women, and when it does they can look for greener pastures.

My experience has shown that certain strategies can make a significant difference in retaining your female talent, your future corporate leaders. Here are six of the most effective:

1. **Show your talented women that they are valued: with words—and more importantly, with actions**

There are many ways to encourage and acknowledge your female talent—formally and informally. Certainly, the obvious approaches are crucial: raises, promotions, training and development. But more regular and on-going affirmation is needed as well and should include: complements, plum assignments, opportunities to mentor and train others, team leadership. Also, go the extra mile with your Diversity and Inclusion Strategy by ensuring everyone (especially managers) adopts inclusive behaviors and understands the impact of second generation gender bias.

2. **Be an active listener**

Don't ever be too busy to hear—really hear—what your talented women have to say. Listen for how a woman discusses her role... how she sees herself contributing to the organization and what challenges and struggles she is experiencing. You will gain invaluable insights into how to best coach and support her growth and development. Additionally, by listening, you are sending a message that the person is valued and worth your time.

3. **Facilitate their visibility**

Evidence shows that women, as a rule, are not as good as men at making themselves seen and heard at the levels of management that matter. Women tend to focus more on being top performers than on forging relationships. Advise your talented women on why competence alone is not enough...on how they can take a more prominent seat at the table...how they can make connections that will facilitate their success. Help women articulate the value they bring to the company because research shows women often miss the importance of tying their development to the business. Then, make the introductions to those who matter and help the women be in the right place at the right time.

4. **Meet your talented women where they are...but show them where they can be**

Research indicates that men tend to take on stretch assignments, then learn the position; while women want to know they can do the assignment before taking it on. As a result, you may know and believe that a woman is ready for the next step up in her career, but she may see it differently. She may think she doesn't have what it takes to manage a larger team or she may be comfortable staying where she is and doing what she knows. Make sure you acknowledge her ideas and feelings on the matter while emphasizing your confidence in her potential. Also, make sure she understands that this is an on-going dialog to be revisited by both you and her.

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5. Custom tailor development to both the women and the organization

One of the things we've learned at WOMEN Unlimited is that development never works when it's off the shelf. It doesn't work for the women and it doesn't work for their organizations. Development needs to be fine-tuned so that women embrace it as a springboard for their success and for their growing contribution to corporate success. It's one reason organizations who send women to our programs enjoy a retention rate of over 88% of those women.

6. Start early

Many organizations make the mistake of waiting too long to put the above 5 approaches into action. By not starting early enough in a woman's career, you can allow resentment to take hold. Our most successful corporate partners are those who begin the process of nurturing and developing their talented women during the third or fourth year of their careers—or sooner.

We know that people stay in organizations when they feel valued and have opportunities to grow. While there are no guarantees, these strategies have been significant in helping companies retain their high-potential women and in warding off the human and fiscal costs of finding and developing new talent.



Diversity: Lessons Learned

By Audrey Goodman, April 28, 2014

“During this our 20th Anniversary year, from time to time I will be inviting guest bloggers from our most successful corporate partnerships to share their take on diversity, talent management and creating a successful pipeline of women executives. Audrey Goodman currently an Organization Effectiveness consultant and, former Vice President Organization Development at Medco Health Solutions Inc., a WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. corporate partner since 1995, is our first guest blogger.”

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

Throughout my career at Medco Health Solutions, I was actively involved in our commitment to diversity. From the CEO on down, we knew that in order for both our organization and our talented women to enjoy the benefits of a diverse pipeline, we had to be committed at every level to the process and the results.

I'd like to share with you some of the lessons learned from my over 20 year involvement in fostering diversity.

Find the new voices

Corporations must actively seek out new voices and dig down deep to find people who might not be heard in a business-as-usual environment. At Medco, two approaches proved especially successful. We determined who might have potential for our talent pipeline, and put them in our “Medco Diversity Mentoring Program.” It taught participants, often women, how to be seen and heard. It included networking and coaching by executives, where participants learned how to grow a wide range of skills that would help them step up and speak out.

Another of our initiatives, “Aspire,” was the brainchild of our President. He would talk to early-career employees such as customer service reps and pharmacy technicians and ask them about their career goals. Often they would reply that they'd love to have a long-term career at Medco, but feared no one would find them. It inspired us to reach out. As a result, executives at a local level would select nine employees, whom they believed were likely candidates for more senior positions. They would meet with these employees often and get to know them well, so they could advocate for them at the higher levels of the organization. They were no longer hidden talent.

Make Diversity Part of Talent Management

In order for diversity to become ingrained in an organization, it must be part of an over-arching talent management strategy. Talent management ensures that the right candidate is available at the right time. Diversity opens up the possibilities to a broader talent pool. By linking talent management and diversity strategies, a company makes sure they are always looking at all the qualified people available.

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Diversity: Lessons Learned

By Audrey Goodman, April 28, 2014

Include Metrics

Measurable results are an important aspect of maintaining and expanding an inclusive talent management strategy. There are different ways to measure. Metrics can be created around who got promoted...increased diversity e.g. how many more women...or what the executive succession pool looks like six, twelve, or 18 months out.

Forge Successful Partnerships

WOMEN Unlimited played a key role in our diversity initiatives. Our metrics showed good retention among the women tapped to attend WOMEN Unlimited programs. They are consistently enthusiastic about their participation and, as a result, have reached out across the organization to create a grassroots network for ALL women. Also, Medco's highly-successful Diversity Mentoring Program, which I mentioned earlier, is modelled around the WOMEN Unlimited approach and includes mentoring circles and mentoring groups.

Finally, I'd like to wish WOMEN Unlimited a happy 20th Anniversary. All the best as you continue to help major corporations develop their talented women.

**IV.
BEST PRACTICES
FOR TALENTED WOMEN**



Transformation

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. January 22, 2013

Transforming from employee to supervisor...supervisor to manager...and manager to leader is full of both “Aha” and “Oh no” moments.

A variety of learning theories attempt to help us better understand this process. Especially relevant for women striving to get ahead is Dr. Jack Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory. Mezirow suggests that when an individual experiences a dilemma (in our case, 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.

During this “make meaning” process, it is critical that three key elements be in place: a safe environment, input from more experienced individuals and an openness/willingness to learn. Mezirow posits that the formation of this type of learning “community” will ease the transition and facilitate the required transformation.

About a month or so ago, I revisited Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory as part of my doctoral program at the University of Pennsylvania/Wharton School and I had my own “aha moment.” I realized that the success of our corporate partners and the women they send to our Women Unlimited programs is strongly connected to the “make meaning” and “community” aspects of Mezirow’s theory.

Let me give you a few examples:

- WOMEN Unlimited programs provide a safe environment for high potential women to open up about challenges they face as they transition to their next career stage. In this non-threatening milieu, outside their organization, they feel comfortable to discuss their development dilemma (the resistance they are experiencing when their former behaviors no longer work.) As a result, they learn how to focus on and master the subtle shifts they must make to further their careers.
- The components of our programs put women in touch with experts—both male and female—who know what it takes to get ahead and to manage the difficulties that invariably come with career transitions...because they’ve done it. Additionally, our attendees get to interact with peers from other organizations who can broaden their outlook on achieving the next levels of success.
- Throughout our programs, attendees are provided with mentors who help them navigate the changes required to advance their careers and to increase contributions to their organizations. It is common for these relationships to become career-long alliances.
- Our participants learn to nurture relationships with upper management throughout their own organizations. As a result, they become adept at tapping the expertise of those fully-versed in the organizational climate in which upward-striving women must operate.

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Transformation

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. January 22, 2013

To summarize: our WOMEN Unlimited programs are designed for high potential women, whose development to senior level positions is encouraged by their organizations. Through our process, which is in synch with Mezirow's proven approach, participating women broaden their horizons by interacting with experts and peers... have the benefit of mentors who help them make required attitudinal shifts...and learn to nurture internal relationships at the upper levels of their organizations. As a result, they identify appropriate advancement strategies and embrace necessary attitudinal shifts, a process they would have been unable to accomplish on their own.

Check out our [website](#) for more details on how each of our programs creates opportunities for talented women to transform from one corporate level to the next. And how their increased facility with internal and external relationships brings huge benefits to their corporations.



Women Have To Stop Shying Away From Their Own Accomplishments

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. March 3, 2014

Most women are passionate cheerleaders for the achievements of those they care about—kids, spouses, parents, siblings, friends, bosses, colleagues, subordinates...with one notable exception...

THEMSELVES.

Women often shy away from getting the word out about their corporate accomplishments. They tend to harbor the misguided expectation that their work will speak for itself. Not likely. And even if it does, will it say the right thing? Will it help push a career to the next level? Or will it reinforce a corporate need to keep someone right where they are?

Catalyst research has found that men are paid on potential while women are paid on performance. This may be due, in part, to women not "tooting their own horn." When a woman chooses to let her work speak for itself, she thwarts her own progress by limiting information critical for senior leadership to assess her talents and abilities. By "tooting her own horn" a woman can begin to shift the equation and give corporate leaders a sense of not just her performance, but her leadership potential.

That's why there is nothing wrong, and everything right, with making big hits known, whether it's closing an important piece of new business...hitting on a major new product breakthrough...or receiving a reward from a professional organization.

How to do it? Word of mouth. Memo. Forwarding a press release. Having a trusted corporate friend or colleague get the word out. It's also always good practice to frame accomplishments in terms of how they benefit the corporation and the sense of satisfaction that accompanies being part of that success.

Compliments Are Often Missed Opportunities

I also find that women tend to blow off compliments, rather than leverage them, which flies squarely in the face of best practices. Handling a compliment in the right way can win allies and forge key relationships.

