



WHITE PAPER

# Overcoming Unseen Obstacles: How to Get More Women Into Leadership Positions



**Jodi Detjen**  
Managing Partner,  
Orange Grove Consulting



**Heide Abelli**  
VP, Leadership & Business Skills



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Getting more women into leadership positions can make a significant difference to the bottom line. MSCI found that companies with strong female leadership had higher Return on Equity (ROE) than companies without, as well as a superior price-to-book ratio.<sup>1</sup> DDI found that in companies in the top 20% of financial performance, 37% of their leaders were women, compared with 19% female leaders for companies in the bottom 20%.<sup>2</sup>

Most companies have a lot of capable women who simply aren't making it into leadership roles, which is even more surprising when research suggests that up to 72% of CEOs are concerned about the paucity of key leadership skills in their organizations.<sup>3</sup> How can these organizations afford to underutilize a significant percentage of their workforces?

The answer to this dilemma is to grease the pipeline of talent in order to ensure that organizations are realizing the full potential from their female workforces.

**92%** of respondents agree there is a lack of women in leadership.

**Women in the Workforce:**  
**A Skillsoft® survey report**



<sup>1</sup> "Women on Boards: Global Trends in Gender Diversity on Corporate Boards." Linda-Eling Lee, Ric Marshall, Damion Rallis, and Matt Moscardi. MSCI, November 2015.

<sup>2</sup> "Ready-Now Leaders: Cultivating Women in Leadership to Meet Tomorrow's Business Challenges." DDI, 2015.

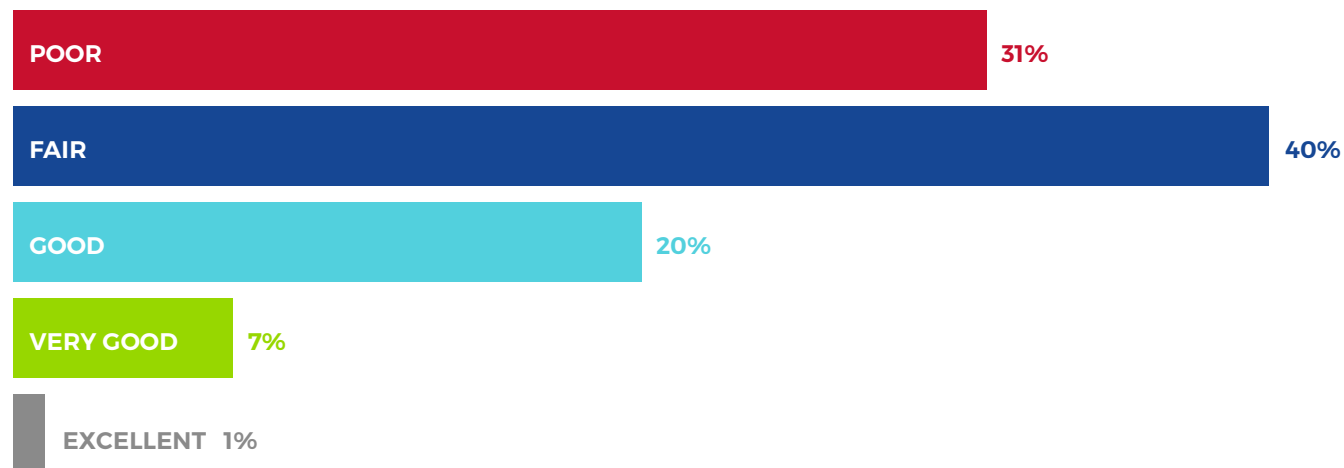
<sup>3</sup> "Redefining business success in a changing world CEO Survey." PWC, 2016.

## IT REQUIRES ACTION

Tapping into this talent requires changes across the board, with respect to behavior, process and the culture of the organization. Companies have had some success by fostering greater senior leader accountability, by becoming less biased in decision-making processes and by changing their cultures to be more inclusive, while ensuring strong performance.

But in reality, there's a lot of talk but not a lot of action. McKinsey/LeanIn.org found that approximately 75% of US CEOs stated that gender diversity was a priority<sup>4</sup>, but when Skillsoft conducted primary research on the topic, 71% of respondents felt that their organizations were not doing enough to address the lack of women in senior leadership roles.

### DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A STRATEGY IN PLACE AND/OR PROGRAMS SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT DEVELOPING WOMEN LEADERS?



**75%** of organizations have affinity groups and **58%** send women to conferences.

**Women in the Workforce:**  
**A Skillsoft® survey report**

<sup>4</sup>Women in the Workplace 2016, McKinsey and Lean In.

