

Talent Intelligence

Leadership Risk Management

A Response to the Lack of Female Executives: Talent Intelligence

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This is the first of a three-part series Talent Intelligence is publishing to raise awareness and create discussion around the lack of female executives in the US workplace. In Part Two of the series we will present client case study and in Part Three will go into greater detail about the research conducted by Talent Intelligence and best practices for this critical executive talent dilemma.

It's still an issue: the lack of female corporate officers in the business world. Surprisingly, the percentage of female corporate officers in the Fortune 500 has grown a mere 10.5% in the past thirty years. Data has shown, however, that women make up half of the work force and were graduating from college in equal numbers as men all the way back in the 1980's. Thirty years later, we should be seeing more than just 15.7% of the corporate officer population be women, shouldn't we?

Granted, women have come a long way. There are fifteen female CEO's in the F500 in 2009. Fifteen percent of corporate officers are women. Ninety-two companies have three or more women on their Board of Directors. But it is 2009, and with women and men graduating in equal numbers from universities for the past several decades, we should be seeing more women at the executive levels.

So what's stopping this from happening? Several theories abound: Work/Life balance issues; lack of desire on the part of women to reach the upper levels; and the "glass ceiling" are just some of the examples. Some say that women aren't as strong leaders as men, or that men and women don't get on well together in the Board Room. And the list goes on...

A multitude of studies and articles have been written about this issue since the first wave of feminism hit the US cultural landscape in the 1960's. Current research points to four main reasons why women are still bumping their heads on the corner office door:

- Career Timing Issues- Unfortunately, women are still expected to be the ones to raise the family and take care of the household, whether they have a career or not. Studies show that where companies hire an equal amount of men and women in entry-level positions, women start dropping out of the employee pool around the Management level- approximately 5-10 years into their career. The most available explanation for this is that women are leaving the workplace, or a steady career path at least, in order to have their children and raise them. Some women are leaving the workforce all together for either a short-term sabbatical or permanently. Others are going down to part-time or moving into roles that take them off the career path to the c-suite. And if women do take a "time-out" to raise young children, they seldom re-enter the workplace in a role that will develop into a higher-level management position.




• Lack of Female Executive Visibility and Mentors- Having role models and mentors is important to career growth, according to several recent studies on the subject. If women are leaving the workforce around the management level, there is a lack of women in the executive levels for junior employees to have as mentors and role models. Women that are in the C-Suite of companies are often spread so thin between work and their careers that they don't have the time to adequately mentor female employees or stay after work for social functions in a visibility and networking capacity.

• Lack of General Management Experience- A disproportionate amount of men have profit and loss experience which is an essential qualification for the C-suite track. Both leadership and female employees are failing to prepare women for the executive levels. Looking at the labor breakdown, women are still taking on more of the administrative and support functions and less of the management positions. Men have confessed that they are hesitant to serve as mentors to women because they are fearful having the critical conversations with women or the relationship being viewed as unprofessional. Women are still viewed as being "sensitive" and "emotional" in the workplace, which makes men uncomfortable. And, as stated previously, there are just not enough women in executive roles to serve as mentors and role models.

• Existence of Gender Stereotypes: Although it has diminished in the past several years, there is still a perception out there that women who make it to the corner office have to be "manly" or a "bitch" in order to thrive and survive. Women have to walk the fine line of not being too hard or too soft. They must still deal with "boys clubs" in several industries and environments, and often are not asked to take a seat at the Board table. They are also being discriminated against in hiring and compensation practices; women still only make 81 cents to every \$1 a man makes in a comparable position. And many male business leaders and recruiters have stated that they prefer to hire men because they are afraid they will invest in a female employee who will subsequently leave to go stay at home with her family.






Women, obviously, are responsible for their own careers. However a company's culture is crucial to how women are treated in the workplace, and how a culture supports and empowers all of their employees, including women, is critical.

What does this mean for our clients? We have had several client organizations approach us expressing interest in our recently launched Diversity Intelligence offering citing some of the same issues/hesitations/frustrations as mentioned above. In the next article, we will take a dive into one client's problem, our solution set and the eventual outcomes. The final article of this three-part series will speak more to the research we have conducted in the area of Diversity Intelligence in terms of the Female Executive problem, and some best practices that we feel every company must execute in order to even the playing field, resulting in an increase of financial success and brand reputation.

Coming Soon: How Diversity Intelligence responded to the lack of female executive talent for one of the most recognized global CPG brands.





About Talent Intelligence:


Talent Intelligence is the premier provider of Leadership Risk Management solutions that solve key business and organizational issues for the Board, CEO, and senior management. Our primary service offerings are Leadership Risk Management, Leadership Advisory Services and Leadership Software. For more information, please go to www.talentintelligence.com.



About Diversity Intelligence:

Diversity Intelligence is a key service offering that comes under our Leadership Advisory Services area. This service is designed for clients who understand the link between diversity and competitive advantage and who are interested to understand and learn more about the diversity strategies and makeup of their competitors and/or best practice companies. Sample deliverables of this solution include, but not limited to, global quantification/qualification of the diversity pool within a defined role/function/industry sector for benchmarking and acquisition, competitive intelligence on specific actions by competitors around diversity, diversity practices audit, and change management in support of diversity initiatives.





About the Author:

Cara V. Baiocchi is the Global Practice Leader for *Diversity Intelligence*, a formal offering created by Talent Intelligence in response to our clients' need for projects around diversity and inclusion with regard to their talent management strategy. Ms. Baiocchi has been working with diversity in a recruiting and consulting setting for nine years; previous companies include a Big Four accounting firm, an executive search firm and a start-up temporary and permanent staffing firm. Ms. Baiocchi recently graduated from Northwestern University with a Masters of Science in Learning and Organizational Change. She can be reached at cara.baiocchi@talentintelligence.com.



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