Top tips for increasing women in leadership – Industry

Talented women face numerous barriers on their path toward leadership positions. The ‘leaky’ leadership pipeline means that there are fewer female colleagues, role models and mentors who could support other women in their career advancement.

To strengthen the leadership pipeline, industry should:

- Support a greater diversity of career paths in and through middle-management through programmes, policies and training
- Ensure that flexible or part-time employment also includes opportunities for leadership skills training and experience
- Industry, government or trade union bodies should support groups of smaller organisations to collectively offer the mentoring and networking support available to those in larger companies

"I think I could have moved up even better if there was a system."

Women now make up over 30% of the IT workforce we surveyed and the majority of these are under 30. The youth of the Indian IT labour force has significantly powered its rapid growth. However, maintaining profitability will require changes to the wider IT sector.

By retaining diversity throughout the leadership pipeline, Indian IT can continue to prosper. To do so, our industry must meet the challenge of supporting women to have long-term and leadership careers.

"You see more women coming back, even after children, and moving into levels where they’re able to give whatever it takes. It is increasing."


For details on research methodology please see Women and IT Scorecard India – 2018.
Women in IT leadership – the current picture

The number of women in leadership positions has increased between 2012-2017 (GSMIT 2018). More companies are hiring or advancing women into senior leadership and C-Suite positions (fig. 1). There has been a significant decrease in the number of companies with very few women. However, the number of companies with gender parity at C-Suite has seen relatively little increase.

Maximising efficiency means changing the career system – but company size matters

The smallest companies are the most diverse, with big increases in the number of firms at gender parity. The largest companies have the most marked movement from very low representation to between 20 and 40%, but few have achieved gender parity.

Being a woman, you don’t need to work or talk or walk like a man to prove yourself. You have your strengths.

Benchmarks for the future

Research shows that team performance improves when companies achieve around a 35% ‘critical mass’ of women (Kanter 1977). Between 2012 and 2017, the odds of a company having more than 30% of women at senior management or above increased by 65%. The number of companies achieving 30% at the C-Suite level has been increasing quickly – at 2% a year from 2012 (fig. 2).

Barriers to leadership

Figure 3: Barriers to women’s career progression

Women face professional and personal barriers on their pathway to leadership positions.

Professional barriers experienced within companies highlight the lack of:

- leadership training
- appropriate employment opportunities
- career progression opportunities
- mentors

Personal barriers

While the availability of support from their wider family (such as for childcare and caring for elderly relatives) can help the career progression of many women, the expectation that women take responsibility for these roles can also become a barrier for progression into senior roles, especially if there is little flexibility from employers.

Top Tips for increasing women in leadership – Firms

For Senior Management

- Senior level sponsorship for diversity
- Reward managers for good mentoring, by including it in promotion criteria

“...The internal folks, we’re giving them mentors, we’re seeing what can be done to develop them further and we’re also looking externally at hiring.

For Middle Management

- Enable employees to develop broad range of expertise - technical, geographical and managerial

“I’ve changed industries, I’ve changed functions, so to get that complete holistic view you need to be willing to take risks. In fact, get disruption into your work as well, see what’s different, go out and do something different.

For Human Resources

- Make career development pathways more transparent
- Assist new hires to develop support networks within the company
- Enable international mobility through family friendly policies (fig. 4)

Companies need to adopt a flexible and individualised approach to accommodate the range of caring responsibilities that women undertake at different stages of their careers.

Figure 4: Is international experience important in building leadership?

“I’d find better roles if I was more internationally mobile, but...I owe it back to the family now.

Figure 1: Percentage of C-Suite who are women, 2012–17

Figure 2: Companies with over 30% of C-Suite positions held by women