

Women in the Economy

# THE JOURNAL REPORT

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## A Blueprint for Change

At a Wall Street Journal conference, business and government leaders examined what's holding women back in the workplace—and set out an action plan for creating new opportunities

**W**hen Sandra Day O'Connor graduated near the top of her class at Stanford University's law school in 1952, she received only one job offer: to be a legal secretary.

Opportunities for women have expanded dramatically since then. But there is growing evidence that the progress of women in America's workplace has stalled—and is now actually falling backward.

The Wall Street Journal convened almost 200 top leaders in government, business and academia not only to discuss the reasons for the slippage, but also to come up with an action plan for how companies, government, and men and women themselves can address it.

Women are now graduating from college and graduate school in greater

numbers than men and entering the work force in equal numbers. But at each stage of advancement, men are at least twice as likely as women to move forward. Only 11 chief executives of Fortune 500 companies are women, down from 15 in 2010, according to Catalyst Inc., a nonprofit women's research group.

"Middle-management women get promoted on performance. Many middle-management men get promoted on potential. Performance vs. potential," said Vikram Malhotra, chairman of the Americas for McKinsey & Co., which conducted research commissioned by the Journal. "Qualified women actually enter the work force in sufficient numbers, but they begin to plateau or drop off...when they are

eligible for their very first management positions. And it only gets worse after that."

Among the top recommendations at the inaugural meeting of The Wall Street Journal Task Force for Women in the Economy: a proposal to encourage companies to break women out of traditional support positions like human resources and put them into jobs with bottom-line, profit-and-loss impact, considered essential preparation for the CEO spot. Other recommendations include the creation of a CEO Commission to make the business case for advancing talented women.

We need to focus on women in their 30s, get them to "hang on by their fingernails" if they are tempted

to step back, said Sallie L. Krawcheck, president of global wealth and investment management at Bank of America Corp. "But that's not going to be fast. It will take a long time."

The disparity is increasingly becoming a competitive issue for the U.S. and its growth potential, according to economists, because many developing countries such as China and India are making rapid strides in how effectively they utilize women, which is helping fuel their growth rates.

Justice O'Connor, who served a quarter-century in the Supreme Court, received a standing ovation when she spoke to the participants. "Women bring a lot to the table and I think are effective as employees, as managers and CEOs, when they are given the chance....And I just think we need to find a better path for women because they have had a hard time."


—Rebecca Blumenstein




**INDRA NOOYI**  
*'The pyramid starts narrowing for everybody, but disproportionately for women because the pipeline wasn't as rich as it needed to be coming up.'*  
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**SALLIE KRAWCHECK**  
*'I convinced my husband that when the toddler woke up in the middle of the night and screamed, "Mommy," he actually meant, "Parent of either sex."'*  
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**GOV. RICK SCOTT**  
*'Find the best people you can, and then hold everybody accountable by measuring them.'*  
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**GEENA DAVIS**  
*'The more hours of television a girl watches, the fewer options she believes she has in life. And the more hours a boy watches, the more sexist his views become.'*  
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#### TOP PRIORITIES

☛ *Leverage the Power of the Women at the Conference* ☛ *P&L Leadership*

#### ◆ PLUS ◆

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Sandra Witelson on the differences between male and female brains  
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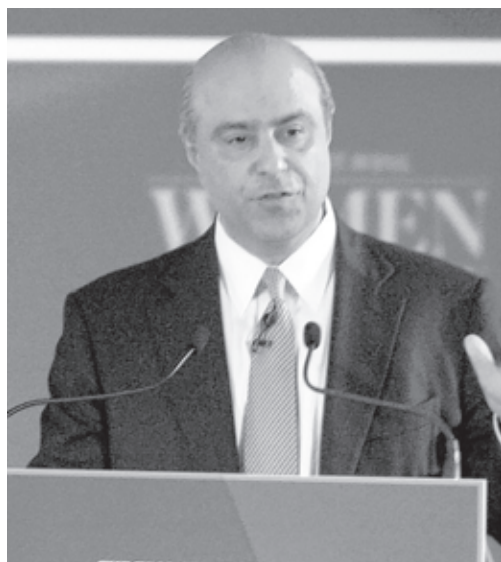
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# Where Are All the Senior-Level Women?

Vikram Malhotra of McKinsey on a corporate talent pipeline that is leaky—and blocked



**VIKRAM MALHOTRA** 'As women age, their desire to move to the next level dissipates faster than men's.'



**CLAUDIA GOLDIN** 'There's a lot more meshing of family and profession.'



**SAADIA ZAHIDI** 'What can be done through communities that companies are active in?'



**NANCY CARTER** 'Set goals for diversity and inclusion at every level of the organization.'

What is holding women back in the workplace? And how can those restraints be broken? Vikram Malhotra, chairman of the Americas at McKinsey & Co., told the Women in the Economy conference what insights into those questions his company discovered in its latest research. The Wall Street Journal's Alan Murray then discussed those findings with Harvard University economics professor Claudia Goldin; Saadia Zahidi, director of the Women Leaders and Gender Parity Program at the World Economic Forum; and Nancy Carter, head of research at Catalyst Inc. Here are edited excerpts of Mr. Malhotra's address and the discussion that followed.

**MR. MALHOTRA:** Why aren't there more women in senior positions, even with the best efforts of corporations?

The reason is very simple. Our corporate talent pipeline is leaky, and it is blocked. Qualified women enter the work force in sufficient numbers, but they begin to drop off at the very first sorting of talent, when they're eligible for their very first management positions. And it only gets worse after that.

There is a silver lining, a leverage point—middle-management women. They have enormously high aspirations. They're accumulating new skills and gaining expertise in how business works. And they are growing more confident and more ambitious day by day.

They really want to move to the next level, as much as men do. We must capture their minds and hearts before their ambitions turn sour. And we know

that their ambitions do turn sour before those of men down the road.

So what is discouraging and holding back such highly qualified, highly motivated women? First, the familiar structural barriers. They include a lack of women role models, exclusion from informal networks where connections are made, and the absence of sponsorship. Second, there are lifestyle issues—concern about the 24/7 executive lifestyle and travel requirements.

The third barrier is the entrenched beliefs held by both men and women throughout management: "Everybody knows you can't put a woman in that particular slot." Or, "That job could never be done part time." Or, "If you promote a woman and she goes out on leave, we won't make our numbers."

A fourth barrier is individual mind-sets. As women age, their desire to move to the next level dissipates faster than men's.

What can we do about this? It starts with a compelling story for change—the business case. It requires management at every tier and employees of all levels to connect with the case for change and understand how they can each contribute to it.

Second, it requires refining the organizational processes and other mechanisms to reinforce the change. Third, we must build the capabilities that enable the desired behavior. For example, both men and women can learn how to be much more effective sponsors than they are today. Finally, it requires leaders all the way down to the front line.

**MR. MURRAY:** Saadia, does your research show at all how much of this is either lifestyle choices or individual mind-sets versus

structural problems or institutional mind-sets?

**MS. ZAHIDI:** They are rational choices given the structural environment. So there is a need for changing some of the structure.

Organizations and countries often want to change and are now starting to buy into the business case, but don't necessarily know how to. They tend to go through a long internal process of learning, when that learning could happen so much faster if there was greater sharing across organizations and across countries. So one thing we're trying to do is create a repository of best practices.

**MS. CARTER:** It's important to recognize that there are different ways of building the business case. We've talked about the financial business case. Did the financial performance of the company improve by having women on the board or in senior leadership positions? There's a good deal of research that will show that yes, when you have greater representation of women on those boards, the company improves.

But there's also a marketing business case. What kinds of products are you producing? What kinds of services are you giving? What kind of consumers do you have? Does the representation of men and women in senior executive positions mirror what the market is?

We also can talk about a societal business case. By and large if you have women who are represented, that's going to better the community.

**MR. MURRAY:** Claudia, you talked about lifestyle. Can you elaborate on that a little bit? What are the lifestyle choices that people make?

created context, if you then choose to go for child care, that's going to cost about \$5,000 per month. Couple that with a very traditional joint taxation system for the husband and wife, and it simply becomes not worthwhile to make that choice.

And so it becomes almost impossible for companies to really try to fight against that system. And so one of the pieces of research we're trying to do is what is that government-created environment? What's happening in terms of child care, what's happening in terms of taxation, what's happening in terms of maternity leave?

And then the second thing is within that context, what are companies doing? And the first area is setting targets across the entire company structure. The second is you have to be creating and developing that female pool at all levels.

Third would be training and incentivizing managers. Making this a part of your bonus and other incentive structures. The fourth is promoting that work-life balance and ensuring that that's not seen as just a women's space. The fifth is sending the right signals through communication and leadership.

And finally, what can you do beyond the office? What can be done through supply and distribution chains? What can be done

through advertising? What can be done through communities that companies are active in?

**MR. MURRAY:** If you had to point to one thing that you had the power to change in this area, what would it be?

**MS. CARTER:** Set goals for diversity and inclusion at every level of the organization and hold people accountable for achieving those goals.

**MS. GOLDIN:** We have to realize that life is a lot longer than it used to be. So just because you take some time out does not mean your potential over your life cycle is going to be that much lower.

**MS. ZAHIDI:** I think I'd have to agree very much with Nancy's point on target setting, but coupled with transparency. You can look at it as naming and shaming, but it works.

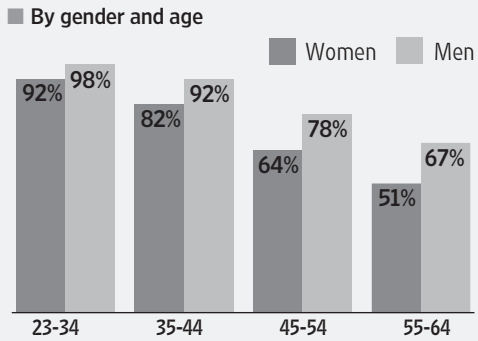
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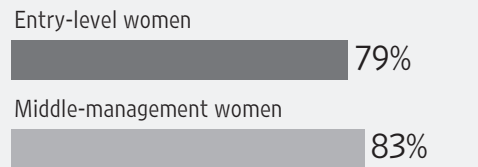
**Thwarted Ambition**

Women lose interest more quickly than men in climbing to the next level professionally. But it isn't for lack of ambition—the problem is largely a perceived lack of opportunity. Tapping women's enthusiasm before it is quashed—particularly at the middle-management level, where they feel more empowered and hopeful than women in entry-level jobs—could go a long way toward unleashing their potential.

