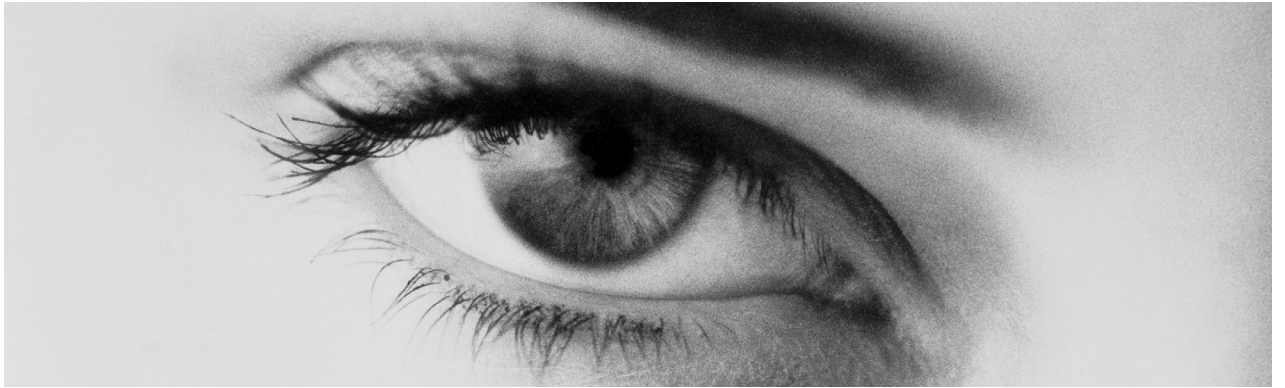


Women Matter 2010



# Women at the top of corporations: Making it happen



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# Abstract

*Women Matter 2010* is the fourth in the series of McKinsey & Company's *Women Matter* research projects assessing if and how women leaders contribute to companies' performance. In 2010, the *Women Matter* study shows that although a majority of leaders recognize the impact of gender diversity on business performance, this belief does not translate into actions. Indeed, gender diversity is not high on companies' strategic agenda and the implementation of dedicated programs remains limited overall. The 2010 *Women Matter* study also reveals that some measures tend to be more effective than others in increasing gender diversity in top management, in particular CEO commitment and women's individual development programs. The lessons of this study clearly indicate a way forward to an effective gender-diversity ecosystem in corporations.

# Introduction

In 2007, McKinsey & Company published *Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*. This report demonstrated a link between a company's performance and the proportion of women serving in its governing body. In *Women Matter 2*, published in 2008, we identified the reasons for this performance effect by examining the leadership styles that women leaders typically adopt. In 2009, we conducted a survey of about 800 business leaders worldwide which confirmed that certain leadership behaviors typically adopted by women are critical to perform well in the post-crisis world. Where are we in 2010 in terms of gender diversity at the top of corporations?

The 2010 *Women Matter* report confirms that women are still underrepresented in boards of corporations, although improvements have been seen in this area in some countries. At the same time, gender diversity within executive committees remains very low.

And yet gender diversity in the top management of corporations remains a key topic: three years after the first *Women Matter* study, the link between the presence of women in executive committees and better financial performance is still valid.

The 2010 *Women Matter* study provides a focused analysis on how to achieve gender diversity at top management level. Its findings are partly based on a survey we conducted in September 2010 of about 1,500 business leaders worldwide across all industries, from middle managers to CEOs. The survey concretely reveals that a majority of leaders, both men and women, now recognize gender diversity as a performance driver, while also showing that actual implementation of gender-diversity measures in corporations remains limited.

This is not surprising as the achievement of gender diversity is not at the top of – nor even on – companies' strategic agenda: only 28 percent of respondents identified this as a top-10 priority in their company. This is a concern, as the new McKinsey study shows a link between having gender diversity as a top priority and achieving women representation in C-level positions (CEO, COO, CFO, etc.). Moreover, the companies that have placed this topic high on their strategic agenda implement on average more gender-diversity measures. The study finally identifies those measures that tend to be more effective in increasing women representation, highlighting in particular the impact of CEO commitment and women's individual development programs.

Looking forward therefore, the findings of the 2010 *Women Matter* study should help clarify priorities for those companies that want to achieve gender diversity in their top management.

# Too few women in corporations' top management: a persistent reality in 2010

In 2007, McKinsey's first *Women Matter* study highlighted the underrepresentation of women in European companies' top management. The 2007 study also provided a factual basis demonstrating the link between the number of women in a company's governing body and its organizational and financial performance. In 2010, the situation is largely unchanged, in particular in executive committees.

## *In 2010, women are still underrepresented in corporate boards and barely present in executive committees*

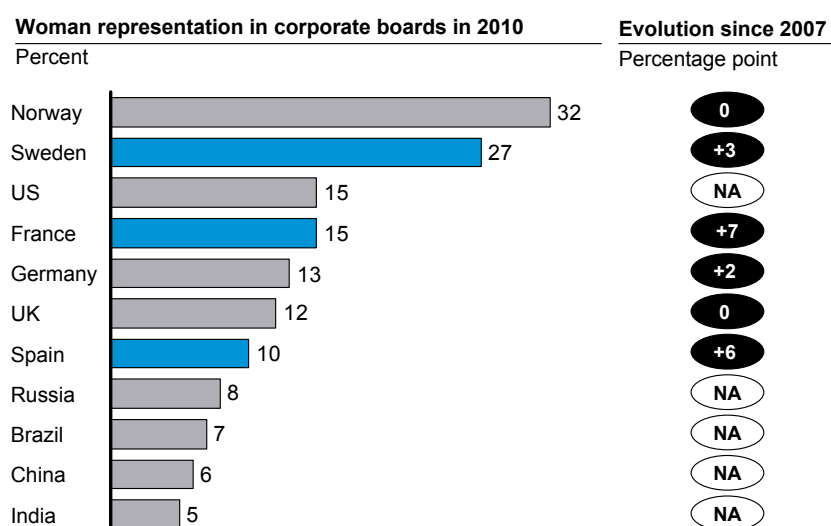
McKinsey developed a proprietary database<sup>1</sup> composed of 441 companies from the local reference

stock index of six European countries (Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, UK, Spain) and the BRIC countries. We analyzed the composition of their boards, one by one. The results show that women are still underrepresented at board level, despite some improvements in a few countries. This is consistent with the US results<sup>2</sup> (*Exhibit 1*).

The situation varies greatly from one country to another: in Norway, women represent 32 percent of board members, against 15 percent in the United States, 13 percent in Germany and 5 percent in India. Gender diversity in boards remains generally higher in Northern Europe and lower in BRIC countries. However, even leaders, like Norway and Sweden, have not achieved gender parity.

