About This Document

The majority of what you are about to read is based on the perspectives of a cross-section of women in the meeting and event industry who work for large and small corporations and organizations across Canada and the United States. It is therefore, for the most part, empirical data—a based on experience.

This document is by no means the final word on what all women (or men) face in the workplace as they strive to advance in their careers. Depending on your own experience, it may resonate with you to a greater or lesser degree or not at all. The reactions/responses of pre-publication readers were unique to each with one exception: everyone had an emotional reaction to something in the document. Please recognize that possibility in yourself, and know that this report is meant to raise awareness by offering data, experience, thoughts, opinions and recommendations to encourage additional dialogue—a call to action, and hopefully, affect change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women have long played important roles within the $100 billion meeting and event industry. But although women have contributed greatly to the success encountered by corporations, nonprofit organizations and related suppliers, they have generally not been as successful in moving into leadership positions within their own organizations.

The following report presents results, conclusions and recommendations that emerged from a set of studies sponsored by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and the MPI Foundation designed to explore the requirements for either women or men to lead as well as the challenges that confront women aspirate to leadership. In addition, this report attempts to place those results, conclusions and recommendations in the larger perspective of the industries, provide a compelling rationale for taking notice of these findings, and to provide a framework for resolving the needs of aspiring women leaders.

As part of its Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI), MPI is helping women move into leadership positions within the industry and helping companies within the industry capitalize on this source of potentially undervalued resources. The study will be of interest and have application outside the industry due to the nature of the challenges women face in many work environments.

This report does not negate the challenges and/or similar situations that men may face in their personal or professional lives as they lead or aspire to lead. Rather, the focus of the studies was to identify factors related to women and in so doing offer opportunities for those who work at the executive, managerial and non-profit volunteer leader levels need to commit to radical change.

Additionally, in order to obtain leadership opportunities, individual women professionals need to deliberately decide to succeed with a strategic plan modified as their professional and personal life changes. Our findings indicate companies wishing to take greater advantage of the operational and financial advantages of gender-neutral leadership need to seriously commit to an internal organizational “audit” of attitudes, policies and standards to determine what the organization needs to do to develop, support and advance more women into leadership.

THE RESEARCH STUDY

Why Was the Research Needed? How Was the Research Conducted?

Phase I – Baseline Research with Michigan State University
Phase II – Grassroots Research – MPI Chapters

THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Phase I – 2001 Baseline Research – Industry Wide
Phase II – 2002 Grassroots Research – MPI Chapters

THE COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Why Do Leaders of Corporations or Organizations Need to Help Women Advance?
What Do the Current Leaders of Corporations or Organizations Need to Do to Help Women Advance?
What Do Individual Women Professionals Need to Do to Help Themselves Advance?

IN CLOSING

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☐ I wish to see another proof.

Signature
Date

These are the highlights of the two studies:

Phase I: Baseline Research – Women/Men Leaders in the Meeting and Event Industry (not just MPI)

• Women and men leaders agreed on the major criteria to be a leader in the industry:
  – Show Adaptability
  – Exercise determination
  – Exceed expectations
  – Get your point across
  – Develop a vision
  – Get regular exercise
  – Develop personal hobbies/interests

• Women leaders identified additional criteria for women to reach and/or stay in a leadership position:
  – Develop a work style superior
  – Work on difficult/highly visible projects
  – Get broad experience
  – Be good at negotiating
  – Get help at home
  – Decrease sleep, hobbies and interests
  – Trust subordinates
  – Simplify

Phase II: Focus Groups – Women Aspiring to Lead – MPI Chapters

• Women desiring to move up face five critical challenges related to their personal and professional lives:
  – Professional Responsibilities vs. Home/Family Management
  – Women Dead-ended by Ability to Detail and Multitask

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What is Meeting Professionals International? (MPI) What is the MPI Foundation?
What is the Women’s Leadership Initiative? (WLI) How Does the Women’s Leadership Initiative Operate?

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We believe most successful organizations are likely to reflect the essence of leadership revealed in the Qualities, Strategies, Life Balance and Keys to Leadership that we identified in our Phase I research. More importantly, we believe they will also exhibit some of the following Best Practices, which align with the recommendations presented throughout this report. We believe:

- These organizations recognize the value proposition in a potentially underutilized existing corporate asset—women.
- These organizations most likely have policies in place that demonstrate concern for the full-life challenges of women and men within the organization, valuing each employee as an individual who has two 24/7 sets of life-work responsibilities.
- These organizations most likely value the woman who is able to “do it all”—and reward and utilize her as an asset to be in a leadership role, where she sees the big picture and the bottom-line while leading others, instead of trying to do everything herself.
- These organizations most likely also value the unique communication styles of women and men, and provide training and support through out the workplace so that all employees can cooperate and achieve their professional goals through mutual respect and understanding.
- These organizations most likely also value the leadership attributes that women bring to the table, recognize the gift these are to a contemporary workforce and fast-track these women into leadership positions.

Finally, these successful corporations or organizations most likely are staffed and led by individuals who define the word “leader” in non-gender-specific terms.

“We don’t need a new career blueprint for women like there is for men. We need to make one.”

Anonymous

2002 WLI Listening Process

MPI Chapters

INTRODUCTION

Under the auspices of its Women’s Leadership Initiative, Meetings Professionals International conducted a pair of studies that investigated the challenges faced by women who work in the meeting and events industry and aspire to leadership. These complementary studies—the first, completed in conjunction with Michigan State University; the second, supported by a grant from the MPI Foundation—yielded significant data, conclusions and recommendations unique to the meeting and event industry but possibly relevant to the broader corporate world.

We emphasize this relevance to the broader corporate world because many of the meeting and event industry professionals involved in this research study are leaders or are employed by corporations or organizations beyond the industry. Therefore, much of the experience captured in these studies comes from and is applicable to professionals outside the meeting and event industry.

What is Meeting Professionals International?

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the world’s largest and oldest professional association for meeting and event planners and suppliers. The meeting and event industry cumulatively spends more than $100 billion per year, with 40 percent of the meeting planner members of MPI each spending from $1 million to well over $3 million annually.

MPI—encompassing nearly 19,000 members in 60 countries with 60 local chapters—is currently thriving despite the economic challenges faced by virtually all other sectors. The organization is seen as the premier information source and voice for the hospitality, travel and meeting planning segments. The association’s CEO and senior management are sought and valued as representatives of the meeting industry to the media and at the invitation of global heads of state. MPI is committed to maintaining a 50/50 ratio among its supplier and planner members, who represent virtually every segment of the hospitality, travel, meeting planning and corporate worlds. Its planner members are employed by thousands of major corporations or organizations, including 82 percent of the Fortune 500 companies and are critical assets as they plan and implement vital corporate meetings and events. Its supplier members represent top hotel, resort, leisure, airline and vendor companies. In addition to their memberships, supplier members support MPI through sponsorships due to the high quality and quantity of business and networking opportunities that MPI provides. MPI also offers critical industry-related research and professional education that affects its members’ lives and professions—and ultimately the bottom line of their corporations and organizations.

For all these reasons, and more, this document and its contents are significant to those who lead any corporation or organization—and to those who spend their lives working for them.

What is the MPI Foundation?

Twenty years ago, MPI launched the MPI Foundation for the purpose of funding and supporting industry-wide research and projects, including the first-ever senior-level designation for strategic planning in the meeting industry the Certification in Meeting Management (CMM) and a Chapter-level turnkey education program The Platinum Series. In addition it supports projects including a new industry-wide initiative to develop accepted practices/standards for documents between buyers and sellers—the Convention Industry Council’s Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX). The MPI Foundation also sponsored, the research project reported in this document as conducted by the Women’s Leadership Initiative.

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1 2000 MPI Membership Survey
2 Women and Diversity WOW! Facts 2002, p. 179, Business & Professional Women/USA
In January 2001 a grassroots effort began to explore why there is a lack of women in leadership positions in the industry. The Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI) is a response to this effort. The WLI began with the efforts of MPI member Christine Duffy, COO/president of McGettigan Partners of Philadelphia (a division of Maritz Travel). Recognizing that few women in the industry were “at the top”—or near it—Duffy gathered other high-level industry executive women to ask, simply, “Why?” They approached MPI with the idea of establishing an industry-wide initiative to determine what obstacles were preventing women from ascending to leadership positions within the meeting and event industry and, in turn, to do something about it.

