

IDEA EXCHANGE:



Advancing Women in the Workplace



BENTLEY
UNIVERSITY

Center for Women and Business



FOUNDING CORPORATE PARTNER

CENTER *for* WOMEN & BUSINESS

Moving from Conversation to Action

Bentley University's Center for Women and Business is dedicated to the advancement of women in business through sharing the recommendations for corporate practices, conducting research and providing educational programs that offer ways to support, retain and promote women in the workplace.

So, we asked men and women grappling with women's advancement in the workplace about their dream solutions through an innovative study, called the VIVA CWB Idea Exchange. Eleven of the participants captured and elaborated on the ideas from over 350 individuals who shared their thoughts and suggestions over a three week period.

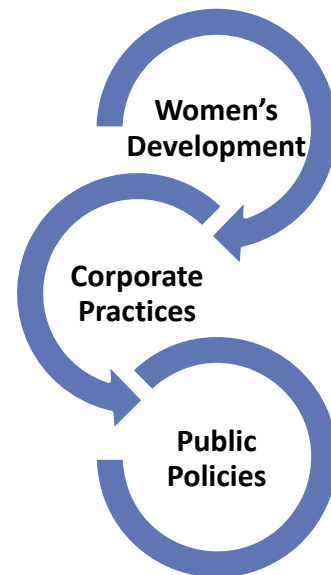
We thank the writing collaborative whose bios are at the end of the report for the time and passion that went into detailing the recommendations they have outlined.

These suggestions demonstrate that there is no magic bullet solution. Rather, the obstacles that women face need attention and action from multiple stakeholders, namely corporate leaders and managers; women in the workforce; and yes, public officials. The report offers specific steps that these three stakeholder groups can take to move beyond conversation to action.

Please share this executive summary widely and encourage others to develop more ideas that will help eliminate the obstacles to the advancement of talented women. We hope that by implementing of these recommendations to accelerate the advancement of talented women, businesses will become and remain more competitive.

Sincerely,

Betsy Myers, Founding Director
Susan Adams, Senior Director and Professor of Management
Bentley University
Center for Women and Business





16 Ways to Make a Difference for Women

1. **Task your Chief Administrative Officer or the head of Human Resources with assessing your strategic framework documents with a defined deadline for reporting back.** If a gap exists in addressing diversity, set a goal of amending the documents.
2. **Are you fully committed to gender diversity?** Show that you are willing to “walk the talk” by issuing an all-employee email or memo emphasizing your personal commitment and intent to institute substantive change.
3. **Host a “coffee chat” with a select group of influential leaders within your organization.** Share your personal story. How have you or the women in your life (mother, wife, sister, daughter, etc.) successfully addressed the challenges working women face? Or share what actions you’ve taken to help women overcome these challenges. Then listen while the leaders tell you why they have (or have not) furthered the company’s goal of increasing female representation at the highest levels.
4. **Contact the head of your board’s nominating committee and stipulate that the next slate of nominees must consist of at least 50 percent viable women candidates.**
5. **Charge your communications department with developing a monthly communication (website, email, bulletin) that lists all internal career moves, not just those that move “up” the corporate hierarchy, as a way to showcase your company’s “lattice.”**
6. **Task the head of HR to gather relevant data on high potential-women — job postings, promotions, compensation, development plans, and training.** Compare it to male contemporaries to determine dissimilarities that may pinpoint previously undiscovered barriers.
7. **Engage a high-potential, early-in-her-career employee in an open dialogue about the challenges she faces as a working woman.** Practice active listening to gain a better understanding of concerns that might push or pull her from the organization.
8. **Task a senior executive with creating a “lunch and learn” series for female employees, young girls and women in the community to discuss career opportunities, educational requirements, and long-term career planning.** Then make a pledge to attend the first session to demonstrate your company’s commitment to this program.
9. **Identify the Woman’s Advisory Committee chairperson.** Reach out to her to discuss the opportunity and objective. Collaborate with her to develop a strategy for recruiting the remaining committee members.
10. **Choose to publicly model your commitment to gender diversity by sponsoring at least one woman in an entry-level management role.** If you do not already have someone in mind, reach out to the head of HR to see who is on his or her talent radar. Identify where your active sponsorship can best impact the trajectory of her career.
11. **Commit to hosting your company’s first roundtable discussion with women to help them learn to navigate the political landscape of the organization.** At least once a quarter, be one of the senior executives offering “leadership open office hours.”
12. **Order an employee survey of parents to find out about their home life challenges.** Once you have that information, look for ways to help employees solve their home challenges, knowing that less stress at home means more productive employees at work.
13. **Contact your head of communications and request that your next all-employee communication incorporates your personal flexibility story.** When have you taken advantage of workplace flexibility? Do you take conference calls on the sidelines of your son’s or daughter’s game? Have you ever worked from home, or the cabin/beach house, on a Friday to get a jump on the weekend? Early in your career, did you ever modify your schedule to pick up/drop off the kids?
14. **Contact your head of HR and request a proposal to turn the flexible work arrangement approval process upside-down and institute a cross-functional flexibility work arrangements oversight committee.**
15. **Task your head of Information Technology with developing training materials showing employees how they can work smarter with currently available technology tools.**
16. **Contact your local Labor Department office and offer your company’s resources to help organize, promote, and attend Best Practices Roundtables.**