### Exhibit 1

**In 2010, women are still underrepresented in boards of corporations, although improvement has been seen in some countries**



Notes: Proprietary database: 441 companies from the local reference index: Norway (OBX – 25), Sweden (OMXS – 29), France (CAC 40), Germany (DAX 29), Spain (IBX 35), Russia (RTSI 50), Brazil (Bovespa 52), China (SSE50), India (Sensex 30). For the UK, data from the Cranfield University "The Female FTSE Board Report 2009" (FTSE 100)

Source: McKinsey proprietary database, 2010; US: Catalyst, 2009 *Catalyst census*, Fortune 500 *Women Board Directors* (2009)

<sup>1</sup> Proprietary database, McKinsey, 2010; 441 companies: Norway (OBX – 25), Sweden (OMXS – 29), France (CAC 40), Germany (DAX 29), Spain (IBX 35), Russia (RTSI 50), Brazil (Bovespa 52), China (SSE50), India (Sensex 30). For the UK, the data is coming from the report from the Cranfield University "The Female FTSE Board Report 2009" (FTSE 100). For the analysis on executive committees we excluded 79 companies for which the executive committee composition was not disclosed.

<sup>2</sup> For the US: data coming from the Catalyst reports on Fortune 500 companies, 2009.

We were able to look closer at the 362 companies within the sample that publish the composition of their executive committee and identified one by one the

number of female members. This examination reveals very low levels of gender diversity, well below that of boards (*Exhibit 2*).

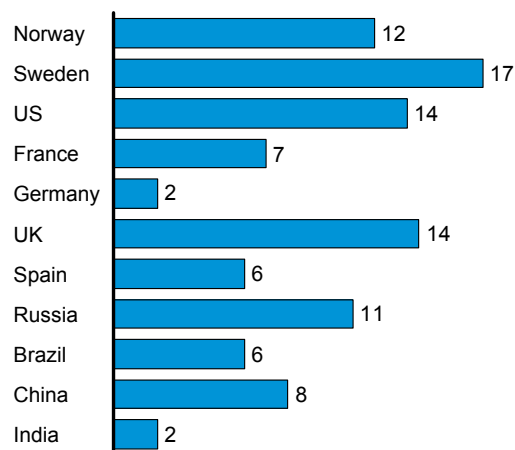
**Exhibit 2**

**Gender diversity in executive committees remains very low**

---

Percent

**Woman representation in executive committees of corporations in 2010**



Notes: Proprietary database; selection of the 362 companies which disclose their executive committee members within the local reference stock index: Norway (OBX – 25), Sweden (OMXS – 29), France (CAC 40), Germany (DAX 29), Spain (IBX 35), Russia (RTSI 50), Brazil (Bovespa 52), China (SSE50), India (Sensex 30). For the UK, data from the Cranfield University “The Female FTSE Board Report 2009” (FTSE 100)  
Source: McKinsey proprietary database, 2010; US: Catalyst, 2009 Catalyst census, Fortune 500 Women Executive Officers and Top Earners (2009)

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One interesting detail revealed in this examination is that the representation of women in corporate governing bodies varies by industry (*Exhibit 3*). For example, the consumer goods and retail sector has more women both in the boards of companies (16 percent) and in their executive committees (12 percent). Transportation, logistics and tourism as well as real estate and infrastructure are lagging behind, with women respectively representing 9 and 6 percent of boards and 9 and 8 percent of executive committees in these sectors.

***Changing the promotion system is critical as the increasing number of women graduates will not be sufficient to close the gender gap in top management***

Against common wisdom, the increase in the number of female university graduates will not by itself be sufficient to close the gender gap in top management positions. The projection of historic trends demonstrates that unless prevailing corporate norms and rules for promotion are changed, the growth in female graduate numbers will have a marginal impact on women's representation in executive committees (*Exhibit 4*).

**Exhibit 3**

**Gender diversity in top management varies by industry**

2010	Women in boards Percent	Number of companies	Women in executive committees Percent	Number of companies
Consumer goods and retail	16	41	12	41
Telecom, media and entertainment	16	30	11	28
Finance, insurance and professional services	15	68	11	66
Science and technology	14	14	13	13
Healthcare	13	9	8	8
Diversified Industries	10	81	6	75
Energy, basic materials and environment	10	96	7	92
Transportation, logistics and tourism	9	18	9	18
Real estate and infrastructure	6	14	8	13

Notes: Proprietary database; 441 companies within the local reference index: Norway (OBX – 25), Sweden (OMXS – 29), France (CAC 40), Germany (DAX 29), Spain (IBX 35), Russia (RTSI 50), Brazil (Bovespa 52), China (SSE50), India (Sensex 30). For the UK, data from the Cranfield University "The Female FTSE Board Report 2009" (FTSE 100). For executive committees: selection of the 362 companies which disclose their executive committee members

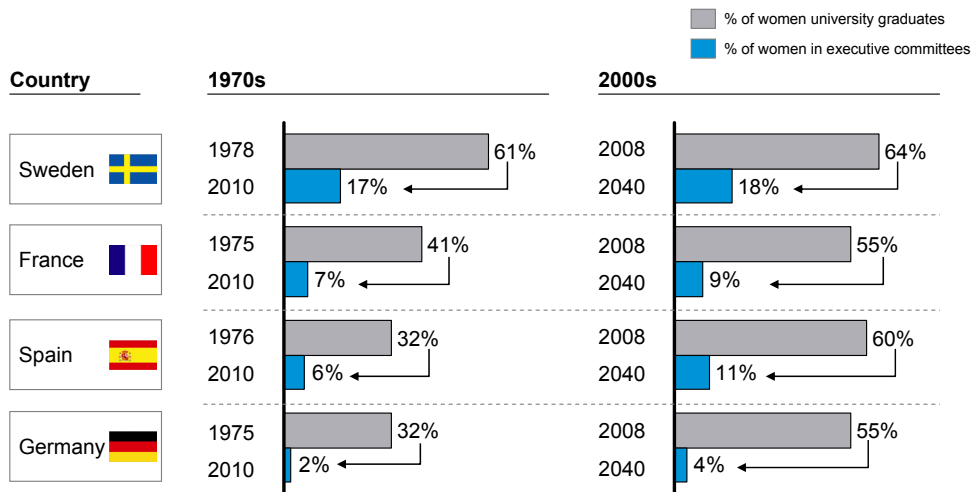
Source: McKinsey proprietary database, 2010



**Exhibit 4**

Changing the promotion system is critical as the increasing number of women graduates will not be sufficient to close the gender gap in top management

**Women university graduates vs. women in executive committees – 1970s, 2000s, projection for 2040**



Notes: Women graduates are defined as those with the equivalent of a master's degree (Types 5 and 6 in the ISCED methodology); French equivalent: university degrees Bac + 4; executive committee statistics based on McKinsey proprietary database 2010; 2040 extrapolations based on 1975-2008 trends  
 Source: OECD; National statistics; McKinsey proprietary database

### Women continue to face many barriers on their way to the top

One of the reasons that change has been slow in coming are the persisting barriers women face on their way to the top. Our 2010 *Women Matter* survey of about 1,500 executives, across multiple industries and regions of the world, from middle managers to CEOs, identified two main barriers to gender diversity in top management (*Exhibit 5*).

