

Ready to R.I.S.E.

Insights from:

- 300 Women Leaders
- 5 Women's Leadership Innovation Labs
- 3 Continents
- 1 Diverse World



Center for
Creative
Leadership®





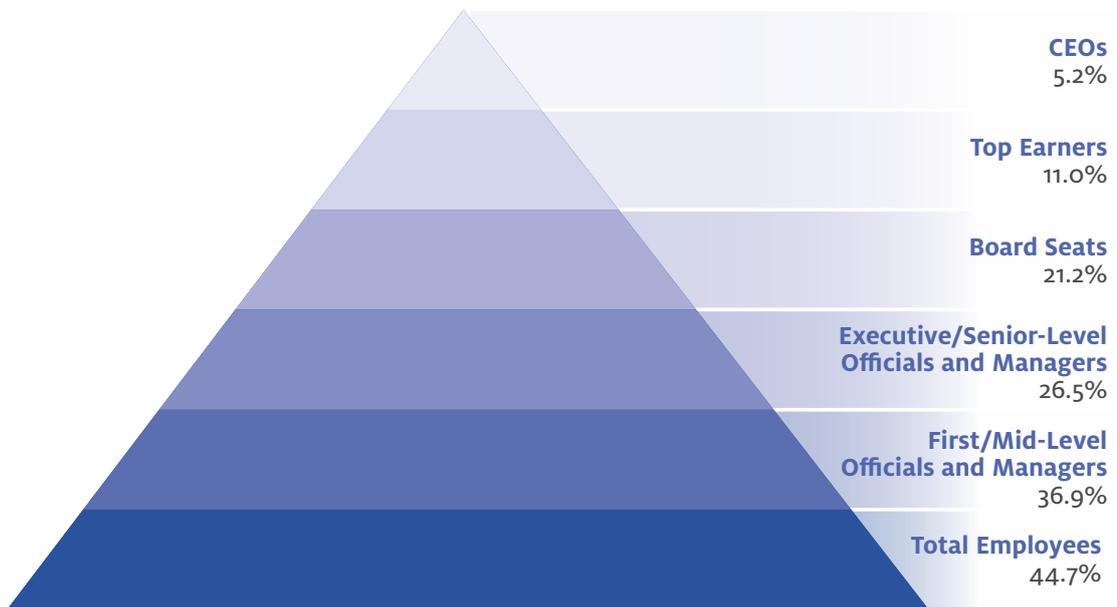
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Background

Across the globe, there is increasing awareness that women leaders are critical for organizational success. According to Catalyst, a leading women’s research and development organization, Fortune 500 companies with the highest percentage of women on their boards of directors outperformed those with the lowest by 53% of return on equity, 42% of return on sales, and 66% of return on invested capital.¹

However, women are still under-represented in senior positions. Moreover, talented women seem to “leak” from the pipeline. Another Catalyst study shows that, while women consist of 45% of total employees in S&P companies, they occupy only 21% of the board seats.² Another study even reports that fewer S&P 1500 firms are run by women than by men named John!³



Women in S&P 500 Companies

Sources

- Catalyst, Women CEOs of the S&P 500 (2017)
- EY Center for Board Matters, 2016 Top Earners in S&P 500 Companies, Unpublished data.
- Catalyst, 2016 Catalyst Census: women and Men Board Directors (2017).
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Unpublished 2015 S&P 500 EEO-1 data.

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A Call to Action

Ready to R.I.S.E.: The Women’s Leadership Innovation Lab

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is committed to advancing women’s and girls’ leadership development. For over 30 years, CCL has been researching women leaders, producing groundbreaking books such as *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*, *Standing at the Crossroads*, and *Kick Some Glass* (due out in October 2018). We have developed thousands of women through our high impact women’s leadership development programs, including the public Women’s Leadership Experience and many custom-designed programs. Around the world, we are working with girls from kindergarten through college, helping them to realize the immense leadership capability they hold.

In 2017, we undertook a series of Women’s Leadership Innovation Labs (The WLI Lab®) is intended to bring together men and women who share the same passion to brainstorm innovative solutions to today’s challenges.