Advice for Working Women

22 Ways Women Can Help Themselves



1. **Find out who is involved in the strategic planning process in your organization.** If there are no women, approach your CEO to discuss the best way to ensure greater diversity in the process.
2. **Champion corporate strategies that support and advance women.**
3. **Practice “Impact Purchasing” and “Impact Investing.”** Be a consumer and investor of companies that include women on their boards and support your values.
4. **Acquire a sponsor who is a corporate board member.** Connecting with current board members is the most likely path to a board appointment.
5. **Nominate yourself for board membership.** Share your resume with firms that perform searches for corporate directors.
6. **Obtain board competency training from your employer or an outside source.** Acquire the necessary skills for board membership and the confidence to perform required duties.
7. **Ask yourself what assumptions you make of others.** Are you unintentionally limiting the opportunities of others based on those assumptions?
8. **Confront and replace your own self-limiting, embedded mindsets.**
9. **Contact local elected officials to discuss the importance of improved maternity leave policies, not just for mothers but for families.** Take it a step further and organize a group of passionate and concerned citizens to share individual stories of why this issue is important.
10. **Join an advocacy group and keep up to date on efforts nationwide to improve maternity and paternity leave policies.**
11. **Be a lifelong learner to keep your skills current and build confidence, particularly during those periods of time when you decide to slow your career.** Take a long-term view and continue to develop yourself, ensuring that you remain viable.
12. **Become an education advocate to share information with parents, educators, and the medical community on how to raise daughters in a healthy way in today’s challenging society.**
13. **Promote math and science events, share your own successes, and point out female role models in these fields to prepare girls to educate themselves, compete, and succeed.**
14. **Educate yourself on the difference between mentoring and sponsoring and make sure you have both.** Know how to use them to further develop your skills and advance your career.
15. **Realize that you too have a lot to give others.** Network with other women and provide support. Become a mentor or, if you are in a position to help, be an active sponsor for other women.
16. **Know what constitutes quality in child care, early childhood education and school-aged child care programs, and locate strong programs by contacting county-level childcare resource and referral agencies.**
17. **Understand available tax credits and employer-provided flexible spending options to subsidize child care costs.** Ask employers for flexible spending opportunities if they are not provided.
18. **Advocate to Congress for more holistic education policies that support well-rounded education content with a variety of subjects, alternative school schedules, outdoor and physical education, and parental involvement.**
19. **Advocate for yourself.** Ask employers for flexibility to accommodate children’s school schedules.
20. **Educate yourself about workplace flexibility options** — from telecommuting to video conferencing to working a compacted or extended work week — then make a case for the arrangement you need.
21. **Investigate your company’s flex policy and understand what the ramifications might be to your career and whether they are likely to be short- or long-term.**
22. **Support political candidates who subscribe to the full agenda of policies that support working women.**

Index of Actionable Ideas

RECOMMENDATION 1

View Women as a Strategic Asset

Proposed Solutions

1. Create and communicate the compelling business case for diversity as a strategic necessity.
2. Embed gender diversity initiatives into strategic conversations and strategic planning.
3. Review your strategic framework — mission statement, vision statement, and values — to ensure it contains a commitment to inclusion and diversity.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Pave the Way as Corporate Leaders

Proposed Solutions

4. Ensure leaders are including women.
5. Give leaders time to learn and personalize inclusion.
6. Expect executives to participate in the solution.
7. Assess the preferred leadership style in your organization and ensure it is gender-neutral.
8. Set a corporate policy that says your company will not sell products with advertising that sexualizes girls or is sexist in nature.
9. Require at least one man and one woman on succession plans.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Heavily Recruit Women to Ensure More Diverse Governance

Proposed Solutions

10. Increase female representation on boards of directors to a minimum of 30 percent.
11. Encourage outside board self-nomination and participation for high-potential women.
12. Require existing board members to sponsor a female leader.
13. Provide board competency training to women who are potential candidates.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Increase Cultural Consciousness

Proposed Solutions

14. Adopt a non-linear lattice career path approach to accommodate the new ways of working.
15. Foster non-competitive workplaces, allowing employees to seize the “anti-ladder.”
16. Teach collaboration.
17. Focus on individual talents and niches.
18. Promote an inclusion model for women that offers alternative paths to success.
19. Ensure all leaders are aware of and guard against well-intentioned, yet unconscious, bias.