As a result of this grassroots effort, the WLI was created in 2001 with co-funding from a generous industry sponsor—Wyndham Hotels & Resorts—and the MPI Foundation.

The Vision and Mission of the WLI are as follows:
The Women’s Leadership Initiative is the premier source of research, education, mentoring and networking for and about women in the meeting industry. The Initiative is an agent of change, leading the industry in the career development and organizational advocacy for women aspiring to leadership.

How Does the Women’s Leadership Initiative Operate?
MPI’s WLI focuses on four key activities: research, development, delivery and advocacy. These activities describing the work of the WLI are not sequential but, rather, cyclical. That is, their activities are ongoing, occurring simultaneously, and those who engage in these activities need to remain current and cutting-edge.

Research is outdated the day it is gathered. Development responds to new findings. Delivery occurs in multiple levels in multiple situations. And Advocacy is an action and an attitude. The diagram below shows this theory as ongoing.

THE RESEARCH

STUDY

The research was conducted in two phases:
• Phase I – Identifying what it takes to be a leader in this industry
• Phase II – Identifying what obstacles women face (and opportunities they encounter) as they aspire to be a leader in this industry

Phase I baseline research, conducted with Michigan State University, involved industry-wide participation of men and women in North America. This research, which used written surveys, yielded quantitative results.

Phase II grassroots research, conducted by the WLI and a consultant, involved participation from “women in the middle” of the meeting industry (those wanting to advance) from 12 strategically selected MPI chapters in North America.** This phase of the research, which used focus groups, yielded qualitative findings and narrative reporting.***

Each phase is summarized and reported here, with particular detail spent on the latter (Phase II) due to the specific application for the primary constituency: women.

The findings and recommendations are of significance to women and men. Leadership positions are most often held by men, therefore men need to understand the opportunities to their organizations brought by gender-neutral leadership and the obstacles facing those women who aspire to leadership.

Although this research explores the challenges faced by women professionals who aspire to lead, some male professionals with similar aspirations may discover that the findings, conclusions and recommendations apply to them as well. That is, some men also face challenges of life balance, some men face being stuck in the middle unable to advance, and some men also struggle to work with and for women (or other men). Therefore, while the two WLI studies focused on identifying factors of unique interest to women professionals, the findings offer value that men may apply to their own professional or personal lives.

Additionally, even though the research findings focus on the challenges that face women (and, possibly, men) who aspire to leadership positions within the meeting and event industry, we do not mean to ignore or discount the achievements of those organizations and corporations within the industry which have already lead the way for change. Via professional policies and practices that encourage, invite and provide the well-deserved resources for women to be leaders too, some firms have exemplary models for developing women in leadership together with men as a pathway to progress.

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Phase I – 2001 Baseline Research

In the summer of 2001 the WLI collaborat-ed with Michigan State University to conduct seminal research in the meeting industry to determine benchmarks for the leadership development of women. The study was conducted by surveying 2,000 women and 2,000 men in the meeting and event industry, not just members of MPI. The results of the survey were reported in January 2002 in three streams: findings from women alone, findings from men alone, and findings that compare what men and women reported. The comparative report provided the broadest interpretive data.

Methodology

The survey was designed and then sent in hard copy form to a random sampling of industry members whose names were provided by their respective organizations. Farms were subsequently returned to Michigan State University, where results were tabulated using SPSS, a statistics program. A report with qualitative data accompanied by brief narrative interpretation was created and presented to the MPI International Board of Directors in January 2002.

Demographics

The table at right shows some of the relevant demographics of the women and men who participated in the Phase I research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Meetings Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (Less than $500,000)</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium ($500,001-1,999,999)</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large ($2,000,000 or more)</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Compensation (year 2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 or less</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001-$75,000</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001-$100,000</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Membership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Professionals International (MPI)</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Sales &amp; Marketing Association International (HSMAI)</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Association for Exposition Management (IAEM)</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Speakers Association (NSA)</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of Incentive &amp; Travel Executives (SITE)</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II – 2002 Grassroots Research

The results of the baseline research generated the impetus for a second tier of research with those wanting to move into leadership positions. Men and women were selected from the survey and subsequently (although not planned) mostly leaders were recommended and/or gave the input. This outcome was not a negative, just interesting. As shown in the results, MPI had the opportunity to find out what leaders said is needed to get into leadership from those who had already made it. In addition, the data was from those who look for potential leaders. In other words, we heard primarily from those on top of the glass ceiling. This created a need to hear from those trying to get there. This need to listen to the women striving for advancement was clearly missing in the initial research. Knowing what it takes to be a leader was valuable, but knowing what MPI members need to advance is critical because MPI is dedicated to responding to the needs of members. Having their own professional organization make sure that their needs would be beneficial to the women and men of MPI, as well as other groups in the meeting and event industry.

Methodology

In July 2002 a research study was planned and executed in the fall to gather data from the industry through the experience of women who were also members of MPI. The method involved conducting a grassroots listening process in various MPI North American Chapters. The plan first identified a representative sampling of chapters. A random sampling of members from each chapter was selected.

The following describes the plan and implementation of that listening process. As mentioned, unlike the quantitative Baseline Research, this research offers qualitative, empirical data, and thus, the researchers selected a narrative approach—with only the demographics providing quantitative data.

The researchers decided to exclude men from the focus groups hoping for a more candid discovery of women’s leadership from those who had it. The researchers relied on the chapter to determining what this meant in each chapter. The researchers decided to draw from the focus groups in the study.

** The researchers relied on the chapter to determining what this meant in each chapter.

** The researchers decided to exclude men from the focus groups hoping for a more candid discovery of women’s experiences and concerns. It is anticipated that men and women will be combined in groups for future discussions.
THE RESEARCH RESULTS

The WLI research yielded rich information to help us understand how individuals and businesses may change so that more women (and men) may capture leadership opportunities throughout the meeting and event industry. However, "leadership" itself is a broad, somewhat nebulous word with any number of definitions, levels and interpretations. Therefore, we offer one treatise on contemporary leadership and leaders themselves so as to offer a common ground for the purpose of this document. These descriptions are courtesy of the Cramer Institute, a Missouri-based enterprise which partners with companies to achieve significant business results through developing exemplary leaders and leadership practices:

"Leadership has never been more important. The conditions in which we live and work, our very context and being, our confidence in institutions, people and organizations are changing at a dramatic and sometimes alarming pace. Leaders who know how to drive significant, beneficial results under conditions of rapid-fire change, upheaval and uncertainty will inspire much of what is created in the near and long-term in business, government and the world. Leaders and organizations need to constantly adapt, create and change in directions that allow them to prepare for the future while excelling in the present.

Exemplary leaders are passionate and intense about what they do and set big agendas for themselves and their teams. They share responsibility and know they must involve others to drive exceptional results. They define leadership by who they are, how they contribute and what they accomplish. They are widely celebrated in their organizations—sometimes viewed as positive revolutionaries. They are appreciated in the business community for their problem solving approaches, their unwavering support of their teams and their success in transforming visions into profitable businesses."**

Understanding what contemporary leadership is and what an exemplary leader does lays the groundwork for studying and understanding this research driving individuals and organizations toward embracing the facets of leadership and leader woman or man. We report the findings will be followed by a discussion of the significance to organizations and women, as well as suggestions and action plans to help women advance.

Leadership is most interested in creating what has not yet happened. Leaders stand in the future and present simultaneously.

The Cramer Institute, 2003

Phase I – Baseline Research:

What does it take to be a leader in this industry?

Women and men were surveyed separately, and the data was compared in Phase I. Table 1 shows the top four criteria women and men chose under the four categories: Qualities, Strategies, Life Balance and Keys to Leadership. As is shown in the Women-Men (W-M)
Another example indicates that almost 50 percent of the women felt hiring household help was a necessary practice to be able to work, but only 15 percent of men agreed. This statistically significant disparity supports the conclusion that women (presumably even the women in the lives of the men who answered) continue to be responsible for the majority of the daily home and family management even if they also work outside the home. This study also revealed that 34 percent of women said they were “losing sleep” in order to keep managing it all whereas only 7 percent of men indicated this. This helps us understand the level of personal, physical and emotional commitment women make in order to be able to succeed in personal and professional arenas.