## AFFINITY GROUPS: ONE WOMAN'S STORY

“As part of a Fortune 100 company, I can speak to the limitations of affinity groups. The group met informally once a month to discuss the issues we were having as female leaders in the organization. While the group was officially sponsored by two very senior executives, a male and a female, the sponsors never attended any meetings. The meetings very quickly became gripe sessions about the frustrations and challenges associated with four elements of the work environment: 1) exclusion from a powerful “old boy’s network,” 2) bullying behavior by two senior male vice presidents directed towards female executives 3) the lack of senior women in leadership positions and 4) the domineering, unfriendly behavior exhibited towards other women leaders by senior female leaders.

While the discussions felt therapeutic, nothing ever changed in the organization as a result of these gripe sessions. Decision-makers were not present in the room. Instead, the sessions often served only to fuel the fires of frustration and discontent and they might have even created awareness of problems that more junior female leaders and managers were previously unaware of. In addition, the affinity group lacked a budget, formality, structured development activities, or opportunity for updating sponsors. The only tangible benefits were tips and tricks shared among members regarding balancing the responsibilities of work and home life. It’s no surprise then that the affinity group died on the vine after about a year.”



## WHAT'S BLOCKING THE CHANGE?

When attempting to implement these strategies, good intentions often meet a lack of will across the organization. A variety of factors, common across organizations, contribute to the ineffectiveness of change efforts. Here are six inhibitors that we have seen in our work.

## CHECK THE BOX MENTALITY

Human resource leaders are often pressured to show that they are addressing the gender gap and to produce evidence that they have programs, efforts and projects underway. Many efforts do in fact produce useful outcomes, but because they are not integrated into the organization itself, they often fall short of their full potential. Skillssoft finds that too often, organizations offer only episodic leadership development programs or singular events focused on selected employees.

Three common approaches include:

### 1. AFFINITY OR EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS.

Affinity groups in businesses are most often groups of people representing a particular aspect of diversity such as race or gender. Approximately 90% of Fortune 500 corporations have affinity groups, though research has shown their efficacy is unclear. Their effectiveness depends on their structure, mission and the level of surrounding support (including financial resources, time off, and senior management support).

Done well, affinity groups provide greater access to role models, an opportunity to create a groundswell for organizational change, advice on career paths within the organization and opportunities to build camaraderie. Too often though, they are underfunded and under-supported, requiring already overstretched “volunteers” to administer the program. Some affinity groups turn into little more than discussion groups around a book-of-the-month, while others have a revolving roster of speakers. Rarely is there a real and deep connection to enabling substantial change

within the organization. When affinity groups function primarily as vehicles for showcasing diversity support, they have little intrinsic value and can, in fact, sometimes be damaging, providing a forum for fostering negative attitudes about the organization.

## **2. ONE-OFF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TRAINING.**

Training can often turn into a check-the-box activity when it is not adequately integrated into the business. Leadership training in general has a much higher efficacy when integrated, but this is especially true for women's leadership training. Too often, a selected group of women is provided sporadic professional development, where the women attend one to a few sessions without any specific follow-up, measurement of progress, or any attempt to link the program to particular leadership skill gaps. Within any given session, there may be learning and a willingness to try out new skills. But many organizations subsequently fail to invest in the required post-session reinforcement, don't provide environmental support for implementing the new skills and fail to highlight its value to senior leaders. Thus, once women return to their daily work environment, many fail to make any meaningful behavioral changes.

## **3. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES.**

The final checkbox area is providing attendance to one of the many leadership conferences available for women. Sponsorship is wide-ranging and creates a branding opportunity for companies to signal that they are women-friendly organizations. But the content is often mixed. Some conferences offer highly curated content focused on helping women become leaders; others merely consolidate mass market content that ranges from how to negotiate to health and wellness suggestions. Rarely does a conference offer any kind of follow-up support. Far too often, companies rely on these conferences as the sole source of development for their female talent. While they can have some short-term motivational impacts, these events are usually high-priced, especially when they include travel, thus reducing the budget available for more integrated development activities and more substantive programs.

## WOMEN'S CONFERENCES: ONE WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

"I received a notice from the HR department that I was invited to a women's conference and while I was intrigued by the opportunity, there was no background or context provided with respect to the benefits or goals associated with attending the conference. Nevertheless, I assumed it was a potentially important development opportunity, because otherwise, why would HR have granted me a day out of the office to attend?