**Desire to move to the next level**



**By professional position**

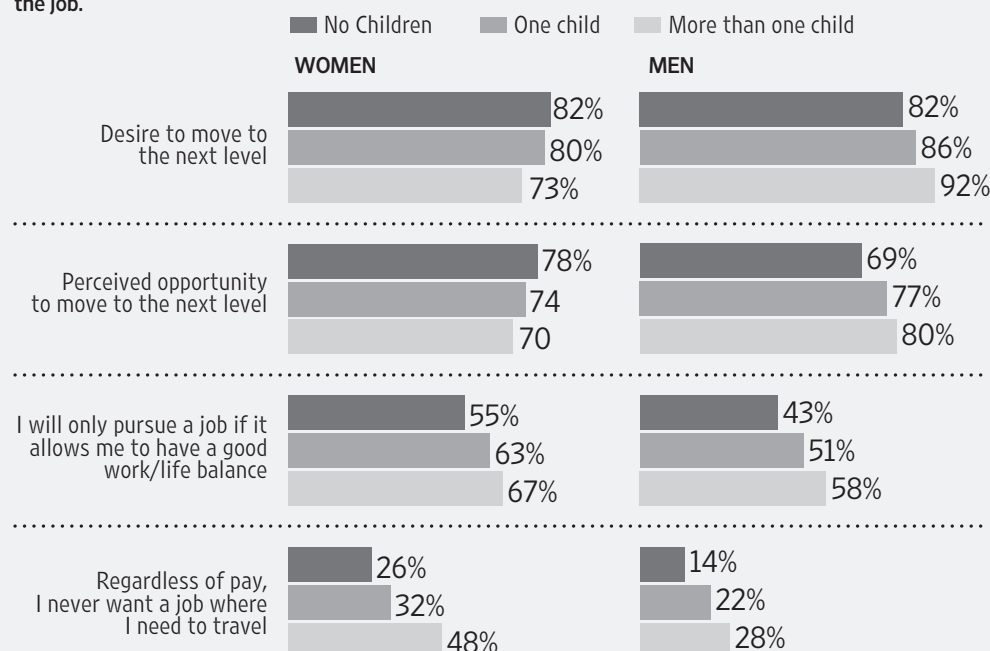


**Feeling Ambitious**



**Striking a Balance**

As their families grow, women, unlike men, show less interest in advancement and believe their chances for promotion fade. Greater flexibility in the workplace could help reverse that trend: Women express a greater desire than men to maintain what they consider a healthy balance between work and life outside the job.



Source: McKinsey & Co. survey conducted February 2011

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D'ARCY F. RUDNAY There hasn't been enough emphasis on sponsorship



ESTHER DYSON Corporations need to discover their biases



ADELE GULFO Women need profit-and-loss experience

# Industry by Industry: How to Move Forward

What are the challenges facing women across a wide range of industries? And what can be done to help deal with these challenges? Task-force participants at The Wall Street Journal's Women in the Economy Conference split off into six industry groups to discuss and debate these issues, each coming back with their top four priorities moving forward.

Here's a look at those priorities—and edited excerpts of their explanations on how they came up with them.

## MEDIA

### Top Four Recommendations

**1 MENTORS AND SPONSORS:** Develop more industrywide and company-specific programs for both mentorship and sponsorship. The sponsorship goals to pay or career advancement. Such programs should include succession planning and "co-mentoring," which allows advice to flow from junior to senior levels. Involve men and women.

**2 LEADERSHIP WISDOM PORTAL:** Create a nationwide portal for insights and advice on leadership for women, pooling the resources of multiple media companies. Include formal career advice and discussion of the "unwritten rules" of being a woman in the workplace. Take better advantage of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

**3 WOMEN ON BOARDS:** Get more women on the boards of companies by having the SEC require all listed companies to set and disclose their own goals for adding women to their board, and then explain their progress in their SEC report. Goals should include training programs for women interested in board membership.

**4 P&L LEADERSHIP:** Companies should establish a program to train and encourage women to take leadership positions that involve profit-and-loss expertise specifically, and enable them to transition into these roles. Companies should establish specific targets and incentives to this end.

**ALESSANDRA GALLONI:** I want to talk a second about the difference between mentors and sponsors. By mentors, we mean someone who informally gives you advice, perhaps about the written and unwritten rules about your position in your company. By sponsor, we mean

someone who actually pushes you through the organization and helps you advance through the different career stages.

**D'ARCY F. RUDNAY:** For more than 30 years, since I've been working, there's been so much emphasis placed on being a mentor, but not much on being a sponsor.

And many of the people in our group articulated how important it was that sponsorship should be identified as an important part of one's career. And that perhaps there should be sponsorship goals included in compensation goals, compensation requirements or performance requirements.

**DEBRA L. LEE:** The second proposal we called the Leadership Wisdom Portal. That is to create a national portal for insights and advice on leadership for women, pooling the resources of large media companies.

The thought is that we were all enjoying this conference so much, and the little tidbits of information that we were getting from the speakers, that wouldn't it be great if we had a place to download these pieces of advice, and make them available for women all over the country?

We would include career advice and discussion of the unwritten rules—things that women should know as they try to climb the corporate ladder, or try to become entrepreneurs.

**MS. RUDNAY:** The third proposal was about how important it is to get more women on corporate boards. It was suggested having the SEC actually require all listed companies to set goals and disclose those goals. We had some conversation about whether that made sense or not.

The conversation evolved quickly to the importance of helping women get on boards and the training that women need at various stages of their careers as they're considering

going on boards. We believe change will happen once women start to get on more corporate boards, not nonprofits.

**MS. LEE:** The fourth idea was to provide leadership and training for women in areas that involved P&L. If you want to climb the corporate ladder, sometimes you've got to get out of the functional areas and really run a business. It would be helpful to establish a program to train and encourage women to take leadership positions that involve P&L expertise. We thought companies should establish specific targets and incentives to this end.

**ALAN MURRAY:** Regarding women on boards: You're not saying quotas, you're saying have the SEC require that you set your own goals and disclose those goals.

**MS. GALLONI:** Yes, that the companies will set their own goals, specific targets, and stick by them.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Top Four Recommendations

**1 BRAND THE BLING:** Build a vision for females, using branding and glamour to attract them to the field. Build up role models, make them more prominent. Clone Marissa Mayer. Tech-industry groups should run an ad campaign that highlights women tech executives. The group could also produce a movie that glamorizes women in technology. Get Harvey Weinstein involved.

**2 FEMALE-FRIENDLY EDUCATION:** Develop mandatory classes for science and technology for entire bodies of schools. Universities should assign all students to small sections of entry-level computer-science courses based on their level of

experience. Problem sets should be more relevant to women's lives. Help young females understand technology through internships. Let women discover which fields interest them most.

**3 CULTURE CHANGE:** Technology companies should evaluate their corporate culture for any adverse impact on employment and retention of women in engineering and computer science, and make adjustments based on their findings. Review internal systems and leadership-development policies. There must be a deliberate, long-term focus on women, coming from the top.

**4 INSIST ON DIVERSE HIRING:** Technology companies should insist that every candidate pool contain women and every interviewing panel contain women. Also, look to hire female-friendly men. Use evidence-based hiring. Diverse hiring must permeate the entire organization, coming from the top down, with the CEO committed to it.

**JULIA ANGIN:** Our top recommendation is something called brand the bling, which basically means glamorize technology, make it a cool field for women to want to go into.

Maybe there should be a movie, "The Anti-Social Network" had one view of women. There could be another one with a woman tech executive flying in a plane to her meetings.

**WEILI DAI:** Number two is that educational institutions should offer science, technology and math classes to empower women to be more interested in technology. It's important that when we do problem solving, we should relate it to women's real-life examples. Finally, I think it's important to encourage young women to have internships in high-tech companies, because they can learn and discover their interest and passion.

**ESTHER DYSON:** In a sense, you could put absolutely every recommendation from every group into "culture change." And it's kind of hard to figure out exactly what all it applies to. But it does go back to one recommendation that got dropped, which was awareness. As a corporation, as a technology company, examine yourself, do it scientifically, discover your biases, so that you

can engage in evidence-based hiring, as well as evidence-based management development.

Once you've hired these people, then it is your responsibility to make sure, not just that they're allowed to advance, but that they're encouraged to advance, that they're developed. So analyze your systems, your people, the impact of your policies to see if they adversely affect women.

And then the final one, insist on diverse hiring. That is not simply looking for a diverse pool. When you hire people, see how they react to women engineers. And if in the interview they somehow don't click with the women engineers interviewing them, that's a bad sign.

## FINANCE

### Top Four Recommendations

**1 BOTTOM-LINE/P&L IMPACT:** To climb to the highest level, women need to pursue profit-and-loss responsibilities early in their career. Below the vice president level, women need to cross-train and work in units that affect the bottom line. Companies need to make it possible for women to break out of support positions, gain experience with revenue generation and mastery of the core business.

**2 PROMOTE WOMEN ON POTENTIAL:** Women should be equally considered for promotion on their potential as are men. Companies need to identify talented women early and nurture them. Employers should create incentives for female sponsorship, tying success to mechanisms such as compensation, goal achievement and performance evaluation.

**3 MEDIA:** The media need to work harder to dispel stereotypes about women in business. Too much attention is given to stories of the fall of women and too little to their comeback. Stop writing about what women wear. Create professional women's magazines and blogs to better connect professional women and celebrate their success.

**4 IMPORTANCE OF SELF-PROMOTION:** Women need to get comfortable with self-advocacy. Women should embrace their financial success and recognize the power of their posi-

tions. Women should leverage their horizontal networks.

**KAREN PEETZ:** Not unlike the media group, we decided that P&L or business-line management was a critical element. Start earlier rather than later: It's unlikely you can kind of pop into running a business when you're 50, 55.

**IRENE MAVROYANNIS:** Our second proposal relates to sponsorship and promotion.

One concept that was raised in the McKinsey study was that women are often promoted based on performance, whereas men are promoted based on potential. We think it's critical, in order to level the playing field, that women be considered for promotion on the basis of what they can bring to the table, as opposed to what they already have brought to the table.

The second element related to our proposal is the importance of sponsorship and of creating some kind of a mechanism or concrete action plan, to ensure that managers are incentivized to sponsor female talent and to nurture female talent.

**REBECCA BLUMENSTEIN:** The feeling in the room was very strong—I think surprisingly so—that the media share some of the blame, that we too often cover a woman's fall disproportionately to how much we cover their success, that we write about what women wear, what women look like. There's a need for media to work harder to dispel stereotypes about women.

**MS. PEETZ:** As women, many of us were raised and are ambivalent about success and about ambition. And we often credit our success to either luck or chance or some other person who helped us, not embracing it on ourselves. So our fourth recommendation had to do with the importance of self-promotion, with celebrating and talking about our own successes and tooting our own horns a little bit and walking the walk a little bit better.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** One last thing I would add: When we started the session, I asked the participants how many felt that progress, in terms of the status of women and finance, had stalled. And every single woman raised their hands. And then when I asked if it's been getting worse, Please turn to page R6

## Career Advice for Women

Read more about women in leadership positions in technology, finance, and sales and marketing

- Exclusive interview with Google's Marissa Mayer
- The best mentorship programs for women
- The truth behind sexual-harassment claims

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## The Top Five Recommendations

After each individual industry-focused group presented its priorities, the full task force ranked all the priorities, in order of their relative urgency and importance. Here's a look at the top five priorities, as voted by the entire task force.