The first one is the “double burden” syndrome – the combination of work and domestic responsibilities – which is difficult to reconcile with the second barrier: the “anytime, anywhere” performance model.

According to the many interviews of female top executives that McKinsey conducted over the past four years around the world, the issue of the double burden – which is currently inherent in most models of society – and its incompatibility with the demands associated with senior management remains onerous. The dominant

model in the business world (or the one perceived as such) seems to demand total availability as well as greater geographical mobility (“anytime, anywhere”).

Both male and female leaders more frequently quote these two barriers as the biggest ones preventing the advancement of women. Interestingly, women respondents identified a third important barrier: the reticence of many women to advocate for themselves.

### Companies with more women in their executive committees have better financial performance, confirming the case for change

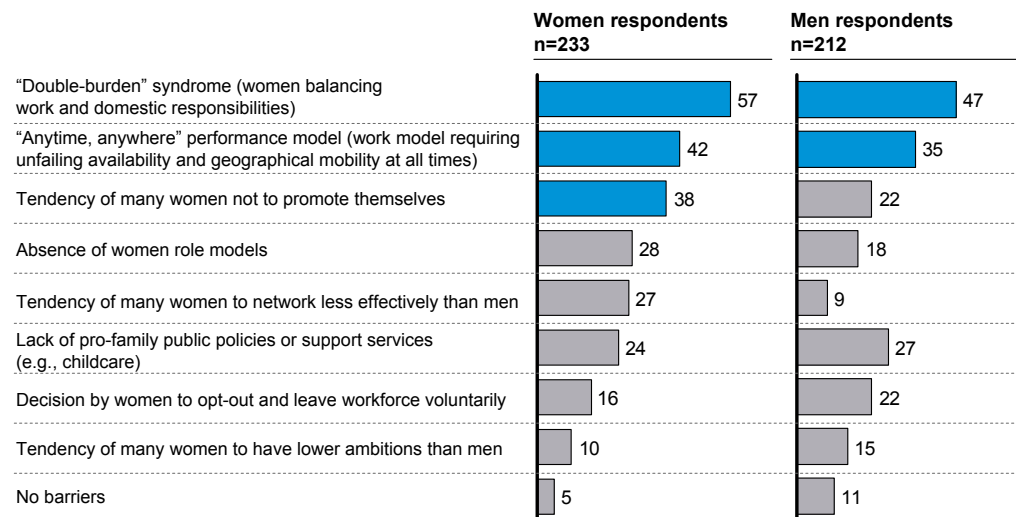
Change is not really happening in corporations’ governing bodies. And yet gender diversity at the top of corporations remains a critical topic. Three years after the first *Women Matter* study, which established the link between gender diversity in the top management

#### Exhibit 5

##### Women continue to face multiple barriers on their way to the top

**In your opinion, what are the biggest barriers, if any, to increasing gender diversity within the top management of corporations?**

Percent, Total respondents = 445 ; C-level respondents only



Note: The chart does not include the respondents who selected “don’t know”

Source: 2010 *Women Matter* global survey, September 2010

positions of a company and its performance, the *Women Matter 2010* research reassesses this link, focusing on executive committees and extending geographies outside Europe to the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China).

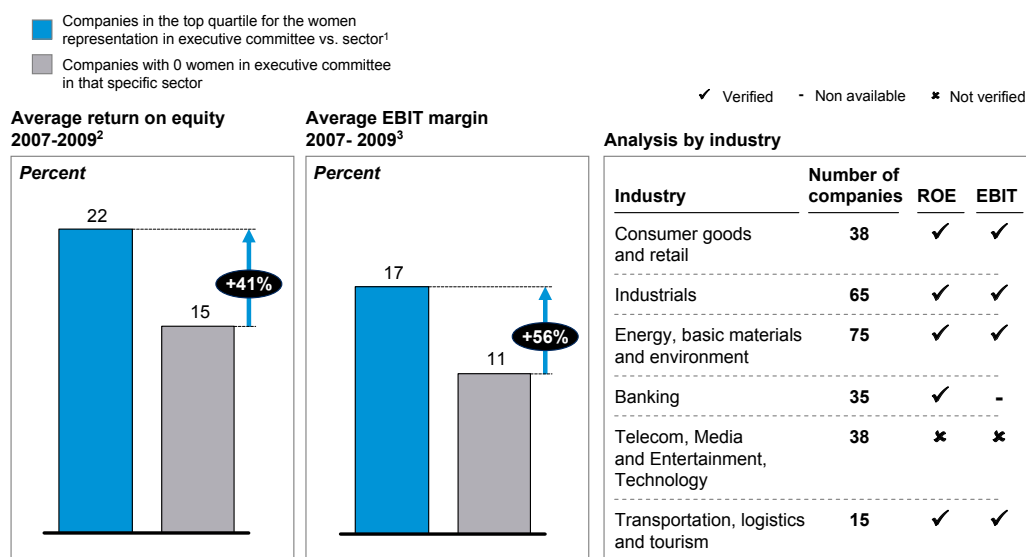
Using our proprietary database, we identified, industry by industry, the top-quartile companies in terms of share of women in executive committees<sup>3</sup>. In each sector, we then compared the financial performance of this top-quartile group with companies with all-male executive committees. Companies with the highest share of women outperform companies with no women. In terms of return on equity, the top-quartile group exceeds by 41 percent the group with no women (22 vs. 15 percent), and in terms of operating results, the more gender-diverse companies exceeds by 56 percent the group with no women (17 vs. 11 percent) (*Exhibit 6*).

What conclusions should we draw? This statistically significant analysis confirms that companies with a higher proportion of women in their executive committees are also the companies that have the best performance. While this link does not demonstrate causality, it does provide a strong factual basis to continue to argue in favor of greater gender diversity in corporate top management.

