WICT examines the issues, best practices and programs that member companies have put in place to prepare their employees to be the leaders of tomorrow.
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The Path to PAR Report

Biennially Women in Cable Telecommunications conducts the WICT PAR Survey. The PAR Survey is a central part of WICT’s overall PAR Initiative; an initiative designed to help cable companies reap the benefits of a more gender-diverse and inclusive workplace. In addition to gauging the representation of women throughout the industry’s workforce, the survey specifically measures the survey participants’ practices related to pay equity, advancement opportunities, and resources for work/life integration.

Based on the PAR Survey results, WICT creates an overall Executive Report that analyzes the movement and positions of women in the industry, indicating gender differentials in promotions, hiring, and exit rates. The report also assesses the representation of women at varying levels of the corporate hierarchy and within specific job disciplines.

During the gap-year between survey periods, WICT provides two by-products based on the PAR Survey data: The Path to PAR report and interactive PAR at Work webinars. Each deliverable gives a separate and distinct framework for analyzing and utilizing the PAR Survey results.

Path to PAR informs retention, promotion and recruitment practices by analyzing and evaluating key findings in the PAR Survey. This report also cites compelling outside research exploring gender diversity published subsequent to the most recent Path to PAR report. This research highlights the ever-growing pool of findings that reinforce the strong business case for gender diversity and illustrates how to retain, enhance and capitalize on gender diversity in your workplace.

The 2015 PAR Survey was underwritten by the Walter Kaitz Foundation and is supported by WICT’s 21 chapters.

Global consulting leader, Mercer, deploys the survey and analyzes the data on behalf of WICT. In all, 27 companies responded to the 2015 survey, representing over 260,000 U.S. employees (approximately 65% of the overall cable telecommunications workforce). Additionally, 22 organizations participated in both the 2013 and 2015 PAR Surveys, enabling Mercer to compare industry trends based on these overlapping survey participants.
Probing PAR

Women’s representation of overall full-time employees in the cable workforce dropped in 2015 by one percentage point to 34%, compared to 2013. In terms of job title, at the executive and senior manager echelon, women’s representation increased markedly; four percentage points higher in 2015 versus 2013. Conversely, there was a modest decline of women’s representation in each of the remaining tiers. (See Graph 1)

The 2015 PAR Survey illuminated two important trends affecting gender diversity within the cable telecommunications industry workforce: a higher promotion rate for women in two out of three levels compared to men and a higher exit rate for women compared to men at all workforce echelons. Those trends had a broad impact on gender diversity dynamics, driving both positive and negative developments in 2015.

The PAR Survey Executive Summary featured an Internal Labor Market (ILM) map that showed the vertical and horizontal movements of women and men, with side-by-side comparisons of their entrance, exits and promotions. As the map illustrates, the promotion rate for women outpaced that of men at both the professional and manager tier but lagged behind at the staff level (See ILM map pg 6). This marks a notable improvement since the 2013 PAR Survey, which tracked a higher promotion rate for men at all echelons.

The hire rate of women exceeded that of men at all workforce tiers in 2015, continuing a 2013 trend, demonstrating that “there’s a real effort to improve the representation of women at all career levels,” noted Mercer’s Gail Greenfield in a June 30, 2016, PAR at Work webinar. Narrowing the exit rate of women would significantly improve the overall number of women in the industry. “The big lever to increase the representation of women is closing those gaps in turnover and ensuring that women are being retained at the same rate as men,” said Greenfield.

Mercer projected the representation of women at executive and management levels over the next five years will dip from about 36% to 34% in 2019, due predominantly to women’s higher exit rates, if current workforce dynamics continue. If cable companies are able to move “the big lever” and bring women’s turnover in line with that of men, the 2019 projection for women’s representation at those levels increases, to just over 37%. (See Graph 2 pg 6)

Women’s representation at the executive and senior manager level was 32%, higher than four national benchmarks for women at this level including the national benchmark for women’s representation in the information sector, which was 26%. The representation of women at the entry- and mid-level roles were slightly lower than national benchmarks.
Comparing PAR

In 2014, Mercer launched *When Women Thrive* (Thrive), an international survey on gender diversity, allowing organizations to compare their policies and best practices to global and regional results. Mercer compared their Thrive survey with WICT’s PAR Survey to give robust comparisons and draw helpful solutions.

As part of this initiative, Mercer compiled an ILM map for the average North American organization, providing a valuable framework for WICT to use to compare workforce trends with our specific industry.