This study is of unique value because for the first time, the participants’ responses provided a baseline from which to determine which natural abilities and learned skills the existing leadership in the meeting and event industry currently utilize and deem valuable. It also shows what challenges they must cope with. For example, “adaptability” was identified as a quality especially important for leaders within our industry. This quality is also required to manage another category: Life Balance. The significance here is acknowledging that this industry is not a Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. industry. It is a full-time/weekday/weekend on-demand industry. (An interesting side note here is that, for many women professionals, the industry requires the same commitment as does home and family. This tension could be the root of some of the challenges women identify in the Phase II research.)

Underlying attitudes related to the answers men and women give could affect the decisions about who moves up in leadership and who does not. For example, looking at the results in the rankings, if the decision-maker is a man who highly values technical ability, a woman seeking advancement who highly values natural intelligence might be wrongly overlooked or eliminated because of this disparity she doesn’t demonstrate her technical acuity. Or, if the decision-maker is a woman, a man being considered could be in jeopardy if he over demonstrates his penchant for technology and does not demonstrate a value for relying on natural intelligence as well.

percentages under each criterion, in many instances, women felt much more strongly than the men. (More about this outcome follows.) The only exception occurs under Life Balance and involves taking time to exercise regularly—women and men felt equally strong about the need for regular exercise.

On average, men and women ranked many of the survey choices in the same order. These findings reveal that women and men have similar expectations about what it takes to lead in the meeting industry and can help women/men know what it takes to develop in leadership. Of the 11 possible criteria choices given in the survey in each of the four categories shown across the top in Table 1, women and men agreed on the top four rankings in each category. They also agreed on the lowest four (not shown in the table). These lowest-ranked leadership criteria are:

Table 1
What the Leaders Said it Takes to Lead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>LIFE BALANCE</th>
<th>KEYS TO LEADERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Exceed expectations</td>
<td>Exercise regularly</td>
<td>Develop a vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-95% M-90%</td>
<td>W-89% M-86%</td>
<td>W-49% M-50%</td>
<td>W-87% M-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Develop working style</td>
<td>Hire household help</td>
<td>Trust your subordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-92% M-87%</td>
<td>comfortable for superiors</td>
<td>W-81% M-57%</td>
<td>W-90% M-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to get your point across</td>
<td>Work on difficult or highly visible projects</td>
<td>W-71% M-54%</td>
<td>Keep your cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-91% M-90%</td>
<td>W-71% M-54%</td>
<td>W-34% M-28%</td>
<td>W-87% M-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation Skills</td>
<td>Gain experience in various functional areas</td>
<td>Decrease sleep</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-87% M-74%</td>
<td>W-66% M-55%</td>
<td>W-34% M-7%</td>
<td>W-76% M-63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical Attractiveness and Level of Formal Education. We were very interested to learn that both men and women ranked Level of Formal Education last. Especially since 62 percent of these leaders have graduate and/or undergraduate degrees. In addition, three other criteria that ranked in the middle of the spectrum are not depicted in Table 1: Intelligence & Intellectual Capacity, Extraverted & Charismatic and Technical Skills or Competencies. These three survey choices had the greatest disparity of percentages assigned by the survey population. For example, 75 percent of the women felt Intelligence (natural intelligence) was important, whereas only 50 percent of the men agreed . . . a 25 percent gap. Men ranked Technological Ability (ability to work with electronic tools) as more important.

As important as the above data is, by far the overarching story from the Baseline Research is the percentages that separated the answers between the genders revealing that the women and men defined leadership in terms which are significantly different. In virtually all instances the percentage gaps seem to indicate that the women had more intense feelings about their choices. For example, Table 1 reveals that 81 percent of the women respondents felt it important to develop a work style that superiors like, whereas only 57 percent of the men respondents agreed. One possible implication of this could be that most women—and significantly more women than men—feel strongly about conforming and performing to fit the system.

The Top Five Challenges for Women Who Desire to Advance*

#1 Professional Responsibilities vs. Home/Family Management

#2 Women Dead-Ended by Their Ability to Detail and Multitask

#3 Communication Differences – Women vs. Men-in-Charge

#4 Leadership Style Differences – Women vs. Men-in-Charge

#5 Leadership Potential Biased Toward Men

*Because we are all different, some of these findings will also apply to men and not all findings to all women. This input was from the majority of women who participated in the research, representing a cross-section of the meeting and event industry.
Phase II – Grassroots Research – MPI

Chapters:

What is the Experience Like for a Woman Who Wants to Climb?
The women who participated in this phase of the study described the challenges that they have faced and observed in their current and/or former employment situations. They easily summarized what they felt were the core problems, and they freely and quickly offered solutions. They did not need to ponder the questions; they engaged in easy, open discussion, as well as questioned and answered one another.

They also described situations that they knew would not immediately change, revealed their strategies for coping with these realities, and gave one another advice to help to cope and succeed in spite of the challenges they faced.

We believe the value and accuracy of this qualitative data will be further confirmed as it rings true in the heads, hearts, reactions and responses from other women reviewing this report.

These are the voices of the women in the middle.

Without question, the overwhelming challenge for most women involves juggling their career and personal life (home/family). This challenge emerges whether the professional woman chooses a career without a family or tries to succeed in both endeavors: managing a career and a family.

The women in our study repeatedly told us that “life juggling” is especially demanding in the meeting and event industry, due to the nature of the business: with its required travel, extended time away, and night and weekend work. As stated earlier, unlike the typical workday in some other fields, the typical workday in the meeting and event industry is not 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., with evenings and weekends off. In addition, for women (or men) who hold or desire to advance to leadership positions, the hours and time away from home may significantly increase. Women who work in the hospitality segment of our industry may become especially exasperated by the demand that they be flexible, because this segment of the industry provides a substitute “home” for business and pleasure travelers. Hence, night and weekend work is frequently required by those who provide those comforts (i.e., the planners) and those responsible for the meeting or event bringing the group into the venue (i.e., the planners). As indicated above, this full-time availability could very well conflict with availability required at home, especially for those women/men who have families or are the primary care givers of family members.

Personal & Professional Fulltime “Jobs”
Women reported that they face significant challenges as they try to succeed at the equivalent of two full-time jobs: one at work and another at home. Some of what they told us was predictable—some was not anticipated.

The second set of responses—from women in the middle of their careers—depict a different scenario. These women are for the most part on a career-first (not “fast”) track, but lingering and calling to them is the desire to start a family. Unlike their counterparts described above, these women are struggling with the issue now—knowing how their bodies will be affected, how their careers may lose momentum, and how their somewhat peaceful, routine households will change if they decide to bear children. Concern about their careers is most often paramount, and some feel fearful and resentful about what they perceive as a threat knowing that only they, as women, have to face this career threat.

Both sets of women described above also recognize that the “standards” (policies, expectations, work-day schedules, etc.) they face in the workplace are for the most part based on men, not child-bearing women and that to have a child is not really viewed as a positive event by most business organizations or, if supported, only done so by legal mandate or as a coping mechanism. Many of these respondents indicated that they felt that getting pregnant is viewed as a problem—not a positive—to their organization. (For example, in some policy manuals and most insurance policies being pregnant is considered a “sickness.”) Many of these respondents identified the potential for pregnancy as the major unknown reason why “most” women of child-bearing age are not fast-tracked into leadership. In addition, some of these women who are already mothers—and some, further, who are already leaders—reported feeling “guilty and embarrassed” with physical, pregnancy-related challenges in the workplace especially not wanting to reveal any of the physical conditions affecting their workday.

In spite of their ability to work through pregnancy, many women report token understanding from supervisors as the pregnancy progresses: a woman is frequently required to put in the same hours and excel in her job when she is heavy with child and her body and spirit are spent. Few women reported that, in their experience, the leaders in their professional lives consider that pregnant women may need any “special treatment” (e.g., working part of the day from home or staying seated when at work). If a woman cannot meet the “show up, work your head off for hours” standards, she is expected to take her “sick” leave. Trying to “stick it out” as long as her body permits, many women reported they will sacrifice reasonable physical pain or discomfort required to continue working so as to be able to use their maternity leave time with their child, after he/she is born, rather than during the pregnancy. This often takes place at additional physical challenge on her part as she strives to succeed at both jobs.