20. Be careful of assumptions.
21. Replace embedded institutional mindsets.
22. Create productive work spaces depending on the preferences of the individual.
23. Ensure your hiring process is free of unconscious biases.
24. Include information regarding flexible options in the interviewing, hiring, and on-boarding process.
25. Use data and HR to monitor progress.
26. Create a maternity leave tool kit celebrating the occasion of a birth or adoption.
27. Ensure performance reviews are gender-neutral.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Choose Accountability

Proposed Solutions

28. Diagnose and track what really impacts women's success in your organization.
29. Find out why women are not reaching the upper levels in your organization.
30. Create and implement systems and tools that enable flexibility.
31. Clearly define competencies and behaviors necessary for success, ensuring gender-neutrality.
32. Conduct regular retention interviews of high-potential women.
33. Conduct engagement surveys and analyze the results based on gender at different levels of the organization.
34. Create actionable goals and metrics to create accountability.
35. Evaluate leaders on the achievement of strategic diversity goals and use data to measure progress.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Invest in Training and Education

Proposed Solutions

36. Promote the self-esteem and educational development of girls.
37. Participate in programs that advocate science and math careers for girls.
38. Promote opportunities for girls in typically male-dominated fields.
39. Make the criteria for success easily obtainable.
40. Make distance learning available to women who have chosen to slow down their careers.
41. Require continuing education to keep employees current and agile.
42. Have clear policies regarding participation in career advancement conferences.
43. Establish gender participation guidelines for leadership training.
44. Provide skill-building programs specifically for women.
45. Open exceptional corporate leadership training programs to outside individuals to promote best practices.

RECOMMENDATION 7**Create Connections In Support of Women****Proposed Solutions**

46. Educate both men and women on the differences between sponsoring and mentoring.
47. Facilitate support for professional women early in the career lifecycle.
48. Mandate executive sponsorship of women.
49. Create a forum for students to be paired with professional mentors prior to college graduation.
50. Construct networks, both external across industries, and internal to companies, to support women networking.
51. Create internal, open forums for women to network with other female professionals and leaders.
52. Give high-potential women access to executives and role models.
53. Invest in corporate memberships to prominent women's business groups.
54. Institute a funded Women's Network.
55. Develop a mother's mentoring program.

RECOMMENDATION 8**Help Working Parents Keep Children Safe and Supported While They Work****Proposed Solutions**

56. Document child care options close to the office, or offer on-site childcare.
57. Support education initiatives that foster business collaboration in education reform work.

RECOMMENDATION 9**Make Workplace Flexibility the Rule Rather than the Exception****Proposed Solutions**

58. Offer employees flexibility in work hours.
59. Encourage both men and women to take advantage of alternative work arrangements.
60. Find ways to mitigate the impact of flexible/alternative work arrangements on employees' careers.
61. Encourage senior leaders to use flexible or alternative arrangements.
62. Institutionalize the idea of a lattice career path for everyone.
63. Invert the traditional approval process by making managers get approval to deny an employee's request for a flexible/alternative schedule.
64. Offer a leave or sabbatical program that would entail continued interaction between the employee and the company.
65. Provide a donated bank of hours to be used for unpredictable family care emergencies.
66. Harness social technologies to foster flexibility.

RECOMMENDATION 10**Create More Effective Public Policy Solutions****Proposed Solutions**

67. Provide tax incentives to companies in which 30 percent of the directors serving on the board are women.
68. Promote best practices of states that offer tax incentives for flexible work practices in the workplace.
69. Leverage the public policy bully pulpit to get out the message that companies with increased female leadership enjoy financial advantages.
70. Raise the quality and availability of affordable child care and education to truly meet the needs of working women and their families.
71. Address the decreasing quality of American public schools and the impact on families.
72. Determine how school schedules can better align with work schedules.
73. Engage in a national dialogue on maternity leave practices.
74. Create a White House Council on Women and Girls blog category specific to women in leadership and how businesses can support them.
75. Task the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor with launching a "National Dialogue" on paid family leave.
76. Establish a campaign to promote a full agenda of policies that support working women.
77. Create and support educational programs on how schools can better prepare girls.
78. Support businesses that advocate for women's issues and don't discriminate against girls or women.