What could explain such a positive performance gap? We found part of the answer resting with the way women exercise leadership. The 2008 *Women Matter* study<sup>4</sup> demonstrated that some leadership behaviors, observed more frequently among women than among men, have a positive impact on a company's organizational performance. Ultimately, this study highlighted that the complementarity and diversity of leadership styles make a difference on companies' performance.

**Exhibit 6**

**Companies with a higher proportion of women in their executive committees have better financial performance**



<sup>1</sup> Top quartile: 25% of the companies of the sector with the highest share of women in the executive committee  
<sup>2</sup> ROE: Average calculated on 2007-2009 period for 279 companies  
<sup>3</sup> EBIT: Sample of 231 companies; Banks, Insurance and financial services have been excluded;  
 Note: Scope: 6 European countries (UK, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Norway) and the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China)  
 Source: Corporate Websites; Datastream; McKinsey analysis

<sup>3</sup> Proprietary database, McKinsey, 2010; we excluded 83 companies that don't disclose their financial information over the 2007-2009 period.

<sup>4</sup> *Women Matter 2: Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future*, McKinsey & Company, September 2008.

# How to achieve gender diversity at the top of corporations?

The persistence of the gender-diversity gap in corporate top management coupled with the strong business reasons for closing the gap, led us to focus our 2010 study on how to best and most effectively increase women's participation in top management. The *Women Matter 2010* survey reveals that both men and women leaders recognize the importance of gender diversity but that the implementation of specific measures in corporations remains limited. The survey provides new insights on how to make change happen, in particular highlighting the importance of CEO commitment and women's individual development programs among all other gender-diversity initiatives.

link between the presence of a significant number of women in a corporation's leadership team and its financial performance. With a majority of men and women convinced – and in particular 62 percent of men and 90 percent of women at the C-level, these results reflect a positive mindset on the gender-diversity topic (*Exhibit 7*). However, the response also highlights a gap between the conviction of men versus women, as well as differences according to levels of seniority: indeed, C-levels are more convinced than middle managers (e.g., male middle managers lag behind, with only 50 percent of the respondents convinced).

## Most executives recognize the positive impact of gender diversity on company performance

The *Women Matter 2010* survey reveals that a majority of leaders, both men and women, now recognize gender diversity in top management as a performance driver. We asked company executives at different seniority levels whether they were convinced of the

## However, this belief does not translate into action

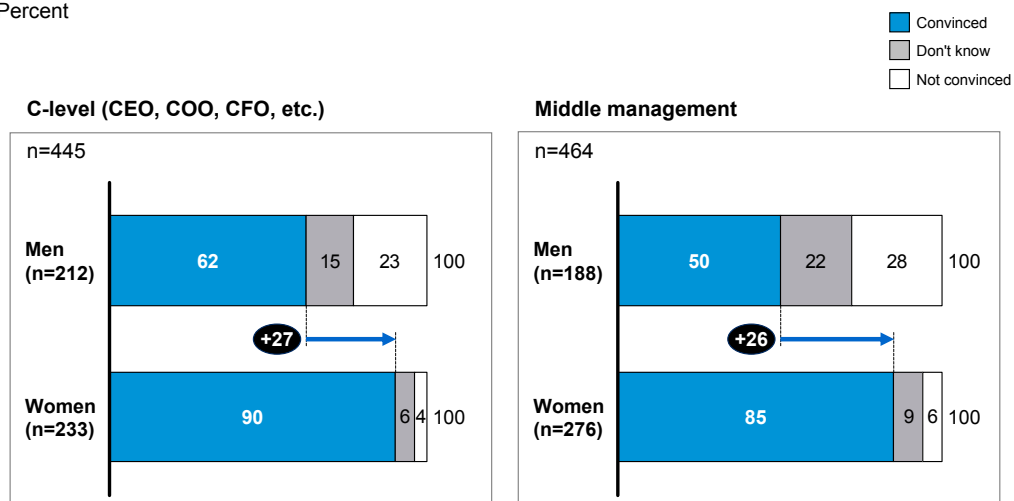
The many discussions conducted by McKinsey in the past four years with the leaders of companies strongly committed to gender diversity enabled us to identify thirteen measures more commonly implemented (see sidebar: *13 gender diversity-measures identified by McKinsey & Company*). The 2010 *Women Matter* study shows that the actual implementation of these

### Exhibit 7

Most executives recognize the impact of gender diversity on financial performance, but more women than men and more C-levels than middle managers

**Much research has shown that companies with diverse leadership teams that include significant numbers of women generate higher financial returns. Do you believe this to be true?**

Percent



Source: 2010 *Women Matter* global survey, September 2010

*“ Making gender diversity part of your strategy or your values is very critical. A company that does not have that in its DNA will certainly have difficulties achieving diversity at senior levels. ”*

CEO of a global medical and healthcare company

### *13 gender-diversity measures identified by McKinsey & Company*

- Options for flexible working conditions (e.g., part-time programs) and or locations (e.g., telecommuting)
- Visible monitoring by the CEO and the executive team of the progress in gender-diversity programs
- Programs to encourage female networking and role models
- Support programs and facilities to help reconcile work and family life (e.g., childcare, spouse relocation)
- Encouragement or mandates for senior executives to mentor junior women
- Inclusion of gender-diversity indicators in executives' performance reviews
- Skill-building programs aimed specifically at women
- Performance evaluation systems that neutralize the impact of parental leaves and or flexible work arrangements
- Indicators of the company's performance in hiring, retaining, promoting, and developing women
- Gender-specific hiring goals and programs
- Programs to smooth transitions before, during, and after parental leaves
- Systematic requirement that at least one female candidate be in each promotion pool
- Gender quotas in hiring, retaining, promoting, or developing women

*Notes: These 13 measures have been identified through the discussions that McKinsey conducted with hundreds of company leaders in the past four years*

measures in corporations remains limited: 32 percent of companies have not implemented any specific measure, and only 30 percent have implemented four measures or more. Interestingly, the share of companies implementing measures is even lower for smaller companies (*Exhibit 8*).

***When gender diversity is at the top of the strategic agenda, there are more actions taken and more women at the C-level***

This low degree of implementation of gender-diversity measures in corporations is not surprising as the 2010 *Women Matter* survey reveals that this topic is not at

the top of – nor even on – most companies' strategic agenda. According to over 1,500 respondents, gender diversity is a top-10 priority for only 28 percent of companies. Even more striking, for 33 percent of the companies, the topic is not on the strategic agenda at all (*Exhibit 9*).

This is all the more a concern since the survey also shows that companies where gender diversity is at the top of the strategic agenda implement more measures and have more women at the C-level (*Exhibit 10*).