I attended the conference with many of my female colleagues, but as I chatted with them at the opening breakfast session, it became clear that none of us knew why we had been selected to attend or, more importantly, what the company expected us to get out of the experience. Regarding the conference itself, while I would say that the day was filled with a few interesting keynote speeches and one or two compelling breakout sessions, on the whole, it was not clear how I could proactively apply anything that I listened to in order to improve how I operate as a female leader. In some ways the conference was more of a "rah-rah session" for women in general and less of a leadership development day for women leaders. Other than the opportunity to meet Shonda Rhimes, I really can't say that I got much out of the day."

"While I appreciated my organization's interest in sending me and others to the conference, it seemed as though they were doing it more as a PR move (i.e. to be on the list of organizations that sent their women leaders to attend) rather than to create any substantive development for women leaders in the company. There was also absolutely no follow-up from HR regarding the experience. I was waiting for a survey asking questions about the value of the conference or follow-up activity but nothing ever came."





## A FOCUS ON GENDERED STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

When companies are evaluated as “Best Places to Work for Women,” they are usually evaluated on items such as the availability of flex-time and child-care options. Women who take advantage of these offerings are often then put on a different, slower track. Immortalized as the “mommy track,” these more flexible career options enable women to take care of children while still continuing to work.

The challenge here lies in the focus on “women only.” When programs are designed to help retain women, they are usually associated with career penalties, such as wage reductions and slower career progression.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, men and career-focused women rarely choose them, despite the fact that support options such as child care, flexible working hours and paternity leave all have significant organizational benefits.

## INEFFECTIVE BIAS TRAINING

Unconscious bias training highlights the embedded biases inherent in the workplace. Biases are incorporated into how we think and make decisions—and everyone holds biases. But unconscious biases are hidden biases: people make outwardly objective decisions via a biased decision making process. In a famous example illustrating this type of bias, orchestras instituted “blind” auditions whereby musicians auditioned behind a curtain so that demographic details were hidden. Prior to the introduction of the “blind” audition process, less than 10% of new hires were women. After its introduction, women made up 35% - 50% of the orchestra new hires.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly unconscious bias is an integral part of understanding the barriers that block women from moving into leadership positions. It’s not a surprise then that many organizations opt for a “quick fix awareness” training where the whole organization is required to attend unconscious bias training. The problem is that while this approach is successful in raising awareness, it can also further embed stereotypes. That is, people are actually sometimes more likely to stereotype after receiving the training. Research from Harvard University’s Center for Ethics suggests that “diversity training can also incite managerial rebellion. The typical diversity program leads to reductions in white women, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans in management. One reason may be that, as some psychological studies show, rather than quashing bias, diversity training can activate it.”<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> *“If We Want to Help Working Mothers We Could Start With Paid Paternity Leave.” Bryce Covert, Slate, May 27, 2015*

<sup>6</sup> *Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of “Blind” Auditions on Female Musicians* by Goldin and Rouse, *American Economic Review*, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> *“Why Diversity Management Backfires (And How Firms Can Make it Work).” Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev, Harvard University Edmund J. Safra Center for*



The reason the awareness training does not yield the hoped-for results is that it is done without any context or integration into the daily work. People become aware of the biases, but then do not know how to follow up within the context of their normal workflows and then, not surprisingly, they become discouraged.

Further, women are often singled out for the training, leaving men feeling left out. But if the bias training is done with men and women together, women are often uncomfortable and much less forthcoming during the training, while the men often either “check out” or feel as though they are being blamed.

## **EXPECT RESISTANCE**

Behavioral change is required for individuals to overcome embedded biases. But behavioral change is notoriously challenging to trigger. Whenever something changes, for example, if the Human Resource department decides to put more objective criteria into the hiring process, there will be resistance. It’s inevitable.

In the example above, hiring managers may resist because they like tapping their networks for talent and they don’t want HR to dictate the hiring process. Or, senior managers might feel threatened because they believe that the hiring process should reflect a meritocracy and they believe they were promoted into their roles solely due to merit. If the meritocracy is found riddled with biases, employees may question whether those in power truly deserve to be in their roles. Fear around “what will happen to me” is inherent in these changes; this fear results in resistance and causes people to sabotage change efforts. Unless people involved in change believe that they should change too, they will resist.

## SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL FOCUS

Focusing on female talent retention, promotion and development is a medium-term goal. While short-term progress can be achieved, creating cultural change can take several years before benefits are realized, and in the short-term the costs can seem quite high. Investing in organizational change that does not immediately return visible value can be prohibitive, especially when that value is more difficult to specifically quantify (v. the broad estimates quoted at the beginning of this paper). Senior leadership is focused on the quarterly profit cycle; investing to get more women into leadership feels like a distraction which is remote to those short-term goals.