Career – No Children
Because not all women who focus on their career identify a career without a family as being a negative, many do not use the words “give up” to refer to their lives without spouse and/or children. Some of our respondents told us that it is only those individuals who value family (children) as a No. 1 life-choice that use these words. Those who chose a career as their No. 1 primary life work do not feel that they gave up anything but that, rather, they have made a significant “life choice.” That is, they see their choice as positive and affirming, rather than negative.

FINDING #1

Professional Responsibilities vs. Home/Family Management

CRITICAL ISSUE

Because many workplace standards and policies were established with men at work and women at home—a situation that is less common today—and because many professional women are also parents and/or primary caregivers, the number one issue corporations or organizations need to address is the following:

Update policies and standards that reflect the presence of women as well as men in the workplace and the common reality that many women professionals also manage home and family.

The Biological vs. Professional Push-Pull
At some point, most career-minded women must choose between focusing on a career and starting a family. Men may never have to wrestle with this decision to the degree a woman does, because starting a family involves a commitment that uniquely affects a woman in many ways. Most notably, only a woman can carry to term and bear a child. Pregnancy and family may conflict, then, with a woman’s personal ambition to succeed in her career, as well. Although the career-family tension may be a significant issue in women’s lives, our respondents reported that they find little or no mention of it by their superiors (women or men) at work. Some women believe that many professionals view the career-family issue at work as an elephant in the room: no one acknowledges it is there, and everyone hopes it will go away on its own.

Some of the women respondents who manage other women pointed out that they themselves “live in fear” that their best female employees will one day announce they are pregnant, thereby greatly affecting the organization and the bottom line. (Of interest here is that a potential pregnancy is a threat to both sides of the work equation: i.e., for the pregnant woman and for her workplace. Both parties, then, share mutual interest in finding a viable, beneficial solution.

The women in our study provided two primary sets of responses concerning the tension between managing a career and starting/managing a family: 1) Women striving to have careers and somehow, maybe, children, and 2) Women striving to have careers with the desire to have children lingering and beckoning to them currently. In addition, a lesser set of responses concerned women who were pregnant and in the workplace. In fact, few, if any, accommodations were made after women were increasing in numbers in the workplace even for the women who were also fulltime mothers.

The first set of responses came from women who strive to succeed with their careers on a fast track and then consider having a family. These women have decided to postpone having a family, because they are not yet ready to set aside their careers, if at all, nor face what their sister professionals may face trying to do both. They also report that although they are comfortable with where they are and where they are going in their professional and familial lives, they do feel pressured by family/others to “have a family,” but for now, they are happy with their own decision and process of putting career first and then (possibly) having a family.

Although either women or men could be the primary caregivers and/or parents at home, common experience demonstrates that the vast majority who do so are women. In addition, one critical difference distinguishes the women from men: only women bear the children. Because significant numbers of women entered the professional workplace, (pre-WWII) male leaders did not need to make special accommodations for women who were pregnant and in the workplace. In fact, few, if any, accommodations were made after women were increasing in numbers in the workplace even for the women who were also fulltime mothers.

The second set of responses—from women in the middle of their careers—depict a different scenario. These women are for the most part on a career-first (not “fast”) track, but lingering and calling to them is the desire to start a family. Unlike their counterparts described above, these women are struggling with the issue now—knowing how their bodies will be affected, how their careers may lose momentum, and how their somewhat peaceful, routine households will change if they decide to bear children. Concern about their careers is most often paramount, and some feel fearful and resentful about what they perceive as a threat knowing that only they, as women, have to face this career threat.

Both sets of women described above also recognize that the “standards” (policies, expectations, work-day schedules, etc.) they face in the workplace are for the most part based on men, not child-bearing women and that to have a child is not really viewed as a positive event by most business organizations or, if supported, only done so by legal mandate or as a coping mechanism. Many of these respondents indicated that they felt that getting pregnant is viewed as a problem—not a positive—to their organization. (For example, in some policy manuals and most insurance policies being pregnant is considered a “sickness.”) Many of these respondents identified the potential for pregnancy as the major unknown reason why “most” women of child-bearing age are not fast-tracked into leadership. In addition, some of these women who are already mothers—and some, further, who are already leaders—reported feeling “guilty and embarrassed” with physical, pregnancy-related challenges in the workplace especially not wanting to reveal any of the physical conditions affecting their workday.

In spite of their ability to work through pregnancy, many women report token understanding from supervisors as the pregnancy progresses: a woman is frequently required to put in the same hours and excel in her job when she is heavy with child and her body and spirit are spent. Few women reported that, in their experience, the leaders in their professional lives consider that pregnant women may need any “special treatment” (e.g., working part of the day from home or staying seated when at work). If a woman cannot meet the “show up, work your head off for hours” standards, she is expected to take her “sick” leave. Trying to “stick it out” as long as her body permits, many women reported they will sacrifice reasonable physical pain or discomfort required to continue working so as to be able to use their maternity leave time with their child, after he/she is born, rather than during the pregnancy. This often takes place at additional physical challenge on her part as she strives to succeed at both jobs.

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Because not all women who focus on their career identify a career without a family as being a negative, many do not use the words “give up” to refer to their lives without spouse and/or children. Some of our respondents told us that it is only those individuals who value family (children) as a No. 1 life-choice that use these words. Those who chose a career as their No. 1 primary life work do not feel that they gave up anything but that, rather, they have made a significant “life choice.” That is, they see their choice as positive and affirming, rather than negative.
Although a pregnant professional who continues to work may experience extreme physical and emotional challenges, many of the women in our study expressed the same pride and passion for both their expected child and their existing career, determined to succeed at both. (This determination directly reinforces the Phase II – Life Balance findings, in which the data indicates that, in order to succeed, women often must make physical commitments beyond those of their male colleagues.)

Our findings also indicate that, for the most part, the women in our study believe the executives/managers in the meeting and event industry do not recognize the amount of pressure on women/men who are the primary caregivers and/or parents and who may not have help at home.

Many of the women we met with who want (or have) children reported that they felt that their concerns about home vs. work life are dismissed as “whining”—especially when they use the phrase “life vs. work.” Our respondents feel that their concerns about home and/or parents and who may not have help at home.

Many of the women respondents said that they are being a responsible person in their personal lives to better focus on their responsibilities as parents 24/7 of the home management burden on the woman. Some would say this burden is reason to have women stay at home. Our respondents suggest that, on the contrary, it is reason to have more equitable sharing of those responsibilities.

Career—Good Bye! Hello Home!

We would be remiss not to report on the excitement, enthusiasm, support and peacefulness expressed by some of the women respondents who plan to become “stay-at-home moms.” They shared their struggle with this, their decision-making process and the value-based sacrifices they and their husbands/partners were going to make to enable this lifestyle choice to become reality. Many of the older, more seasoned women among our respondents expressed support and provided helpful suggestions for those who plan to become stay-at-home moms.

...the perception that...and John Gray—well known authors, speakers and teachers, respectively—have written extensively on the issue. Their respective work has helped millions of men and women understand one another better in personal and professional relationships. According to Gray, “Not only do men and women communicate differently, but they think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need and appreciate differently.” His work was recently expanded to explore how women and men communicate in the workplace. (See Mars & Venus in the Workplace, John Gray, 2001.)

According to Gray, most men are fact-focused, not wanting a lengthy explanation. Most women, however, are fact and detail-focused with an innate desire to...
FINDING #3
Communication Differences – Women vs. Men-in-Charge

CRITICAL ISSUE

Because women and men are unique, they also have unique communication styles. A woman in a workplace where men hold the main power may encounter a very difficult challenge if she does not use a typically male communication style. Moreover, she is likely to become frustrated if she has to learn a male communication style and if her natural way of communicating is discounted and causes her to be side tracked in her career. Therefore, business professionals need to learn the value of women’s communication style and enable both the women and the men to understand and value each other’s communication style as acceptable in the workplace.


Anonymous

2002 WLI Listening Process

Business professionals need to recognize the differences between men and women in the workplace. Our respondents strongly believe that one style common to most men so those in charge will listen. However, our respondents see it as vital that men also learn to speak with the same emotions in their personal communications. Our respondents repeatedly told us that they must often do understand and often can predict what men will do or say in a given situation but that they themselves are frequently not heard and taken seriously in the workplace. This phenomenon may have been demonstrated in the Enron, WorldCom and IBM debacles when women’s voices were internally discounted or ignored by the men in charge.*

Although other ethical issues were at play, the dismissal and/or discounting of the women who were communicating to their male superiors in these three major examples was a critical eye-opener. Had they been heard (i.e. their concerns accepted) earlier, the outcomes could have been very different. Each of these women believe that one of the reasons their input was not valued was because they were women and their communication style was not seen as the same value as that of a man.

