
BENCHMARKING STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: PHASE 2

Challenges Women Leaders Face, How to Overcome Them, and Results Accomplished

November 2022



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I. Executive Summary

As an executive coach and organization development consultant for 25+ years, I frequently saw leadership teams requesting women to speak up, push back, and bring more of themselves into the team. My hypothesis was that when women drop their limiting beliefs and have a strong community of support, they courageously step out of their comfort zones, find their voices and bring their full selves to work, which allows them to be effective and enables the company to be successful. When these high potential women receive the right coaching and create a powerful “two-way street” of alignment and empowerment with their managers, they not only transform their impact in the organization, they feel empowered, energized and engaged.

The intention of this study is to identify the biggest challenges women leaders face, from the points of view of three different stakeholder groups (male executives, female executives, and HR professionals) and share quantitative data regarding how women are feeling and acting and rarely admitting. Women of color face even greater and in some cases different challenges, which this study does not document and we acknowledge is important work to include through other studies.

We will share our recommendations companies can take to close the gaps so companies and leadership can commit to empowering women to overcome the biggest challenges they face, thereby unlocking organizational success through unleashing the potential of half their population.

Headlines from Latest Research Findings

[Women in the Workplace 2022: McKinsey and Lean In \(October 2022\)](#)

- Women leaders are switching jobs at the highest rate ever and at higher rates than men in leadership, with some calling this time a “Great Breakup.”
 - Numbers of women were already lower, and companies are struggling to retain the women leaders they do have. This is even more significant for women of color.
 - For every woman at the director level who gets promoted to the next level, two women directors are choosing to leave their company.
- Examples of common “microaggressions” and dynamics that undermine their authority and signal it will be difficult to advance:
 - When colleagues imply they aren’t qualified
 - Being mistaken for someone more junior
 - DEI work women perform as “extra” to their role isn’t acknowledged in performance reviews
- They value companies who prioritize flexibility, employee well-being, and DEI.
 - 43% women are burned out (compared with 31% of men)
 - Majority of employees want to work for companies with remote or hybrid options
 - Women who choose to work in preferred arrangement of remote or on-site are less burned out, happier in jobs and less likely to consider leaving.

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- Hybrid / remote work is also causing challenges in team members feeling less connected to their teams and there are fewer opportunities for recognition and advancement.
 - What's at stake: retention of current women leaders and the next generation. Younger women are more ambitious and value equitable, supportive, and inclusive workplaces.
 - More than 2/3 of women under 30 want to be senior leaders
 - 41% of women of color want to be top executives, compared to 27% of white women.
 - Women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in leadership roles.

Women in the Workforce Statistics: Senior Roles, Maternity Leaves, Pay Gap in 2022

- Women account for 47.7% of the global workforce.
- 50.2% of the college-educated workforce are women.
- 48% of women occupy entry-level roles.
- Only 27.1% of women are managers and leaders.
- 61% of women think motherhood disrupts their progress opportunities.
- 42% of women claim they have been discriminated at work because of their gender.
- Work-life balance causes conflict for an astonishing 72% of women
- 75% of self-employed women love their job.
- For the past 20 years, the number of women software engineers has increased by just 2%.

What Makes Women CEO's Different? September, 2022

6 Insights pinpointing critical traits that are landing women in CEO roles:

1. They worked harder and longer to get to the top
2. They were driven by a sense of purpose and achieving business results
3. Differentiating traits sustained the women's success on the road to CEO (including courage, risk-taking, resilience, agility, and managing ambiguity).
4. They were more likely to engage the power of teams.
5. Despite evident potential, the women didn't set their sights on becoming CEO (until a boss or mentor encouraged them).
6. The women shared STEM and financial backgrounds that served as springboards.

Process: Who & How

Phase 1 qualitative data: Almost 50 interviews with male, female, and HR executives from a total of almost 25 organizations including:

- Majority Fortune 500 companies, with almost all being Fortune 100
- Three private companies (worth \$500m - \$20b)
- Three European-based companies with rest being US-based with global operations
- Two mid-cap companies
- One mission-driven organization

Industries included: Aerospace, Automotive, Consumer Food, Custom Goods and Products, Luxury Goods, Financial Services, Hospitality, Industrial Manufacturing, Retail, and Technology (Semiconductor, E-commerce, Imaging and Electronics).