An effective approach would go something like this. Let's say a Vice President congratulates a middle-level manager on an outstanding presentation. First, she should thank the VP for the compliment and then ask, "What was the most impactful aspect of the presentation?" To really wow the executive, she could then ask "If there is one thing I could change to make the presentation better, what would you suggest?" By seeking out constructive feedback, the manager is cultivating a stronger relationship with the VP, and is also leaving the door open for future interactions.

For any number of reasons, women at all levels need to become skilled at both making their accomplishments visible and leveraging the power of a compliment. Developing these strategies will accelerate the transition from women being paid for their performance to their being paid for their potential!

As Jean Otte, founder of WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. so often told participants in our programs: "It's not what you know, it's who knows you know."



Tweeting about Lean In

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. May 30, 2013

On Tuesday, May 21st, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. hosted a Twitter Chat to discuss how the concepts in Sheryl Sandberg's runaway bestseller, *Lean In*, apply to women's everyday work lives and dovetail with the principles and practices shared in WOMEN Unlimited programs over the past 19 years.

A variety of women took the opportunity to tweet their thoughts, ideas and suggestions including WOMEN Unlimited alumnae and current program participants. The fast-paced 40 minute chat was structured around ten topics—posed one at a time by [@womenunlimited](https://twitter.com/womenunlimited).

Here are highlights:

- **Excellence vs. Perfection:** Since our inception in 1994, WOMEN Unlimited has used mentoring, education and networking to encourage women to abandon perfection for excellence. Twitterers agreed that perfection is an “unattainable expectation” and focusing on excellence “hones your instincts and ability to work in ambiguity.”
- **Women in the C-Suite:** We at WOMEN Unlimited are dedicated to helping women and their organizations enjoy the benefits of diversity in the C-Suite. That's why these two tweets were especially heartening. (1) “Diversity of thought, perspective and experience will lead to stronger business results.” (2) “More women in the C-suite ripples throughout the organization, offering fresh points of view and inspiring upcoming leaders.”
- **Work/Life Balance:** As women go through our programs, they develop a balanced approach to their personal and professional success. The importance of this balance was confirmed during the chat. Twitterers pointed out that when women learn to *Lean In*, they will become more confident in asking for what they need both in and outside of work. Additionally, both men and women will benefit from “added flexibility and balance.”
- **Women Underestimate Their Talents:** There was universal agreement that women tend to undervalue their contributions. By underestimating themselves, they miss opportunities for advancement. Additionally, they “over-focus on content” to the detriment of get-ahead strategies. These observations echoed an essential component of our WOMEN Unlimited programs—identifying key strengths and leveraging them for organizational and career success.
- **The Role of Confidence:** It was agreed that “confidence is the rocket fuel of success” and that unfortunately, most women do not have enough of it. They wait for others to tap them on the back instead of doing it themselves. One participant put it this way: “Confidence is huge. Even when you don't feel it, fake it until you make it.” Over and over, we hear from our alumnae how WOMEN Unlimited helped boost their confidence and lay the groundwork for taking the next career steps.
- **Organizational Support:** Alumnae and participants of WOMEN Unlimited programs were especially vocal on this subject, praising their organizations for sending them and highlighting the impact WOMEN Unlimited has had on their careers including developing networks, learning to assess their own strengths and prioritizing their career goals. “Sent me to WUI—best investment ever,” tweeted one program graduate.

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Tweeting about Lean In

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. May 30, 2013

- **Women “Holding Themselves Back”:** Participants agreed with Sandberg (as they do very vocally in all our programs) that women tend to hold themselves back. They cited a variety of ways including: “waiting for the right time” which never comes and failure to “ask for what they want.” “(Women) prioritize everything over their own happiness and development.” Throughout our programs we provide participants with tools and techniques to become successful advocates for their own success.
- **Making Risky Decisions:** This last topic was filled with powerful suggestions. “Be thoughtful. Evaluate data. Assess impact. Trust my gut.” Other participants emphasized the importance of getting past fear of failure. “I’m not seeking perfection. I’m limiting barriers.” One participant offered this advice: “Learn to negotiate for support both at work and at home before committing to risky decisions.” At WOMEN Unlimited we are all about helping women make the right decisions, even when they may appear risky initially. Developing this higher risk tolerance has been a career changer for literally hundreds of our alumnae.

We are thrilled to have hosted this dynamic give and take, and to once again have our approach to helping women achieve their full potential affirmed.



You, Inc.: Developing Your Personal Brand

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 26, 2013

We place great emphasis on “developing a personal brand” at our WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. programs. Why? Because, despite the critical importance of personal brands, women are often reluctant to look at themselves that way. As we’ve seen from research, women tend to shy away from what they view as self-promotion or “tooting their own horn”. Too often, they rely on others thrusting them into the limelight, rather than doing it themselves.

Big mistake. The 21st Century is all about brands and that includes personal ones. I like what Wikipedia has to say in its definition of Personal Branding: “While previous self help management techniques were about self-*improvement*, the personal branding concept suggests instead that success comes from self-*packaging*”.

When we talk about developing a personal brand, we are not asking a woman to be untrue to herself or her core values. We are asking her to take control of her own corporate destiny instead of relinquishing it to others. Developing a personal brand is not schlock advertising. It’s simply pulling together all your best assets and then letting the world know they shouldn’t be ignoring what you have to offer. It’s like making sure consumers hear about a fabulous product that can solve a big problem for them. Why wouldn’t you let folks know about it? Why would you deprive them of the benefits? Why would women with so much to contribute to their organizations, not get the word out? Same thing.

5 Tips Every Corporate Woman Should Know About Personal Branding

1. First and foremost, developing a personal brand starts with identifying the qualities and characteristics that make you stand out from the corporate crowd—in a good way. It is “the you” who will make you invaluable to your organization. It’s “the you” who will help your company service its clients and customers more dynamically. Be honest, but don’t be modest as you chronicle your assets.
2. Your brand is about benefits—not features. For example: as you pull together your unique qualifications, DON’T say “personable.” Instead, say something like “My personality allows me to work with people of diverse backgrounds so together we achieve—and surpass—organizational goals.
3. Your personal brand is not just a list; it is a plan and a strategy. It is the persona that defines everything you do corporately: from meetings to problem solving to salary negotiations. It is the walking, talking proof of your worth to the organization. Make sure you totally believe in your personal brand and its value and then sell it.
4. Try your brand out in a safe way on people inside and outside the corporation whose judgment you trust. Ask them questions like “How would you describe me?” “What are my key attributes and how do they contribute to organizational success?” Elicit their feedback and adjust your brand accordingly.
5. Revisiting and revamping your brand is an ongoing process. As you acquire more expertise, rack up more accomplishments, and forge new successes, your brand must reflect the “new, improved” you. Since your brand IS you, it needs to change WITH you.

Tom Peters, who many view as the “Father of Personal Brands” summarizes the importance of developing a brand this way:

“You are a brand. You are in charge of your brand. There is no single path to success. And there is no one right way to create the brand called You. Except this. Start today.”



Yes! Do It On Purpose

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. December 26, 2013

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

I've quoted that famous Lewis Carroll line in a previous blog, but it's worth repeating as we discuss the importance of a purposeful mindset for women with their eye on the C-suite.

What exactly does a "purposeful mindset" mean vis a vis getting ahead? Predominantly it means:

- Having a clear picture of exactly what you want to achieve
- Understanding the opportunities and obstacles to achieving your goal
- Being willing to take required risks
- Finding the right people to help you get there (inside and outside the corporation)
- Knowing which management behaviors to hold on to and which ones to let go of
- Requesting feedback to ensure having the full view of an issue, as well as to validate your plan
- Making sure, every step of the way, that your goals are in synch with corporate needs

It may seem like a long laundry list, but not really. Once you set out on a purposeful approach to becoming a more impactful corporate leader, much of what you need will become clearer and more attainable. For example, by defining the opportunities that could bolster your ambitions and the obstacles that could block them, you are in a great position to assess the behaviors that will get you there and the people who can help.

Additionally, once you've pinpointed those people, they will be a huge catalyst to achieving your goals. If they are the right people, they will be both your most avid supporters and your most honest critics. They are exactly whom you need and exactly whom you should heed.

As you can see, there is an intermingling and a synergy that makes a purposeful approach to leadership prowess more concise, more definable and easier to accomplish than the scatter shot approach, too often characteristic of get-ahead strategies.

Purposefulness- A Key to Personal and Corporate Success

At our WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. programs we stress the importance of a sense of purpose to our participants and their sponsoring corporations. Throughout the program, we check in with both to make sure individual and corporate goals are in synch and that the women participants are realistic and resilient about achieving those goals. We stress to both participants and corporate partners that changes in behavior and attitudes are most likely called for if mutual success is to be achieved.

Bottom line? The wide screen purpose of a sense of purpose is to unleash a new wave of women leaders who take their corporations to the next level by achieving results that are mutually beneficial.



Risk Aversion—The Real Risk Part 1

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. August 16, 2013

I can't tell you how many times I've asked myself: "Why do women shy away from job-related risk taking?"

As a gender, women are not innately risk-averse. We willingly take risks that we perceive will improve our personal lot. We plunge into the unknown, getting into relationships and marriages—or out of them. To keep our kids safe and happy, we would risk anything from personal comfort to financial stability.

So where does this fear of taking risks in the workplace come from and why is it so hard to shed even when it stands in the way of getting ahead?

From my years of working with talented women who aspire to higher levels in their organizations, I've isolated three main reasons why women are less likely to take calculated risks at work—less likely than in other venues and less likely than their male counterparts.