### 1 P&L Leadership

Companies should establish a program to train and encourage women to take leadership positions that involve profit-and-loss expertise specifically, and enable them to transition into these roles. Companies should establish specific targets and incentives to this end.

### 2 Leverage C-Suite Power

Hold the CEO accountable for hiring women in the top jobs with equal pay. Use metrics and score-

cards to track women's promotions and positions, and if women aren't promoted, explain why not. Require a diverse slate of candidates for high-level jobs. Expect a balance of men and women at the decision-making table, including the board.

### 3 Promote Women on Potential

Women should be equally considered for promotion on their potential as are men. Companies need to identify talented women early and nurture them. Employers should create incentives for female sponsorship, tying success to mechanisms such as compensation, goal achievement and performance evaluation.

### 4 Mentors and Sponsors

Develop more industrywide and company-spe-

cific programs for both mentorship and sponsorship. Tie sponsorship goals to pay or career advancement. Such programs should include succession planning and "co-mentoring," which allows advice to flow from junior to senior levels. Involve men and women.

### 5 Strong Talent-Management Programs

Recruit outside normal channels and leverage diverse networks. Take risks on high-potential women by rotating them through different positions and giving them exposure to senior leadership. Provide training in effective communication and strategic thinking. Foster entrepreneurial culture, including a more flexible work/life environment.



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# Tales From the Front Lines

Melody Hobson, Julie Louise Gerberding, Marissa Mayer and Debra L. Lee on how they did what they did

**T**he challenges women face often cut across industries. But some are also unique to specific sectors. Women who have risen high in four industries—finance, health, technology and media—sought to illuminate these issues by recounting their own experiences and assessing how women generally have fared in their fields.

Melody Hobson, president of **Ariel Investments** in Chicago, spoke with The Wall Street Journal's Rebecca Blumenstein. Julie Louise Gerberding, president of **Merck & Co.**'s Merck Vaccines unit, sat down with the Journal's Laura Landro. Marissa Mayer, **Google Inc.**'s vice president, consumer products, talked with the Journal's Julia Angwin. And Debra L. Lee, chairman and chief executive of **BET Networks**, a unit of **Viacom Inc.**, spoke with the Journal's Alessandra Galloni.

Here are edited excerpts of their conversations.

## A Broader Perspective

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Melody, you played such a major role in building Ariel up. Could you describe how you did it? There's a stereotype that women don't know how to manage money and don't know how to take risks.*

**MS. HOBSON:** I was an intern at my firm. I fell in love with the investment business, and from the very beginning I knew this was where I was going to work for my career. So I could think very long term about how to build our company. That ultimately allowed us to accomplish quite a bit.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Did you have more freedom as a woman, less of a hindrance from some of the structural barriers that might have come up at a big company?*

**MS. HOBSON:** There's no question about it. My business partner, John Rogers, who started our firm, was very used to strong women. His mother was the first black woman to graduate from the University of Chicago law school, in the '40s.

So John was always very happy for me to be out and about representing Ariel.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *You have very strong ties politically in Chicago. You appear on "Good Morning America." You're very involved in your community and things outside of work. Could you talk about the importance of reaching out and almost building your own persona?*

**MS. HOBSON:** With some women, even in my own firm, you have to sort of push them out because they think, "I've got to do a-

ally good job, which means staying very focused." I learned very early that I can do a better job if I have other stimuli that give me a broader perspective.

And what people with that focused mind-set don't realize is how important those outside relationships can be. I helped Bill Bradley when he ran for president in 2000. I worked as hard on his campaign as I worked on my job every single day. Obviously, we were unsuccessful. But then one day, Bill calls and says, "I'm on the board of Starbucks, and I'm taking you with me." He recommended me to Howard Schultz. I never imagined that was possible—I'm like this pipsqueak in Chicago.

So I get to be in the room with one of the most successful brands in the world, with a front-row seat to all the things that are going on around the world. And, ultimately, I get to bring those ideas and knowledge back to our firm as it relates to all the other investing that we are doing.

So I always say to people in terms of going out and being of this world—be it business, politics, nonprofit or whatever—it actually makes you a better businessperson.

## The Nature of Leadership

**MS. LANDRO:** *For those of you who aren't familiar with Dr. Gerberding's many accomplishments, she started out as a physician and was in academia for some years before she went into public service and ran the Centers for Disease Control, where she was basically on the front lines protecting us from all of*

**KAREN S. ROHAN:** We all agreed that for the advancement of women, we absolutely have to put it on the CEO's agenda. And the CEO has to lead from the top, that there have to be clear, measurable metrics, that there have to be diverse candidates to fill the top positions.

It's also imperative for the CEO to ensure that there's equal pay for those top executive talents. We also talked about continually advocating for women on boards, and that the CEO really needed to be the person to do that.

**ADELE GULFO:** Getting women into P&L tracks is a recurring theme, and it goes along with getting women on corporate boards. Because in order for more women to get on corporate boards, they need to be able to demonstrate that they've actually run a business.

One of the ideas we came up with is for a sponsor or someone in the organization to take a risk and seek out high-potential women, and actually give them a piece of the business to run. Health care is a huge business, there's lots of opportunities to give women bits of whatever business you're in, whether it's medicine, whether it's a piece of geography, so that they can actually demonstrate the value that they're delivering.

**LORI BEER:** For our third recommendation, we thought it was important to look outside the normal channels for recruiting, and leverage those diverse networks.

When we talked about health care, we thought about the fact that 70% of health-care decisions are made by women. What an opportunity that is, as we think about talent, and building the skills that women need, and as we watch pieces of this industry go through transformation, really leveraging that innovative, creative, entrepreneurial spirit that many women have.

**LAURA LANDRO:** *The fourth one we came up with is the idea of building the business case for this. Why women are important, let's look at the contributions to*



**MELLODY HOBSON** 'I fell in love with the investment business.'



**JULIE LOUISE GERBERDING** The CDC 'needed to evolve.'



**MARISSA MAYER** 'I'm a geek at Google.'



**DEBRA LEE** 'I was trying the "nice girl" approach.'

*the horrible things out there—bioterrorism, SARS, anthrax. After leaving public service, she went to head a large business, Merck Vaccines.*

*You've said you think women have certain characteristics that make it easier for them to be good managers. Can you elaborate on that?*

**DR. GERBERDING:** In a word, meta leadership. Which is not just knowing yourself and being able to lead within your organization, in a vertical way, but it's the horizontal leadership: the ability to lead networks of people who are not in your own power domain. That horizontal leadership takes different skills than vertical leadership. And it requires people to know how to negotiate, to be able to be true and effective partners and collaborators, to find that third path, to be able to walk in someone else's shoes with emotional intelligence and empathy.

And while men and women

possess those skills, I think some of them are attributes that women are naturally inclined or more socialized to excel in. And in this very complicated world in which we live, that horizontal leadership probably is one of the key success factors for any organization.

**MS. LANDRO:** *Tell us about how you wound up at the CDC and reorganized some things there.*

**DR. GERBERDING:** I was asked to come there to lead the Patient Safety Hospital Infections Group. Then, by an amazing set of coincidences, I was involved in the response to the anthrax attacks.

And I think that's what prompted the secretary to ask me to take on the leadership of the agency. Having been an emergency-room doctor and an ICU attending, I think I was naturally better at making decisions in those kinds of situations than people who hadn't been used to crisis management.

I think the CDC is the finest government agency there is. And yet it was not an agency designed for public-health preparedness or for emergency response. And suddenly our nation found itself in a situation where those were really important public-health imperatives. We had anthrax, we had SARS, we had avian influenza, we had monkey pox, we had West Nile marching across the U.S.

We had one public-health crisis after another. And so I felt that the public-health agency needed to evolve another set of capabilities and another set of strengths.

I went to the CEOs of the business leaders in Atlanta like Bernie Marcus from Home Depot, Oz Nelson, the former CEO of UPS, the CEO of Delta. I went and consulted with people who had to have faced organizational transformation in their own organizations and asked for their advice and consultation. I also

went to the military because I have learned that our military probably does the best job of any organization in investing in leadership development. I hired some retired military personnel to come and help us with the preparedness planning for influenza pandemic.

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** *At the CDC you had an opportunity during a time of crisis that gave you greater leadership. In your career or others, have you seen where women have stepped up to take jobs where others were reluctant to go because there's great opportunity for failure? And yet by taking those risky situations, they really did add to their toolbox.*

**DR. GERBERDING:** I certainly have seen women accept challenges that would be considered high-risk challenges. I don't know whether or not women or men  
*Please turn to page R11*

## Industry

Continued from page R4  
three-quarters of the room raised their hands.

### HEALTH CARE AND PHARMACEUTICALS

#### Top Four Recommendations

##### 1 LEVERAGE C-SUITE POWER:

Hold the CEO accountable for hiring women in the top jobs with equal pay. Use metrics and scorecards to track women's promotions and positions and disclose if women aren't promoted, and explain why not. Require a diverse slate of candidates for high-level jobs. Expect a balance of men and women at the decision-making table, including the board.

##### 2 GET WOMEN INTO P&L TRACKS:

Give promising women responsibility for running a piece of the business. Identify or create key P&L positions to get women started on the management track. Focus on middle management and ensure they have experience and exposure to the business as a whole.

##### 3 STRONG TALENT-MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS:

Recruit outside normal channels and leverage diverse networks. Take risks on high-potential women by rotating them through different positions and giving them exposure to senior leadership. Provide training in effective communication and strategic thinking. Foster an entrepreneurial culture, including a more flexible work/life environment.

##### 4 BUSINESS CASE FOR VALUE:

Emphasize women's contributions to the bottom line in companies and organizations. Demonstrate how gender diversity has improved their performance. Publish data on best work-places for women by metrics including work-life balance and opportunity for advancement. Require progress reports on women's advancement in annual reports.

*the bottom line. Let's do some metrics. And get those numbers out there.*

### LAW AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

#### Top Four Recommendations

##### 1 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:

Professional schools and companies need to train women students and employees in business-development skills, including interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills, so women can market themselves effectively. Among these skills: knowledge about the business of the professions and the businesses they serve, self-representation and strategic decision-making. Companies also need to provide constant opportunities for active engagement in business cultivation.

##### 2 IMPROVE COMPENSATION SYSTEMS:

Companies should make clear the characteristics of success within the organization and develop fair, measurable, objective and transparent compensation systems. They should also set measurable goals and objectives for diversity and correlate compensation to the achievement of these goals.

##### 3 COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Companies should support women in collaborative relationships across professional boundaries in order to share strategies, cultivate contacts, generate business relationships and promote one another. These would include professional conferences, trade associations, internal and alumni networks.

##### 4 LEVERAGE PROCUREMENT POWER:

Companies should use their procurement power to encourage providers to promote women and people of color, and this should be measurable.

**ANNETTE L. NAZARETH:** One of the things that we focused on was that there was more opportunity for professional schools, as well as companies, to train

women and students and employees in general on business-development skills, so that women can market themselves more effectively. What's interesting about professional services is that you can be very, very good at something like the law. But that doesn't make you good at purveying or selling your services.