Our respondents believe that men and women have the same communication objective: Get the message sent, and get it received. However, our respondents report that when women communicate in their language/style—in their professional or personal lives—some men only pretend to listen.

Recognizing the differences between male and female communication styles is only the first step. Doing something about it is the next step. As frustrating as it may be for men to listen more than they may want (or think they need) is in order to get the point, it is every bit as frustrating for the women we spoke with to be ignored or cut short when they want (or think they need) to say more. Neither party is right; neither party is wrong.

But as the women in our study emphasized, when men are in charge their communication style is dominant. The women respondents described the frustration they feel when they are expected to take care of critical details and then try to communicate with the existing leaders who negate their personalization by discounting their very way of communicating (i.e. giving the details or adding another subject to the discussion). Hence, women are not just multi-tasking but, moreover, “multi-talking”: using multiple communication styles.

Our respondents view the answer as being twofold: To advance, women absolutely have to use the communication style common to most men so those in charge will listen. However, our respondents see it as vital that men also learn to “speak” and value the female communication style. The women respondents strongly believe that one gender adapting is no longer acceptable, because the dominant communication styles of women are as valid as those of men. The women in this industry told us they resist and respect the expectation that they be the only ones to adapt.

“We lead from Different Planets – But Are On This One Together!”

Women see it as vital that men understand the norm for “women’s ways of leading,” especially since collaborative leadership is the “new” way to lead. Most women are relationship-focused and utilize compassion, conciliation, empathy and sympathy to motivate and lead—wishing to talk, discuss and collaborate on decisions. For some of our respondents, even reported that they are often the objects of jealousy from other women subordinates who resent them and frequently complain about them to human resources. These same respondents said that few, if any, men seem to receive the same complaints from subordinates, even if the men are autocratic. Rather, these women say, some women subordinates tend to complain among themselves about men but complain to their superiors when they feel disrespected.

Although our respondents did not favorably describe men who are autocratic, they have become accustomed to the autocratic behavior and are almost inclined to excuse such behavior, saying such men “are just that way” or what it takes to really motivate people and get them to produce.

“Old Boys’ Network”

The phrase “old boys’ network,” which is used to describe a tightly knit exclusive “club” of older men (with some older men let in), perpetuates standards of control and mistrust. Respondents believe that because these leaders are operating out of the old style of leadership that demands submission and fear-based productivity, subordinates are destined for stressed work environments, the organization is likely to have employee retention problems, and the entire enterprise will ultimately suffer bottom line consequences.

“This ‘I’m in charge, and what I say goes!’ leadership style still lingers.”

Women were unforgiving of this style especially when it was/ is wielded by “one of us” (i.e., other women). From group to group, women told stories of how some other women bullied, controlled and held them back. Whereas we would not use in print the one word that we heard over and over to describe these women in charge, the women we listened to were quick to use it. Putting it another way, one woman said, “We all know women like this. They’re...just good old boys.” (Anonymous, 2002 WLI Listening Process)

Many respondents said that they have a sense of being a leader-in-waiting, meaning that they believe that the controlling men/women in charge are dying out or retiring, and the organization will come full cycle with new leaders ready to lead in collaborative team-atmospheres. (However, a small minority of respondents indicated that they perceive a new “Young Old Boys” network emerging: one that threatens to back-track to old ways. These women said that the “new” worker, especially Generation Y, would not stand for these behaviors and would likely exit organizations if this young leadership model is perpetuated.)

Leaders in Other Places

This document would not be complete without a discussion of the women who are already leaders in other institutions and organizations outside the business world: in their families, their churches, neighborhoods, schools, sports, health institutions and other arenas. The women in our study relayed their own and others’ existing commitment to lead in these arenas and described the extreme personal sacrifice and situation that is in this leadership role.

They also were quick to tell us that volunteering is the only way some women want to lead, as some are very happy in their professional/business lives as very good workers, colleagues, and followers!

“In the hospitality industry, the corporate ladder was constructed for the men.”

Anonymous

2002 WLI Listening Process

The importance of this category of women leaders—especially within their families—cannot be understated. The significance expressed in our study of the importance of women as mothers, daughters, sisters, and others’ existing commitment to lead in these arenas and described the extreme personal sacrifice and situation that is in this leadership role.
Women’s Leadership Initiative

Finding #5
Leadership Potential Biased Toward Men

Critical Issue
The business world may be biased toward men—who are seen as having future “potential” beyond a new position/promotion—whereas women are rarely, if ever, seen beyond being “perfect for the job!” Therefore,

Decision-makers (including human resource professionals) are encouraged to explore their own attitudes that may dead-end successful women candidates.

The Leadership Track is Male-Friendly

The fifth challenge is that many women believe that current leaders perceive men as having leadership potential—and, in turn, place them on a fast-track—and perceive women (if they are considered for leadership) as being a good fit for the current position but not suitable for the fast track.

Many of our respondents believe that whereas men are evaluated on current ability and potential when promoted, recruited or hired, most women are evaluated only on their ability to accomplish the responsibilities for the existing position that they are being offered. They felt that in order to break through this barrier, a woman must not only find a way to be seen as being good for the current position but must also have to demonstrate additional worthiness to be fast-tracked by “working harder than expected” with such actions as tenacity, dedication, extended time commitment, ability to accomplish many goals, overcome adversity, loyalty, and women’s notice availability. Whereas, the women in our study said that a male colleague must only prove that the decision makers were right when they hired him—that he was a good selection to be fast track to advanced positions in addition to being good for the current position.

Many respondents said that they are more than able, willing and qualified to perform in an advanced position but are often passed over and a man is “parachuted in” (from another organization/department). The woman then has to train him to do what she can already do. One woman reported being passed over many times, always hopeful that she would be promoted the next time and eventually harboring such anger that it has affected her health and created bitterness toward the organization.

Many respondents gave advice to others concerning how to get noticed and get on that elusive leadership track. A frequent suggestion involved finding someone to champion you within the organization—a person who believes in you, praises your abilities to colleagues, listens, responds and knows a potential leader when she/he meets one. The women report that this professional mentor may be either a woman or a man. Several women reported having mentors in other corporations or organizations—mentors who were in the same industry but coached them from afar. Our respondents indicated that finding a mentor was a great strategy to expand one’s network and advance into other organizations. However, the women did not support structured mentoring. One woman said it was a matter of “professional chemistry and not an action plan.”

Advancing into another organization is a strategy many women use with one limitation. Many women are reluctant to pull up roots (i.e., community and family, as indicated in the Baseline Research), whereas their male counterparts frequently relocate. One woman summed it up this way: “Men move up by leaving the city, whereas women by leaving the organization for another one or starting their own business.” (Geographic relocation may be an important strategy for women who want to be on a career fast-track.)

“The most of my mentors have been men!”
Anonymous
2002 WLI Listening Process

The Phase I and Phase II research findings, which represent the experience of current leaders in the meeting and event industry as well as the experiences and voices of women who aspire to lead in this industry, make very clear the following:

• Because women are vital professionals in the meeting and event industry, the industry needs to recognize that in many corporations or organizations there may be a compelling revenue-generating value proposition already existing in the leadership asset of women.

• Because the role of women continues to evolve in business and the marketplace, the role of corporations (and those responsible for guiding corporations) must change as well;

• As corporations or organizations engage in implementing plans that will help them to advance women, individual women professionals also need to share responsibility for helping themselves advance.

What follows are strategies to advance more women into leadership. Although not meant to be all-inclusive, the material offers vital information about women’s increasing financial power in business and the marketplace, the corporate or organizational role in advancing women; and recommendations and action plans to accelerate personal, professional and organizational change in support of advancing women.

Why Do Leaders in Corporations and Organizations Need to Help Women Advance?

If corporate executives still wonder why they should train, promote and hire more women into leadership positions, they may want to consider the following statistics concerning the increase in financial power and presence that women wield in business and the marketplace.

These data specifically reveal: 1) that women are gaining influence and control over financial decisions in the workplace and in the marketplace; 2) that women are in the move within many organizations; and 3) that women are willing to go elsewhere if the organizations where they work do not provide them with adequate flexibility, trust and growth opportunities.