1. Women are newer to the corporate scene than men – at least to the leadership, decision making roles. They have had less time to practice and perfect the art of effective risk taking and fewer allies to help them do it right. As relative newbies, they tend to be more cautious, more introspective, more eager to gain a firmer footing before taking a risk.
2. In certain corporate contexts women **are** likely to take big risks. For example, in the defense of a wronged employee or to stand up for something they truly believe in. However, they tend **not** to take calculated risks in the day-to-day areas where risk taking is most likely to occur and most often needed. For example, managerial decision making and corporate governance.
3. Women, more than men, become captives of their own perfectionism, which makes them more introverted and less likely to evaluate the business impact of their activities on the corporate world around them. This insular attitude thwarts their ability to assess risks and take the smart ones.

We at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. have seen literally thousands of talented women come into our programs with a solidly entrenched fear of risk taking. They worry about losing status, being wrong, losing their jobs, losing allies, making enemies, being forced out. There isn't a career negative that our attendees haven't attributed to risk taking....and it's our job to help them let go of the fear and develop a comfort level with the right kind of risk taking.

We chip away at that fear through our three-pronged approach of mentoring, education and networking. We help women create a strategy for identifying which risks should be taken and which ones shunned. We give them the opportunity to develop relationships with people inside and outside their organizations who can help them assess whether a risk is worth taking. We help them better understand their talents and skills as they relate to formulating a get-ahead risk taking approach.

It's initially an uphill battle to overcome the attitudes and behaviors that support risk aversion among corporate women. But if they are going to make it to the top and stay there, it's a battle that must be fought and won.



Risk Aversion—The Real Risk: Part 2

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. August 28, 2013

Why take risks? That's a question many corporate women ask themselves, especially women who have attained a modicum of success. In their minds, risk taking can upset the apple cart and begin a downward spiral that undoes what they've worked so hard to achieve.

Not so. This is the reality:

When you ignore an opportunity you deem risky, you have already made a risky decision.

Let's be clear. No one is saying women should become the corporate equivalent of tightrope walkers without a net. However, to summarily dismiss new job offers... to fail to volunteer for visible new projects...to sit back and wait to be noticed are just a few examples of how women build barriers to their own success.

There are so many upsides to taking smart risks. At the broadest level, according to Juli Ann Reynolds, president and CEO of the Tom Peters Company: "People who take more risks tend to learn more and experience more personal growth."

Additionally, there are critical tangible benefits of intelligent risk taking:

- You are more likely to get noticed by the people who matter
- You demonstrate your ability to assess growth opportunities...in essence playing the game "just like the boys"
- You position yourself as a leader who can make the tough decisions
- You are more likely to have highly-visible, break-through successes
- Your team will see you in a different light
- Even if the risk doesn't pan out, you will have gained a new level of self confidence and resilience by having tried

At WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. we understand that developing the skills of a successful risk taker is a difficult and arduous process, which women should not attempt alone. Helping our participants become "risk ready" is one of the key roles our mentors play. They help their mentees in a variety of ways including:

- Sharing their own successes (and failures) as risk takers
- Helping mentees assess which risks are worth taking
- Providing a safe sounding board to tackle fears and behaviors that may be standing in the way of successful risk taking
- Holding their mentees accountable to push past their fears and develop appropriate risk taking skills

To sum up the last two blogs: As a rule, women tend to be more risk averse at work than their male counterparts and this fear of risk can hold them back from reaching the highest levels of corporate governance. Helping talented women shed their risk aversion is part and parcel of our mission at WOMEN Unlimited. We provide tools, techniques and support for our participants to become intelligent risk takers, with mentors playing a crucial role in this process.

V.

**BUILDING THE NEXT
GENERATION OF LEADERS—
MENTORING**



Happy New Year! Happy National Mentoring Month!

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. January 27, 2014

Happy New Year. I wish you all a year filled with happiness and prosperity. It's an especially exciting year for us at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. since it marks our 20th Year Anniversary helping organizations foster the success of their talented women. In the weeks and months ahead you'll be hearing much more about how we plan to keep upping the ante for our participants' individual and organizational success.

I'd like to start the year off by honoring the fact that it's National Mentoring Month. I've blogged previously about mentoring, a critical cornerstone of our WOMEN Unlimited programs, but this time I'm going to approach mentoring from a different angle.

Last June I completed my doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton school and focused my dissertation on "Women's Mentoring Wisdom." My research, which focused exclusively on the mentee perspective, brought to light some interesting findings which I'd like to share with you. The research was qualitative in nature with in-depth interviews of 26 alumnae from the WOMEN Unlimited LEAD program, who were all at mid-career stage and from Fortune 1000 companies. They reflected a broad spectrum of positions and industries, with no two women from the same company. Here are the key findings:

First and foremost, we found that effective mentoring relationships were a definite asset to career advancement for women. BUT the key ingredient to that success came from the mentee NOT the mentor. The operative word for success was "intentional," which for our research meant deliberate actions by the mentee to make a positive outcome happen. Mentees were MOST successful when they acted intentionally in three specific areas.

1. *Intentionally preparing for the mentoring relationship* The greatest success occurred when mentees carefully laid the groundwork for their mentoring relationships with preparations that included clarifying goals, focusing on their aims and ambitions and creating a strategy to ensure their encounters with mentors were open and productive.
2. *Intentionally leveraging their mentors' insights* Applying what they learned from their mentors to their organization, allowed mentees to "show up" in new ways that advanced their growth and development. For example, they became proficient at enhancing their visibility, pinpointing the right risks to take and when to take them and developing an effective leadership style that was true to themselves.
3. *Intentionally building relationships* Mentees who transferred what they learned from their mentoring relationship to over-all organizational relationships enjoyed increased career success for a variety of reasons. They became more adept at spotting key people and developing relationships with them. They were less reluctant to approach those who could be of help to their advancement. Their increased involvement with key players gave them a "better line of sight" on the corporate big picture.

These findings are an important breakthrough in the understanding of mentoring relationships in the growth and development of women leaders. Previously, there was little or no research focusing exclusively on mentoring from the perspective of the mentee. The implications and opportunities are significant for mentees, mentors and their organizations, which I will address in future posts.



Mentoring Success – In the Words of Mentees Themselves

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. February 26, 2014

In my January blog I highlighted the key finding from my doctoral dissertation, Women's Mentoring Wisdom. Most notably, that mentees were successful when they acted intentionally and took deliberate steps to prepare for their mentoring relationships, to leverage their mentors' insights and to transfer what they learned to organizational relationships.

This time, I'd like to share with you some comments from the mentees themselves. One of the advantages of my qualitative research methodology is it allowed me to conduct open-ended interviews with 26 women. They candidly shared with me, how intentional mentoring changed them and changed their careers. Here are a few examples.

Improved Self Esteem

I don't think I would feel as confident in making career changes without mentors, because they are people to whom I can say: this is why I think I want it. This is why I think I would be good at it. Here's where I am scared that I am not good enough for it and getting advice on that. I do not think I would be changing positions, or growing myself as much as I am without mentors.

...I get feedback and coaching from them that builds my confidence. I leverage this on a day-to-day basis from a leadership perspective. It's validation that my approach, that what I am looking to do, has a chance of working.

Broadened Business Perspective

*Helped me understand what top talent was, and I was able to craft a plan to be viewed as 'top talent'
My mentor helped shift my mindset when he shared his experiences and perspective. He helped me see the importance of building relationships.*

One of the key benefits of these relationships...is providing you a resource of knowing things that are not in your frame of reference

“Showing Up” the Right Way

You approach the leadership team and ask them, can I meet with you for 15 minutes to get guidance on a certain topic; I really value your opinion? They love to share their knowledge, background and offer advice.

Through these relationships, I understood that if I wanted to be the GM (general manager) of this business, I needed to act like the GM of this business.

I was able to talk with my boss and discuss my career goals... A few months later, a role opened up and my boss recommended me for the position. I would not have had the conversation with my manager without my mentor's support and guidance.

From everyone's perspective: the over-all corporation, mentors and mentees, the payoffs of successful mentoring strategies are significant and pervasive. Here are a few links to more information on creating effective mentoring relationships that produce high-impact results.

To view/download: [\[click here\]](#) **WOMEN'S MENTORING WISDOM: RESEARCH AT A GLANCE**



Mentoring Muscle Helps Shatter the Glass Ceiling

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. February 11, 2013

Women bring to the table a smorgasbord of talents and skills which over the past 20 years have elevated them to executive positions in unprecedented numbers. That's the good news.

The bad news is that women are still grossly under represented at the highest levels of major corporations. In my 19 years of working with women aspiring to get ahead—I have observed a pattern I believe holds talented women back. Many...in fact, most women... fail to understand the crucial role of mentoring in business. They do not develop and nurture the relationships with mentors that will take their careers where they want them to go. On the flip side, mentors often don't usher along their mentees as productively as they might.

Eventually, on their own, or through skills learned at programs or seminars, most talented women find one or more mentors. That's great, but it's only step one, and a baby step at that. What happens afterwards often short circuits even the most promising careers.