The map demonstrates that the hire rate of women in cable telecommunications exceeded that of men at all levels compared to the average North American company. *(See North America ILM map)*

The promotion rate for women in cable was also higher than the average North American company in three of four elevation points, and the promotion rate for women in cable telecommunications outpaced that of men at two of three elevation points. However, the exit rate for women proved higher than men at all levels in cable, while comparatively, the average exit rate for women at North American companies varied.

Mercer’s global survey also gauges the policies and practices that are effective in building gender diversity. In this case, “the big lever” is the demonstrated commitment of executives at the highest level in cultivating an inclusive corporate culture.

According to Mercer’s Brian Levine, “It’s really critical that executives be engaged in diversity activities.” A CEO’s outspoken support of diversity and inclusion, as well as participation in diversity councils is critical, overriding the significance of rewarding diversity progress with bonuses. Levine also noted that diversity initiatives need broad support. “When men are in the diversity dialogue we see much stronger success (for women).”

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**2015 “When Women Thrive” Survey Outcomes: North America ILM Map**

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New Outside Research

The Business Case for Gender Diversity

Given an increasingly competitive landscape across a multitude of industries, organizations are looking for ways to optimize the performance of their teams. Recent data reinforces the already proven value of gender diversity to an organization’s financial performance. Women are of exponential value in leadership positions and throughout the corporate workforce. The numbers speak for themselves.

According to a McKinsey study published in January 2015, gender-diverse companies are 15 percent more likely to outperform their competition, and ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to do the same. According to McKinsey, companies in the top quartile for gender or racial and ethnic diversity are more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians. Companies in the bottom quartile in these dimensions are statistically less likely to achieve above-average returns. And diversity is probably a competitive differentiator that shifts market share toward more diverse companies over time.

Group IQ and Team Dynamics

Researchers examining team dynamics have more specifically quantified women’s value to a group or team setting and pinpointed the behaviors that help elevate collective performance. According to a 2015 op-ed in The New York Times by Professors Anita Woolley, Thomas W. Malone and Christopher F. Chabris (from the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon; Sloan School of Management at M.I.T. and Union College, respectively), “Teams with more women outperformed teams with more men...Indeed, it appeared that it was not ‘diversity’ (having equal numbers of men and women) that mattered for a team’s intelligence, but simply having more women. This last effect, however, was partly explained by the fact that women, on average, were better at ‘mindreading’ than men.”

The Business Case for Diversity

The professors demonstrated that women are disproportionately valuable on teams, providing a multiplier effect value to the group. Overall, the professors’ research showed that some teams consistently worked smarter than others, noting, “The most important ingredients for a smart team remained constant regardless of its mode of interaction: members who communicated a lot, participated equally and possessed good emotion-reading skills.”

These are the building blocks of emotional intelligence and Group IQ – concepts that have been discussed in human resource circles for some time and are refined by continuing research. As part of an effort to cultivate a forward leaning and nimble workforce, leading researchers are increasingly pointing to the importance of the Group IQ of a team. Broadening the gender diversity of a team is a highly effective way of bolstering its Group IQ.

In turn, if hiring managers think about elevating the aptitude of an entire team through hiring, building gender diversity becomes a natural outcome. “My advice first and foremost would be to consider each hire based on the value they can add to the team, rather than simply in a specific role. It is not always about hiring the best person for the role, rather the best person for the team as a whole,” said Daniele Fiandaca, a member of The Great British Diversity Experiment, in a January 2016 article.

Fiandaca said simple tweaks to the hiring process can also pave the way towards greater gender diversity. Organizations should require all short lists to contain at least one strong male candidate and one strong female candidate, she said. And since research shows that women will only apply for a job if they think they fulfill 100% of the requirements – while men will apply if they fulfill 60% of the criteria – job posts should be forward looking, emphasizing the achievements expected in the role rather than a long list of prerequisites. For existing employees, companies should offer flexible working if it is suitable for the position.

Potential Pitfalls to Avoid

According to the study Women in the Workplace 2016, which is part of a long-term partnership between LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Co., for every 100 women promoted to manager, 130 men are promoted. This disparity is the largest at the first step up to manager. Women who negotiate for a promotion or compensation increase are 30 percent more likely to be perceived as bossy, aggressive or intimidating than their male colleagues. Also, women and men both view sponsorship by senior leaders as essential for success but women report fewer substantive interactions with senior leaders than their male counterparts. By the time women reach the SVP level, they hold just 20 percent of line roles that lead more directly to the C-suite – a circumstance that could also lead to a higher risk of job loss, as the research indicated. In 2015, 90 percent of new CEOs in the S&P 500 were promoted or hired from line roles.