## SHEER EFFORT

Finally, the process, system and behavioral changes required to shift the culture's underlying operating assumptions, can feel daunting. Especially when viewed from a whole organizational perspective, the focus, effort and time required to implement the changes can feel impossible. Thus, there is a tendency to do the visible, less impactful activities, such as sending a large cohort of women to a leadership conference for women. But change is possible. By looking at the challenge from a strategic talent approach, organizations can address the systemic aspects and realize benefits.



## **THE SOLUTION: THE GENDER TALENT APPROACH**

### **1. BE HOLISTIC.**

Systemic embedded challenges cannot be done ad hoc. As noted, simply providing training without corresponding changes in processes will yield female employees who believe they are underutilized. A holistic approach draws together a wide range of changes strategically. Aligning the changes with business objectives so that the changes are associated with operational successes rather than simply a “feel-good” support effort makes the change substantive. Finally, setting expectations that the change will help the organization be more effective and ultimately more profitable helps lessen the resistance.

### **2. ASSESS WHERE IN THE ORGANIZATION THE PROBLEM LIES.**

In many organizations, women predominate in human resources and marketing but are less represented in operations, finance, R&D and other areas. Some organizations do exceptionally well at talent development but struggle with promotion. Others excel at helping women get into positions of power but face challenges in keeping them there. Knowing what your organization already does well and where it needs help enables the challenge to be broken down into more manageable aspects. Assessment also provides a base for measuring progress.

### **3. BEGIN WITH THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS.**

Unconscious biases are built on underlying assumptions. For example, in many organizations, there is a bias of the “ideal worker.” The underlying assumption is that the ideal worker prioritizes work above all else. Operational processes are built on this assumption. A worker who, for example, works a flexible schedule might be evaluated lower due to this bias. Using a framework developed by Orange Grove Consulting, once the underlying assumption is identified, it can be tested to evaluate whether it is useful and accurate or whether it should be reframed. Reframing changes the way the underlying assumption is put into practice. In this case, a reframing could be instead that the ideal worker creates positive outcomes for the company. Genderized assumptions need to be uncovered, tested and reframed.

#### 4. WORK WITH WOMEN'S UNCONSCIOUS BIASES ABOUT THEMSELVES.

Why women? Change happens when people start to look at the problem through a different lens (a reframe). When you transform the perspective of most of your women, they will start to make changes themselves. Orange Grove's research suggests that women have internalized three key biases:<sup>8</sup>

- **Career ambivalence:** Often women feel that they can't share their career ambitions or desires to move into positions of power by assuming "I'm not sure I'm supposed to make my career so important."
- **Role disconnect:** This is a feeling that their roles as women, mothers, sisters, friends, community members are at odds with their roles as professionals. Societal assumptions suggest that being a good mother, for example, means not being selfish or overly committed to earning money. It can also manifest as stereotypes such as a warm versus cold woman.
- **Self-limiting beliefs:** Women have internalized stereotypical messages and often reinforce these through self-talk such as "I'm not good enough. I'm supposed to do all the work perfectly."

The work here is to shift women's mindsets by changing the self-talk they use around these biases. For example, instead of thinking I'm not good enough, women can tell themselves I am good enough and I am continuing to grow and learn. The mindset shift opens up thinking so that women can start to realize they are capable of moving into positions of leadership through continued professional growth and development. It's about helping women shift from a fixed to a growth mindset.

In addition, women need to support each other in this mindset shift. Research suggests most of the successful women had a supporting group of other women behind them. These support groups were designed precisely to hold each other accountable, challenge them to move outside their comfort zones, and support each other to grow and develop.