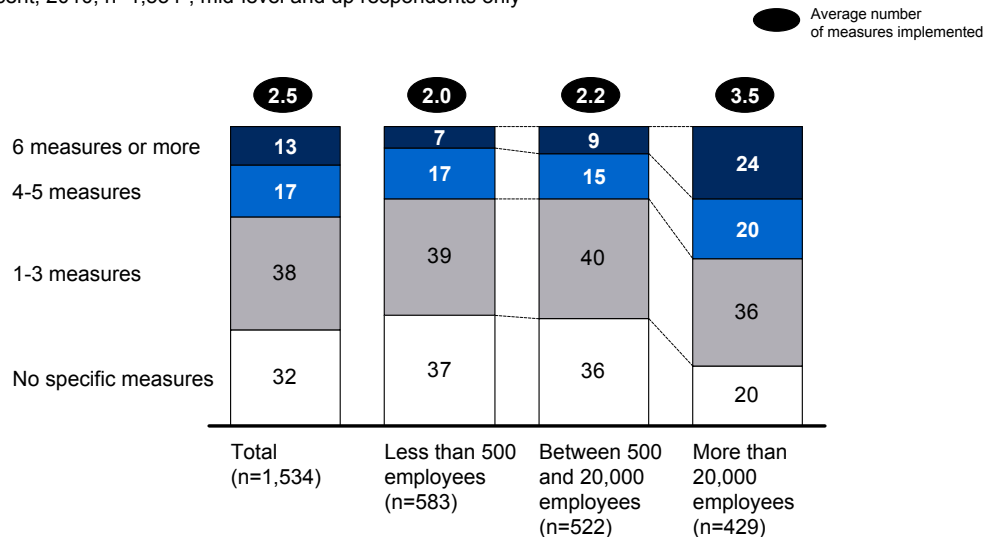
Comparing the answers of C-level respondents depending on the strategic importance of gender diversity in their companies, we noticed that among

**Exhibit 8**

**Implementation of gender-diversity measures remains low, and even lower for small-size companies**

**Number of measures undertaken in the past five years to recruit, retain, promote and develop women**

Percent, 2010, n=1,534<sup>1</sup>, mid-level and up respondents only



<sup>1</sup> Does not include the respondents who did not know which measures were implemented in their companies  
Source: 2010 *Women Matter* global survey, September 2010

*“You have to over-correct for the gender-diversity gap and create lots of programs if you want to reach a balance.”*

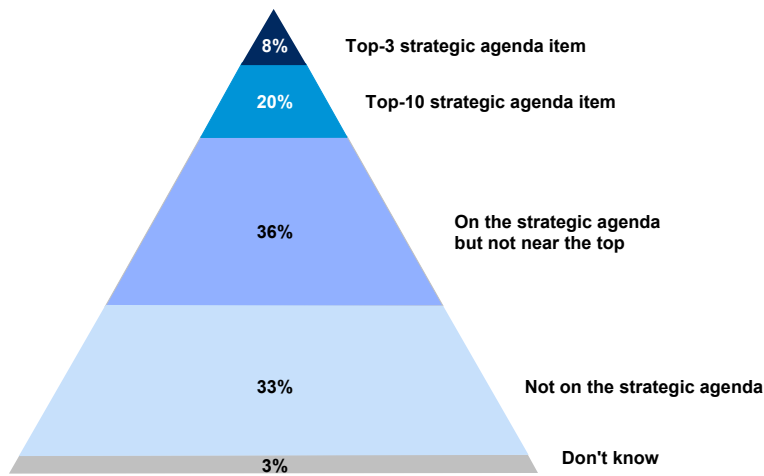
President, Global Sales Operations, of a High-Tech company

**Exhibit 9**

**Only 28% of companies designate gender diversity as a top strategic priority**

*In recent years, many companies have undertaken measures to increase gender diversity in leadership. How important is gender diversity on your company strategic agenda?*

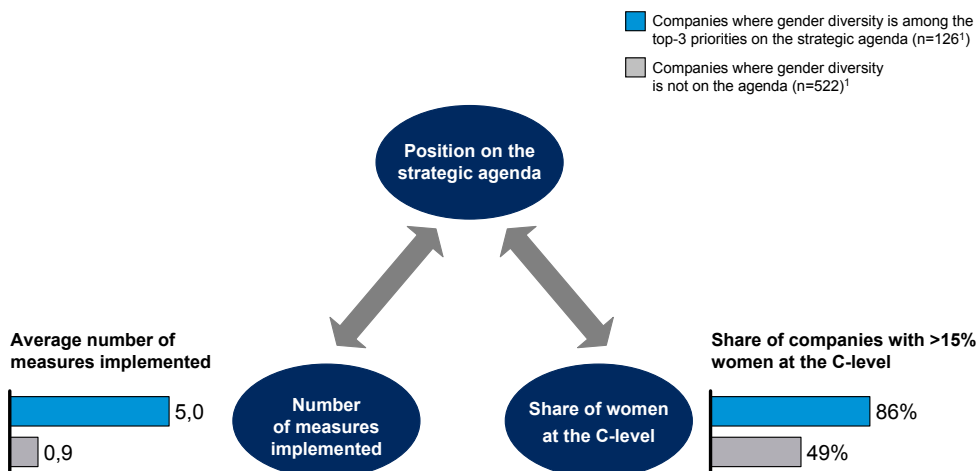
Percent, total respondents = 1,560; mid-level and up respondents only



Source: 2010 *Women Matter* global survey, September 2010

**Exhibit 10**

**Companies where gender diversity is at the top of the strategic agenda implement more measures and have more women at the C-level**



<sup>1</sup> For the share of companies with more than 15% women at the C-level, the sample has been reduced to 124 for companies where it is not on the agenda and 36 respondents for companies where it is in the top-3 priorities

Source: 2010 *Women Matter* global survey, September 2010

companies which have gender diversity as a top-3 strategic priority, 86 percent have more than 15 percent women at the C-level. This number goes down to 49 percent when gender diversity is not on the strategic agenda (Exhibit 11).

At the same time, companies with gender diversity as a top-3 strategic priority implement on average 5 measures, while companies without it as a priority implement fewer than 1 on average (Exhibit 12).

In addition, 58 percent of the respondents who work in companies where gender diversity is not on the strategic agenda declare that no specific measure to increase

the share of women at the top has been undertaken in the past 5 years (versus 4 percent when it is a top-3 priority).