Both mentees and their mentors fail to flex their mentoring muscle and the glass ceiling stays solidly in place. Some examples:

- A woman taps her mentor's functional expertise, but does not call on her mentor to help her navigate the often tricky organizational landscape
- A woman waits until she is well along in her career to develop a mentoring relationship, putting her at a disadvantage with her male colleagues, who tend to forge these relationships early on
- A mentor is reticent to point out potentially derailing behaviors in her leadership and management style to the mentee
- Mentees do not reach out to their mentors frequently enough for fear they may be "bothering" them or "imposing" upon them
- Both mentors and mentees often keep the relationship at the transactional rather than the transformational level (such as talking about tasks rather than goals), which stymies the changes in behavior a talented woman needs to become a top executive

It's also crucial to keep in mind that when it comes to mentors—more is not better. The quality of the mentor relationship is far more important than the quantity. In fact, too many mentors can seriously impede the process of what a mentor/mentee relationship should really be about. Mentees must take responsibility for fostering a relationship beyond the superficial so that there is a comfort level on both sides for hearing and telling the truth about needed changes for success. Building that kind of relationship takes time and effort—already in short supply—and virtually impossible to achieve with a number of mentors.

The failure to nurture mentoring relationships has serious consequences for both individuals and corporations. Talented women stay in the shadows instead of the spotlight, while corporations lose the contributions of a stalled talent pool.

Our WOMEN Unlimited programs work hard at making sure our attendees "get it" when it comes to finding, using, and fostering mentor relationships. We also provide mentors with practical, proven guidelines on how to be there constructively for their mentees. We are proud of the success of our multi-faceted approach to mentoring, which we measure by the success our alumnae bring to their corporations. Take a moment to take a look at why our [mentoring programs](#) work so well.

VI.
BUILDING THE NEXT
GENERATION OF LEADERS—
EDUCATION



Women Only Programs – Yes or No?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 18, 2013

The debate about single-gender learning environments is an interesting one with many questions circling around it. Are women more likely to speak up when it's just them? Will they be more themselves? Learn better? Do better once the training is completed?

...Or...

Are such environments bubbles sheltering women from the real dual-gender world? Do they overlook male insights and perspectives? Are they too insular and mono-focused?

Our programs at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. ARE for women only. No surprise there. But we're for women only in a very special way, which has worked for almost 20 years. **To borrow a word from the culinary world, ours is a "fusion" approach.** Here's how it works.

In the workshop education portions of our programs, attendees are women only. Experience has shown us that women feel safer in this milieu. They more freely open up about their feelings, their strengths and their shortcomings. Consequently, learning and required behavioral shifts happen easier and faster. Additionally, participants are surrounded by their peers – women who share the same aspirations and obstacles to achieving success at the highest levels of their corporations. This commonality allows for honest feedback, new perspectives, and ties that extend beyond the classroom and beyond the length of the program.

However, while participation is limited to women, perspectives are global. From the very earliest stages of the programs, women are required to deal with the reality of the workplace, which in most cases, at the levels they are seeking, is male dominated. They role play. They assess. They practice what they learned in their own corporations. Everything we do is helping our women participants hone the strategies for success required in the real corporate world.

Additionally, our mentors and panelists are both male and female, ensuring a balanced perspective. Also, throughout our programs, we work closely with our participants' management team, both men and women. The feedback we and our participants receive helps us all customize the tools and techniques needed for success in their individual organizations.

So, YES we at WOMEN Unlimited are staunch advocates of single-gender classroom experiences. However, ours is anything but a "feel good" environment, where women share their complaints and continue with the same patterns that have stood in their way. We bring women together so they can take an honest look at who they are, what they want and how they can get it. We help them grapple with how to change, where to change and why to change.

As a result, our women graduates are more equipped to function at the top levels of corporate America, which is anything but women only.



New Evidence: Develop Talented Professional Women Early

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 16, 2012

We see it all the time here at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. Corporations fail to focus on their largest potential pipeline of long-term talent: professional women in the early stages of their career. More and more evidence is pointing to the importance of programs for this diverse and talented group. Here are a few examples:

- “Top performing organizations now recognize that the earlier potential talent is identified and put into the pipeline, the sooner the entire organization reaps the rewards.” (workinfo.com)
- “By addressing the mind-sets holding women back, corporate leaders can reshape the talent pipeline...making it likelier that women will retain their ambition” (McKinsey quarterly)
- “Fortune 500 Companies with the best records of promoting women...report 18 to 69 percent higher profits than their competitors who have not been as successful promoting women” (Corporate Retention of Women Engineers)

One of our programs, TEAM – an acronym for Transforming Emerging & Aspiring Managers - goes right to the heart of creating a cadre of talented professional women who will stay with your organization and rise to its highest ranks. Let’s take a look at how this program differs from other professional mentoring programs.

Primarily, TEAM takes a three-pronged approach of Mentoring, Education and Networking, which allows professional women in their early careers to touch all the bases as they learn how to develop a personal brand that will bring success to themselves and their companies. TEAM’s 3-in-1 approach provides a sort of “one-stop shopping” for organizations looking to develop managerial competencies that include managing both tasks and people. Skills seminars and other professional mentoring programs cannot offer the same far-reaching benefits.

Perhaps the best evidence of TEAM’s success is the “company we keep.” More than 75 top corporations have used TEAM time and again, rather than other professional mentoring programs, to develop the leaders they need for tomorrow’s complex global marketplace. These companies include Adobe Systems, Inc., Bank of America Corp, Bayer Healthcare LLC, Bridgestone Americas, John Deere, Prudential Financial, and Raytheon Company.

You’ll find much more information about TEAM on our [website](#). It’s been helping organizations get their professional women started off early and started off right for over 13 years.



Tapping the Newest Generation of Talent – Millennials

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. June 9, 2014

Born between 1980 and 2000, millennials (aka Generation Y) are the largest generation in American history, numbering around 95 million in the US... with almost 80 million already in the workforce or about to enter it.

They ARE a force to be reckoned with, and a force no corporation can afford to ignore. The challenge of attracting, developing and retaining millennials is not just about their numbers; it's about their different attitudes, styles and perceptions. It's a whole new ballgame.

Let's focus on millennial women for a moment, which make up just about half of all millennials. In a Washington Post Magazine article, Laura Sessions Stepp pinpointed certain characteristics of these early-career women. They "appear to be buoyed by a stronger belief in their capabilities than many of their mothers enjoyed at their age." Additionally, they have high expectations for the quality of their work, as well as high hopes for what they'll be paid.

An internet search reveals a plethora of tools, tactics and techniques to motivate and retain millennials. Most interesting to me is that these are strategies we have been utilizing in our TEAM Program (Transforming Emerging and Aspiring Managers) for 20+ years. It has always been our mission to help early-career women gain the confidence, the networks and the mentors they need to navigate their corporations.

Since TEAM is very much in synch with these young and talented women who want both a good career and a balanced life, it is a vital resource for accelerating their learning curve and fostering their journey to higher levels in the organization. Additionally, the program will help millennial women understand their particular corporate realities and identify the key levers for success. In the process, they will better grasp what they need to do for advancement and the timeframes in which they can realistically expect advancement to happen. In turn, their corporations will experience a higher retention level of this valuable, but often impatient talent pipeline.

Here are just a few examples of how millennial attitudes and TEAM dovetail:

- Millennials want and seek out mentors: One of the lynch pins of TEAM is showing women how to find and engage mentors for maximum career success
- Millennials are natural networkers: They've grown up with technology and social media and are interactive and engaged. TEAM will help them forge the right networks, galvanizing resources inside and outside the corporation
- Millennials tend to be team players. TEAM helps early-career women show up at the table and get noticed by peers and superiors in career-enhancing ways
- Millennials want real responsibility. TEAM helps women look at what they currently do, versus what they need to do to and how they can transition themselves for the added growth and responsibility they seek
- Millennials need regular feedback. Millennials feel "annual reviews" are not enough and TEAM couldn't agree more. Women at our TEAM programs are encouraged to regularly seek out feedback at all levels of their organizations and are counseled on the right ways to do it.
- Millennials welcome change and challenge: TEAM has long shown that the biggest risk is not taking the right risks. By their openness to change and challenge, millennials are well on their way to moving ahead.

Click [here](#) for full information on how the TEAM Program can support the development and retention of talented millennial women.



TEAM—An Early Start to ‘Leaning In’

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 12, 2013

So far there's no contest. The business book of the year is Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*. As COO of Facebook with a track record of startling success, Sandberg has both the experience and the clout to advise women at all levels on how to “*Lean In*” for going all the way in their careers.

I was struck by the many similarities between Sandberg's prescriptions for success and WOMEN Unlimited Inc.'s “**Rules for Cultivating Leadership Excellence**”, from our 2009 book *Women Are Changing the Corporate Landscape*, a cornerstone for all of our programs. The TEAM Program, specifically, is designed for women starting on the road to leadership and corporate success, so they can “Start Early and Start Right.”

Let's look at just a few of the career-advancing strategies *Lean In* and WOMEN Unlimited have in common.

THINK EXCELLENCE, NOT PERFECTION—A common pattern we have seen often among the near 9,000 women who have participated in our programs over the last 19 years, is a striving for perfection. It's a dangerous tendency which is career limiting, career stalling, and too often career destroying. We strive vigorously to help women understand that if they want high level corporate success, they must refocus their view of themselves and strive for excellence, NOT perfection.

Here's what Sandberg has to say on the subject of Perfectionism:

“...One of my favorite posters at Facebook declares in big red letters, ‘Done is better than perfect.’ I have tried to embrace this motto and let go of unattainable standards... Aiming at perfection causes frustration at best and paralysis at worst.”

ASSESS YOUR IMPACT—Too often women start out on their career paths with an unrealistic assessment of what they can contribute to the organization. Frequently, they underestimate their talents and potential, and become as much, or more, of a limiting factor to their careers than their bosses or their organizations. During the TEAM program, we help our participants realistically assess the talents they have, versus the talents they'll need and encourage them to begin making the shift.

In *Lean In*, Sandberg emphasizes the importance of a truthful assessment of capabilities:

“How can I do better? What am I doing that I don't know? What am I not doing that I don't see? These questions can lead to many benefits. And believe me, the truth hurts...”