The other thing we talked about is this notion of metrics and improving compensation systems. We want to see clear characteristics of success within an organization, defined in measurable objective and transparent ways, so that women can be judged in the same manner as men. But we took that a step further and said that encouraging women, encouraging minorities, encouraging diversity in organizations should be part of the metrics on which you are judged and on which you are compensated.

**PREETA D. BANSAL:** Our third recommendation was that companies should support women in developing collaborative relationships across professional boundaries, not just within their industry, but across the professions in order to share strategies, cultivate contacts, generate business relationships and generally help one another.

The discussion in our group was that women really do have a lot of power. And it's up to us to realize our power to some extent.

And our last recommendation was to encourage companies to leverage their procurement power. Our view was you take the pressure points and the help wherever you get it. So companies should be using their procurement power to encourage providers to promote women and people of color.

### GOVERNMENT

#### Top Four Recommendations

##### 1 PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP:

Create a mission statement. Research and assess status of

women in government. Establish a presidential task force on how to get women promoted into leadership roles. Utilize executive orders. Build on existing institutions for quicker action.

##### 2 POLICY REVIEW:

Review and assess policies in agencies and departments, including maternity leave, flex time and re-entry, seniority practices, mentorship, union provisions and child care. Recommendations should be presented to the president. Government should abide by private-sector rules.

##### 3 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OFFICIALS:

Incentivize and require officials to implement policies that advance qualified women in government. Performance-evaluation measures should reflect success in meeting these goals.

##### 4 MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Create a nonpartisan or bipartisan group to encourage women to serve in government and elected office. Promote civics education and encourage women early to run for office.

**KIMBERLEY A. STRASSEL:** *The challenges of advancing women who are in the career civil service can be very different from the challenges of advancing women who are running for elected office, which can be very different from the challenge of getting women into better appointed positions within administration. The group nonetheless did a fabulous job of transcending those and coming up with recommendations.*

**KIM CAMPBELL:** The first recommendation is called presidential leadership. We recommend that the president create a mission statement and sponsor research and assess the status of women in government.

We also recommended that the president establish a presidential task force on how to get women promoted into leadership roles.

There was a big concern not to reinvent wheels. We know in this area that there are a lot of existing institutions. So the idea was we should build on existing

institutions for quicker action.

**PAULA J. DOBRIANSKY:** Our second recommendation is policy review. There was a clear consensus that we need to take practical action. You just can't rely on the goodwill of an agency or a department to bring about change. There have to be rules in place, and there has to be a review and an assessment, and some evaluation and maybe even some punitive measures that might need to be taken.

##### FRANCES FRAGOS TOWNSEND:

The third area was accountability for officials. There was a discussion about requiring and incentivizing officials to implement these policies. This included a discussion of sponsorship and mentorship, evaluating and looking to performance metrics to ensure that policies related to diversity are actually implemented.

**MS. CAMPBELL:** The final recommendation, more women in politics, probably sounds like a no-brainer. The question is, how do you do it? There are many institutions and organizations looking to recruit women, to find financial support for them. We argue that perhaps another step could be taken to create a non-party or bipartisan—we dreamed of the DNC and the RNC coming together to do this—group to encourage women to serve in government.

The more women publicly take on roles and responsibility in society, the more they change the landscape from which many young people draw their inference about the way the world works. And people in public life can have a very important influence on letting young people know that yes, girls do this, they belong.

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**ONLINE TODAY:** What piece of advice from a role model or mentor has helped guide your career? What hard-earned lessons would you share with the next generation? Join the discussion, at [WSJ.com/WIE](http://WSJ.com/WIE).





**BETH A. BROOKE** We all know tone at the top is critical.



**BARBARA HACKMAN FRANKLIN** Enlist the influence of shareholders



**NICOLE J. WALKER** The SBA needs to be completely restructured

# From Kindergarten to the Boardroom: The Top Priorities

**W**omen face unique challenges at specific stages of their careers. Task-force participants at The Wall Street Journal's Women in the Economy Conference split off into six career-stage sessions, and came up with four priorities each for dealing with each phase of the career life cycle for women.

Here's a look at those priorities—and edited excerpts of the presentations by the co-chairs of each session.

## EDUCATION

### Top Four Recommendations

#### 1 TEACH GENDER EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP: Provide training on gender bias to parents and instructors, draft a curriculum and teach students about gender equity alongside other social issues. Work to ease transitions in the education process at key drop-off points for girls. Start early teaching of leadership skills in schools, along with related topics such as networking and negotiations. Re-evaluate the core curriculum in all subjects to focus on gender equality and leadership.

#### 2 SEX UP SCIENCE, TECH, ENGINEERING AND MATH: Make introductory science, technology, engineering and math courses more engaging. Improve the public portrayal of women scientists and engineers and highlight the rewards of these careers. Bring women scientists into schools as role models. Start all of this in middle school and then work to keep girls engaged.

#### 3 REVISE TEACHER PAY AND TENURE: Rethink how we select, train, reward and retain teachers. Consider pay differentials for science, technology, engineering and math teachers; create a "fast track" for professionals in these areas who may want to change careers and become teachers. Recruit teachers from the top third of their graduating classes and increase average pay. Tie teacher compensation and tenure to performance.

#### 4 STRENGTHEN SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: Focus on recruiting qualified school superintendents, principals and faculty, then train and empower them to improve teaching across grades. We should have national metrics for measuring the success or failure of schools and create a standardized data dashboard to evaluate performance.

**AMY GUTMANN:** Here's the good news: Girls do really well in school. And here is the not-so-good news: There is a huge amount of gender inequity and lack of leadership training for girls in our schools. We need throughout our school systems to provide training on gender bias to parents and instructors, draft curricula and teach students about gender equity alongside other issues. We need to couple the teaching of gender equity to something enormously positive and important for our young girls and boys alike: the teaching of leadership skills, which include skills in negotiation and networking.

**NOREAN R. SHARPE:** We would like to make introductory science, technology and engineering courses more engaging for all students. We should highlight rewards of these careers, as well as alternative career paths. Bring women scientists into schools as role models, and make the point that this should be started at a very young age, either primary education or middle school.

#### HELEN G. DRINAN: Our third recommendation goes to the heart of the public-school experience, and that is looking at how we are recruiting and rewarding teachers. We would like to see the pay available for teachers raised well above the minimums that we offer today, so that we can attract the top graduates from all of our schools in this country. After that, we want to be sure that they are rewarded and that tenure considerations are made in the context of performance of those teachers.

#### MS. SHARPE: The last recommendation focuses on improving education for all students, not just women. We're recommending that we strengthen school accountability. That's accountability for superintendents and principals as well as faculty. Then train and empower them to improve teaching across all grades, all subjects.

#### KIMBERLEY A. STRASSEL: The group focused a lot on establishing formal policies within your company for some of these integrative work practices. Saying, "You can telecommute this, but you are expected to do these things when you do"—that gives both the company and employees reassurance about what the rules are about some of these flexible arrangements.

#### REAR ADM. MOIRA N. FLANDERS: We all agree that fully engaging new employees is very important. Fully engaging them used to be called orientation. Now I think the term is "onboarding."

#### And it needs to continue throughout their career, because as you develop and you are promoted, you need a bit more training and orientation on what you're expected to do. People need to know what their expectations are from the company, and the company needs to know what the expectations of the employee are.

#### We also thought that it's important to recognize that the millennials coming in are really their generation's subject-matter experts. Utilize those strengths, their expertise, and give them things they can do to help the company continually refresh itself.

#### The last of the many that we voted on was to actively recruit women.

## MIDCAREER

### 1 TALK TO ACTION: It starts with us: Leverage the power of women at the conference. Attendees should deliver the key messages of the conference to their own companies and industries. McKinsey could create a standard set of materials, including an executive summary, talking points and questions for attendees, to help them drive action within their own companies. Report back at next year's conference on what has been accomplished.

### 2 STRAIGHT TALK: Each organization must encourage honest and open internal dialogue about the challenges and opportunities facing midcareer women. Both women and managers must define clearly what they mean by words like "flexibility" and "commitment," and set measurable performance objectives. Managers must be trained to hold effective discussions about flexible working hours' impact on employees' career paths and the personal responsibility women have for developing their own careers. Women also must take personal responsibility for making sure this discussion takes place.

### 3 TOP TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY: Tie top team members' compensation and performance evaluations to results achieved in moving midlevel women forward. Set specific diversity targets. The executive committee and the board should monitor progress. Include human-resources issues in board-level discussions.

### 4 CREATE A CEO COMMISSION: Create a commission composed of CEO volunteers from some of the nation's leading companies to identify, drive and publish the results of transformative, internal efforts to increase women at the top. The group would discuss the possibility of setting public targets for advancing women in senior management. Company scorecards and metrics would be published. Formation of the commission could be initiated and led by a variety of private-sector organizations.

**SUE SHELLNBARGER:** We felt the weight of responsibility, having

## WORKPLACE CULTURE

### 1 CULTURE AUDIT: Organizations should undertake formal diagnosis and action planning to identify and change current norms, processes and practices that make it difficult for women to contribute to their full potential. The process should be done at a company, team and individual level. It should include employee engagement surveys and the option of anonymous questionnaires.

### 2 ROWI: Making the business case: Catalyst, McKinsey or another firm should create a "return on women investment"

### metric. It should be presented at the WSJ CEO Council.

### 3 CORPORATE LATTICE: Companies should create a new model for ways to be successful outside the traditional corporate-ladder structure. The model should apply to both men and women and specifically include flexibility for child and elder care. Flexibility should be tailored to the individual.

### 4 CEO CHAMPIONS: The Wall Street Journal should form a CEO Champions group that commits to six principles and actions to improve workplace culture for women.

**CLARENCE OTIS JR.:** We thought that the starting point would be a disciplined look at ourselves as a company. A big piece of that would be introspective self-assessments, ideally done among the different leadership teams.

What biases do we bring to the table? What blinders do we have? We can then begin to have candid conversations about these dynamics. Because, if we don't do that, it will be impossible to manage them in an effective way.

**ALESSANDRA GALLONI:** The second recommendation is what we called the Return on Women Investment

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had McKinsey and several other experts at the conferences identify midcareer as the biggest leak in the pipeline.

**JULIA A. BAILEY DULAN:** Regarding our first item, "Talk to Action," we talked about this idea of personal responsibility and where we fit into the equation, in terms of moving toward positive change and accelerating growth within our own organizations. Each of us is charged with leveraging the power of women, by taking key messages of this conference to our own companies in our own industries.

**MARY ELLEN STANEK:** The next item gets at this issue of honest, open, transparent dialogue. Discussions need to take place about what exactly does flexibility mean to both sides, to managers and employees. What does commitment mean to both sides? And what are the actionable items? We talked at great length about this issue of personal responsibility, making the business case and making sure performance and results are measured as objectively as possible.