Interviews: **Female executives** interviewed were primarily VP with some at the SVP and senior director levels. **HR professionals** were either heads of HR or Global HR Learning Leaders, VP's of Coaching or Diversity & Inclusion, Global Directors of Talent Development or Learning and Development. **Male executives** were primarily CEOs or C-suite executives. Due to the high level of authentic, vulnerable conversations with the majority of all interviews, the participants and their companies will remain anonymous.

Phase 2 quantitative data: Gathered from approximately 500 respondents representing 75% of people who identify as women and 25% who identify as men.

Outcomes

The need and desire for successful women leaders within companies is clear:

- There is much research to show and it is widely accepted that companies with greater gender diversity get better results, increased innovation, varied perspectives that support better problem-solving and market focus, and excellent talent that positively impacts the company and helps grow the diverse talent pipeline throughout the organization.

The tangible takeaways identified:

- The biggest challenges women face - inside and outside themselves.
- The biggest needs - to create breakthrough and community for participants, and alignment with their managers, who also become better allies.

II. Biggest Challenges Women Face

When asked the question, “*What is the biggest challenge that gets in your way*” there were two main areas of challenge. The most significant challenge being within myself, and those within the organization.

Challenges Within Myself

When asked “*What are the biggest challenges within yourself?*” there were three themes that emerged, the most significant one being how they perceived themselves. Almost every woman has what we refer to as ‘*Self-Bias*’, a tendency to underestimate self, regardless of evidence, input and requests to the contrary, resulting in prioritizing others above themselves, negative self-talk and a fear of stepping out of their comfort zones, which drove all other internal challenges.

From the Men’s perspective, “women hold themselves back, shortchange themselves, and get in their own way.” They mentioned “an unwarranted lack of confidence and insecurity.” They personalize, demonstrate poor work life boundaries, and are overly deferential, apologetic and conflict averse.” Women “believe they need to do it all and apply much higher standards to themselves, with so much pressure on themselves to do everything,” leading them to be unwilling to take care of themselves, share struggles, ask for help or delegate enough. “It seems they feel inadequate unless they say yes to everything in order to overly prove themselves to feel worthy and valid.” One interviewee referred to “displayed versus real confidence,” highlighting how they are wanting to look on the outside versus what might be real underneath. “They’re fighting a war with themselves no one asked them to participate in.”

There were several comments regarding managing emotion in the workplace. When leaders get emotional, the stereotypical examples provided are that men get aggressive, curse, yell and bang their fists on the table, while women tend to cry or get angry. While some believed leaders need to be composed and better manage their emotions, a few had the view that organizations need to get better at allowing authentic expression that might get ‘messy’ - allowing people to be authentic and bring their full selves to work. The “**tightrope opportunity**” is for leaders to bring their full selves forward while communicating in a way that supports others to be able to hear them.

The three main challenges that get in women leaders’ way are:

1. Self-Doubt “The Paradox of Unworthiness”

Self-doubt is the #1 biggest challenge the majority of all women experience. Many expressed what one summed up when she said “at the root of my self-doubt is the feeling that I’m not enough or unworthy.” Personal success measures are largely rooted in external indicators, defining self by what *I do*, versus internal success indicators defined by *who I am*. **The most common ways this plays out is in second-guessing, overthinking, overanalyzing, over-preparing, replaying, ruminating, worrying, playing “what if” scenarios, taking things personally, “catastrophizing failure”, beating myself up for what I ‘should’ have done, not owning accomplishments or taking risks, over-including others, and not making decisions without all the data.**

While respondents rationally know their self-doubt is unfounded and generally know they are competent, it is still rampant. It is rooted in what we call the ‘Paradox of Unworthiness’ - when people think they are unworthy or not enough in spite of evidence to the contrary. This is similar to the Impostor Syndrome, a pattern in which individuals doubt their accomplishments and have persistent internalized fear of being exposed as “frauds”, though for most people, identifying their imposterism doesn’t reduce it. Impostor syndrome tends to emerge at transition points (new company or school, role, task, etc.). The ‘**Paradox of Unworthiness**’ is more subtle and constant: in the background women are constantly wondering if they are worthy, or enough. **Knowledge alone is insufficient to create a breakthrough in this dynamic; it also requires self-awareness, intention and practice.**