Specifically, The Lab involved attendees in four topics (i.e., R.I.S.E.) that have been identified based on CCL’s learning and experience:

- R** Reinventing what it means to be a leader, by asking “How do we change the definition of leadership so that women aren’t constrained by male definitions?”
- I** Initiating partnerships and conversations, by exploring the headlines we’ll see in five years if women have strong networks
- S** Supporting women and girls by providing spaces to learn to lead, by creating and designing such spaces for women and/or girls.
- E** Engaging and educating others about their role in creating the environment that liberates leadership potential in women and girls, by examining what men, governments, organizations, and the media can do to champion women’s and girls’ leadership.

The Lab was designed to be interactive, with facilitators guiding the discussion. Both men and women were welcomed to The Lab to share opinions and exchange ideas. Gender balance of attendees varied by session. Our labs were:

2017 Dates	Location	Participants’ Gender
February 2nd	Greensboro, NC USA	Mixed gender
June 21st	Silicon Valley, CA USA	Women only
August 31st	New Delhi, India	Women only
September 5th	Singapore	Mixed gender
September 8th	Shanghai, China	Mixed gender
September 26th	San Diego, CA USA	Mixed gender

Key Highlights



Reinventing What It Means to be a Leader

When asked to draw a picture of a leader, both men and women tend to draw men—or use masculine traits to describe a leader—more than they draw women or use feminine traits for description. Similarly, a Google image search for “leader,” “manager,” and “CEO” reveals that most of the images are men or graphics that look like men. Even more specifically, the photo images are overwhelmingly of white men. We use this example in the lab to highlight how people tend to “think manager—think male.”⁴ In other words, when people think of managers and leaders they automatically think of men; and because of this, women often are not thought of as leaders, or are seen as a poor fit for leadership.

We then encouraged participants to discuss how they would reinvent leadership from a women-centered perspective. The discussion focused on three specific questions:

1. What traditional assumptions of leadership would you throw out?
2. How would you define a leader?
3. How would we select and train leaders?

Assumptions to be thrown out



aggressive
..... micromanaging
long hours on site
..... dictatorial
one person
..... dominant
bossy
..... biased
conservative mindset
..... no time for family



Across all six labs, participants identified two types of assumptions that need to be discarded:

1. Assumption that leaders need to follow traditional masculine stereotypes.

For example, the idea that leaders should be dominant, stoic, high-powered, always right, or have no time for family. Participants believed that these ideals were no longer relevant to modern leadership—and that both women and men could benefit from having these assumptions removed. Research suggests that our participants are right. Future-focused, trust-building, transformational styles of leadership are more effective than traditional, authoritative, transactional styles of leadership.⁵

2. Assumption that women need to follow traditional feminine stereotypes.

For example, the idea that women are emotional, responsible for the household, or are only interested in certain workplace roles. Participants said that these ideas keep organizations from seeing women’s potential and keep women from realizing their own.

As one group put it,

.....
**“Why is ‘strong’
not representative of a woman
as well as a man?”**
.....

Redefining Leadership

Participants were given the opportunity to redefine leadership. Specifically, we asked which qualities and experiences would become the most valuable, if we redefined leadership to include women. These words came up from the discussion:

drive
..... resilient
balanced
..... inspirational
people-focused
..... execution
embrace
..... ethical
empathetic
..... collaborative
visionary
..... passionate
compassionate
..... networking
diversity
..... listening
integrity

As we can see, most of the words are gender inclusive. They are also consistent with what academic research calls transformational leadership—a leadership style that has been shown to be both very effective and commonly used by women.



Selecting and Developing Women Leaders

Lastly, we asked participants to brainstorm how we might need to select and train leaders differently in the future in order to break down these assumptions and redefine leadership, resulting in more women leaders in the leadership pipeline. They recommended:

Select Through

- Assessment of capabilities (360s, assessment centers, performance review)
- Soft skills (vision, passion, diplomacy, communication skills, resilience)
- Removing gender and racial bias from the process (e.g., removing names from applications)
- Including more women decision makers in the process
- Using a pipeline development process (cultivate women's careers so they are ready for leadership positions)

Develop Through

- Soft skills required for leadership, such as empathy and resilience
- Leadership courses
- Exposure to networking, top management
- Mentors, sponsors
- Helping female leaders navigate gendered challenges
- Using a pipeline development process (as with selection)