Our third priority is that the CEO and the executive team of the organization need to take ownership of this issue. And the board has to hold the CEO ac-

countable. The human-resource or human-capital function needs to be a part of the conversation, but for too long they have owned the conversation.

**MS. DULAN:** Our last recommendation is what I would describe as a stretch goal. It would be aspirational. We are recommending that a CEO commission be created and charged with identifying, driving and publishing the results of transformative, internal changes to increase the number of women at the top of the organization.



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# The Global View

Sandra Day O'Connor, Wei Sun Christianson and Robert Zoellick offer a report card on women's progress

Over the past few decades, women's economic opportunities have vastly improved in the Western world and China. But a lot remains to be done—and there are even bigger challenges in developing countries.

For insight into the issues involved, The Wall Street Journal's Rebecca Blumenstein spoke with retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Wei Sun Christianson, chief executive of Morgan Stanley China and co-chief of Asia Pacific, and Robert Zoellick, president of World Bank Group. Here are edited excerpts of the discussion.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Justice O'Connor, what do you think of the progress of women? Women are doing very well in law school, but is it taking longer than you would have expected?

**MS. O'CONNOR:** Well, it took 191 years to get the first woman on the Supreme Court. A couple of months ago, I was back in the Supreme Court and went in to listen to an oral argument at the court, and sat below and looked up at the bench. And believe it or not, there were three women there. And that was a real progressive change. With that kind of progress, we might see nine of them before long.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Wei, can you tell us about Asia?

**MS. CHRISTIANSON:** In the past 30 years, you see a lot of women entering the work force voluntarily. Most importantly, they are getting into areas that are dominated by men. You see more and more women entering into sectors such as telecommunications, technology and finance. But there is a glass ceiling, or a bamboo ceiling, in China. You see very few women on the top.

However, there's one interesting phenomenon. With the government encouraging the development of the private sector,

you see private business and family business thriving. That's already one-third of the Chinese economy, and 21% of these entrepreneurs are women.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Bob, could you give us an assessment of women in the developing world?

**MR. ZOELICK:** We estimate there are about three billion people working in the world. About 40% of those are women, so about 1.2 billion. This is going to be increasingly important, because as we've seen in this downturn, about half of the global growth comes from the developing world. Earlier you mentioned a phrase that we developed—gender equality is smart economics. Not only is it fair and right to give women equal opportunity, but we're getting increasing evidence from studies around the world about what a difference economic empowerment makes.

For a lot of women, the greater opportunities are in informal sectors, such as agriculture, often in rural areas. The restrictions they face often are some combination of education, health care, legal systems and participation in governance.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Justice O'Connor, I'd like to ask you about the



Robert Zoellick of World Bank Group, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Wei Sun Christianson of Morgan Stanley

role of men in your career. I read your husband's remarks when you were appointed to the Supreme Court, how he had a fuller life because of your promotion.

**MS. O'CONNOR:** He had to give up his practice in Arizona, which he loved, to move to D.C., and his firm had no business in D.C. So, he was kind of adrift.

I wasn't sure I should take the job when it was offered, because I wasn't sure I could do it well enough. It was my husband who said, "Oh, you'll do fine. That's ridiculous." He was so supportive. It's hard to imagine anyone being better than he was.

**MS. CHRISTIANSON:** My father played a very important role in my life. My mother inspired me by being my role model, but that would have not been the case without my father treating my mother as an equal.

My parents both were very serious Communists and believed ideologically in equality. My father, to a certain extent, sacrificed his own career to let my mom develop her profession. Ever since I was young, equality was a given for me. So, once I

grew older and faced the world, I had no fear. I could say, "If it could happen to my parents, then I could replicate that." I thank my father for that.

## Empowerment in Action

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** What about issues of culture and tradition? The World Bank is finding that the key to economic advancement in many countries is working with women more, or policies that put money in the hands of women over men.

**MR. ZOELICK:** I've often asked the women involved in our programs how their husbands respond to this. Universally, there's a sense of first of uncertainty. Often not so much about the role of women as the role of outsiders coming in and doing something. But very quickly, if you start to earn added income, if life starts to get better, people come around pretty quickly.

Since a lot of the women are employed informally, one of the things we've looked at is legal arrangements that might give them more empowerment and then access to credit and other

things. We did a land-titling exercise in Ethiopia. One of the changes was to simply put room on the form for a second name and a second picture. It brought a vast increase in women also having the tenure in land ownership. That created the opportunity to get credit by borrowing against land.

In Rajasthan, there was a women's self-help group, based on helping them improve the productivity of the cows. As the women got organized and confident, they started to take on other issues. They said, "We had a schoolteacher that didn't show up at the local school. Some of us went individually to the district officer, and they never did anything. Then we went as a group and we said, 'Get this teacher to show up.' " Once you start to create these groups and some cohesion, you can start to build other things on it.

## Different Approaches

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Without being stereotypical, what are the attributes women bring to the table, both positively and negatively?

**MS. CHRISTIANSON:** I think women provide different perspectives. And we do think differently than men. If you look at studies, the majority of corporations have very few women on their boards. But these women are adding value by providing different perspectives.

**MS. O'CONNOR:** At the end of the day, a wise old woman and a wise old man are going to reach the same legal conclusion. I think it's been important to have women on the bench so that citizens realize that we do have judges of both sexes. But not because they reach a different conclusion, because of their gender. I don't think that's true. I don't think they do.

**MR. ZOELICK:** When I was a U.S. trade representative, about three-quarters of our senior negotiators were women. And one of the things I observed was that they were superb negotiators, because they were as firm and as directed as their male counterparts. But they managed to push hard in a way that seemed to create less tension and confrontation.

## Career Stages

Continued from page R7  
vestment, as opposed to Return on Investment. And the idea was that expert groups should create this ROWI as a metric, and then companies would commit to including this as one of their yearly targets.

**CATHLEEN BENKO:** The third, the "corporate lattice," acknowledges that it's time to just get real, that if you take a look at the issues and the solutions that we've been talking about in whole or in part for the last 20 years or so, they have not delivered.

So it's time to maybe think differently. It's time to think more expansively and to change expectations. Change the expectations about how careers are supposed to be built. Change expectations about whose ideas and whose voices matter and when.

**BETH A. BROOKE:** Our last recommendation is something we coined CEO Champions. We all know tone at the top is critical, and if the CEOs don't buy into the business case and the need for this, nothing will change. Being a CEO Champion would mean you as a CEO commit to something, to a set of principles,

to a set of standards that you would agree to have applied to your company.

## GLASS CEILING & BOARD LEADERSHIP

**1 THE ROLE OF MEDIA:** The media should report the business case for women on boards and in the executive suite, domestically and globally. The Wall Street Journal should take the lead with continuing coverage. The Journal should also use the CEO Council to highlight these issues.

**2 LEVERAGE SOURCES OF INFLUENCE:** Create a group of professionals to partner with shareholder and other groups to develop standards for recruiting female executives and board members, and for disclosing those efforts. Develop a national list of candidates and metrics for evaluating candidates and the business case for female involvement. Engage, among others, Catalyst, listing firms and public pension funds, and encourage congressional hearings on the importance to economic competitiveness.

**3 EXECUTIVE SEARCH:** Executive-search firms must commit to including women on every candidate slate. Company succession planning should be linked to this process. They should develop clear methodology for evaluating the potential of executive and board candidates. Candidates from the non-profit, academic and government sectors should be included.

**4 ENGAGE MEN:** Find CEOs and board chairs to champion and promote the business case for women on boards and in senior positions. Begin reverse mentoring for men in order for them to understand how women manage and lead.

**ALAN MURRAY:** The top priority was the role of the media. The media should report the business case for women on boards and in the executive suite domestically and globally. The Wall Street Journal should take the lead with continuing coverage. It was compared to what we do, for instance, with CEO pay. If we did the same sort of accountability on women in the workplace, it could have a powerful effect.

**BARBARA HACKMAN FRANKLIN:** The fundamental idea behind the second recommendation is that there are influencers out there on companies. Chief among those would be shareholders.

What we would like to do is create a group to engage and partner with those influencers to push for more women in management and on boards.

**KARENA STRELLA:** Next we talked about making search firms commit to this diverse slate and having women represented—and not just the same slate of women, but really expanding it beyond the typical corporate world into public service, government, professional services, etc.

And the last one: Men, men, men. Engaging the men who are in power who think that they're doing quite a bit, but may not understand what the actual impact could be if they did more.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**1 ROSIE THE START-UP:** Teach entrepreneurship skills, both at the state and national level, from grammar school onward. Expand already existing programs. Establish apprenticeships within businesses. Make a videogame that teaches entrepreneurship skills: She loses if she doesn't ask for enough money from her investors; if she apologizes, the game immediately crashes.

**2 MAKE SBA CABINET LEVEL:** Completely restructure the

Small Business Administration and rename it the High-Growth and Employment Agency. Make this a cabinet-level position. Measure creation of jobs. Change the definition of a "women owned" business to allow equity investment. Reinvalidate the National Women's Business Council.

**3 TAX CREDITS:** Tax credits or deferred taxes for "women owned" businesses that create jobs. Offer new tax structure to provide an incentive for women to become investors.

**4 ENCOURAGE WOMEN INVESTORS:** Women should leverage their money as investors. Existing investors should act as mentors to encourage and educate other women investors. They should mentor, guide and reserve for follow-on capital. Create investor-affinity groups. Establish a clearinghouse of opportunities for investment in women-led companies.

**MEGAN GARDNER:** We can't start teaching business in college and grad school. It's just too late. It needs to be a core skill, from grammar school all through high school. So one idea was, let's create a videogame called Rosie the Start-Up.

**JULIA ANGWIN:** One of the things that came up is that women don't ask for enough money

when they launch start-ups. So that's why Rosie loses if she doesn't ask for enough money when she goes to pitch her investors. And also if she apologizes, the game crashes immediately.

**NICOLE J. WALKER:** Second idea is to completely restructure the SBA and make it a cabinet-level position. Along with that, we need to reinvigorate the National Women's Business Council.

**MS. ANGWIN:** Part of this is the overarching theme of rebranding "small" as "high growth." Because small just seems small. Who wants small? Nobody wants small.

**MS. WALKER:** Third, we recommend tax credits for women-owned businesses and tax incentives for women to become investors.

**CYNTHIA B. PADNOS:** The fourth area was about encouraging women as investors, and by that we really mean direct investors.

There's a preponderance of data that show that a firm that has a woman as a partner is 75% more likely to invest in a women-led or co-founded business than a firm that is exclusively male.

They should take the skills they've built as executives, as founders themselves, and become guides and supporting infrastructure to those companies that they do invest in.

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## The Top Five Recommendations

After each individual career-stage-focused group presented its priorities, the full task force ranked all the priorities, in order of their relative urgency and importance. Here's a look at those top five priorities, as voted by the entire task force.

## 1 TALK TO ACTION: IT STARTS WITH US

Leverage the power of women at the conference. Attendees should deliver the key messages of the conference to their own companies and industries. McKinsey could create a standard set of materials, including an executive summary, talking points and questions for attendees, to help them drive action within their own companies. Report back at next year's conference on what has been accomplished.