THE VIVA CWB ADVANCING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE PEER COLLABORATION

Who We Are

Bios



DEBORAH DEAN is currently vice president and general counsel-Americas for **Dassault Systèmes**, a multi-billion dollar global 3DEXPERIENCE software company headquartered in France. Previously, she was general counsel for MatrixOne, Inc., where she counseled other technology companies. Throughout her career, she has been committed to the development of women in the technology sector and is currently a member of the board of directors of WEST, an organization dedicated to advancing women in technology and science. Deborah received her B.A. from Wellesley College and J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law.



CORINA L. FISHER is the director of talent strategies for the group sales force within **MetLife**. She is responsible for providing strategic leadership in the development and execution of all talent and diversity initiatives to ensure MetLife attracts, develops, and retains a talented and diverse workforce. Previously, Corina was a senior business architecture consultant within MetLife responsible for leading initiatives to reduce complexity, lower operational spending and enhance customer satisfaction. Corina was also part of MetLife Human Resources for 10 years. She worked extensively in the areas of performance management, total rewards philosophy, management coaching and employee development. Corina received her B.A. in psychology from Lehigh University.



DR. LISA KAPLIN has a master's degree and doctorate in psychology. She is also a certified professional life coach. Lisa's company, **Smart Women Inspired Lives**, helps women who feel stuck in their personal or professional lives find their voice and reach their highest potential. Lisa is also a corporate trainer for American Management Association, Aetna, and others focusing on psychologically related topics such as communication, stress management, and women's assertiveness. Lisa is a married mother of three teenage children. After struggling with finding a healthy work/family balance, she has focused her career on helping other women to do the same.



EMILY KLEIN is the founder of **Flextime Global**, a consulting and training business that helps organizations achieve success by implementing workplace flexibility programs, strengthening virtual workplaces and building high performing teams. As an accomplished strategy consultant, Emily has developed strategic, performance and change management plans, conducted assessments, implemented process improvement initiatives and created education and training programs that have been highly regarded among executives and managers across the public and private sectors. As an author, Emily writes about telework, mobility strategy, collaborative tools, and workplace transformation. She holds a M.P.A. from the George Washington University School of Public Administration and Public Policy.

THE VIVA CWB ADVANCING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE PEER COLLABORATION

Who We Are

Bios



KAREN LINDER is Founder/CEO of **Linspiration, Inc.**, a company that supports entrepreneurship. She serves on the boards of directors of the Museum of Nebraska Art, KANEKO, and SkyVu Entertainment. Linder is a former faculty member of the University of Nebraska Medical Center where she founded the School of Cytotechnology. She also founded Heartland Pathology, Inc., and is past President of the American Society for Cytotechnology. She belongs to the Nebraska Angels and Women Investing in Nebraska groups. She has written numerous scientific journal articles and edited textbooks. In 2012, her business/biography book *The Women of Berkshire Hathaway* was published.



JULIE MADHUSOODANAN has a master's degree in computer science and has worked in the software industry for 15 years delivering products that have worldwide impact. She currently works at **Microsoft** and is deeply invested in diversity and inclusion activities inside and outside the company. In addition to raising her 11-month-old infant, she is involved in community projects, fitness activities and maintaining bonds with friends and family abroad. She attributes her accomplishments to date to the support of immediate family, excellent managers at work and a corporate culture that reflects the needs of the ever changing landscape of women in business.



MELANIE KADLIC MEREN arrived in Washington, D.C., in 2002 to improve education for American children. She has worked for the U.S. Department of Education and Office of Management and Budget, nonprofits and private companies. Melanie marries expertise in education and public policy with her ability to create organizational systems for education efforts. Upon starting her family in 2009, she founded her own consulting practice, **MKM Strategies**, to continue her education reform work while securing time for motherhood. Since then, she has integrated her passions for education, healthy living and motherhood to build a path for better living for American women and families. She authors *So Very Vienna*, a popular local blog, and supports her area's 400+ member moms group.

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Who We Are

Bios



CARLA MOLINA is a freelance writer and creative strategist. Carla, who studied philosophy at Northeastern University, was a student of corporate culture at MetLife Auto & Home in roles in underwriting and compliance. While there, she welcomed two daughters in two short years and left corporate America to pursue a career aligned with her values and lifestyle. Carla now uses her talents to advocate for the passions of small business entrepreneurs, writing and strategizing them into success. Personally, Carla focuses her time homeschooling her bilingual daughters, reading, watching TEDTalks and pretending not to pay attention while her husband watches Breaking Bad.



