

*Women are  
making  
the move into  
corporate  
offices  
and  
boardrooms*

Are cracks starting to spread across the glass ceiling?

They just might be. Recent evidence indicates that women are beginning to move toward critical mass in the leadership pipeline of America's companies and major nonprofits. Women currently make up 14.1% of women executive officers at Fortune 500 companies, according to research conducted by Catalyst, a non-profit that advocates for executive women. That's up from 13.5% in 2009. And they're making steady progress on boards, holding 16.1% of Fortune 500 board seats, compared with 15.2% in 2009.

Deb Gmelin certainly detects a shift. As corporate director for the Leadership Institute at health care provider Humana, she believes the company has identified the key factors that have subtly derailed talented women from landing top positions. Among them are the absence of role models; exclusion from informal networks; the lack of sponsors; and the myth of work-life balance.

APLAC

BY JOANNE CLEAVER

A woman in a black dress stands on the left, gesturing as if presenting. A group of business professionals, including men and women in suits, are seated at a long table with red chairs, looking towards her. The setting is a modern office with large windows and a staircase in the background.

**E** AT THE  
**T**ABLE

Those factors aren't a surprise. Observers, ranging from the federal government to private organizations like Catalyst, have independently pinpointed the same dynamics. But Humana is taking a different approach than many of its Fortune 500 peers: It is combining structured professional development programs with a culture change initiative to cultivate a "coaching culture" that calls out these dynamics for what they are—career derailers.

"We are starting from day one, with every employee," says Gmelin. "Every employee has the responsibility to give feedback and to receive feedback." The company's intent is to make career development everyone's responsibility, which means that promising women will get insight early and often about the career implications of seemingly small decisions.

Women across many professions, from health care to public accounting, often scale back their ambitions as they approach the demanding stage of parenting young children. They look ahead and assume they can't replicate the career path of the few women who have landed in the corporate suite. So these women, about 10 years into their careers and poised for big steps forward in responsibility, quietly evaporate from the leadership pipeline. Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, famously made this point in her TED talk, "Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders," that ignited a collective cheer from women around the world.

In reality, employers can't afford to lose half the talent pool. "Women have huge contributions to make," says Gmelin. One tactic Humana has found effective: transparency about the trade-offs and honest sharing from senior-level women about the costs and rewards of staying the course. "We are busting the myth," Gmelin says. "In your twenties and thirties, you don't see the path forward. We are sharing stories and solutions to show them: This is what you can do. Get household help. Work at home. And by the time your kids are in their teens, you will be at the peak of your career."

**"We need more encouragement, more sharing, more listening in our cultures, and less hard-driving management. Women truly listen to people and try to be inclusive. They're not about command and control."**



## *Sign Her Up*

Want better results? Include more women. The business case for gender-diverse teams and executives continues to evolve. Here's a roundup of the latest evidence.

- Recent research published in *Science* magazine found that a team gets smarter when it includes more women. That's so even when the group is composed of people whose individual IQs are high. Women infused the group dynamic with social intelligence, collaboration, better listening and a genuine win-win expectation, which added up to faster, more accurate problem solving, found professors Anita Woolley and Thomas Malone.
- When either men or women are a distinct minority in their work teams, they become more disaffected and less committed to the organization, according to a study published by the London Business School, which states, "While innovation is best fostered in teams that are composed equally of men and women, women who are in the minority on their teams are more resilient than are men when they are outnumbered by female teammates. Women network assertively, which increases their exposure to others' knowledge across the organization."
- Women typically are adept at leadership traits required for effectively leading large and global organizations. The McKinsey "Women Matter" team asked business executives globally what they believe to be the most important leadership attributes for success today. They report, "each of the top four—intellectual stimulation, inspiration, participatory decision-making and setting expectations/rewards—were more commonly found among women leaders."



## Northwestern Mutual *Connection*

Many women in corporate leadership positions today say they couldn't have gotten this far if it weren't for those who blazed the way in years past.

Catherine Cleary was one such pioneer. Among Wisconsin's first 150 women lawyers admitted to practice, she was also one of the first women to serve on a U.S. corporate board, starting with Northwestern Mutual in 1955 and followed by AT&T, General Motors, and Kraft in 1972.