But the upside of painful knowledge is so much greater than the downside of blissful ignorance.”

TAKE RISKS—MAKE DECISIONS: At WOMEN Unlimited we have learned through our extensive dealing with career-oriented women that they are much more likely to be risk-averse than their male counterparts. Lack of self-confidence, a desire to have “all the ducks in order” and fear of the unknown are common reasons why women embrace the status-quo to their own detriment. During the TEAM program, we emphasize the need for taking the right kind of risks both personally and professionally, and how effective risk taking can help women become more strategic and pro-active.

Sheryl Sandberg is an advocate of effective risk taking and offers this compelling argument in *Lean In*:

“Being risk averse in the workplace can cause women to be more reluctant to take on challenging tasks. In my experience more men look for stretch assignments and take on high-visibility projects, while more women hang back.”

These are just a few of the areas in which WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. and *Lean In* are in sync. Personally, I totally share this observation Sandberg offers close to the end of her book:

“As we start using the talents of the entire population, our institutions will be more productive, our homes will be happier, and the children growing up in those homes will no longer be held back by narrow stereotypes.”



The Leaders We Need

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. March 14, 2013

I have a great job. I get to be part of leadership development for women and to see a large number of our program graduates get promoted.

As advocates of leadership development for women, we take a special kind of pride at Women Unlimited in the success of our graduates. In a survey to alumnae, over 60% indicated they had advanced their careers since graduation. The leadership development for women that our programs are able to achieve is nothing short of breathtaking.

One of our more recent success stories is Mary Ann Gallo. Mary Ann graduated from our San Francisco-based LEAD program (Leadership Education and Development) in November of 2011. In April, just five months after completing the program, she was promoted from Senior Director to Vice President of Global Communications for Hitachi Data Systems, heading up a 30-person organization.

Mary Ann credits LEAD for helping her get the promotion. She pinpoints certain components as especially conducive to her advancement to higher levels in her organization. She says she learned about “looking like a leader” and that by formulating an “Individual Development Plan” she was able to become more “deliberate, active and passionate” about her career. She also indicates that her boss was quick to notice the changes... “always a good thing.”

Mary Ann has also been aggressively sharing her LEAD insights with her team. For example, posted on her office wall are the program’s 10 Rules for Success, an on-going reminder to herself and to all who come into her office of the game plan for being a talented and competent leader. Additionally, she and fellow LEAD graduate, Linda Xu, ran a form of the “Looking Like A Leader” exercise from the LEAD program for other Hitachi employees. The two exercises Mary and Linda facilitated were praised by participants, both male and female. It became quickly apparent that the goal to “give them a reality check” on “the **impact** of what they do versus what they do” was being met and exceeded. Incidentally, Linda was also promoted following her participation in a recent LEAD program— from Senior Director of Product Marketing to Vice President, Product Marketing.

As with Mary Ann and Linda, the individual success of our LEAD graduates spawns corporate success in a variety of ways. Talented professionals stay with their organizations longer. Their leadership savvy spills down to their teams. Their commitment to their organization and their fellow employees, nurtures a new willingness to “give back” by serving as mentors and encouraging others to foster leadership development for women.

Yes, it may be a bit of cliché, but LEAD participation is “win win” at its best.

VII.
BUILDING THE NEXT
GENERATION OF LEADERS—
NETWORKING



Networking—The Right Way

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. November 1, 2013

Frequently in these blogs, I've focused on mentoring, one of the mainstays of our WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. three-pronged approach, with the other two being Education and Networking. This time around I'd like to turn our attention to Networking.

As with finding mentors, how you approach building your network is crucial. There are approaches that achieve your desired results, and ones that keep you spinning your wheels. Let's start by looking at what I like to call the "NOT JUST" test.

- A network is NOT JUST a group of working people or fellow employees
- A network is NOT JUST those who share your functional expertise in other organizations
- A network is NOT JUST people whose shoulders you cry on or whose brains you tap
- A network is NOT JUST folks you reach out to when you want to change jobs

Certainly, these components can be part of a successful network, but they are not the crux of what makes a network WORK. In fact, many women actually sabotage their career advancement by misunderstanding what a network should be. They stay too insular in forming and using their networks. They overlook the single most important aspect of a network—a degree of discomfort.

Does it seem counter-intuitive that for a network to be successful, it must be somewhat outside your comfort zone? It's not. By sticking exclusively with people you know and people with whom you are comfortable, you are simply fine tuning what you're already doing. That may be enough to hold on to your present job, but it's not enough to move you up.

What are the components of a successful, non-insular network?

- It should include talented men and women who see the corporate world differently than you do
- It should include people with whom you do not normally come into contact, both inside and outside the organization
- It should include people who are above your current corporate level

The reason many women, and for that matter men, don't network in this way is because it's harder. It takes more time. It takes more intentional fortitude.

At WOMEN Unlimited, we help our participants prepare to network the right way. Our sessions cover networking and cover it well. But we take it a step further by creating in each session the core group of a successful network. Participants come from a variety of corporations, backgrounds, and functional areas—the perfect starting point for a non-insular network. It works over and over. Our alumnae use what they've learned to build productive networks and they often stay in touch with each other long after they complete our programs.

A few final pointers:

- Networks are about quality of contacts, not quantity
- Networking takes time—so use it wisely
- Lastly, enjoy the people with whom you network. Getting ahead should be fun.



Yes, Virginia, It's a Relationship

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. July 24, 2013

As I work with women at all career levels, I spot patterns. Of course, no pattern is universally true, but most are true enough to pass along to career-minded women—either as a strategy to embrace or a pitfall to avoid.

One tendency I've observed over and over: women are usually great at building strong personal relationships, but generally fall short when it comes to forging corporate ones.

Why?

I think it comes down to a misguided sense of what it takes to succeed...a sense of “keep my nose to the grindstone, get the job done and I'll get ahead.” Here's the REAL truth: **if you don't do your job you'll get fired...if you do JUST your job, you won't get promoted.**

At our WOMEN Unlimited programs we attack this task-only mental set from day one. All three pillars of our system, mentoring, educating and networking, hit heavy on the importance of forging successful corporate relationships. We help women develop the tools and techniques they need to break free from that nose-to-the-grindstone perspective and seek out relationships that support their career advancement.

In a recent [interview](#) with Mediaplanet published July 5, 2013 in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, I pinpointed five tips for building good mentoring relationships. With a few adaptations, they can be applied to developing just about **any** career-oriented relationship.

1. **Be prepared**—Be buttoned up **before** you seek out a relationship. Outline your career goals, identify your key strengths and pinpoint areas of development that will get you to your goals. This step will help you find the right person and then help that person help you.
2. **Be intentional**—Once you have an understanding of what you need from the mentor (or other person who will be helping you succeed) develop a strategy for how you want to work together. This strategy, combined with your development goals, will ensure you identify the right person.
3. **Assess potential relationships**—Potential career-boosting relationships exist within and outside your company. Contact individuals who possess the perspective to support your development and ask them to meet with you. If you or they feel they are not the right person, ask them for other recommendations.
4. **Be open to learning**—Your goal is to learn and gain insights that will boost your career, which often means having your current thinking and strategies challenged. Be receptive to breaking loose from comfortable practices that are holding you back.
5. **Value these relationships**—Say “thank you”. Make sure to let your mentors know how they have helped you. Show your appreciation for their time and insights.

To sum it up, as you progress in your organization, your success depends less on *what* you do and much more on *how* you do it...and that's about people and relationships.

Here's the [link](#) to the full Mediaplanet interview.



Your Way...Or...?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. July 31, 2013

In this blog, I'd like to focus on what seems to be an extremely difficult challenge for many women—developing multiple perspectives. It's the flip side of the same coin. Both building corporate relationships and developing multiple perspectives are strategies for getting unstuck.

They are approaches to seeing the corporate world more accurately from the perspective of its leaders and its customers. Both are a means to the all-important end of joining the top ranks of an organization.

No doubt about it—women who rise to mid-management positions in leading companies are smart, talented and determined. However, that intelligence, that task-focus and that tenacity can turn into stumbling blocks as they reach for the next levels. It is a fine line, often crossed, between determination and stubbornness; between tenacity and shortsightedness.

In order for women to succeed to C-suite positions, they must make a sea-change shift from an internal to an external focus by developing a multi-faceted perspective about the corporate world.

What are the components of this much-needed multiple-faceted perspective?

- A willingness to swap the comfort zone of what you know for the curiosity zone of what you need.
- An openness to changing your behaviors and your perspective
- A wide range of corporate contacts
- An ability and willingness to manage up and manage down
- Relationships with sponsors and mentors who support you in your development and provide honest, meaningful insight and feedback into what needs to change
- A gut-level acceptance of the importance of diversity in all its forms in today's global marketplace
- When you feel you have the answer, building the habit to ask yourself "How do I know? What difference will it make to the company? To our customers?"

How does a woman gain this important multiple-faceted perspective?

- Actively seek out those who will widen your corporate point of view
- Don't "fall in love with your own story." Understand that it is only ONE story
- Look for both validation and clarification. Be willing to change, but also don't throw the baby out with the bath water
- Try to understand, rather than to judge
- Be introspective, not for its own sake, but to evolve your perspectives
- Participate in developmental programs that foster the growth of a multi-faceted point of view
- Ask for feedback
- Be curious about how other individuals view situations

As I said in an [interview](#) in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, women need to find ways to create a safe environment in which they can explore different perspectives and achieve greater insight into navigating their organizations.

It is folly to think anyone—male or female—can do that alone.