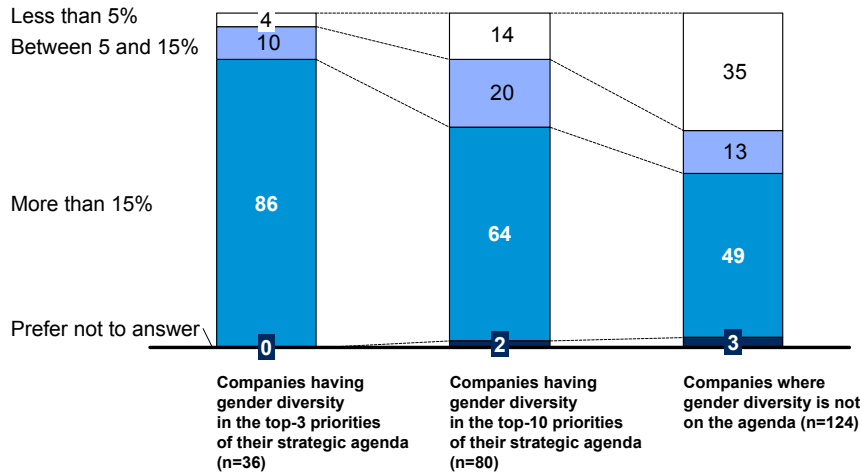
Finally, the survey highlights that, except for “Options for flexible working conditions”, the most implemented measures vary depending on the importance of gender diversity on the strategic agenda. In particular, “Visible monitoring by the CEO” is hardly implemented by companies where gender diversity is not on the strategic agenda (2 percent) while it is the second-most implemented measure when gender diversity is a top-3 priority (Exhibit 13).

**Exhibit 11**

**Companies with gender diversity at the top of their strategic agenda have more women in their top management**

**What is the percentage of women at your level of seniority in your BU?**

Percent, Total respondents= 359<sup>1</sup>, C-level respondents



Note: The chart does not include the respondents who selected “don’t know” or “on the agenda but not near the top” to the question on the strategic agenda  
 1 Does not include respondents who selected “don’t know” or “prefer not to answer” to the question: *Do you know the percentage of women at your level of seniority in your BU?*

Source: 2010 Women Matter global survey, September 2010

*“I measure the progress of gender diversity looking at the number and percentage of women assigned to senior operational roles like country manager or general manager.”*

President, Europe group, of a Food and Beverage company

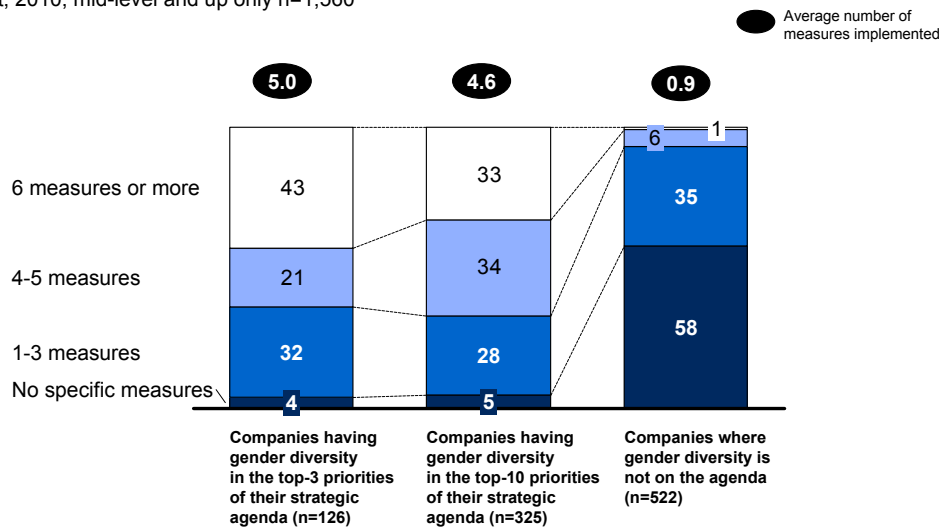


**Exhibit 12**

**Companies with gender diversity at the top of their strategic agenda implement more measures**

**Number of measures undertaken in the past five years to recruit, retain, promote and develop women**

Percent, 2010; mid-level and up only n=1,560



Note: The chart does not include the respondents who selected "don't know" or "on the agenda but not near the top" to the question on the strategic agenda, as well as the respondents who did not know which measures were implemented in their companies

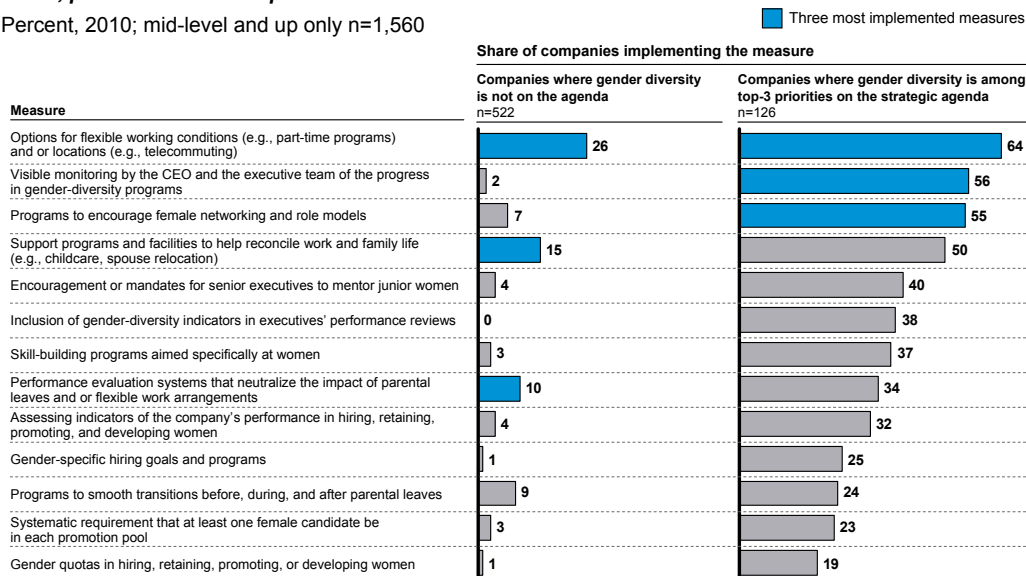
Source: 2010 Women Matter global survey, September 2010

**Exhibit 13**

**The most implemented measures vary depending on the importance of gender diversity on the strategic agenda, except for the first one**

**Over the past 5 years, which specific measures, if any, has your company undertaken to recruit, retain, promote and develop women?**

Percent, 2010; mid-level and up only n=1,560



Note: The chart does not include the respondents who selected "don't know", "in the top-10 priorities of the strategic agenda" or "on the agenda but not near the top" to the question on the strategic agenda, as well as the respondents who did not know which measures were implemented in their companies

Source: 2010 Women Matter global survey, September 2010

***CEO commitment and women's individual development are at the heart of an effective gender-diversity ecosystem***

What measures should companies focus on to increase women representation at the top? In order to assess the most effective gender-diversity measures among the many, we divided our survey sample into two groups for each identified measure: companies that have implemented the designated measure, and companies that have not. We then looked at each group to find the proportion of companies with a C-level constituted of more than 15 percent women. The difference between these two figures gives us an index that we used as an indicator of the effect of the measure on women representation at the top. For example, 22 represents the additional share of companies with more than 15% women at the C-level when comparing companies that have implemented "Visible monitoring by the CEO of gender-diversity measures" versus those that have not (*Exhibit 14*).