Note: In regard to this final point, as shown below: women have had to either adapt to the Good Old Boy system or abandon the organizations which live by this norm in order to accomplish some remarkable personal and economic influence. Leading organizations are on the leading edge and would be wise to consider gender-neutral policies as a way to attract valuable leaders which other organizations have swept aside or neglected because they were women—i.e. adjust any biased policies based on men as the providers/primary professionals.

More broadly, the data suggests that by advancing women in key leadership positions current corporate leaders may be executing a wise business strategy by aligning their organizations’ leadership profile to reflect what is emerging in the broader workforce and marketplace...

Women Have the Money

This first set of data reveals that women are continuing to gain influence and control over key financial decisions in business and the marketplace:

• Women have $5.2 trillion in purchasing power7
• Women business-related spending is $1.5 trillion8
• Women business travelers constitute 50 percent of the business travel market9
• Women purchase 50 percent of all computers and related products10
• Women purchase 48 percent of all stocks11

1 Selig Center for Economic Growth, Century, Volume 62, Number 1
2 Women and Diversity WOW! Facts 2002, p. xxv, Competitive Edge Magazine, Marketing to Women
4 Women and Diversity WOW! Facts 2002, p. xxv, Travel Industry Association
5 Women and Diversity WOW! Facts 2002, p. xxv, Travel Industry Association
6 The Women’s Market, May, 2003, Herald Tribute/Business Travel Agenda
7, 8, 9, 10, 11

WWW.WLI.MPIWEB.ORG 21
Women Are on the Move — The Competition is Out There

A second set of data reveals that women are moving in and moving up in the corporate leadership world. Those organizations that capitalize on the ability of women to lead have the opportunity to gain a first-mover advantage especially as women leaders help represent the brand to key constituencies: customers, clients and employee groups. Those organizations that lag in identifying women leaders may suffer a short- or long-term competitive disadvantage.

• The number of women in the highest officer positions in corporate America increased 113 percent since 1995.10

• Since the year 2000, Fortune 500 companies experienced the following:11
  – 300 percent increase in the number of women CEOs
  – 5.2 percent increase in women corporate officers (15.7 percent total)
  – 10 percent increase among companies with at least 25 percent women officers
  – 1.7 percent increase in “clout” (top) titles
  – 3 percent increase in women CFOs

• 3 percent increase in women general counsels

• 85 percent (17) of the top 20 most successful companies have women on their boards (10 of the 20 least successful companies do not have women on their boards).12

• 62 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have women directors.13

• 57 percent (one-third) more women than men have been awarded academic degrees in the last 15 years.14

• 40 percent of the MBAs graduating today are women.15

• 52 percent of all Internet users are women.16

Note: It may be wise for corporations who lag behind in advancing women, and who want to learn how other organizations have made it happen, to seriously study and utilize the Best Practices gender-neutral evaluation process suggested at the end of this document.

Women Are Leaping Out of Corporate America

A third set of data reveals that some women are leaving the corporate world to use their skills and abilities to succeed in their own businesses, while other women are starting businesses because they have the desire, abilities and resources to do so. If women leaders or potential leaders find limited growth opportunities (or a lack of sensitivity to their full-life challenges) within the existing corporate workplace, if these women “parachute” out so that they join or become competitors, their existing organization will lose these valuable assets with no recompense.

• 5.4 million women in the U.S. own their own businesses.17

• Women-owned companies are growing at twice the rate of those owned by men.18

• In the U.S. own 40 percent of total businesses.19

• Each day, 1,600 women become new business owners.22

• Women-owned businesses are entering the global marketplace at the same rate as all other US companies20

• Women-owned firms that operate internationally are among the fastest growing American-owned companies21

• 34 percent of all Canadian businesses are owned by women.23

• Women-owned businesses receive less venture capital.24

• Annual sales of women-owned firms increased by 43.6 percent over the last 12 years.25

• 9.1 million women-owned businesses employ 27.5 million people and contribute $3.6 trillion to the economy.26

What Do Current Leaders Need to Do to Help Women Professionals Advance?

The MPI Women’s Leadership Initiative has developed a roadmap of Best Practices for organizations to use who wish to prosper through gender-neutral leadership. This is possible as women professionals.

If executives seriously believe that women (as well as men) are vital assets to their organizations, they need to develop a strategy for capturing the untapped potential of these valuable assets. More specifically, current leaders need to determine what organizations and individual executives, managers and employees must do to facilitate change. Such an endeavor, as part of a broader women’s leadership initiative within an individual organization, might begin with a study of the existing attitudes, standards and employee profiles/statistics: the equivalent of a women’s leadership audit. Based on the audit findings, each organization should consider developing a program specifically designed to foster organizational change.

The success of any such audit will depend on how receptive the individuals are who lead and work in corporations or organizations to the data reported earlier in this report. These data show that organizations and corporations are ripe for accelerated change that focuses on advancing women into leadership positions for two primary reasons:

1. Women are a hidden, compelling, revenue-generating asset, permanently in the workplace.

2. Many organizations and corporations need tradition-breaking standards to replace archaic ones built around the premise that men work and women stay at home.

The acceleration of change must start with a strategic commitment from the executive levels to make the change. By considering, adapting and/or adopting the following three steps, current leaders within organizations or corporations can ensure that their workplaces advance women professional.

Step 1 — Lay the Groundwork to Move from Premise to Practice

If an initiative to encourage advancement of women is to be at all successful within an organization, the leaders of this initiative may lay the groundwork as follows:

• Secure support from the highest levels;

• Obtain an enterprise-wide commitment to study, recommend and implement;

• Commit to the staff power (commonly called “man power”) and priority of this endeavor;

• Commit to the staff power (commonly called “man power”) and priority of this endeavor;
Bias 1: “Work is Work and Family is Family — Get Used to It”
- Which, if any, of our policies reflect this attitude?
- What (and who) specifically needs to change?
- Do we need better, more-inclusive standards based on both genders as workers and home managers? (Can we devise standards that support and enable women, as well as men, to be valuable to their companies and their families?)

Bias 2: “Women Take Care of the Details — Men Are the Leaders”
- Do any of my colleagues or I believe women need to tend to the tasks and men to the strategies?
- Are any of my colleagues and I keeping women or men in these positions because they are so “darn good”?
- Do we have on staff highly qualifies, gifted women who can help us strategize?
- What do my colleagues and I need to do to make this happen?

Bias 3: “Women Can’t Get to the Point”
- Do my colleagues and I turn off and tune out when most people begin to talk longer than we would like them to?
- Do my colleagues and I engage in any communication activities at work that frustrate our colleagues?
- What do my colleagues and I need to do to help the women and men in our organization understand and value the different communication styles?

Bias 4: “Leaders Need to Be Decisive and Not Hem and Haw”
- Do my colleagues and I believe that most women naturally want to build personal and corporate loyalty by building relationships?
- Do I really know what my overall leadership persona is with subordinates? How do I know this?
- What might I do to find out and/or confirm my beliefs?
- Do we already have in our organization women who are naturally relationship-oriented and who might use their leadership abilities to enhance our executive roster?
- What do my colleagues and I need to do to help the women and men in our organization understand and value the different leadership styles?

Bias 5: “Men Make the Best Leaders — They Are Natural”
- When my colleagues and I consider someone for a position/advance, do we see them as potential for greater contribution to the organization?
- At what point did I recognize the leadership potential of the last two employees (male and female, respectively) hired or promoted into leadership positions?
- Do we currently have in our organization women whose leadership potential I/we have overlooked?
- What changes do my colleagues and I have to make to move these women into positions that they, and we, deserve?

Step 2 — Conduct a Thorough Attitude Check
All executives/senior managers need to engage in systematic evaluation of their own underlying attitudes toward women that they might detect and explore any biases that might undermine the endeavor. These executives/senior managers can begin by exploring to what degree they accept and agree with the following five widespread biases. The critical questions that follow each bias should help each individual to explore his/her colleagues’ attitudes, his/her own attitudes(s), and effects of such attitudes within the organization.