VIII.
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS:
SPOTTING IT AND
COMBATTING IT



Is the Ceiling Glass or Titanium?

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. February 27, 2013

I get really frustrated when yet another study comes out showing the continued absence of women at the highest levels of corporations. The numbers may vary a point or so from study to study, but no matter how you slice it, the results are bleak. Only 17% of Fortune 500 board members are women. Only 3% of Board Chairs are women. And a recent Catalyst study showed that the number of women in senior positions in 2012 remained unchanged from 2005.

Why is there such a failure to shatter the glass ceiling? Why have we made so little progress, ESPECIALLY when it has been proven that diversity at the top directly correlates to a more successful organization? It makes you wonder if that ceiling is glass or titanium.

The main reason the ceiling has been so shatter-resistant, is that there ISN'T one reason. At the very least, it's a "double whammy" centered on both the women themselves and the culture of the corporations for which they work.

Women traditionally do a worse job than men at advocating for themselves and at embracing career-advancing strategies. Many talented women never even see themselves in the running. In a recent Op Ed piece in The New York Times, Nicholas Kristof cited an April McKinsey survey which underscored women's failure to go for the corporate brass ring. The study found that "36% of male employees at major corporations aspired to be top executives, compared with 18% of women."

Likewise, corporations knowingly or unknowingly reinforce the glass ceiling. While most major companies espouse the advancement of their women, top management usually fails to aggressively follow through with male managers at the level where women start their path upward. While most managers would deny "second gender discrimination," those attitudes still hang heavy in many—if not most—middle levels of corporate America. *Will she be able to do all the traveling? What about her kids? Will she fit in with the guys? Can she handle the stress?* These are the kinds of often subliminal mind sets that create an iron-clad barrier to women moving past the middle levels of management.

While the picture is far from rosy, it's not all doom and gloom either. We at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. are seeing more major corporations committed in a real sense to developing their talented women by using our proven method of [mentoring, educating and networking](#). This approach works because it is holistic in scope, involving not only the woman taking our program, but also her manager(s), her mentors, and her top executives.

As a result, attitudes towards inclusiveness and diversity change company-wide and obstacles to talented women advancing start to crumble. Women who attend our programs stay with their sponsoring companies for the long haul because they know their chances of success and advancement are higher than elsewhere. Corporations, to the tune of 98%, continue to work with us so they can more and more enjoy the benefits of diversity at the top. It's happening over and over in leading companies nationwide.

As I see this shift start to take hold, I remain a realistic optimist. For now, women at the top are a news-worthy anomaly. But I envision a time, not too far into the future, when their **absence** from C-suites and board rooms will be what captures the headlines.



Gender Bias—A Study in Denial

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. December 4, 2013

As I started to write this blog, I thought I would take a look at what Wikipedia had to say about “second generation gender bias.” Guess what? It isn’t even there. Wow! That was a metaphor for making my point: second generation gender bias is so hidden, so camouflaged, and so denied, not even Wikipedia talks about it.

As I pointed out in a previous blog, often no one knows second generation gender bias is happening – from top management to the women themselves who are being held back from the highest levels of corporate governance by it.

Unlike blatant prejudices of previous eras, second generation bias is subtle and echoes deeply-ingrained masculine values about leadership, alliances, and mentoring. Seemingly, there is no deliberate intention to discriminate which makes it especially difficult to attack and change these ensconced attitudes and the climates that inadvertently support them.

Let me give you a few examples of second-generation gender bias:

- A male manager believes that a 30-something woman is not a candidate for promotion to a VP slot because her biological clock is ticking.
- A senior executive is very impressed with a talented female middle manager. If she were a male, he would be her mentor in a heartbeat. However, he has concerns that if they develop a close professional relationship, “people will talk.”
- A talented woman who is highly qualified for a C-suite position, pats herself on the back for achieving her recent promotion to middle management and aspires no further.
- Three male managers who like, respect, and enjoy working with a female colleague, rarely invite her to join them for drinks after work, fearful they will have to behave differently in the company of a woman.

I would guarantee that if pressed about being biased, any of the individuals in these situations would deny it vehemently. Why am I so sure? Because these are stories I’ve heard and situations I’ve experienced through our WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. programs...and long before it had the name of “second generation gender bias.”

We at WOMEN Unlimited have seen the toll this bias takes on the women themselves and on the corporations who miss out on the profitable benefits of a diverse talent pool at their highest levels. We strive to educate and encourage our participants and our corporate partners to acknowledge second generation gender bias, look for it at all levels of their organizations and make changes accordingly. It can be a long, arduous process, but one that our Corporate Partners report is well worth doing.



Second Generation Bias: The Silent Career Killer

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. September 23, 2013

In these next two blogs, I'm going to use *Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers* by Herminia Ibarra, Robin Ely and Deborah Kolb, an article which appeared in the Harvard Business Review, as a springboard for sharing my perspective on barriers facing women in organizations. [[click here for original article](#)]

In this blog, I'm focusing on the phenomenon known as Second-Generation Gender Bias. I totally agree with the authors when they say second-generation bias:

"...does not require intent to exclude; nor does it necessarily produce direct, immediate harm...it creates a context in which women fail to thrive or reach their full potential. Feeling less connected to one's male colleagues, being advised to take a staff role to accommodate family, finding oneself excluded from consideration for key positions – all these situations and practices reflect work structures and practices that put women at a disadvantage."

Additionally, second-generation bias is the insidious silent killer of many women's higher career ambitions. Often, neither the perpetrators nor the women themselves know it's going on; and when pressed will deny its existence in themselves or their organizations, pointing to women who have achieved modicums of managerial success.

As stated in *Women Rising*, "...without an understanding of second-generation bias, people are left with stereotypes...[of]why women as a group have failed to achieve parity with men."

At WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. we have long acknowledged the wide-spread existence of second generation gender bias and take a multi-faceted approach to attacking it.

First and foremost we start with the talented women themselves, who are most likely to be the recipients of these biases. Through our education process, women learn to identify the warning signs of second-generation bias, and better understand their organizational climate. But far from feeling victimized or hopeless, women learn how to forge a strategy that is likely to work.

...AND HERE'S THE KEY...

No two situations...no two organizations...no two people are exactly alike. So, we help women develop a customized approach that will work in their organizations with the managers who, most likely unknowingly, are practicing second-generation gender bias.

Also, it is important to understand that not only must the anti-bias approach be customized to the organization; it must also be customized to the woman who will be using it. Each woman's approach to taking on the biases in her organization must be in synch with her present position, her personality, her corporate goals and her ambitions. With the help of their mentors and their networks, women learn how to attack these biases effectively without sabotaging their chances for advancement. In doing so, they are often successful in opening the eyes of senior management to the wide-spread existence of second-generation bias in the organization – an all-important starting point to attacking the problem.

At WOMEN Unlimited, we can say along with the authors of *Women Rising* "...that when women recognize the subtle and pervasive effects of second generation bias, they feel empowered, not victimized, because they can take action to counter these effects."



Feeding the Pipeline: 2 Strategies that Work

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. September 30, 2013

As I pointed out in my last blog, the Harvard Business Review article, *Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers*, resonated with me. The strategies suggested by Herminia Ibarra, Robin Ely, and Deborah Kolb are very much in sync with what we've been doing at WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. for nearly 20 years.

In this blog, I'm going to comment on two critical, yet often overlooked, concepts highlighted in the article: focusing on leadership purpose and creating safe identity workspaces. They are absolute musts if C-suites are to become more heavily populated by talented women. Let's look at them one at a time.

FOCUSING ON LEADERSHIP PURPOSE

There's an old quote that says: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will lead you there." The flailing about that comes from meeting everyone else's agenda is something I see often with the talented women who come to our WOMEN Unlimited programs. They forget to ask the question: "What do **I want?**" It may seem ironic, but in answering that question, they become better qualified to meet their organization's needs. The meshing of their goals and talents with corporate goals is where enduring, high-level success really happens. I've seen it hundreds of times.

The authors of *Women Rising* put it this way: "Anchoring in purpose enables women to redirect their attention toward shared goals and to consider who they need to be and what they need to learn in order to achieve these goals." For example, the authors point out that many women will avoid networking, seeing it as "unauthentic" and taking time and focus away from getting the job done. However, when "they see [networking] as a means to a larger purpose, such as developing new business to advance their vision for the company, they are more comfortable engaging in it." Instilling in talented women the importance of networking and the strategies for going about it, have always been central to WOMEN Unlimited's approach.

CREATING SAFE IDENTITY WORKSPACES

I alluded to this issue in a previous [blog post](#), when I discussed the importance of a women-only learning environment. Far from isolating women from the real corporate world, it allows them to feel safe and to honestly open up about issues which will further their success in that corporate world. Additionally, there is a sharing of common experiences that both sustains and empowers our program participants.

The authors of *Women Rising* affirm the importance of the safe setting WOMEN Unlimited provides its attendees: "A safe space for learning, experimentation and community is critical in leadership development programs for women." They go on to emphasize the importance of peer interaction: "Identifying common experiences increases women's willingness to talk openly, take risks, and be vulnerable without fearing that others will misunderstand or judge them." This safe learning environment provided by our programs has helped thousands of women evolve their authentic leadership identities.

To recap the last two blogs: The authors found three areas where traditional leadership development programs for women were lacking: acknowledging second generation bias and how to combat it...helping women define their leadership purpose...and creating safe identity workspaces.

I am pleased to say, all three are part and parcel of the WOMEN Unlimited agenda...and have been for nearly 20 years. As with all our strategies for increasing the number of talented women in the top management pipeline, we continue to adjust and adapt to the changing corporate landscape.