2. Work/Life Integration “The Struggle with the Juggle”

The desire to be all things to all people, to “prove” themselves, to succeed in spite of an almost impossibly high bar (which most acknowledge come from their own “perfect” standards). **This leads women to over-prioritize work and others by saying yes, not saying no, working at all hours, skipping personal commitments, not eating lunch, exercising, etc. Even when they are not working, they are thinking/stressing about it, feeling guilty (at work about home and home about work), and being distracted, not present, focused or happy.** This dynamic plays out in every area of their lives: wanting to be on top of everything with work, family, friends, etc. - feeling they are not doing any of it well. **They feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and burned out. They often do not make choices or requests that include what is good for themselves and rarely prioritize their own well-being or desires.**

Pre-pandemic research showed that women often take primary responsibility for the care of children and/or parents even when they have partners who share running the household, and single mothers are primary caregivers. In both cases, they often don’t have sufficient support at home. The pandemic spotlighted this dynamic. As identified in the 2021 Women in the Workplace Study by McKinsey Study,

42% of women say they have been often or almost always burned out in 2021, compared to 32% a year ago.

3. Effective Communication “The Tightrope between Timid & Tough”

Communication is the outward extension of the internal landscape. There is a link to the previous two themes that, when women feel self-doubt and lack of confidence, they can hold back and not speak up, apologize, speak timidly, not make requests or share disagreement. Their language minimizes their presence with words such as try, just, possibly, maybe and sorry, especially when they make statements that sound like questions. It can be difficult to understand what they are specifically saying, wanting or needing. Non-verbally it is obvious in their facial expressions, inappropriate use of laughter, use of staying on or off camera online and in person, how they literally stand and command (or don't) the room.

Communication can also be the opposite: not listening or asking questions, talking over or interrupting others, telling, competing, or driving an agenda without bringing others along. Non-verbally it is also apparent in how much “space” they take up, the presence they exude and if they occur as insecure, closed, distracted, or disconnected (versus open, present and connected). Many women admit they use both the “Tough” and the “Timid” styles of communication depending on the audience, the project and their fatigue / stress levels.

Challenges Within the Organization

The overarching challenge in organizations can fall under the bucket of Bias. There is a great amount of research and documentation on this topic, which deserves to be addressed. The examples we heard in our research fall into three main categories:

- 1. Language:** HR leaders in particular provided examples of language differences, and all would agree the different views represent bias. They hear from managers comments such as, *“She has sharp elbows or is aggressive vs. he is direct and assertive; she is ambitious or pushy vs. he is career focused; she is too nice vs. he is a people leader.”* Language was also different in calibration sessions: *“He is a great guy, we feel good about him vs. she is just not ready.”* Most mentioned these unfair challenges represent a double standard that is alive and well in most organizations.
- 2. Actions:** The biggest challenges that occur in actions are most obvious in meetings. Interrupting, not asking questions or inviting input, speaking over others, are a few of the most common examples. We heard the terms “Mansplaining” and “Maninterrupting” which most women say occur on a regular basis in almost every meeting they attend. This is relevant in the virtual landscape where it can be harder to insert a point of view, disagree or fully align. Actions such as asking women to take notes, prepare slides or do other “housekeeping” roles take place by both people asking and women volunteering.
- 3. Processes:** The most common processes referred to included talent processes of selection, calibration meetings, talent reviews and promotional processes. While the talent landscape has shifted through the Pandemic to be more talent focused, there remains the perception that talent reviews and promotional processes still favor men. While representation of women leaders in companies is slightly better than it was over the last five years (improving from 1-5 percentage points depending on level), they are still significantly underrepresented in Corporate America. The most significant place this plays out is in these processes reviewing and promoting talent, which surfaced in our interviews. Research shows women are often promoted on performance, while men are promoted on potential, which plays out through the biased language and processes in these critical decision points.

III. Beliefs, Fears & Desires

Limiting Beliefs

In coaching, a critical aspect is having people identify limiting beliefs, so they can separate them from being “the truth.” The first step is to identify the (often unconscious) beliefs that are driving assumptions and behaviors. Below are examples of limiting beliefs women mentioned in the interviews and how they often drive behavior:

- *I don't belong here / feel like a fraud* (so I work harder to prove myself)
- *I'm not sure I'm smart enough* (so I don't volunteer for visible challenges or put myself out there)
- *I don't deserve the credit* (so I give others accolades, don't take credit, don't represent my own work, attribute success to luck or others)
- *I don't deserve this job... have enough skills or experience...* (so I don't apply)
- *I need to NOT be who I am or cover up aspects of myself to succeed* (so I don't disclose, or speak / act in a way that's me)
- *I can't put myself out there because of my pressures / responsibilities at home, it's impossible to have a balanced life* (so I stay off the radar and don't volunteer)
- *I have to prove myself and overinvest in everything -only then will I be good enough* (have to be perfect and feel I'm failing at everything)
- *I'm not like the leaders above me* (Can I excel? Do I belong here?)
- *I can't have a career and have a family* (I have to choose.) Note: this was mentioned in the level primarily of emerging leaders

