Helping women thrive in your company

Why are so few women represented in corporate leadership today, and how can companies attract, cultivate and retain female talent?

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Michelle, a financial analyst at a leading multinational, thought she was doing everything right. During her 10 years with the company, she had worked to develop her leadership skills, received excellent performance evaluations and let management know she was interested in

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advancement opportunities. Despite this, she kept being passed over for more senior roles. Frustrated, she wondered if she would forever be stuck in a professional holding pattern.

Unfortunately, Michelle's situation is far from unique. Even though half of middle management positions are held by women, most will remain there, mired in the middle. In S&P 500 firms, a quarter may ascend to senior management positions, while only around 20 percent will serve on corporate boards. An even more telling testament to the scarcity of female leadership is that less than 5 percent of Fortune 500 companies have a woman as CEO.

The debate over the obstacles and inequalities that women face in the workplace is not new. So why is it taking so long for gender parity to go from a talking point to corporate reality?

This article will suggest some of the steps that are necessary to ensure that women become better represented in companies today. As research shows, global organizations can reap numerous benefits by encouraging a more diverse, more gender-balanced workforce. As markets become increasingly competitive and globalized, and with women driving an estimated 70-80 percent of consumer purchasing, bringing more female talent to the table becomes vital for survival – not to mention it being a matter of fairness and human values.

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