LISA AMAYA PRICE has been in the workforce since 1987 both as a human resources professional and educator. She is currently a director of talent acquisition programs at **Biogen Idec** in Boston, where she is responsible for university relations, onboarding, contingent workforce management, employer branding and recruitment operations. In 2011, Lisa co-founded Biogen Idec's Women's Innovation Network and helped launch the company's first Diversity & Inclusion function. Lisa received her M.B.A. in global management from the F.W. Olin School of Business at Babson College in 2005, and also holds an M.A. in Teaching from Simmons College in Boston.



LAURA ROCK has worked in human resources in the insurance industry for 20 years. She began her career as a benefits consultant in Chicago and has relocated her family twice during her career for promotional opportunities. She understands the difficulty of juggling a demanding, full-time career while raising two children. She travels frequently, has obtained numerous professional designations and her master's degree while working, stays involved in the community and runs marathons. None of this would have been possible without the assistance of her husband, extended family and, equally as important, supportive managers and corporate cultures. Laura is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and received her M.S.M. from The American College.



LAURA ROSSI TOTTON is a public relations expert and social media strategist with more than two decades of experience. In New York City, she ran publicity campaigns for celebrity/bestselling authors at Random House, Bantam Doubleday Dell, Viking Penguin and W.W. Norton. Today, Laura runs **Laura Rossi Public Relations**, a full-service public relations agency. A blogger, published author, and entrepreneur, Laura is a regular contributor to The Huffington Post and has been featured on local NPR, in The Chronicle of Higher Education, and other outlets. Laura is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and an honors graduate of the University of Connecticut. She lives with her husband and twins in New England.

Bentley University Center for Women and Business

Partners

Bentley University's Center for Women and Business in Waltham, Massachusetts, is dedicated to supporting, retaining and promoting women in business. As the source of practical, effective solutions, the Center addresses challenges posed by a multicultural, multigenerational workplace in which women comprise an increasingly larger segment. The Center shares innovative research and real world insights that foster the development of an inclusive work environment through resources, workshops and events where thought leaders and business professionals can share best practices.



BETSY MYERS is the founding director of Bentley University's Center for Women and Business. Her book—*Take the Lead*—provides leadership observations and advice based on her rich experiences in public service and business. Betsy was a senior adviser to Barack Obama's presidential campaign, as COO and as chair of Women for Obama. Prior to the campaign, Betsy served as executive director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where she focused the center's teaching and research around personal leadership and the fully integrated person.

During the Clinton Administration, Betsy was the President's senior adviser on women's issues. She launched and was the first director of the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, served as the associate deputy administrator for Entrepreneurial Development in the U.S. Small Business Administration and was the director of the Office of Women's Business Ownership at the SBA. Prior to joining the Clinton Administration, Myers spent six years building Myers Insurance and Financial Services, based in Los Angeles. She specialized in the small business and women's market providing insurance and retirement planning.

Betsy received her B.B.A degree from the University of San Diego, and a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School, where she was a Public Service Fellow.



SUSAN M. ADAMS, Ph.D., combines her career passions for teaching, research, and consulting in her current position as current position as a Professor of Management and Senior Director of Bentley University's Center for Women and Business. Before coming to Bentley in 1994, she taught a variety of management classes at the University of California-Irvine's Graduate School of Management and Chapman University.

With more than 70 publishing credits to her name, Susan regularly writes in leading academic and practitioner journals, focusing on professional advancement and organizational effectiveness. Her academic insights, shared in and out of classrooms of undergraduates, M.B.A.s, Ph.D.s and executives, are enhanced by her consulting work with over 80 clients. She has served on and chaired boards of companies and non-profit organizations.

Susan is a former Chair of the Management Consulting and Careers Divisions of the Academy of Management and a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society of Human Resource Managers. She earned a B.S. Ed. in mathematics from the University of Georgia, an M.S. Ed in mathematics from Georgia State University and a Ph.D. in management from Georgia Institute of Technology.



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About the Center

The Center for Women and Business is focused on helping women reach their full potential in the workplace and helping corporations engage the full potential of talented women leaders.

Our research and programs provide a roadmap for organizations and individuals alike to move this critical conversation forward. We all know what the problems are. It is time to share solutions.

Our goal is to share what is working for companies to advance women and to identify new ways to address the long-standing challenges.

The Idea Exchange remains accessible to anyone who wants to register online. You are invited to join the Idea Exchange to view all the comments and to post your own.

- ▲ Idea Exchange: <http://bit.ly/CWBIdeas>
- ▲ To stay informed about Center research and events, register for the CWB newsletter: <http://cwb.bentley.edu>
- ▲ For more information about the Idea Exchange or other CWB research, contact Susan Adams sadams@bentley.edu



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