As for her "day job," Cleary made her mark at First Wisconsin Trust Company in Milwaukee, working there from 1947 to 1978. According to her 2010 obituary in the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, First Wisconsin became the largest trust in the state while Cleary was its president. She also became known for popular financial forums for women, talking about topics from the family checkbook to estate planning.

Cleary was named one of 10 leading women in big business in America by *Fortune* magazine (1973), and she was inducted into the Wisconsin Business Hall of Fame (1991).

As reported in the *Journal-Sentinel*, she approached her trailblazing role somewhat matter-of-factly. While a GM board member, she asked to meet with its women in management and management training. "I was trying to make employers realize that there was a supply of very competent employees in their work force who just happened to be women," Cleary said.

—Amy Korpi

wonder if we  
can obtain  
head shot of  
Catherine  
Cleary

### The Power of Influence

In her 25 years as CEO of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), a Chicago-based nonprofit that designs large-scale industry and college training programs, Pamela Tate has observed some major changes: These days, she rarely has difficulties recruiting qualified women to CAEL's board. As the definition of a "power player" has shifted from someone who wields authority to someone who wields influence, Tate has realized that CAEL itself can be its own best "show and tell" for advancing women.

It's dawning on employers that women, in general, share a collaborative leadership style that intuitively meshes with the expectations of Millennials and Gen Xers, says Tate, whose organization collaborates annually with hundreds of employers. "We need more encouragement, more sharing, more listening in our cultures, and less hard-driving manage-

ment. Women truly listen to people and try to be inclusive. They're not about command and control. In today's workplace, with four generations, that kind of approach is needed. And young people expect it."

Women can catalyze culture change in their workplaces as they rise in the

ranks; they don't have to wait until they have a top spot on the org chart to start advocating for new definitions of success and new ways to recognize female talent. Tate has evolved her own leadership style accordingly. To ensure that women at CAEL have a chance to gain operations experience,



which is critical for anyone aspiring to a top position, she has delegated budget responsibility to department and team leaders—with one critical difference. They are responsible not just for their own department's results, but also for the direct effect of their bud-

get decisions on the overall organization's results. That reinforces the systemic effect of each major budget decision and builds in positive reinforcement for cross-departmental projects.

“You don't gain influence by hold-

ing it over other people. You gain influence by sharing decision-making,” says Tate. “The more power you give away, the more you get back.”

### Making the Case

If there's one thing that will propel women to the top, it's the business case. Shellye Archambeau is CEO of MetricStream, a software company whose products help companies comply with government regulations and manage risk. She rose through the ranks at IBM on the basis of her performance, then rotated in swift succession through several lateral senior roles at Silicon Valley companies to pick up the operating experience essential for success as a CEO.

Archambeau agrees with the notion that women need sponsors as well as mentors. But she also thinks performance is the pivotal factor for anyone to rise to the top, and that women need to keep that top of mind.

Of course, employers need to match performance with transparent assessment of talent and results. That's where corporate-level advocacy for women can make a critical difference. Archambeau models that inside MetricStream, where she cultivates a culture of coaching for everyone, and as a member of the board of Watermark, a nonprofit that supports California women in business.

Groups like Watermark provide role models for women in male-dominated industries and companies. And it speaks volumes, Archambeau believes, when a woman CEO openly aligns herself with a group that advocates for the advancement of women. “I can remember when the perception was that there was one slot for a woman [in a large company] and we were all competing for that same job, so women didn't help other women,” she says. “It's encouraging to younger women to see accomplished women proactively supporting them.”

**Joanne Cleaver** is a business writer and strategic communications consultant based in Chicago. Her book, *The Career Lattice*, was just published by McGraw Hill Professional.



## Breaking Into Biotech

THERE'S A BIG GAP between a promising technology in a lab and a new treatment that's proven safe for people. But in that gap lies the greatest return on investment, believes Daphne Zohar, founder and managing partner of PureTech Ventures.

Most venture capital firms place their bets after a new idea has already been validated. But Zohar believes the greatest value comes from helping nearly ready technologies complete their last rounds of lab tests and then bridging them into the market.