Fears

What are these beliefs and challenges rooted in? Women most commonly answered this question with language that was primarily based on not being enough / worthy. The majority of respondents said some version of “I know this isn't true!” and yet they report experiencing these concerns anyway. HR professionals mentioned that most of these fears are not obvious to others, and most women are not admitting them, which makes women feel like “I am alone, it's just me” and for men to often have no idea because the outside behaviors don't match their internal landscape.

Women Tend to Fear:

- Not being capable, failing, making a mistake
- Others finding out I'm not as smart as they think I am
- Not being competitive, strategically bold, or able to push my agenda
- Not speaking like a leader
- Appearing arrogant, not being a team player
- Not fitting in, belonging, being part of the club, being taken seriously
- Missing out
- Losing control (particularly regarding delegating and empowering others)

A common view from an HR leader was best said: *"I can't tell you the number of times women leaders look like they have tons of confidence and underneath it, they have this fear that they're not good enough, can't do this, are not worthy. All these inhibitions we create, stories we tell ourselves, we don't allow ourselves to be worthy of the power that is within us."* Coaching requests are often focused on transitions, executive presence and effective communication and are rarely positioned on the biggest challenges, though they are almost always foundational to any coaching that takes place.

Male executives assumed women's fear was not wanting to make mistakes or fail.

Desires

The biggest theme of this question by women and HR was to be able to "be who they are, bring their full selves to work, and to be valued and respected for it. They struggle with authenticity - sounding and acting like a "leader" and saying what they think - they want to be who they are because it's too exhausting to be someone else."

Part of respect is knowing they are valued. "They want someone to express gratitude for the contribution they are making. When they don't feel appreciated or see tangible impact, they ask themselves 'if I'm sacrificing so much time away from my family, is it worth it for me to be here? Their desire to be heard, have their opinions matter, influence others and impact the organization is significant." They also want "to be talking about leadership and the right person for the job without gender playing a role." Instances of celebrating when women get P&L roles and other signals are nuanced examples that detract from the very intention that inclusion efforts are promoting.

Men's guess at what they desire focused on advancement ("It's a tangible metric of how much they're valued") which is an interesting contrast to what women mentioned most frequently, to be who they are, heard and recognized.

IV. Costs for Women & Organizations

Costs to Women

The costs of these limiting beliefs, behaviors and dynamics are high, for both women and organizations. The ultimate cost was the belief that they “fail to be all they can be, lose themselves, erode their self-power and fulfillment. Holding back due to fear of failure has them not living up to their true potential so they are unwilling to take (calculated) risks and share who they really are.”

The five biggest areas of costs reported by women and HR professionals are:

1. **Distracted, unfocused:** *I’m never not thinking about work; I carry it all over with me; I sacrifice all: I am not present; I’m barely holding this together*
2. **Exhaustion/Depletion:** *I can’t put energy into other things because I’ve given all to work; complete depletion, burnout, loss of self-capacity; I am drowning*
3. **Stress:** *Depression, unhappiness, withdrawal; family neglect, poor quality of home life; I feel like a terrible mom and beat myself up for everything; I feel crazy, resentful, anxious, highly irritable, snappy, impatient, insecure, guilty*
4. **Physical Health:** *Weight gain, loss of sleep, well-being, health issues*
5. **Missed Opportunities:** *Advocacy and sponsorship I deserve, not advancing, money, wasted time*

Men’s point of view was that it can cost women opportunities and they can be seen as “victims” when they withhold opinions, avoid risks, make slow decisions, and act stuck. They can be taken advantage of by giving them more work, which further results in work/life balance issues, lower reliability, quality and increased mistakes, which thereby lowers trust and ultimately negatively impacts their brand.

Costs to the Organization

In February 2021 women's participation in the workforce hit a 33 year low. 1 in 3 women have considered leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers - a significant increase from 1 in 4 in the first few months of the pandemic.