The *Women Matter 2010* survey reveals a significant difference in effect between the gender-diversity measures: the most effective measures are CEO commitment and women's development programs. In particular, the first three measures that come out as having more effect on women representation at the top are: 1) Visible monitoring by the CEO and the executive team of the progress in gender-diversity programs; 2) Skill-building programs aimed specifically at women; 3) Encouragement or mandates for senior executives to mentor junior women. Five other measures are critical enablers (indicators, processes, infrastructure) for companies to achieve gender-diversity aspirations. Among the effective enablers, "Performance evaluation systems that neutralize the impact of parental leaves and/or flexible work arrangements" comes out as very effective.

Building on these findings and on hundreds of CEO and top-executive interviews, we developed a vision of what an ideal gender-diversity ecosystem should look like (see sidebar: "*The ideal gender-diversity ecosystem*").

*“Organizations are learning from the behavior of their top people much more than from manuals or internal newsletters. So, it's really about “walking the talk”.”*

CEO of a Transportation and Logistics company

*“Most important is senior management commitment to this objective, followed up by a series of metrics that measure progress and structured initiatives to achieve the goals.”*

Chief Executive of a financial institution

The CEO remains the first and ultimate pillar of this ecosystem. As one CEO of a major global company in the medical & healthcare industry said:

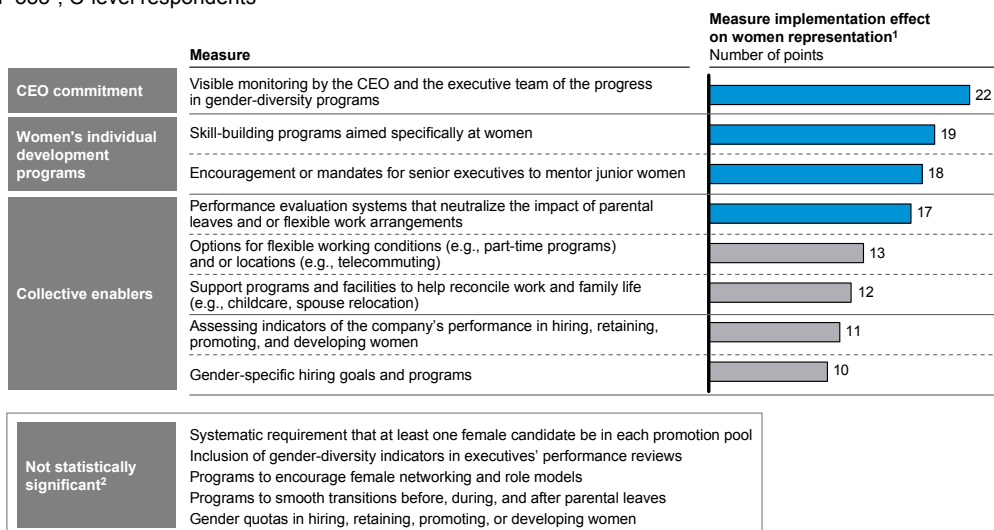
*“The commitment of the CEO is absolutely critical. It reflects the commitment of the company; it reflects the strategy of the company. If you have the strategy of the company, if you want the commitment of the*

*company, the CEO must be personally committed. He must be present in the situations where people talk about gender diversity. He must be committed in forcing gender diversity in promotion slates. He must be present in the coaching of talent. So I think it’s absolutely critical that the CEO plays a fundamental and central role in promoting and driving gender diversity in the company.”*

**Exhibit 14**

**The most effective measures promoting gender diversity focus on women’s development and appraisal**

n=355<sup>3</sup>, C-level respondents



<sup>1</sup> Difference between the proportion of companies with more than 15% women at the C-level depending on whether the measure is implemented or not

<sup>2</sup> Chi square >0.05

<sup>3</sup> Does not include respondents who didn’t know which measures were implemented in their company or who didn’t know / preferred not to answer the question about the percentage of women at their level of seniority

Source: 2010 Women Matter global survey, September 2010

## *The ideal gender-diversity ecosystem*

The many discussions conducted by McKinsey with the leaders of companies strongly committed to gender diversity enabled us to identify a set of best practices to develop women leaders. We have grouped these practices into three levers, in order to frame the ideal gender-diversity ecosystem.

### **CEO commitment**

The introduction of a gender-diversity policy is often like a cultural revolution and requires full and visible commitment of the CEO to drive the changes. Building a truly gender-diverse company, which supports the development and the promotion of women at the highest levels, can only succeed with the support of the top management. Positive practices stand little chance of developing fully if senior management does not commit to changing the culture of the organization under the sponsorship of the CEO. Our 2010 survey confirms that close attention of the CEO and the executive team to indicators of progress and visible commitment in managing gender-diversity programs are the most important drivers to increase the number of women at the top of corporations.

### **Women's individual development programs**

As shown by the *Women Matter 2010* survey, the individual development of women is at the heart of an effective gender-diversity ecosystem.

These programs primarily focus on helping women overcome the barriers they face on their way to the top. For example, as highlighted in our survey, 38 percent of women respondents consider as the third main barrier “a tendency of many women not to promote themselves”. Companies that are leaders in gender diversity have implemented very effective training, coaching and mentoring programs to help women become aware of their potential and manage their careers in a predominantly masculine environment. Setting up women's networks also increases women's awareness of this important lever for career progression, while simultaneously raising the profile of women leaders in an organization. It is also an essential step to help young women identify with role models. Such initiatives often deliver outstanding results in terms of retaining and expanding the pool of female talent in companies, provided that the CEO is committed.

### **Collective enablers**

This critical individual development of women has to be supported by collective enablers, which are not necessarily gender-specific.

- The first set of enablers comprises the implementation of indicators of gender diversity in order to identify inequalities and gaps, and to measure progress

This is a prerequisite to create transparency. The initial step is a diagnostic to measure the size of the gaps to address within the organization (identify the proportion of women in the various businesses, activities, functions, and geographies of the company, at different levels, and among its new hires; measure the discrepancies in pay and in turnover between men and women in comparable positions; calculate the ratio of women promoted as a proportion of those eligible for promotion, measure women's satisfaction compared to men's). After completing the diagnostic, the resulting indicators should serve to guide the priority actions and measure their progress. For example, setting targets for managers and incorporating gender-diversity criteria into manager performance reviews are both effective ways to steer change. Indicators also represent an important communication lever to maintain positive momentum around a gender-diversity program.