Initiating Partnerships and Conversations

Networks and networking are important for the career advancement of both men and women. Research found that leaders who had focused, structurally diverse networks were likely to:

- A. hear new information early and capitalize on opportunities that require merging of disparate expertise and insights⁶
- B. be in an organization's top 20% of high performers⁷
- C. be promoted more rapidly, enjoy greater career mobility, and adapt to changing environments more successfully.⁸

Networks are powerful mechanisms to help both yourself and other women. However, sometimes women are excluded from key networks in male-dominated cultures. They face additional time pressures during life phases such as maternity leave. They may also limit networking activities to only those that bear clear and short-term fruit in terms of their careers. These circumstances often lead women to access networks less than men.

We encourage women to consider building open networks (where parts of their network are not connected to other parts) which provide greater diversity and access to more non-redundant opportunities. In The WLI Lab, we encouraged participants to think boldly: "Imagine that great networks exist for girls and women. In five years' time, what would be headlines in major news outlets?"

Women make up 50% of government cabinets and lead 50% of the countries worldwide

20% increase in Fortune 500 companies' growth attributed to higher percentage of women leaders

First female president/prime minister in X country

Universal Family Care leads to a rise in workforce productivity and wage equity

Women have same median income as men in 2022

The glass ceiling is shattered—51% of Fortune 500 C-suite positions held by women

These are just a few of many goals that ambitious participants aspire to achieve.

So we asked: **"How do we get there?"**

Across the six labs, participants identified three key shifts required to achieve this aspiration.

First, there should be a shift in government policy. We need engaged political leaders to advocate for equal opportunities for women and girls. With this shift, there will be more and stronger women candidates at local levels and above.

Second, there should be a shift among influential organizations, for example, Fortune 500 companies. We need changes in organizational policies, beliefs, and structures. Some examples of the shifts are: better support for both men's and women's families; and more intentional mentoring and sponsorship for women.

Third, there should be a shift to equal opportunities. Girls and boys should have equal access to education around the world; men and women should have standardized earnings; all employees, including contract workers and students, should be treated equally in terms of occupation and benefits.



Supporting Women and Girls by Providing Spaces

In our experience, we find that a safe space is important for women and girls who want to grow in their leadership capability. One example is single-gender leadership programs for women. Women find it safe to candidly share their unique experiences and challenges in such a space without fear of being misunderstood. These spaces also provide opportunities to build confidence and receive peer support.

We asked participants to brainstorm “spaces” where women and girls can lead. Participants came up with diverse types of “spaces” that could meet different needs. These include:

★ Mentoring/Sponsoring Spaces

- **Like a Girl:** support girls through cross-generational mentoring.
- **Cloud 9:** mentoring by successful women leaders to help women see the sky beyond the glass ceiling.

★ Networking Spaces

- **SHE-click:** a meet-and-greet group where women can “click” on issues.
- **The WIN (Women Innovation Network):** for senior business people to connect and champion women and gender issues.

★ Social Media Spaces

- **Plug-in:** an internet plug-in that would use existing social media groups for the benefit of women.
- **Girls Gone Global:** a social media platform that helps girls learn to be advocates for themselves and gain access to internships and other opportunities.

★ Hacking Spaces

- **Glass House:** a transparent thinktank to help shape policies and practices that support women in the workplace.
- **Women’s Hackathon Lab:** a group that hosts local hackathons for women.
- **SAKSHAM:** a masculine Hindu name that means able or capable; establish a business group for women with mentoring, business education, technical and non-technical topics.
- **All-girls’/all-women’s schools:** provide leadership development opportunities for students in all-girls’ and all-women’s schools.



They also discussed potential challenges to supporting women and girls and providing spaces for them, such as:

- Girls aren't proactively being shown that they can be leaders.
- Girls are discouraged from STEM fields that produce many Fortune 500 leaders.
- Some data needed to create action (for example, salary equity and decision criteria) isn't readily available or transparent.
- All women in need do not have equal access to these spaces.
- Equal pay and caregiving through organizations is not required.
- To create the space, activism needs to be activated.