Finding #1: Professional Responsibilities vs. Home/Family Management
The Task Force needs to determine whether the organization’s current policies and standards reflect the presence of women as well as men in the workplace—and the reality that many women professionals also manage home and family.
- Seriously examine the organization’s policies by soliciting anonymous feedback from female employees:
  - For workplace issues, what would have to change for these women to be able to accept more responsibility (i.e., moving toward or into a leadership role)?
  - For home/family-management challenges, what could or should the organization do to enable these women to advance?
- Study the organization’s policies to determine whether they are based on the premise that men in leadership roles do not have significant home management responsibilities (because, perhaps, they have a wife/partner at home).
- Determine to what degree the organization’s policies reflect the assumption women are not in the workplace, do not belong in the workplace, are not there permanently or are not serious about their careers.
- Determine whether the organization’s workplace standards reflect that women and men have responsibilities both at work and at home.
- Explore to what degree the organization’s policies reveal the real role in its employees. Do the organization’s policies allow them flexibility? Give them permission to get the job done: no matter when, no matter where, etc. If not, why not?
- Uncover additional questions unique to your organization’s people, mission, products and/or services and business culture.
- Analyze the findings and develop recommendations to implement throughout the organization.

Finding #2: Women Dead-Ended by Their Ability to Detail and Multitask
The Task Force needs to determine the organization can use the unique leadership abilities of women to attain the corporate goals and objectives and drive the bottom line. But it must first decide to create a seat at the leadership table for the voice of women leaders. To address this challenge, the Task Force should consider the series of questions below as they pertain to: a) overall leadership within an organization, and/or, if applicable, b) specific questions for meeting and event planning and meeting and event sales.

Overall Leadership
- Who does the detail work in our corporation or organization?
- Of these employees, how many are women?
- Of these women, who shows potential (natural charisma or learned skills) and/or is a leader already?
- Of these leaders/potential leaders, who has the necessary human resources (subordinates) to help her/him succeed (detail delegates)?
- In order for each of these women to advance in leadership in our corporation or organization, what else do we need to do to enable her to be free to lead?
- What resources (time, money, human) do we need to provide to make this happen?
- When will we make this happen?
- How will we know we are successful?

Meeting and/or Event Planning and Meeting and/or Event Sales
- What part of our organizational structure makes meetings happen?
- If this is clearly either a designated department or individuals, what are our attitudes toward the “professionalism” of those who make this happen?
- Are their responsibilities critical to the bottom line of this organization?
- How critical?
- What is the scope of their responsibility? (For example, do they plan internal/organization departmental-type meetings—large and small—or external organizational meetings such as sales incentives, annual client/customer conferences, product launches, etc.?)
Finding #3: Communication Differences – Women vs. Men-in-Charge

The Task Force needs to determine how to help all professionals within the organization to understand and value the unique communication-style norms of both men and women.

• How much do the employees (and, in particular, current leaders) know about the differences in the ways women and men communicate?

• What can we do to help improve the inter-gender communication in our workplace?

• What attitude-adjustments do we need to have in order to make sure both female and male ("Venus and "Mars") language is valued (spoken and understood) in the workplace?

• How can we help women/men to be free to "speak" like a man/woman and be respected?

• What kind of parameters (limits) can we put on not abusing the use of either language to the detriment of discounting the other? (That is, in what ways do both women and men need to adjust their habits/natural tendencies?)

• How will we know when communication has improved?

• How will we acknowledge and affirm our staff when that goal has been reached?

Finding #4: Leadership Style – Women vs. Men-in-Charge

The Task Force needs to determine how to help all professionals within the organization to view women as leadership assets and utilize their unique relationship-focused skills to improve the organizational culture, attain the corporate goals and objectives and drive revenue.

• Do we have women (men) in our organization who are autocratic and controlling?

• Do we have unduly high employee turnover (even without the current economic scene)?

• Is the morale high/low in our work environment?

• Do women/men feel free to speak their minds without fear of repercussions?

• Do women/men feel valued, affirmed and important to the corporation or organization? How do we know that? How can we be sure?

• What would employees report if they were given the opportunity to comment anonymously?

• Do we have a good, healthy work environment or one where 30 percent of the energy is gone before employees get to work in the morning?

• What specific features, if any, of our environment are not conducive to enabling people to succeed?

• How might we change these features?

• Is leadership in place that is empowering and supportive?

• If not, who in the organization’s leadership roster is like that?

• Are they what some people call “caring” (as opposed to merely “social”) individuals?

• Do we have people in our organization to which others naturally gravitate because they feel valued and enabled?

• What would it take for us to enable some of these individuals to move up into formal leadership positions?

• Are any of these individuals women? if not, why not?

• What would we need to do to move more of our professional women with natural leadership abilities into more significant roles/responsibilities?

• What are the identified needs of our organization in the near future, and how can we import or enable more women to fill important functions of leadership?

• Who are the people (men or women) we need to eliminate in order to create a “great place to work”?

• What would we need to do to move more of our professional women with natural leadership abilities into more significant roles/responsibilities?

• How long will these changes take? Why? And why wait?

Finding #5: Leadership Potential Biased Toward Men

The Task Force needs to determine how to help all professionals within the organization to explore their own behaviors and attitudes that may dead-end women candidates from advancing.

First, ask key decision-makers to envision the next vice president in the company using the following set of criteria/questions:

Envision a good candidate for our next vice president position.

• Is this person young?

• Is this person eager with smart, vision and strong business sense?

• Does this person have good solid educational background and understanding?

• Is this person able to lead, follow and support the brand and corporate loyalty?

• Does this person have good corporate experience with unbridled potential?

• Truthfully, now, do you see a male or female?

Second, determine what needs to happen to envision women/men in upcoming leadership positions.

What Do Individual Women Professionals Need to Do to Help Themselves Advance?

The MPI Women’s Leadership Initiative has developed a roadmap to a Best Practices process to help women professionals determine their own goals and objectives and prepare themselves to succeed. The following describes that process and suggestions for progress.

The leadership journey is different for every leader, man or woman. But, as our research shows, most women who want to succeed must still go the extra mile work harder and more deliberately, so that they will be valued enough that they will be promoted to leadership. Although current leaders within corporations or organizations have a critical responsibility to recognize the compelling value proposition and unique leadership opportunity that women bring—especially to attain the corporate goals and objectives and drive the bottom line—women also have a responsibility to help themselves. In particular, women who aspire to lead need to demonstrate to themselves and to their colleagues that they are prepared to step up and capture the opportunities ahead.

In order to capture the leadership opportunities and overcome any challenges she may face, each woman should consider three key steps: 1) make or reevaluate a plan; 2) get the education and experience needed; and 3) make sure she has balance in her life.

Make or Reevaluate a Plan

For those women who aspire to climb into leadership, the more experienced women respondents in our research provided consistent advice: make a plan. Although many unforeseen events may affect that plan along the way, the experienced women were adamant—make a plan. For those who already have a plan, the information here can provide fodder for re-evaluation of a plan. If we don’t make a plan for our life, someone else will."

Anonymous

Is this true for you?

To help her complete these three steps, we suggest that she answer some critical questions for herself similar to the organizational “audit” suggested in the prior section. Based on her answers, she can begin to formulate a plan that is both deliberate and strategic: a full-life plan.

As part of such full-life strategic planning, women who aspire to leadership need to take stock of who they are, where they are going and what (if anything) they want or need to change. Because strategic planning makes good business sense for organizations, it should make equally good sense for individuals who seek to manage this “business of life.”

The strategic-planning process for an individual approximates the process that an entire organization might engage in when it develops a strategy

* The creation of a plan and the information which follows may also be of value and apply to men.
Step 1: Ask Yourself Key Questions That Call for Meaningful Introspection

- What am I doing with my life that I am happy with?
- What would I change if I could?
- Where do I want to go with my professional career?
- Where do I want to go with my personal life?
- Where do my answers conflict?
- How can I resolve the conflict?
- What’s blocking me in my goals for my professional career?
- What’s blocking me in my goals for my personal life?
- What do I have control over and what do I have no control over?
- Of what can I control, what do I need to change?
- Of what I cannot control, what can I do to make it better?

Step 2: Formulate and Implement Action Steps

- In spite of future factors now unknown about either my personal or professional life, what would I like to have happen?
- What would be the first three steps I need to take to start my new life strategy?
- What are the three small steps in each of these I would need to take to make the major step happen? e.g., if I want to be a vice president in three years, I would need to:
  1. Develop my leadership abilities (see Baseline Research for what this means);
  2. Expand my lateral experience in the organization;
  3. Identify and nurture strategic relationships (networking);

- What is my time frame for achieving these goals?
- Are my goals and timeframes realistic? If not, what needs to change?
- With whom do I need to share this plan? (Who can help me to test it? Modify it? Execute it?)
- What financial resources do I need? Do I have?
- If limited, how can I change that to move toward my goals?
- What other resources will I need?
- Who can I depend on to advise, support, challenge and celebrate with me?
- What specifically can I do to start tomorrow?