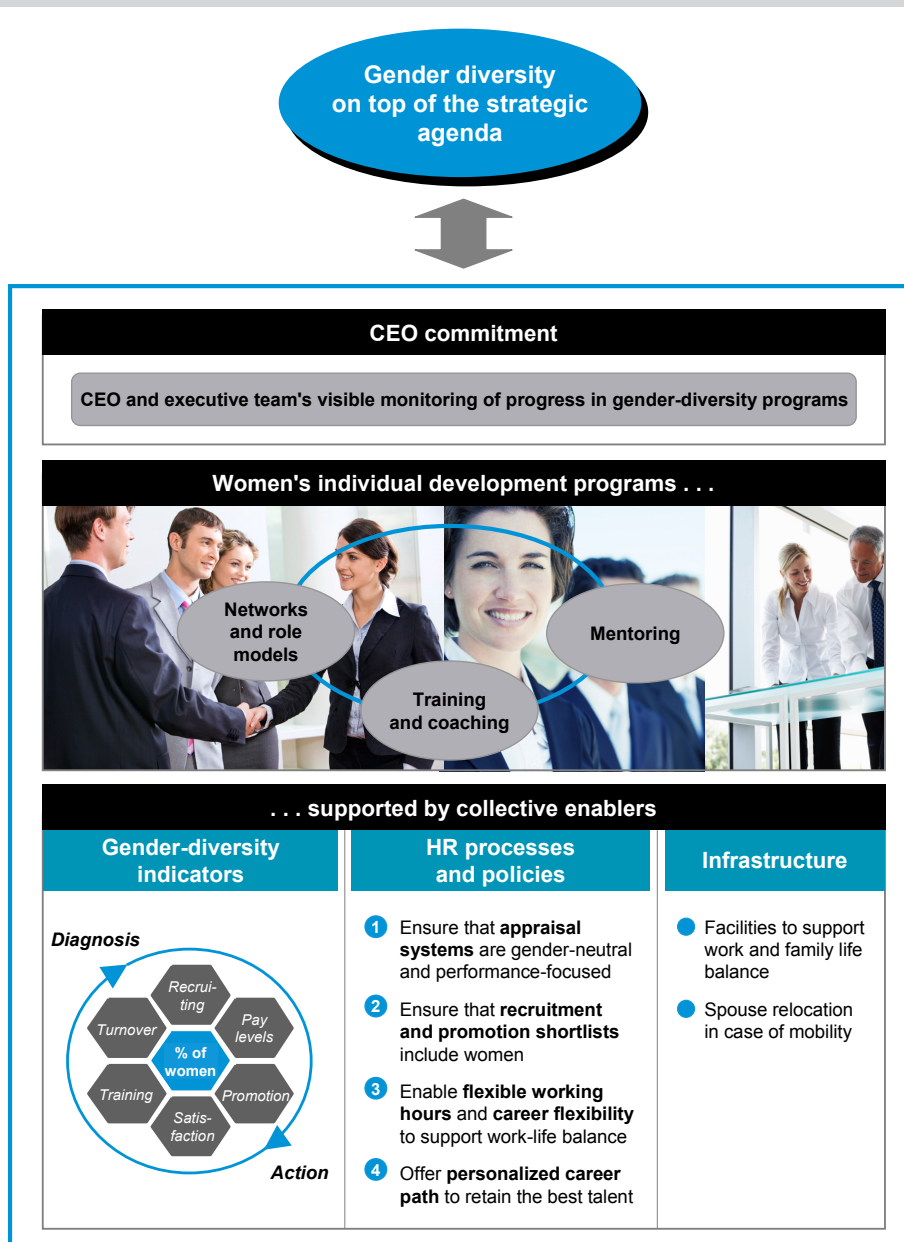
- The second set of enablers includes HR processes and policies

Companies need to develop neutral recruitment, evaluation, and promotion systems to ensure they do not penalize women's careers. For example, some companies consider career breaks (maternity or parental leave) in their high potentials' identification processes by including length of service as in addition to the criterion of age. Other firms ensure there is at least one female candidate for all management posts, while others implement recruitment programs that specifically target women.

Flexible working conditions allow remote working, flexi-time, part-time work, and tailored working hours. Flexibility remains a key success factor for a better work/life balance, but it shouldn't be the only lever nor should firms reserve it exclusively for women. Moreover, the concept of flexibility could and should apply to career management, too. Hence, as women's careers often include breaks, providing support during such periods should help to limit any negative impact on job or salary progression.

- The third set of enablers includes infrastructure

Companies need to create the actual conditions that will facilitate the work-life balance or mobility. They can offer a wide range of services, depending on the most critical needs women are facing, such as childcare, laundry or house cleaning services, or provide strong support services for spouse career relocation in case of mobility.





# Conclusion

As we have seen, gender diversity at the top of corporations continues to stand as a key challenge for companies. We believe that *Women Matter 2010*, along with many other recent articles and studies, demonstrates the clear case for gender diversity progress in the coming years.

There are compelling reasons for achieving greater gender diversity across our corporate landscapes in the not too distant future. Our study has shown that awareness of the benefits of gender diversity is spreading among company leaders and that a majority are now convinced of its positive impact on company performance.

We still have a long road to travel, since this topic has not generally been adopted as a high strategic priority by many companies and implementation of dedicated programs to promote gender diversity remains limited overall. Positive mindsets are in place but the translation into action has stalled.

Focus must therefore be placed on how to make change happen at the top of corporations. Our study clearly highlights the priority steps among a larger set of gender-diversity initiatives which can actually increase the number of women top executives. Although everybody agrees that there is no magic formula for success, according to this study, CEO commitment and women's individual development programs stand at the heart of any effective gender-diversity ecosystem.

Of course, all enabling policies, processes, and infrastructure are critical to supporting women's development initiatives, but the means to remove the glass ceiling have to be in the hands of women themselves. Women will build their own way to the top mainly based on the supportive learning, coaching or mentoring initiatives that companies put in place.

Finally, achieving greater gender diversity is mostly about building a workplace where each woman can develop and grow without encountering gender-specific barriers. As *Women Matter 2010* has reaffirmed, this project must be incarnated and actively supported by the CEOs themselves, who have the responsibility and the ability to embed gender diversity in the DNA of the entire company.





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