Engaging and Educating Others

Women cannot achieve everything we are describing alone. We will need support from others, and to do this, we need to engage and educate the people around us about their role in creating the environment that liberates leadership potential in women and girls. We identified five key stakeholders in this environment that will make the future real, and come sooner. We asked participants to brainstorm:

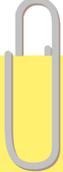
1. What **Women** can do to engage and educate others
2. What **Men** can do to support women leaders
3. What **Legislatures/Governments** can do to support women leaders
4. What **Organizations** can do to support women leaders
5. What **The Media** can do to support women leaders.

Here's what participants said:



Women Can

- Mentor/sponsor other women; ask for mentorship/sponsorship for self; get others engaged in mentoring/sponsoring other girls and women
- Lead by example
- Develop a gender acumen program for men/women mid-to-senior-level leaders in my organization
- Work on their company's diversity initiatives
- Use their social media platform to create awareness
- Provide spaces for girls to find their own voices
- Fight their own inhibitions
- Support and encourage other women



Men Can

- Truly listen to women
- Mentor and sponsor women
- Fully share family- and home-care responsibilities
- Educate themselves and learn about unconscious bias, discrimination against women
- Encourage daughters the same way as they do sons
- Mentor young men to support women
- Be inclusive
- Provide equal opportunities and allow risk-taking and failure
- Open male-dominated jobs to women
- Be willing to be the “trailing spouse”

Legislatures/Government Can

- Create and uphold laws against discrimination and crimes against women
- Ensure gender equity in all spheres
- Institute pay equity
- Create development pipeline for women in government
- Support legislation that is women- and family-friendly
- Appoint more women to leadership roles; make them visible



Organizations Can

- Insist on equality in succession planning
- Implement gender-neutral hiring processes
- Review all HR policies for diversity and inclusion outcomes
- Work to achieve an equal number of men and women in senior leadership roles
- Leverage qualities of empathy, collaboration, and passion
- Acknowledge women leaders
- Support network building
- Pair women mentors with new male employees so the men can learn from women leaders
- Build awareness of unconscious bias
- Strengthen parental leave for parents of all genders
- Offer more flexibility in where and when work happens
- Walk the talk. Point out adversities that keep women from leading
- Hire more women into key roles

Media Can

- Focus on women’s accomplishments and impact on business/community—not on what women wear or how they look
- Portray women for their intellect and talent. Put women on the air
- Show successful young women leading in business and using traditionally feminine traits
- Create female superhero cartoons that use STEM and technical skills to save the day
- Point out adversities that keep women from leading
- Hire more women into key roles
- Promote portrayals of men participating in house work

Cultural Differences

In general, we observe many more similarities than differences.

There are definitely cultural nuances. The most significant differences are in the roles of government and state.

- **Singapore:** All men at age 18 in Singapore are required to serve a two-year term in the national military; women are not held to this requirement. However, many participants believe women should also be required to serve, as the networks developed in the service are influential in a man's subsequent career.
- **India:** Women in India do not feel protected by the law enforcement and legal entities when crimes are committed against women. They indicated the need for capital punishment for crimes against women to deter such crimes.
- **Shanghai:** Our group in Shanghai pointed to the need for boys and girls to learn about women leaders from the time they are in kindergarten.
- **US cities:** Across all three US-based innovation labs, there was a demand for government-mandated maternity and paternity leave.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The Women's Leadership Innovation Lab® is designed by CCL to collect innovative ideas to help women "RISE." Based on the experience of six labs in six cities across two continents, we found The Lab® effective in

- raising the awareness of women leadership issues
- creating a network opportunity for men and women leaders
- helping organizations hear from women and better understand their needs
- informing the design of other women leadership initiatives

The contents of this report can and should be used by individuals, organizations, and policymakers to consider and act upon relevant and meaningful recommendations to address the many challenges that stand in the way of girls and women filling the leadership pipeline in parity with men.



Endnotes

- ¹ Catalyst, 2007. <http://www.catalyst.org/media/companies-more-women-board-directors-experience-higher-financial-performance-according-latest>
- ² Catalyst, Pyramid: Women in S&P 500 Companies (January 9, 2018).
- ³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/upshot/fewer-women-run-big-companies-than-men-named-john.html>
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- ⁵ Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 1–12.
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