## 2 THE ROLE OF MEDIA

The media should report the business case for women on

boards and in the executive suite, domestically and globally. The Wall Street Journal should take the lead with continuing coverage. The Journal should also use the CEO Council to highlight these issues.

## 3 CREATE A CEO COMMISSION

Create a commission composed of CEO volunteers from some of the nation's leading companies to identify, drive and publish the results of transformative, internal efforts to increase women at the top. The group would discuss the possibility of setting public targets for advancing women in senior management. Company scorecards and metrics would be published. Formation of the commission could be initiated and led by a variety of private-sector organizations.

## 4 TOP TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

Tie top team members' compensation and performance evaluations to results achieved in moving midlevel women forward. Set specific diversity targets. The executive committee and the board should monitor progress. Include human-resources issues in board-level discussions.

## 5 TEACH GENDER EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP

Provide training on gender bias to parents and instructors, draft a curriculum and teach students about gender equity alongside other social issues. Work to ease transitions in the education process at key drop-off points for girls. Start early teaching of leadership skills in schools, along with related topics such as networking and negotiations. Re-evaluate the core curriculum in all subjects to focus on gender equality and leadership.



# View From the Top

PepsiCo's Indra Nooyi on the trade-offs she made—and why she hopes her daughters won't have to

**T**ask-force participants at the conference had no end of recommendations for addressing the challenges—and opportunities—facing women in the economy. Give women more bottom-line responsibilities. Hold CEOs accountable. Recruit outside the regular channels. And so on.

To get insight into those issues, The Wall Street Journal's Alan Murray turned to one of the highest-ranking women in corporate America: Indra Nooyi, chairman and chief executive of PepsiCo. Here are edited excerpts from the discussion.

## Reaching the Top

**MR. MURRAY:** *McKinsey research, building on Catalyst research, shows this pipeline in corporate America. The majority of entrants are very high-qualified women—but at each stage of advancement, men have at least twice the odds of advancing as women. How the hell did you do it?*

**MS. NOOYI:** I ask myself that question every day. Especially recently, I've been looking back and thinking about all of the trade-offs and sacrifices I've had to make to get here. My second daughter's going off to college this September, and I say, "My God, I missed so many things about her growing up." Hopefully, my two daughters will be in an environment where it's going to be easier for them.

**MR. MURRAY:** *Are you suggesting that it could have been easier, and you still could have achieved the pinnacle you achieved?*

**MS. NOOYI:** From a family situation, I wanted it all, and it wasn't easy. But I lucked out in one way. I had a husband who said, "You're going to have true gender equality." He was working, I was working, but we juggled our schedules. I also had tremendous support from the extended family.

On the professional side, I had mentors who gave me feedback. For example, I'm a pretty honest and outspoken person. So, you sit in a meeting and somebody presents a three-year, five-year plan. Typically, a lot of the men in the room would say, "You know, that's very interesting. But maybe you could think about this slightly differently."

I just said, "That's crap. This is never going to happen." I'm sure they were all thinking that, but they were saying it in a much more gentle way. I'd come out of the meeting, and one of the guys would pull me aside and say, "You could have said the thing slightly differently. Maybe not the way I said it. Maybe not the way you said it. There might have been a middle ground."

I was very happy that these mentors stepped up and gave me feedback on how to interact in a world that is predominantly male. How can I keep my authenticity, yet adapt to the environment?

**MR. MURRAY:** *Can you have an example of where you didn't make the compromise on authenticity?*

**MS. NOOYI:** If my kids called in the middle of a meeting, I took the call. I never said, "Mom's not available." I said, "Excuse me, my kids need to talk to me."

## The Leaky Pipe

**MR. MURRAY:** *How do you account for the fact that the pipeline is, to use the adjectives that have been used here, leaky, blocked, broken?*

**MS. NOOYI:** I think the pyramid starts narrowing for everybody, but disproportionately for women because the pipeline wasn't as rich as it needed to be coming up.

I think there might be three reasons why that's so. One, just law of numbers, there weren't enough women in the pipeline. Second, as you move up the organization, there are so many trade-offs and sacrifices to be made. Many women opted out.



**INDRA NOOYI** 'The harder the business, the bigger the turnaround, put your hand up and say "I want to do it."'

Third is the environment in many companies, because it's more male dominated. It's changing now, but the senior men belong to the older generation who talk differently and act differently.

Let's say Alan Murray made a presentation, and it was awful. The guys would go to Alan Murray, thump him on the back and say, "Alan, buddy, what happened? You screwed up, man." And Alan says, "You think so? Tell me what I did wrong." There's a locker-room conversation that goes on.

When a woman makes a presentation that's not so good, the men say, "She screwed up, God, she did." That's not locker room; that's heckling the woman.

Women need to go to women and say, "Hey, that presentation wasn't very good. Let me tell you how you could have done it better." But there's a reverse problem. When women give women feedback, women don't take it well. So, there's a funny

psychological issue we need to address. Women can be better mentors to women, and women should be more willing to accept women mentors.

## The Bottom Line

**MR. MURRAY:** *Let's take a look at the list of priorities. Number one was that too many women are in support roles. In order to see women advance to the top, they needed to be put in positions where they could develop responsibility for the bottom line.*

**MS. NOOYI:** Punching the ticket that you've done P&L management makes a huge difference. But roles like finance or HR or marketing are now critical to the functioning of a company. You can actually exert your influence from those roles. So, ask for a P&L role, get it out as soon as you can—and then figure out how to get into a critical function. But make sure that as you do this job, you expand your own definition of that job.

**MR. MURRAY:** *Another recom-*

*mendation was to hold CEOs accountable for hiring women in the top jobs and making sure pay was at an equal level.*

**MS. NOOYI:** I agree with all of that, especially the pay parity, which is something we can fix right away. The thing to be very careful about, though, is that if you don't fix the issue of getting talented women in the pipeline, you can't fix the top-management issue overnight. That's a formula for disaster. You put women in there, and they don't succeed, and then it's a worse situation for women.

**MR. MURRAY:** *Another idea was to promote women on potential. A phrase that's been repeated around here for the last few days is that men are promoted for potential, and women are promoted on performance. The implication is that there's a higher hurdle that women have to meet.*

**MS. NOOYI:** I think that's changed a lot. The sensitivity, the aware-

ness of these issues is rising, but I think we ought to keep the pressure on. As long as there are no women in the C-suite, these kinds of discussions won't happen.

**MR. MURRAY:** *Then there's the need for strong talent-management programs. Companies need to recruit outside of normal channels, leverage diverse networks and take risks on high-potential women by rotating them through different positions.*

**MS. NOOYI:** I completely agree with that. As for women themselves, I want to give you all a piece of advice. The harder the business, the bigger the turnaround, put your hand up and say, "I want to do it." Because doing a real turnaround and showing that you can take a difficult situation and make something out of it, counts for running three P&Ls. So, I'd suggest that you volunteer for these difficult jobs. It gives you a big diving board into many other things.

# Climbing the Hill

Florida Gov. Rick Scott on how government can help women advance



**GOV. RICK SCOTT** 'One thing the political process can do a better job of is getting more women active in it.'

**P**articipants at the conference zeroed in on a handful of top priorities for advancing women, such as getting them out of support jobs and into roles where they affect a company's bottom line.

To find out what role government can play in that drive, The Wall Street Journal's Rebecca Blumenstein spoke with Florida's Republican governor, Rick Scott, who has appointed a number of women to top positions in his administration. Here are edited excerpts of the discussion.

## Women in the Capitol

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Many of the people you're working with are women. Could you outline the role that women play in your administration?*

**MR. SCOTT:** My lieutenant governor is the first elected female lieutenant governor in the state, and she's African-American. My transition chair was a woman from D.C., and my policy director, Mary Anne Carter, has worked with me for a while.

I have three deputy chiefs of staff, and two of them are female. I think one of them has the

hardest job; she's doing children and family services, Medicaid reform, elderly affairs, the agency for persons with disabilities, all the hard things. Probably half my policy and budgeting team is female.

Then there's the lady that runs juvenile justice, the lady that runs the lottery, and the lady that runs the department of revenue.

So, probably almost half of the top people in the administration.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *McKinsey did a study and found that there's a sense that men are promoted on their potential and women on their performance. Are you seeing things change?*

**MR. SCOTT:** I never think about what other people are doing. In my case, I have the same expectations for everyone. Find the best people you can, and then hold everybody accountable by measuring them.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *What do you mean in terms of measurement?*

**MR. SCOTT:** Whatever it is, everybody should have a job description. What are the goals for the year, and measure it..

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Can we talk about education? In New Jersey, Gov. Christie has irked many teachers in the unions, and that's happened here in Florida, as well. Some people say that teachers are obviously predominantly female, and some of these moves to try to cut the state work force really hurt women.*

**MR. SCOTT:** Everything I'm doing will increase private-sector jobs. And I talk to teachers. One of my daughters teaches special-needs kids; she wants to be measured on her performance. She doesn't expect to be guaranteed a job if she doesn't do a good job.

## No Limits

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *One of the main recommendations that came up was to give women P&L positions. You ran Columbia/*

*HCA Healthcare for many years. What are the things that have held women back from further advancement? One of the big thoughts among participants here was to put women in line jobs, not in support jobs, because women need more bottom-line experience.*

**MR. SCOTT:** There's no reason a woman can't do a job better than somebody else. You've got to give them the opportunity. Everybody we go through, we find the best people, and we tell them what the job is. There's no limitation on what people can do. And that's what my daughters think.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *How do you do your searches? How do you make sure that you get enough women? Sometimes the answer back from a search is, "Well, there aren't any qualified women."*

**MR. SCOTT:** No, there are plenty of qualified women. When we do a search, we write the job description, and we do it as broad as we can.

I think there is one area that women are not as active. When you run for office, there are probably more women involved in the grass roots, but less involved in the fund-raising side of it.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Florida has an unemployment rate that's above the national average right now. Is advancing women something that's fair to hold government accountable for, as you have all these other priorities that you're trying to meet?*

**MR. SCOTT:** My job is to make sure I'm fair. I give everybody an opportunity, and that's true whether you're speaking about women, or whether you're speaking about African-Americans or whatever group you're talking about. I put a lot of effort into making sure it's fair. I think one thing the political process can do a better job of is getting more women active in it. Through the Republican party, that's the one thing I'm pushing.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *It sounds like getting women more involved in the fund-raising side of politics would be helpful?*

**MR. SCOTT:** Whether it's grass roots or whether it's raising money or whatever, the political process is impacted by those

things. So, I think that they should get involved. I think everybody should. I give a lot of talks to kids, and I say, "This budget's yours. You're paying for all this. And so you better get active."