Karma

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. October 29, 2014

Talk About Bad Karma....

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella unleashed a firestorm of well-deserved criticism when he lauded women who don't ask for raises saying "that's good karma" and calling them "the kind of person that I want to trust"

Really? Really?

Why Nadella was wrong no matter how you look at it....

...From a business perspective.

The evidence mounts. Companies who develop and retain talented women are companies that prosper, grow, succeed, attract shareholders and outdo the competition. However, talented women are not likely to stick around for Karma to get them to the income level their male colleagues have enjoyed for years. They are not likely to wait for Karma to even the odds of a 50 percent+ workforce accounting for 14% of top management. CEO's are not well served to "trust" that their talented women will hold out for Karma to kick in to advance their careers.

....In his message to women.

Here's a mover and a shaker with a golden opportunity to make the tech sector (which struggles mightily to attract and retain female talent) more appealing to women. Instead of his Karma comment, he could have been talking about the right ways to ask for a raise...how to focus on contributions to the organization...how to neither be too shy nor too aggressive when asking for a raise. He could have been a voice of power, speaking with authority and empathy. Instead, he stoked the fires of exclusion.

Here's the worst part

Nadella is not alone. The underlying beliefs behind his comments are a perfect example of what we have come to call second generation gender bias. Can anyone imagine a corporate leader saying to a male audience: trust Karma to get you the raise you deserve? It's a perfect example of how unconscious attitudes about gender cause different expectations for men and women. Second generation gender bias often goes unnoticed by both the managers and the women who are its recipients. Managers exclude women in subtle ways. They look at women differently without even realizing it, pigeon holing them in old-school categories. For example, women are perceived to be too soft, or too tough. They're not ready to move up, or they're too ambitious. They'll leave to raise a family. They're not decisive. The list goes on and on.

Nadella's comment is possibly a blessing in disguise

The fact that a CEO of one of the world's largest and most powerful companies would reveal some of his gender-based beliefs; acknowledge his error and then retract his statement can be an important turning point. It can shine a light on how vital it is for women and men to realize that despite how far women have come, prejudice continues its strangle hold on their advancement. Unless corporate cultures change, starting at the top, both women and their organizations will be robbed of the advantages of diverse top-management teams.

So did Nadella inadvertently do corporate America and its female talent a favor? Did he help bring "second gender generation bias" out of the closet? Let's hope so.

Now that would be Good Karma.

IX.
**THE 21ST CENTURY ROLE
OF MALE MANAGERS**



The Role of Men in Fostering Female Talent: Part 1

By Michael Chamberlain, Vice President of Marketing for Catalyst, Inc. September 10, 2014

For the next two blogs, I am thrilled that we will be having Michael Chamberlain, as our guest blogger. Michael is Vice President of Marketing for Catalyst, Inc.. Catalyst has been a mover and shaker in support of corporate women for 50 years. In both his blogs, Michael will be discussing “The Role of Men in Fostering Female Talent.” This first blog will share his points of view and perspectives. His second blog will focus heavily on recent Catalyst research and what we can all learn from it.

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



As Vice President, Marketing for Catalyst, Inc, Michael is responsible for the care and promotion of the Catalyst brand. He also heads up the Editorial and Publishing functions. Additionally, he plans and oversees all Catalyst events related to Catalyst initiatives. He is a frequent speaker to corporate audiences and the media on engaging men in gender initiatives and on topics related to women’s leadership.

Here are Michael’s [MJC] answers to 3 questions posed by WOMEN Unlimited [WUI]:

WUI: What Specifically Can Male Managers Do to Help Women Fully Express Their Leadership Traits?

MJC: There are three big areas where the actions of men allow women to express themselves as corporate leaders. First, when men act as mentors to women they help them strengthen their strengths and weaken their weaknesses. They teach them about the unwritten rules of the workplace.

Sponsors are also crucial, but in a different way. Sponsors talk about women—not to them. They advocate for them with leaders in a male-dominated environment. They give women access to opportunities they may have missed due to gender barriers. They take chances on talented people.

Thirdly, men can be pivotal in women’s leadership development when they serve as examples for other men. We need to institutionalize men’s natural instinct to be motivated by other men. If men see senior men acting as champions for women, they will be inclined to do the same—like attracts like. They will see it as enlightened self-interest and that’s the point at which the organization can provide the tools to channel that self-interest into diversity-building action.

(cont’d)



The Role of Men in Fostering Female Talent: Part 1

By Michael Chamberlain, Vice President of Marketing for Catalyst, Inc. September 10, 2014

WUI: What Subtle (or not-so-subtle) Differences Stand in the Way of Effective Conversations Between Men and Women Regarding Women's Advancement?

MJC: I think the strongest obstacle is the concept of masculine norms. They are societally endorsed and embraced. Men frequently feel they must adhere to these norms which are embedded in corporate culture and which stand in the way of women's advancing. Here are four of the most commonly held masculine norms:

- Men should avoid anything feminine. They will be left out if they manifest a behavior perceived to be feminine
- Men must be winners. Wealth, prestige and power are what they should work diligently towards. Equally diligently, they should avoid softer traits—traits commonly attributed to women and so foster gender-segregation.
- Men don't show weakness. Tough. Aggressive. Demanding. These are traits our research shows that people associate with male leaders. For female leaders, they use "softer" terms like: Willing to negotiate...takes a back seat.
- The Boys Club notion. Guys are expected to play golf and behave like the other guys. Women are thought of as hanging with other women. Anything in between is still considered an anomaly.

I'd really like to emphasize that men don't understand the unintended consequences of conforming to these norms, not just to women, but to their corporations and to their own psyches. Once men get a sense of what it's like outside of their male privilege and why it's important to let go of these behaviors, the likelihood of change greatly increases.

WUI: Any Personal Experiences or Anecdotes You'd Like to Share?

MJC: At Catalyst, when we talk about why it's important to advance women, we say "It's not only the smart thing to do; it's the right thing to do." What do we mean by that exactly? It's Fairness. It's blindness to race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, parental status, ability and disability. It's awareness of all these things, but awareness also of talent and fair play.

Fairness means that organizations must dismantle systems that disadvantage some or many. It means fair behavior must be recognized, rewarded and spot lit for amplification. Leaders must be held accountable for achieving fairness, so that it becomes the shared vision and the norm.



The Role of Men in Fostering Female Talent: Part 2

By Michael Chamberlain, Vice President of Marketing for Catalyst, Inc. September 26, 2014

In his previous blog, Michael offered some fascinating perspectives on how managers and organizations both succeed and flounder in advancing their talented women. In this blog, Michael points us to Catalyst research that can be helpful in understanding gender bias and moving away from it.

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



My organization, Catalyst, has spent the last half century providing research-based evidence of gender bias, the reasons for ending it and strategies for overcoming it. Over the years, things have gotten better for women, but we are clearly not there yet—far from it.

I'd like to share with you four recent Catalyst research initiatives aimed at helping corporations and their managers embrace gender diversity. All are downloadable in their entirety and I've provided links at the end of each synopsis.

Engaging Men In Gender Initiatives

This research series offers evidence-based advice about the most effective ways to partner with men in ending gender inequalities at work. The series includes four reports: What Change Agents Need to Know: Stacking the Deck for Success: Calling All White Men: Can Training Help Create Inclusive Workplaces? and Anatomy of Change: How Inclusive Cultures Evolve

The series also includes two tools to help your organization take action:

- Engaging Men in Gender Diversity Initiatives
- Actions Men Can Take to Create an Inclusive Workplace
- [Full report](#)

High Potentials in the Pipeline: Leaders Pay It Forward

The Queen Bee syndrome suggests that women do not help other women get ahead, and that they may even actively keep them down, which some say contributes to the gender gap. Our findings support a growing body of research that unravels this myth.

We found that women who have received development themselves are developing others even more than men who have been developed. And not only are women offering career development support to others, they are, more than men, helping other women climb the corporate ladder.

(cont'd)



The Role of Men in Fostering Female Talent: Part 2

By Michael Chamberlain, Vice President of Marketing for Catalyst, Inc. September 26, 2014

While not all women are developing other women, it's also true that not all men help other men. The main difference is that the failure by some men to pay it forward is not used to negatively characterize all men's behavior. The failure of some women to pay it forward, however, is used to negatively characterize women's behavior as a group. [Full report](#)

Feeling Different: Being the “Other” in the U.S. Workplace

We all have complex and multiple identities that define how we see ourselves and how others see us. These include personal attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity, or nationality. The more different we are and feel from our workgroup or workplace as a whole, the more we may feel like the “other” at the table.

This report examines the experience of otherness in the US workplace and how people with multiple sources of otherness are impacted in terms of their opportunities, advancement, and aspirations. For example they are less likely to have mentors, less likely to receive promotions and more likely to scale down their expectations.

Listening to the unique experiences of diverse employees and adopting inclusive approaches to talent management confer benefits on both employees and corporations. [Full report](#)

Finally, our most recent research:

Inclusive Leadership: The View from Six Countries

This study delves into the striking similarities across six countries (the United States, Germany, Australia, India, Mexico and China) on how employees characterize inclusion and the leadership behaviors that help to foster it. For example:

- The more included employees felt, the more innovative they reported being in their jobs
- The more included employees felt, the more they reported engaging in team citizenship behaviors—going above and beyond the “call of duty” to help other team members and meet workgroup objectives
- Perceiving similarities with coworkers engendered a feeling of belongingness while perceiving differences led to feelings of uniqueness [Full report](#)

X.
WOMEN UNLIMITED—
20+ YEARS OF
SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES



An Overview of WOMEN Unlimited: Helping Leading Companies Succeed Through Mentoring, Education and Networking

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. September 21, 2012

Welcome to the launch of our WOMEN Unlimited blog! As President and CEO of WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. it will be my pleasure to share with you information about how our programs help women throughout your organization become the female business leaders that will drive your organization to new levels of success.