Increasing organizational awareness of adverse global and national trends is the first step towards preventing them from occurring. The benefits of increasing the ranks of women are well documented, and organizations benefit broadly from limiting the consequences of gender bias. Knowledge of the policies that bolster gender diversity can also mitigate the impact of bias and exclusion.
Retaining and Elevating Women in the Workforce

Recent data indicates that sound talent management practices do not merely boost employee morale, they also drive superior financial performance. A 2015 Bersin by Deloitte study of more than 450 global companies conducted over a two-year period showed that the companies with the most “mature” approach to developing human resources – focusing on talent management for growth – were also the highest performing companies, measured by business, financial and talent outcomes. Of the more than 128 human resource practices the researchers looked at, the policies geared towards building diversity and inclusion were the ones most directly tied to superior financial performance.

Josh Bersin, founder and principal of Bersin by Deloitte, identified some key takeaways from the study. Talent development, he said, helps to lay the groundwork for success. “Learning is a tremendously important part of business performance, because it makes up the sustainability and innovative nature of your business. It is also a major driver of employee engagement and employment brand.”

To continue evolving, companies must build an inclusive work environment through a top-to-bottom approach. A top executive must be responsible for leading the effort and diversity goals must be embedded into hiring, leadership assessment, development and performance management. In addition, diversity metrics, and accountability in addressing the data, are critical. These policies fostering inclusiveness and business growth serve as a catalyst for building a business environment conducive to retaining top talent. As Bersin put it, the effort is pivotal because “diversity and inclusion is now a business strategy, not an HR program.”

According to leading workplace experts, women value a clear path to career advancement, leadership and mentoring programs, telework flexibility, and child-care and elder-care support in the workplace. These conditions constitute a gold-standard for retaining talented women. At the “Next Billion: Women and the Economy of the Future” conference held in Vancouver, Canada in July 2015, speakers also discussed the idea of favoring “stay interviews” over the more conventional exit interviews that are conducted once employees have already decided to leave an organization. A “stay interview” gives companies the opportunity to talk to female employees who are at risk of leaving but remain employed, in order to learn how they could be empowered to stay and succeed.

Adopting corporate guidelines for compensation, evaluations and promotions can also help level the playing field and improve the retention of women. A results-only work environment (ROWE) can help to integrate clear criteria and method to rewarding employees. Such a structure forces a level of discipline on managers to identify accomplishments and shortcomings – thereby mitigating the impact that unconscious bias can have on important human resource decisions.

As Mercer’s global When Women Thrive survey suggests, the culture of an organization can be instrumental in driving organizational priorities, and its significance can be easily underestimated. Eclipsing material incentives to drive diversity is a CEO’s publicly articulated and demonstrated commitment to inclusion. If corporate culture is developed vertically, on a top-down basis, it can have significant impact on gender equity.
Takeaways

Organizations looking to attract, advance and retain their most talented women should consider looking closely at performance and clear criteria for their most important human resource decisions, maintaining a results-oriented work environment and awareness of Group IQ. Once organizations have instituted a gold standard for motivating and retaining female employees, they should conduct stay interviews to hold on to talented women and identify areas to improve organizationally.

It is crucial for companies to measure progress and track data. For the cable telecommunications industry, WICT’s PAR Survey data illuminates a compelling dynamic: Putting sheer numbers on women’s side can help drive gender diversity. In the 2015 PAR Survey, the representation of women executives and senior managers grew by four percentage points, in tandem with the highest promotion-rate differential at that elevation point (in favor of women) and the lowest exit-rate gender gap. This demonstrates that in addition to intelligent policy crafted to improve the corporate environment for women, human resource professionals should also approach important decisions quantitatively, increasing the overall number of women hired, promoted and retained to achieve lasting results.

Policies that are less quantifiable also remain important, though, as Mercer’s global When Women Thrive survey illustrates. The culture of an organization can be instrumental in driving organizational priorities, and it is developed vertically on a top-down basis. When it comes to diversity, CEOs must function as motivators-in-chief, encouraging progress through their outspoken support and vision.

The industry should, therefore, rely on a variety of measures to improve gender diversity. Data has demonstrated women’s value to organizations, across the board. In the case of cable telecommunications, women offer the added benefit of reflecting and understanding a large segment of the consumer market. Women within the cable telecommunications industry, in turn, command national and global clout through their role in creating, promoting and delivering a wide array of content. Through programming and technological prominence, the cable industry influences other business sectors and the world.