What is it costing the organization? The number one answer across the board was Retention. Turnover rates are higher for women, they leave 3 years earlier with 2-3 fewer years of service, approximately 50% of senior women executives from the outside leave in the first year (multiple comments mentioned these numbers). The 'Ripple Effect' occurs, when women further down in the organization don't see enough women above them and it can negatively affect the pipeline.

And what is the "so what?" The research is clear and organizations know the significant contributions women make when they get the support they need. Almost every company interviewed has a diversity objective in its top corporate goals.

Bottom line: when there are not women leaders at all levels in organizations, companies don't perform as well.

Organizations are negatively impacted in their financials, innovation, talent, and leadership:

- *Revenue and product quality suffer*
- *Poor or slow decisions based on "group think", lack of honest conversations*
- *The right people are not consistently in the right seats, leading to a lack of ability to build high performance teams*
- *There is a lack of diversity of perspectives, thought, background and experience (which yields better input and output and innovation when women are here and engage)*
- *There is loss of insights/market perspective (consumers are typically women)*

V. What is Needed

Coaching

One-on-one coaching is the most-offered solution, though it is often not scalable (many do not get coaching who need it), and it does not leverage community or the sustainability once the engagement is complete.

Many mentioned communities of support are critical for developing women leaders. This is especially valuable due to the common answer that women often compete against their female peers. Women reap significant benefit from building relationships, realizing they are not alone, and identifying with others. They develop themselves and their connections through authentic listening, coaching, encouraging and challenging. *“They build confidence, community, and courage by being with others. They are last to find out what they can do for themselves, and coaching is the best way to meet this need. It’s hard to talk about self-awareness, resilience, and actions without a coach.”*

Heightened self-awareness is key for all leaders. Some companies develop their leaders’ self-awareness and emotional intelligence in development programs and/or with individual coaches, and some in group coaching with men and women. (My experience having lead both mixed gender groups and women-only groups is that when they are women-only, tools and models are the same, the conversation is vastly different, and the level of vulnerability and authenticity is deeper). Some companies offer gender specific women’s leadership programs, the majority of which are an in-person session. Others outsource women’s development to external organizations, the primary focus being on skill development, business acumen and other leadership areas.

The “sweet spot” is a blended approach: in person sessions; group, one-on-one, and peer coaching integrated with engaging leadership. Ideal results transpire because groups provide a trusting community, serve as mirrors and opportunities for self-identification, inspire members to take risks and do what they say they’ll do, and build sustainable, long-term relationships. Peer coaching builds connection and allows members to practice coaching skills, which research shows ripples out to others. One-on-one coaching allows for expert, confidential coaching, customized focus and provocative breakthroughs.

Leadership Role Modeling

Role modeling is critical by the CEO (cited as the most critical stakeholder), the senior team and key leaders throughout the organization.

Women commonly report that when there are not role models at the top, they become at least uninspired, and, at most, question their desire to remain, citing a lack of feeling they belong or seeing a future for themselves.

CEO's and key leaders are not the only role models needed. Leadership teams that model high performance are also by default inclusive because they are cohesive, candid, collaborative, deal openly with conflict and above all, create psychological safety that allows all to speak for real and be heard. When teams operate in this manner, it creates optimal performance AND benefits the Diversity and Inclusion agenda as well.

Sponsorship

A simple definition of a sponsor is an advocate who use their position and influence in the company to create new opportunities and/or help others to be successful. The most important component of this is trust, which is why many sponsorship programs don't work when coordinated and set up programmatically.

There is generally a lack of the right consistent network or process of developing sponsors for women. One man mentioned that "women are often settling for someone to give them advice [mentoring] and they're not proactively building their network of people at the senior leadership level who will sponsor them."

They are harder to create because it involves taking a chance and staking their reputation, which requires trust. There are often not people at the top who know women well enough to do this. People who could be sponsors are also often unclear about the role, what it means, and how critical it is. According to one male executive, "the sponsor piece is conflated by the 'boys club'. It might look like the informal networks between the guys going for a drink, traveling and going to dinner at night. They are conscious of the optics and are not wanting to put anyone in a difficult situation so they don't volunteer as readily as they could."

Mentoring



A general definition of a mentor is one who advises based on experience, makes suggestions, and provides solutions. They can help fix problems and navigate opportunities.

Respondents suggested that mentoring is helpful and needed for the support of women's development. While it is needed and more common, it is not consistently utilized. Several men mentioned that often men either do not know how to be mentors or that they are afraid to be mentors, unsure about expectations and how to do it. It can be helpful in establishing mentoring (and sponsoring) relationships and expectations to effectively define and co-create what the relationship can become.