“It's a lot of work to validate a breakthrough technology, but it's not that much money to perform the initial risk-reducing experiments—usually only a few hundred thousand dollars,” she says. “Most venture technology funds want to see if something works. But we start the company first, with the leading experts in the field: diabetes, obesity, oncology are a few. Then we scour academia for the leading approaches, and license the most promising ones.”

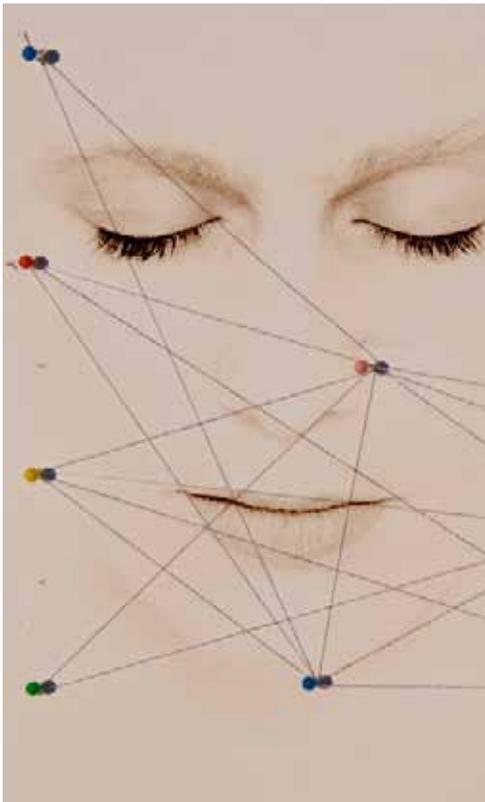
So far, PureTech has formed 16 companies. Zohar is always aiming for the home run: an idea that her team nurtures to proof of concept or to market launch and then sells to a pharmaceutical company or other large venture.

Women patent holders remain scarce, but Zohar soon might be finding more women scientists with ideas worth investing in. Today, women make up 45% of all biological life scientists, according to the National Science Foundation, compared with 30% of computer scientists and engineers, as calculated by the Department of Labor. In addition, the proportion of women scientists in academia has been steadily increasing. Currently, about 20% of all full-time full professors in science and technology are women.

# Is Your Organization *Lattice-Ready*?

**E**conomic recovery is coming slowly and unsteadily. That affects corporate profits, but it's also accelerating another trend: the rise of lateral moves as a key mode of career advancement.

In the past, the “ladder” has been the dominant image of career success in the Western world. But with fewer opportunities for upward promotion and erratic growth in most industries, the “lattice” is emerging as the sustainable model. On a career lattice, employers encourage employees to take on adjacent responsibilities that gradually expand their skills and qualifications. As well, lateral growth can position an individual for any of several jobs: Today's social media managers find themselves suddenly qualified for a brand-new position thanks to communication, digital management, and digital media experience.



**Quiz** Take this quick quiz to detect where your organization falls on the ladder-to-lattice spectrum.

1. Departments and divisions are in strict “silos.”
2. Senior leaders spend at least 30% of their time on talent development.
3. Employee resource groups (ERGs) are a primary channel for identifying and developing talent.
4. Your HR systems inventory employee skills and aptitudes—those acquired on the job as well as those gained outside of work.
5. Employees have a self-directed training allowance.
6. Your recruiters stay in touch with valued former employees via an alumni network.
7. Suppliers, especially minority- and women-owned firms, deal only with buyers.
8. Virtual training enables employees to access courses at any time or place.
9. Midlevel managers are formally evaluated on their ability to cultivate talent.
10. Internal business plan competitions are open only to high-potential employees and/or those in certain divisions.

## Scoring

Give your organization one point for a “yes” answer to questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, and one point for a “no” answer to questions 1, 7, and 10.

**7–10 points:** Your organization is already latticing, whether you call it that or not. Your challenge is to tie together varied lattice programs into a coordinated whole that will exponentially increase results.

**4–6 points:** Latticing is probably happening organically in some divisions or regions. Exploring and analyzing these programs and cultural lattices will help you see how to cross-pollinate their success to the entire organization.

**0–3 points:** The lattice is likely a new concept at your organization. You'll need to build the business case for a pilot, possibly using the few examples you *can* find.

*This quiz is adapted from The Career Lattice by Joanne Cleaver (McGraw Professional, 2012) and is used with permission.*