## Get Out There

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** *Another recommendation was a CEO commission that identifies, drives and publishes the results of transformative, internal changes to increase women at the top. This would be a regular, ongoing priority, putting out things like board membership and how companies are doing on a number of indices.*

**MR. SCOTT:** I think putting out information is helpful. I can tell you with regard to state government, the biggest thing is to get people to apply and get in front of people. I have 2,000 appointments, and I try to find the best people I can, but sometimes it takes more searching to really find the people we want. So, I think the biggest thing is to get really active and apply.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** *You're the father of two daughters. How much influence has that fact had on your putting women in various positions? And being comfortable working with powerful women around you?*

**MR. SCOTT:** It probably helps. One of the things I wanted my daughters to do is go to all-girls schools because there would be, clearly, a female class president, and all those things. They did, until my second really fought us on that.

Going back, half my class out of law school were females. You grew up competing with them; you had all these qualified women, and now there was more opportunity for them. And my mom was very pushy. If you live in Florida, you saw an ad she did for me. She seems really nice; she really wasn't. She had a big yardstick.

In contrast, there's my wife's family. Basically, she was told that her and her sister didn't need to go to college, but her two brothers should. And, of course, she and her sister finished college.

I think having daughters probably helps. As much as I push them, now they push me pretty hard. So they're not quiet and shy.



# Parental Guidance

Sallie Krawcheck on getting to the top as a working mother

**M**any people consider Sallie Krawcheck the most powerful woman on Wall Street. Currently the president of global wealth and investment management for **Bank of America Corp.**, she has also held senior positions at Citigroup and, before that, at Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. She talked with The Wall Street Journal's Alan Murray about the challenges of getting to the top as a working mother. Here are edited excerpts from their conversation.

## The Secret of Success

**MR. MURRAY:** How did you do it? How did you manage to get to where you are in such a male-dominated industry as Wall Street?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** There is absolutely nothing that beats hard work. You hoped that when you were coming out of college, you were the smartest. It turned out none of us are. But I could sure outwork a lot of folks. And by working very hard, by finding what the points of impact were in different businesses, by really focusing on the client and driving through with some hard work, you can certainly make it. But the title here is being a working mother as an extreme sport. And I think there's no doubt that bringing up the kids, having a family life and also having a full-time job on Wall Street is as extreme as it gets.

**MR. MURRAY:** When you look at Wall Street, how much of the problem of women advancing is institutional, structural barriers? And how much of it is the personal—"Hey, this isn't what I want to do with my life?"

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** Let's start with the basics, which is the hair and the makeup. Let's assume it's 15 minutes a day. I've gotten up earlier than my husband since the day we've been married; 15 minutes a day, 75 minutes a week, 3,900 minutes a year.

Now you can say, "Well, don't wear makeup." Give me a break. So you start with the hair and the makeup. You then have the fact that women do twice as much of the housework as the guys do. And we do three times the amount of child care.

I've had this great husband without whom I couldn't have done it. So it's learning to have a relationship that's a relationship of equals. My breakthrough moment was when I convinced my husband that when the toddler woke up in the middle of the night and screamed, "Mommy," he actually meant, "Parent of either sex."

And you have to recognize we just get less sleep. And you have to have the stamina to deal with it.

The second part is the Wall Street part. For a period of time, Wall Street had high barriers because of complexity. And dealing with complex instruments, that tends to draw men. So there's a natural gravitation of men. Then there also has been, for some number of years, a culture of urgency on Wall Street. Everything is the most important thing. And therefore, I found for years on Wall Street, stretch assignments went to men. Or stretch assignments did not go to women because we have to have the sure-fire person in there. What I found worked was, I would go beyond the stretch assignment and I'll take the thing that needs to be fixed. And so by raising your hand and saying, "I'll go beyond the stretch and take the really tough assignment," that was a way to make some progress.

## 'I Need to Work'

**MR. MURRAY:** You've talked about how demanding the Wall Street life is. Weighing that against the demand of the kids at home, did you ever reach the point where you said, "You know what, there are other things I

could do?" Did you ever think it's not worth the effort?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** I was fortunate in that I had a career break in my 20s. So I wandered through my 20s not knowing what I wanted to do, was in investment banking for a period of time and left my job when I was pregnant with my son. I was very much on the track of, "I'll probably do some part-time nonprofit work, maybe some part-time for-profit work, and really stay at home with my son."

A few months in, I found myself on my hands and knees trying to teach him to crawl. And then there was another day when some friends went to play doubles tennis and it upset me that I wasn't included. Those two things happened. I said, "I cannot do this to my family. It's not fair to them, and I need to work."

**MR. MURRAY:** Elaborate on what you mean by "I cannot do this to my family."

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** I've just got too much energy to do that to that poor kid. Let me do that to our clients. Let me do it to the folks that are paid to work with me. I have too much of that neurotic energy. So I really have never questioned whether it's right for me and for my family to work.

**MR. MURRAY:** After that, you never felt guilt?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** When you leave and the three-year-old is crying, "Don't go Mommy, don't go," you have to have a heart of stone not to feel guilt. But I never showed fear. I had a certainty that I loved what I was doing. It was good for my family. And so I was pretty steady about it.

## Upside and Downside of Candor

**MR. MURRAY:** Let's talk about the things that have helped you succeed. You already talked about working hard, making sure you were working harder than anyone else in the room. You have always gotten ahead by being sometimes extraordinarily candid. I saw at one point that you were asked about how you can tell if someone on Wall Street is lying. And you said, "If their lips move."



**SALLIE KRAWCHECK** 'I had a certainty that I loved what I was doing. It was good for my family.'

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** I think it's going to be on my tombstone, actually.

**MR. MURRAY:** And there are some stories that that's part of what happened at Citigroup—that you were quite insistent that certain investors be compensated for bad securities that were sold to them.

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** Right.

**MR. MURRAY:** Do you find that sort of candid truth-telling has served you well?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** Well, it can serve you well and it can serve you ill. If you're not calling a spade a spade, if you're not telling the truth, what's the point? Particularly when you get to senior levels, you have to draw your line in the sand and advocate for your clients and you really sometimes just say, "This is where my line is and I'm not going to cross it."

I'm fortunate where I am to-

day. I've been fortunate in many points in my career to have terrific bosses. My first promotion was when I was about six months pregnant. I said, "Do you see this? Are you sure?"

I can speak the truth. But I don't feel as comfortable having a tantrum at the office. There are many men, particularly in financial services, who can scream, shout, throw things. Nobody blinks an eye.

**MR. MURRAY:** You never do that? You don't scream or shout or throw things?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** It's been rare. I've done it strategically a couple of times where I actually wasn't mad but I figured OK, I'm going to act mad because I really want to make the point.

**MR. MURRAY:** Is there any inherent reason why you couldn't have a Wall Street culture that allows people who work from 8 to 3 to do well?

**MS. KRAWCHECK:** It depends on what they want to do. You can't do my job from 8 to 3. And it wouldn't be fair to the individuals who work within wealth management. It wouldn't be fair to our shareholders. It wouldn't be fair to my partners and colleagues. But what I think we can get to is: "I don't want to run wealth management at this stage. I want to be able to do it in five years. So what I want to do right now is either off-ramp or partially off-ramp without being penalized. And then at some point say, Okay, I'm ready to go again. I'm ready for the extreme sport rather than the bunny slopes."

## WSJ.com

**ONLINE TODAY:** Has having kids improved or worsened your opportunities for advancement on the job? Vote and weigh in, at [WSJ.com/WIE](http://WSJ.com/WIE).

# It's Partly in Your Head

Sandra Witelson on how male and female brains differ



**SANDRA WITELSON** 'It is important to celebrate these differences.'

**S**andra Witelson has spent much of her career studying the relationship between brain structure and function, and the differences in these between men and women.

A neuroscientist from the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Dr. Witelson has assembled a massive collection of brains for research and is known for studying Albert Einstein's brain and what made it unique.

She sat down with The Wall Street Journal's Rebecca Blumenstein to discuss how brain differences can affect the skills, behavior, thinking and aspirations of men and women, and how that might relate to their careers.

Here are edited excerpts of their conversation.

## A Language Advantage

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** You have found significant differences between male and female brains. Could you explain what those are?

**DR. WITELSON:** The very first one that I reported [in a 1976 paper] was that when a young boy is doing things relevant for reading, he is using one side of his brain. He uses the other side for nonreading skills. In a girl, there is much more of a bilateral involvement in these skills. So, in the normal six-year-old, the brain is organized to do the same task, but it's organized in a very different way.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Could you go a little bit more deeply into the

innate differences? When we spoke earlier, you had said that there's a finding that there are 12% more brain cells in the female brain.

**DR. WITELSON:** Some of you may know that there is a structure called the corpus callosum. It is the big highway track between the left and the right hemispheres. What we were able to show is that there is a part of this corpus callosum that is larger in women in the back part of the brain, which is the region where language representation is. This may be part of the substrate that gives an advantage to earlier speech, to better ability to learn phonics, to verbal fluency in women. In another study, we found that in the lan-

guage region, there were more brain cells in women than in men.

Other laboratories have shown that boys' frontal lobes, which are important for judgment and planning of our behavior, mature at a slower rate than girls' frontal lobes. As a consequence, there is more risk taking and more behavior that shows poor judgment in boys than in girls in the adolescent period.

Another example is the response to stress. In animals, it has been shown that in acute stress situations, the male brain, in the hippocampus, which is in the middle of the brain and is crucial for new learning and memory, sprouts more synapses and dendrites, which facilitate learning. In contrast, there is a decrease in the amount of sprouting of these interconnections among neurons in a female during periods of acute stress. It turns out that chronic stress may be biologically responded to more adaptively in the female than the male brain.

There is another part of the brain, the amygdala, that becomes active if there is a negative response to emotionally arousing stimuli. The amygdala is connected physiologically to different parts of the brain in each sex, and I think this has tremendous implications for our behavior.

In men, the amygdala communicates very strongly to motor parts of the brain, which means behavior that is directed outward to the external milieu. And in women, the amygdala is connected very strongly to the hypothalamus, which looks after our internal environment—our breathing, our heart rate, etc.

## Innate or Acquired?

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** A few years ago, Larry Summers got into a lot of hot water when he said that innate differences between men and women might be one reason fewer women succeed in science and math careers. But you would say that we need to acknowledge these differences.

**DR. WITELSON:** Yes, I would say that. No one gets upset that there is an innate difference in lung capacity between different groups of people. No one seems to be that upset when there are different motor skills and athletic skills. But when it comes to our most revered organ, namely the brain, people do not like to think that there is something innate, immutable. But the brain is

an organ of the body like any other organ. So to think that there are no innate differences is an incorrect assumption.

What is very important is to try to get the full picture of why women and men are differentially distributed in the work force in many fields. It's not only trying to understand the organizations and the culture and dealing with the social environment, external milieu, but it is essential to try to understand where some of the differences that you all know and see come from. It is important to celebrate these differences and for the people in authority, whether they're men or women, to understand that, on average, women may bring different styles of thinking, different approaches, different skill sets to their job and should be hired for those reasons and not to fill any quota.

The other advantage would be for women to understand who they are.