Women don't consistently ask for, create, or actively participate in mentoring relationships. One man mentioned a story where a woman was formally paired with him for ongoing support. In spite of his reaching out to her three times, she never followed up.

VI. The Proposed Solution

Cascade Leadership Partners, LLC is a consortium of highly skilled executive coaches and organization development consultants. Cascade team members who are currently based in the United States and Europe each bring 25+ years of experience coaching, advising and consulting to women, senior executives and their teams.

BOLD Leadership Framework

Based on the proprietary research we conducted, we developed The Bold Leadership Program in response to what women leaders and companies are needing. This program is based on a framework that meets most of the major challenges and biggest desires discovered in the interviews. **When women leaders get and give coaching to each other in a supportive, safe community, when they have managers who are and become even more supportive allies, and leadership who is supportive of creating an environment of inclusion, women are able to create breakthrough and maximize their potential.** They overcome internal barriers so they can be themselves, focus on what matters most and have impact.

Since offering BOLD before, during and after the pandemic, we have found the level of breakthrough is consistent both in the virtual and in-person settings. Participants love the in-person time together and they appreciated the longer, monthly process that was established in the virtual environment. Some companies (more and more) are also wanting to include male participants, because it not only allows them to create the breakthroughs their female counterparts experience, they also learn what it feels like to be the minority in the room which enables them to be empathetic allies first-hand.

The two biggest responses anecdotally we hear is that participants realize **they are not alone, “it’s not just me,”** they say. They also realize how much they have in common with their male counterparts and while the work is extremely helpful to women leaders, **it’s a leadership conversation** that all genders benefit from, where the majority of the audience happens to be women.

We are seeing companies report higher levels of advancement, retention, empowerment, engagement and are getting selected for exclusive opportunities. Additional – and extremely meaningful - measures of success that are hard to capture are in the stories that participants share about being better parents, spending quality time with friends and family, prioritizing their health and well-being, setting strong boundaries to prioritize their needs and include themselves in their own lives, making dreams happen they didn’t even know they had.

That is the impact of BOLD and we are committed to helping companies create this for all of their associates, with either Cascade helping them create that or delivering BOLD through their own internal resources.



BOLD Manifesto



VII. Conclusions & Next Steps

The overall finding in this study is that while there are real biases and unoptimized processes that persist and must be addressed, women create the biggest challenges for themselves by succumbing to and suffering from detrimental levels of self-doubt. They are not able to fully leverage or benefit from various leadership offerings when the overwhelming voice in their head is the “Impostor” versus the “Real Self” voice who believes in and trusts themselves.

There is room for women to unlock potential by starting with how they make choices and requests at work and home and take ownership for managing their priorities and well-being.

To do this, it requires women and their leaders to:

1. Get accurate - Pause and take a real look in the mirror at who they are being, what they are doing, and how they are feeling. Often leaders are unconscious to what is working well and what is not, and are unaware (or in denial) about the toll it is taking in every part of their lives. When they pause to assess and calibrate against their internal compass of values and what matters most to them, they can accurately see the gap.
2. Be coach-able - To be coach-able, it requires people to be open and receptive (about feedback, about the current state) and to be willing and able to make shifts to bridge the gap. They also need to take tangible steps and accountability towards what matters most. This requires courage, curiosity and commitment.
3. Build their team - Leaders need to build their teams and women do better in the long run when they surround themselves with a trusted community of supporters. The team can help them recognize and move past limiting beliefs, challenge assumptions and hold them accountable to take on what they're capable of accomplishing.

Good News

- All executives in the study agreed that the importance of addressing these challenges is critical or very important.
- Some companies are beginning to engage leaders on Unconscious Bias and how they can recognize it, shift behaviors and impact key processes.
- Some are actively sending women to conferences, programs and coaching, and encouraging them to build networks and technical expertise. Others are hosting internal forums and summits.
- Many are changing HR processes such as diverse hiring slates.

Bad News

- The numbers show that executive women leaders are declining overall in spite of greater college degrees and parity at the emerging leader levels.
- Retention is the #1 issue companies are facing. There were multiple references to senior women coming in from the outside, leaving around 50% of the time in less than 12-24 months due to “organ rejection”.

If this study hit a chord and you are interested in exploring if our **BOLD Leadership Program would be the right program to help elevate your women leaders, please [contact us](#) to set up an initial conversation.**