Getting the Education and Experience Needed

Few individuals can advance into leadership positions and succeed there without a formal education beyond high school: i.e., advanced certification, college degrees and/or graduate degrees. Regardless of what these certifications may mean on paper, what they mean to you as an individual is critical.

The education that accompanies a formal degree should provide you with additional knowledge and skills that will help you to think with an expanded mind. Additional education should help you to think more rigorously, thereby enabling you to offer additional value to the corporation or organization.

If you do not already have an undergraduate degree, now may be the time for you to consider working toward one. It is never too late to make additional education a part of your plan—to enter a formal program or weave formal study into your life—working toward the ultimate goal of achieving that degree. Many women (and men) do it. Institutions are flooded with the “adult learners”—primarily women. And, in case you do not know this, they are usually the most-successful students. Why? Because they returned to accomplish an earlier life goal. They are motivated, wise to the world as to what it takes to be dedicated and go after something. As a result, they come ready to succeed. Other “agendas” are not on their horizon like some of their fellow younger students. (e.g., hanging out, dating, etc.) They are focused. And, because they usually have another “life” too—i.e., raising children, family and friends outside of the institution, they have great time management—utilizing all those detail and multitasking skills.

So if you put your education “on the back burner,” we suggest you turn that burner up! The Women’s Leadership Initiative offers scholarships, as do many other organizations. Consider education a vital part of your life. It will be difficult to give the time. But you will succeed because you choose to do so.

Getting the experience you need is another vital part of moving up into leadership. Once you make your plan, you need to be very deliberate about what you do and who you do it with, so that you can help yourself advance. You may need to make yourself more aware of all parts and functions of your entire organization or industry (if you plan to move within your industry).

You may need to truly understand what each division, department, role and responsibility entails. And you may need to develop your understanding by getting experience in these parts of the organization.

If you discover an opportunity to work or volunteer to help another department do it! Even a lateral move may provide value: by helping you to gain additional exposure to other parts of the organization and helping others throughout the organization gain exposure to you. Identify what and who you do not know and make it a part of your plan to get the answers and build relationships with the key players.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of gaining broad, deliberate experience: not just for your resume (although that’s important, too!) but for you! Additional experience should provide you with the opportunity to capture any moments of truth ahead of you. That is, when you have the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and abilities in a meeting or one-on-one with decision makers, you can speak with knowledge and understanding of the organization, the issues and the challenges they, as leaders, face.

And you can do other things in order to acquire the experience and education you need. Refer to the results of this research—both Phase I and Phase II. Really read the information and ask yourself:

- How can I make this research personally important to me?
- How does this or that apply to me?
- What is it saying to me?
- What do I need to do as a result of these findings?

Balancing Your Life

As part of your planning process, you need to consider what you can do to balance and, where appropriate, blend your responsibilities at work and outside of work. On a long-term basis, you may need to identify where the key successes and stresses lie in your life, so that you can capitalize on the former and remove or reduce the latter.

Rather than separate your professional life from your personal life, then, you should focus on gaining control of both parts of who you are. Consider the following questions:

- Which individuals are most important in my life?
- Which individuals are the sources of my greatest satisfaction? Why?
- With which individuals do I experience the most frustration? Why?
- What might I do to capture even more satisfaction?
- What might I do to reduce the level of frustration?
- If I quit my job, how easy/difficult would it be for me to find another?
- If I lost any of those dearest to me (e.g., son, daughter, spouse, mother, best friend) how easy/difficult would it be for me to replace them?

Although some of your own answers may surprise you, they should help you to formulate and drive your own full-life strategic plan. Your plan should help you determine what you want to do today, so that you seize the day and help prepare yourself for all the tomorrows that follow.

We are not recommending that you sacrifice your career in favor of your family—or vice versa. We are suggesting, though, that you find the right blend, so that you recognize any trade-offs that you may need to make, so that you make conscious choices, and so that you emerge with no regrets. If you, in effect, live your career—and leave your family/friends somewhere behind you—will you turn to them someday, when you are ready, and not find them there? If you can take care of yourself and attend to those you love, you are likely to find that the path that you choose will provide you with the greatest pleasures. We encourage you to seriously consider the choices you make, so that you can make your life with your family and friends as important as your career.
Tomorrow I will . . .

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In Closing

Leaders within corporations and organizations—and those who aspire to leadership—would be wise to study what researchers have learned about great leadership in current successful organizations. Not all successful organizations are led by women (although some are), and not all successful leaders are women. We believe most successful organizations are likely to reflect the essence of leadership revealed in the Qualities, Strategies, Life Balance and Keys to Leadership that we identified in our Phase I research. More importantly, we believe they will also exhibit some of the following Best Practices, which align with the recommendations presented throughout this report.

- These organizations recognize the value proposition in a potentially underutilized existing corporate asset—women.
- These organizations most likely have policies in place that demonstrate concern for the full-life challenges of women and men within the organization, valuing each employee as an individual who has two 24/7 sets of life-work responsibilities.
- These organizations most likely value the woman who is able to “do it all”—and reward and utilize her as an asset to be in a leadership role, where she sees the big picture and the bottom while leading others, instead of trying to do everything herself.
- These organizations most likely also value the unique communication styles of both women and men, and provide training and support throughout the workplace so that all employees can cooperate and achieve their professional goals through mutual respect and understanding.
- These organizations most likely also value the leadership attributes that women bring to the table, recognize the gift these are to a contemporary workforce and fast-track these women into leadership positions.
- Finally, these successful corporations or organizations most likely are staffed and led by individuals who define the word “leader” in non-gender-specific terms.

We offer praise to those organizations and corporations within and outside the meeting and event industry, which have already led the way for change via professional policies and practices that encourage, invite and provide the well-deserved resources for women to be leaders, too. This industry would greatly benefit from additional research concerning its organizations or corporations with exemplary models for developing women in leadership together with men as a pathway to progress.

When the need for change is accepted and implemented, women and men, valuable as leaders, will be able to be fully present and fully dedicated, because they are supported and trusted. We submit: women, men and the organization all win when business is concerned with the quality of home life as well as the quality of business; when business is concerned with the value of the way women communicate and lead as well as men; when business is concerned with the exclusionary attitudes toward very capable leaders who were born women. Finally, everyone wins when women and men strive to make the workplace a better place for both to be, because of the value that each individual, woman or man, contributes to the bottom line and the leaders of the future. What is better for each individual within an organization can only be better for business.

“Some women have no aspiration to aspire. Others do. I’m one of those.”

Anonymous
2002 WLI Listening Process
Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the world's largest and oldest professional association for meeting and event planners and suppliers. The meeting and event industry cumulatively spends more than $100 billion per year, with 40 percent of the meeting planner members of MPI each spending from $1 million to well over $3 million annually. Encompassing nearly 19,000 members in 60 countries, MPI is seen as the premier source and voice for the hospitality, travel and meeting planning segments and offers critical industry-related research and professional education that affects its members' lives and professions—and ultimately the bottom lines of their corporations and organizations. For all these reasons, and more, this document and its contents are significant both to those who lead any corporation or organization—and to those who spend their lives working for them.

The MPI Foundation funds and supports industry-wide research and projects, including the source of this research, the Women’s Leadership Initiative, as well as the first-ever senior level designation for strategic planning the Global Certification in Meeting Management (CMM) and a chapter-level turncoat education program The Platinum Series. In addition it supports projects such as a new industry-wide initiative to develop accepted practices/standards for documents between buyers and sellers—the Convention Industry Council’s Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX).

The Women’s Leadership Initiative In the meeting and event industry, women are the majority. However, of the approximately 15,000 women MPI’s 19,000 members, less than 9 percent are in leadership positions within their own corporations or organizations whereas approximately 30 percent of the 4,000 men are in leadership positions. As a response to this phenomenon, the Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI), under the MPI Foundation, was created to focus on helping women advance professionally in an industry where they are the great majority, but the minority in leadership positions. As such, the WLI provides research, advocacy and resources for interested women, men, corporations and organizations.