There is a very informative study by some psychologists who studied thousands of children who scored in the top one percentile on the SAT, Scholastic Aptitude Test, on mathematics when they were in elementary school. There were a lot more boys, but there still were a lot of girls. These kids were followed 20, 30 years later. There were fewer physicists among the women. There were fewer mathematicians. There were more administrators among the women. But I think more revealing was that when they were asked to talk about what is important in their life, what their priorities are, there were huge differences.

For women, they are statistically more interested in having close relationships with parents, having a part-time career, living close to parents and relatives, period. Men, on the other hand, more frequently said they want to have a full-time career, and they wanted to invent and create something.

So my point is that the kind of aspirations that men and women have may be very related to some of the biological drives and needs that we have inherited as Homo sapiens over the development of our species.

## WSJ.com

**ONLINE TODAY:** Men or women—which sex do you think handles stress better? Cast your vote, at [WSJ.com/WIE](http://WSJ.com/WIE).



# Life Imitates Art

Geena Davis on how gender inequality on TV and in movies has a powerful impact on kids

**G**eena Davis is an Academy Award-winning actor, probably best known for her roles in movies such as “Thelma and Louise,” “A League of Their Own” and “The Accidental Tourist.”

But in more recent years, she has become an advocate for gender equality in children’s entertainment. As founder of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, she aims to work with content creators to increase the number of girls and women in films and television shows aimed at kids.

She sat down with The Wall Street Journal’s Rebecca Blumenstein to discuss her career, the role that changed her life and the problem with the way women are portrayed in G-rated movies. Here are edited excerpts of their conversation.

## A Life-Changing Role

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** You became known for picking your roles very carefully. Why did you feel so strongly about that at an early point?

**MS. DAVIS:** It was really for purely selfish reasons, because as an actor I wanted to feel challenged and, you know, play baseball rather than be the girlfriend of the person who plays baseball.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** The film “Thelma and Louise” has such a strong feminist message. Did you realize that signing up for it?

**MS. DAVIS:** I don’t think any of us involved in the movie had any idea the reaction that it was going to get. It was very unusual because it had two excellent female parts, and I desperately wanted to be in it.

But what happened was when that movie came out, the difference between if somebody recognized me at the cleaners or something before that movie and that weekend that it came out—it was just night and day.

Afterward, I had women holding me by the lapels, so I could hear their story. And that experience really brought home to me how few opportunities we give women to feel like that about a movie. To feel passionately identified with it and feel empow-

ered and thrilled. It’s just incredibly rare. And I think everything in my life has been colored since then by that experience.

## A Shocking Study

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** You moved on, became a mom and suddenly as an actor you began to develop some different beliefs about the role of media.

**MS. DAVIS:** Being in the business and having the experiences I had where some movies I did resonated with women or girls—like “A League of Their Own”—I had a heightened sense about women’s roles in the media. Then when my daughter—she’s 8 now—when she was about 2, I started watching G-rated videos and preschool programs with her.

And I was absolutely floored to see the same kind of gender bias and gender gap in what we’re showing little kids. She’d be on my lap and I’d be counting the characters on my fingers and thinking, “This is just not right.”

I didn’t intend to turn it into a whole institute or a whole new life for myself. But I started mentioning it around Hollywood. If I had a meeting with a studio executive or a producer, I’d say, “Hey, have you ever noticed how few female characters there seem to be in G-rated movies and things for kids?” And they



Genesis Photos for The Wall Street Journal

**GEENA DAVIS** ‘Of the female characters that existed, the majority are highly stereotyped and/or hypersexualized.’

pretty much across the board would say, “No. No, that’s not true anymore. That’s been fixed.”

So that’s what made me decide that I would need the facts and not just my impression. We raised some money, and we ended up doing the largest research study ever done on G-rated movies and television shows made for kids 11 and under. And the results were stunning.

What we found was that in G-rated movies, for every one female character, there were three male characters. If it was a group scene, it would change to five to one, male to female.

Of the female characters that existed, the majority are highly stereotyped and/or hypersexualized. To me, the most disturbing thing was that the female characters in G-rated movies wear the same amount of sexually revealing clothing as the female characters in R-rated movies.

And then we looked at aspira-

tions and occupations and things like that. Pretty much the only aspiration for female characters was finding romance, whereas there are practically no male characters whose ultimate goal is finding romance. The No. 1 occupation was royalty. Nice gig, if you can get it. And we found that the majority of female characters in animated movies have a body type that can’t exist in real life. So, the question you can think of from all this is: What message are we sending to kids?

## Mitigating the Damage

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** Have you done any work on what the impact is?

**MS. DAVIS:** The whole idea for me was I wanted to take the facts and go back to the people who are creating the media. We go straight to the studios and the producers, the Writers Guild, the Animators Guild, the Casting Directors Guild, and present our research.

The fascinating thing that we found from the beginning was that they were absolutely shocked.

The fact that, in general, all of their movies are so lacking in a female presence is stunning to them. That makes it, obviously, not a conspiracy, not a conscious choice, and leaves them very open to rethinking it and saying, “Now that we know, we’re going to make some changes.”

And we feel certain that when we update [our research] in 2015 that we will have seen the needle move.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** What does a parent do? Is there evidence that the more TV and movies that kids watch—does it have an impact on them?

**MS. DAVIS:** Definitely. They found that the more hours of television a girl watches, the fewer options she believes she has in life. And the more hours a boy watches, the more sexist his views become.

What we recommend, and what I do with my kids, is watch with them.

They’re only allowed to watch TV if I’m there. And I make a running commentary the whole time to take away the negative impact, asking things such as: “Couldn’t a girl have played that part?” And there’s reason to believe that this is actually very effective.

**MS. BLUMENSTEIN:** You did “Commander in Chief” recently. Do you believe playing the female commander in chief has an impact on society?

**MS. DAVIS:** Negative images can powerfully affect boys and girls, but positive images have the same kind of impact. We know that if girls can see characters doing unstereotyped kinds of occupations and activities, they’re much more likely as an adult to pursue unusual and outside-the-box occupations. I really believe that if you can see it, you can be it.

## Tales

Continued from page R6

are preferentially more suitable to those kinds of crises.

But what I do notice in crises is that women are more likely to reach to each other for support. So it was very natural for me when I was leading the CDC to find other women in government that I could connect to or confer with or talk to who would help me. And I in turn would try to support and help them.

I didn’t observe much of that among the men that I encountered. I think men want to be perceived as more competent and more independently effective. And it may be harder to acknowledge that they need help or that you can create a whole that’s greater than the sum of the parts.

## Making Tech Safe for Women

**MS. ANGWIN:** Marissa, you joined Google in ‘99 as the first female engineer. You’ve been a manager at Google since...

**MS. MAYER:** Probably since about 2002.

**MS. ANGWIN:** And so you manage a lot of male engineers, right? How is that for you?

**MS. MAYER:** People ask me a lot about what it’s like to be a woman at Google, but I’m not really a woman at Google—I’m a geek at Google. I’m surrounded by people who love technology and love to try out the latest gadgets and love to see what can you do with this piece of code or that piece of code. We’re excited about all the same things, and that’s our common ground.

**MS. ANGWIN:** One thing that’s interesting about your generation is that in the past women in business tried to maybe keep some of their femaleness in check, whereas you celebrate your love of fashion, your love of cupcakes. These are two things the brand Marissa stands for. How has that helped or hurt you within the organization?

**MS. MAYER:** I think it’s just something that’s separate. One of the things that’s really important to me is getting more young women into science and technology. One of the trade-offs that often happens for girls is they think, “I like art. I like fashion. And I’m going to have to hide that or dial that back in order to get taken seriously.” I don’t think that’s necessarily the case.

In a lot of issues of fashion and things like that, there is also just an engineering problem that has to do with material strength and how something moves, how something works. A lot of times it’s very engineered, so there are commonalities there.

I think it’s important to send the message that you don’t have to give up your femininity in order to be in a male-dominated space like the Internet.

**MS. ANGWIN:** The McKinsey report did say tech and finance are lagging behind other industries in terms of women’s success.

**MS. MAYER:** I personally am very optimistic. I think that one of the things that really helps is the idea of, one, role models, but two, actually getting to see how technology applies in your everyday life. For me, growing up, I knew one woman computer scientist, and she worked at J.C. Penney on the catalog system. That wasn’t something that I got to touch and feel every day.

Now, with the pervasiveness of the Internet, videogames, technology just being all around us, I hope a lot more young women get interested in how can you build that and how can you build the next great thing that really helps people.

## Team and Brand Building

**MS. GALLONI:** Debra Lee, chairman and CEO of BET Networks, is the woman behind famous shows like “The Game” and “The Mo’Nique Show.”

You started at BET in 1986 as general counsel. And then 10 years later you were promoted to chief operating officer. And you say many people below you tried to sort of trick you. They figured, “She doesn’t know my business, so I’m not going to tell her things.”

Can you tell us a little bit about how that happened? And how much do you think that that had to do with the fact that you were a woman?

**MS. LEE:** It was a small, entrepreneurial company. I had been part of a peer group of probably seven or eight other executives. All except two were male. I went from being part of the peer group to being the boss. And I found out all the other men had asked for the COO position, so they were not happy when I was given it.

So there was a lot of “hide the ball” going on. They didn’t feel like they should educate me and give me insight into their divisions. They thought the more they could just run their divi-

sions and keep them away from me, that I would be unsuccessful. Little by little, I had to change that team and hire people who were loyal to me, who wanted to see me succeed and weren’t there to see my demise.

**MS. GALLONI:** How long did it take you to complete the process?

**MS. LEE:** It took about six years before I felt very comfortable that it was my own team. And that’s longer than it should have taken.

I don’t want to generalize about women, but I was trying the “nice girl” approach. So I didn’t come in, as some men do, and fire everyone and start all over. I tried to work with them. I tried to support them. I tried to show them that I was a good person. And then when I saw it wasn’t going to work, I eventually had to fire most of them.

If I had to do it over again, I would come in day one and make changes.

**MS. GALLONI:** As we’ll see in the media breakout session and part of the McKinsey report, the media actually do quite badly in terms of the advancement of women. But media also are very influential in terms of perception. Do you think the image of women in media does not help the advancement of women?

**MS. LEE:** It probably does not help. But I just think it’s so important to have women in the rooms making decisions about programming and images, because that’s the only we’ll ever be at parity and ever really change the way we’re going.

When I became CEO of BET, it was right after the Don Imus incident with Rutgers women’s basketball. And people were looking at hip-hop and saying, “If Don Imus was wrong, then all these young hip-hop artists must be wrong, too, for calling women names and everything.”

And all of a sudden one day I had protesters outside my house. And I’m like, “How does this happen? I’m doing the right thing, I care about women, I care about the images of African-Americans. And now I have protesters outside my house?”

But it really made me sit back and think about BET, BET as a brand, what I wanted my legacy to be, what I wanted to leave in terms of programming. And that’s really influenced my approach to original programming and really has turned BET around in the past couple of years. I’m very proud of that.

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