In the weeks and months ahead, you'll hear about our programs, our upcoming events and the latest facts, figures and findings on how – and why – to develop women leaders. From time to time, you'll also get first hand insights from female business leaders of leading organizations on how our programs have worked for them and their teams.

Let's start with the 3 big reasons over 160 of the Fortune 1000 companies partner with us to grow and nurture a diverse pool of talented female leaders – and have for over 18 years.

- **FIRST** – Our programs take a 3-pronged approach of mentoring, education and networking, a proven methodology that develops bottom-line focused female leaders
- **SECOND** – We work collaboratively as corporate partners. Everyone is involved in the development of your talented women business leaders – HR, corporate executives, corporate sponsors and mentors. Result? A unified approach that ensures the skill sets attendees acquire are applicable to your organization, both immediately and for the long-haul.
- **THIRD**—We seek out and welcome input from our corporate partners, our attendees and our alumnae. We use that input to assess the effectiveness of our programs and to ensure our content is current and in sync with the changing requirements of a global environment.

That being said, overwhelming satisfaction has been a trademark of our 18 years involvement in developing female leaders. Take a look at the results of a recent survey.

96% of the corporate partners who participate in WOMEN Unlimited programs continue to enroll participants and mentors and recommend the program to other organizations to develop female leaders.

98% of program participants rate their overall experience with the WOMEN Unlimited programs as extremely valuable and would recommend it to other high potential women

89% of the senior level men and women who are selected to serve as mentors for the LEAD program's matrix mentoring continue to participate as mentors on an ongoing basis

I'd love for you to take a look at our WOMEN Unlimited website (www.women-unlimited.com) for more details on our programs, the leading corporations that are on-going sponsors, and the results that corporations and attendees are enjoying from their participation.



Success? We've Got the Numbers to Prove It

By **Rosina Racioppi**, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. March 25, 2013

Let me start out by saying that I'm not a bean counter. I'm a results counter.

I believe that the results of training and development programs can be measured in a variety of ways: some numeric...some not. In this blog, I'll focus on the numeric aspects and how they continually point to the success of our WOMEN Unlimited programs.

Let's begin with our corporate partners. There's an old expression that says you should be judged by the company you keep. At WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. we're happy to be evaluated that way. Our corporate partners (We call them corporate partners, not clients, because everything we do is a collaboration.) are international leaders and shakers and include over 100 of the Fortune 1000 companies.

These top corporations are not one-time users of our programs. Over 70% have been with us for over 10 years. Colgate Palmolive Company has been on board since our founding in 1994. American Express Company has been our corporate partner for over 16 years. Additionally, 96% keep sending generation after generation of their talented women to our programs. For example, Adobe Systems Incorporated has over 330 graduates, Bridgestone Americas Inc. has 270 graduates and John Deere has sent over 260 women to our programs.

With the myriad of programs available on the market, why do over 120 of the world's top companies keep coming back to us? Because nothing sells like success, especially success that can be backed up by numbers.

In a recent survey of participants in WOMEN Unlimited programs, over 98% rated the programs extremely valuable and indicated they would encourage other high-potential women to attend.

74% have made career changes in their organization, 60% were promoted to leadership roles and 83% have received salary increases.

In response to questions about attitudinal and behavioral changes, 74% of WOMEN Unlimited alumnae reported "I have become a more effective leader." 68% indicated "I am more effective in dealing with the political environment in the workplace." 63% said "I have enhanced my communication, networking and presentation skills."

Here are just a few more numbers to underline the breadth and scope of what we do. Our programs are offered in nine (9) US cities throughout the year. A team of 20 high-powered women leaders oversee and conduct the programs, ensuring they are continually on target for our corporate partners and their participants. Last year alone, our corporate partners sent over 330 talented women to our programs, bringing our total number of program graduates to over 8800.

Finally, and perhaps the most significant statistic of all, "Fortune 500 Companies with the best records of promoting women report 18 to 69 percent higher profits than their competitors who have not been as successful promoting women." (Corporate Retention of Women Engineers).

That's the bottom line our successful numbers support!



Happy Anniversary

By Rosina Racioppi, President & CEO, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. April 18, 2014

Today marks WOMEN Unlimited Inc.'s 20th Anniversary. Twenty years ago, on a Monday in 1994, we held our first LEAD program. It was attended by 18 high-potential women from 13 Fortune 1000 companies.

Double-Decade Partnerships

Right from that first program back in 1994, we have actively worked with our corporate partners to create organization-wide support for the learning and development of their program participants. Now as then, we consult on effective selection strategies. We work with the participants' managers on how they can offer active, on-going support before, during and after the program. We seek out input from our corporate partners and respond to specific needs for creating their diverse pipeline of talented women. In other words, more important than working for our partners, we work with our partners.

That's why many top corporations have been with us from our earliest days. Together, we continue to pinpoint and develop their high-potential female talent. So on this our 20th Anniversary, we say thank you to all our corporate partners and celebrate their success and the successes of their talented women.

A Founder with vision and valor

Jean Otte, the founder of WOMEN Unlimited was, and is, a visionary. She saw with 20/20 clarity in 1994 (long before most) the need for major corporations to have talented women in leading positions.

She was relentless in her pursuit to convince Fortune 1000 companies of the bottom-line need for high-powered women at the top... and she succeeded. Her perseverance and her passion have resulted in WOMEN Unlimited's running over 25 programs a year for high-potential women with over 10,000 alumnae and current participants and over 160 corporate partners. And, the clarity our participants gain on how to leverage their strengths to benefit their organizations has resulted in dramatic career advancement. Our latest survey shows that over half our graduates received a promotion within a year after completing their programs.

On a personal note: thanks Jean for having the vision and the valor to make WOMEN Unlimited the success it is today.

Proud of our Past. Excited About Our Future

As I look ahead to the next few years, I see WOMEN Unlimited building on its successes. In this global environment, there is a worldwide need for talented women in C-suites and on boards. We will be addressing that need by expanding internationally – slowly AND surely.

Additionally, we will be leveraging our experience and reputation as a major thought leader on how to develop a pipeline of talented women. We will continue to seek out ways to be a valued resource for leading corporations and will be hosting webinars and publishing white papers that share best practices for finding, developing, and retaining high-potential women. We'll be providing advice and input on how male leaders can be more effective mentors for their talented women; and how corporations can break down the subtle barriers that may be standing in the way of advancing their next generation of women leaders.

I am proud, happy and excited to say that for us at WOMEN Unlimited, it's all systems go for 20 and beyond!



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

As President and Chief Executive Officer of WOMEN Unlimited, Inc., Dr. Rosina Racioppi spearheads her organization's initiatives to help Fortune 1000 companies cultivate the talent they need for ongoing growth and profitability. Under her leadership, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. successfully partners with organizations across a wide range of industries to develop their high-potential women and to build a pipeline of diverse and talented leaders.

By overseeing the management of programs and services nationwide, Dr. Racioppi is actively involved in helping organizations meet the challenges of a continually changing global economy. Additionally, she analyzes and develops new business opportunities; works with current Fortune

1000 partners to assess and update offerings to their high-potential women; and ensures that WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. is in synch with the needs of its present and potential partners.

Dr. Racioppi's past experience makes her singularly qualified to understand the needs of partner organizations. Prior to joining WOMEN Unlimited, Inc., she held executive management positions in human resources at Degussa Corporation, Nextran (a division of Baxter Corporation) and Beechwood Data Systems. She has over 25 years experience in Organization Planning and Development, Compensation and Benefits, Training and Development, Safety, Quality Management, Staffing and Employee Relations.

Dr. Racioppi earned her doctorate in education from the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation, "Women's Mentoring Wisdom" focuses on how women use and fail to use mentoring at the all-important mid-career level. She holds a Master's of Science in Education from the University of Pennsylvania, a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University and is certified in the Hay Job Evaluation Process and the Crosby Total Management System.

Additionally, Dr. Racioppi is a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars nationally and internationally. She is an active member of the Society of Human Resources Managers, The American Society of Training and Development and The New Jersey Human Resources Planning Group. She also serves on the Advisory Council for the University of Pennsylvania CLO Alumni Network.

About WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.

Founded in 1994, WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. has a long track record of success in developing high-potential women leaders. It counts as its partners over 189 leading corporations and has retained 90% of its national partners since its inception.

WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. has been featured in Business Week, Bloomberg News, CNN, CNBC, the Chicago Tribune, Wall Street Journal Report, Fast Company, Working Women and CIO Magazine. Lifetime Television, the Committee for 200 and the Y.W.C.A. have honored WOMEN Unlimited, Inc's role in developing high-potential women leaders.

WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. partners with Fortune 1000 companies to create a vibrant and diverse pipeline of leaders who are equipped to handle any business challenge.

Through 20 years of working with major companies and 10,000 alumnae, WOMEN Unlimited has demonstrated that the three-pronged approach of **Mentoring, Education and Networking** can shift the corporate landscape in a way that keeps the most talented women engaged while enabling them to deliver critical business results.

Contact us at [\(212\) 572-6211](tel:2125726211) to discuss how WOMEN Unlimited can enable you to achieve your business goals by leveraging the high potential women in your organization.

TEAM



LEAD



THE FEW





DEVELOPING LEADERS WHO DELIVER RESULTS

— *Since 1994* —

WOMEN
UNLIMITED, INC.

MENTORING
EDUCATION
NETWORKING