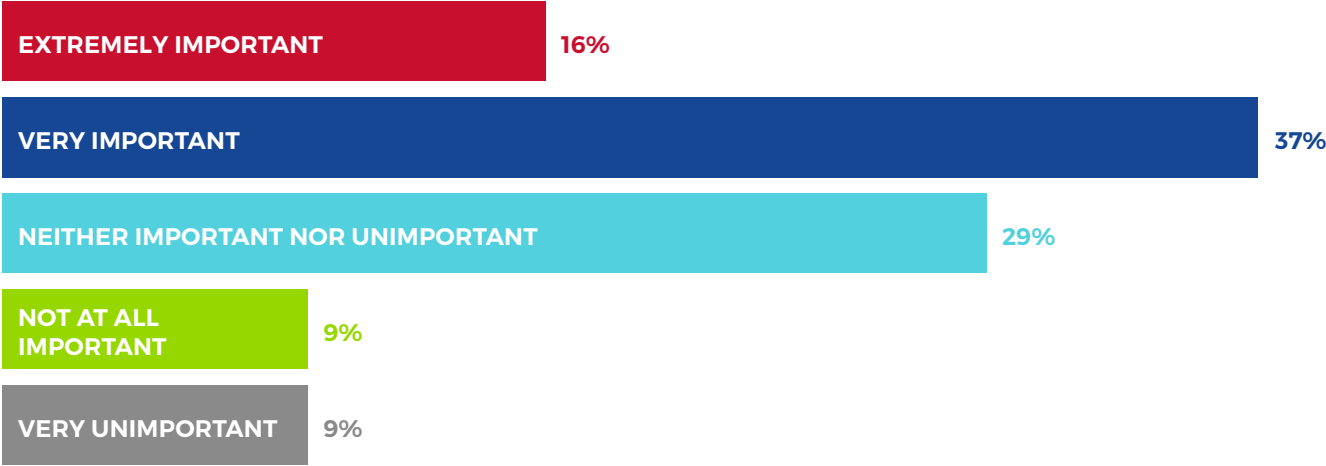
Finally, once the biases have been reframed, then specific training to foster women's leadership can reinforce the insights and broaden the skillsets. Through its primary research, Skillsoft found that 53% of women surveyed believe it is extremely or very important to have these kind of programs to support their development.

**16%** of respondents had a formal mentoring program and only had both a formal mentoring and sponsorship program.

**Women in the Workforce:**  
**A Skillsoft® survey report**

<sup>8</sup> *The Orange Line: A Woman's Guide to Integrating Career, Family and Life* by Detjen, Waters, and Watson, 2013.

**“IT IS IMPORTANT THAT MY ORGANIZATION HAS PROGRAMS SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT DEVELOPING WOMEN LEADERS.” WHERE DOES THIS STATEMENT RANK AS A BUSINESS OBJECTIVE?**



**5. ADDRESS THE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS OF MEN AND MANAGERS.**

We’ve found that men have their own unconscious biases about themselves, such as a belief that they can’t be authentic at work because they have to adopt a persona that isn’t their own in order to be successful. There is pressure not to take their foot off the career “gas” pedal for fear of being left behind.

Male and female managers bring these unconscious biases into their decision making. For example, they may assume a woman can’t travel because she has small children. Managers need to be aware of their own biases as well as the biases that women (and men) hold about themselves, taking into account how all these biases may affect their decisions.

Once the assumptions are seen and understood, everyone can then reframe these biases to enable a wider range of decision options.

## **6. NOW, CHANGE THE ORGANIZATION.**

If the change focuses just on the biases, it is very difficult to embed and efforts are unlikely to be effective. Some employees or managers may shift their thinking and approaches, but the effort won't be sustainable or organization-wide. The people who have changed will eventually leave for an organization that is capable of change. Using the assessment in (2), organizations can identify a myriad of changes that can be effective, including:

- Expanding the talent pipeline in recruitment, job diversity, and middle and senior leadership by broadening where the talent is identified.
- Identifying and changing the unconscious biases embedded in the decision-making processes around talent including both the formal (hiring, promotion, succession planning) and the informal (water cooler conversations, power dynamics within the decision-making process itself, etc.).
- Formal and informal sponsorship of female candidates in the promotion process.
- Senior leadership support for getting more females into leadership positions.
- Focused training to help women with follow-up and implementation support.
- Tackling the change at a pace that makes sense for the company.
- Increasing career pathways including lateral paths, and a career lattice approach versus the traditional vertical climb.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> "The Corporate Lattice A strategic response to the changing world of work." Cathy Benko, Molly Anderson and Suzanne Vickberg. Deloitte University Press, 2011.



- Redefining flexibility to be outcome driven, ubiquitous, available, and designed to meet the needs of work and life.
- Creating diversity in the supplier stream so that the organization buys from more demographically diverse companies.

## **7. START SMALL.**

Systemic changes are not easy. Starting the change process with one team, in a single business unit or defined area enables the organization to learn what works. The effort can then be scaled. Starting small provides an opportunity to experiment, creates built-in change agents for a wider roll-out and enables everyone to become comfortable with the pace of change. It also yields examples that can be shared organization-wide to reduce resistance by increasing the comfort level with the changes.

## **8. MEASURE, MEASURE, MEASURE.**

At the start of the change process, key performance indicators need to be identified and initial measurements taken. For several years during and following the change process, measurements indicate the progress (or not) of the changes. These measurements should align to strategic goals, such as impact on productivity, employee satisfaction ratings, measurements of innovation such as the number of new product launches or the overall return on equity. Resistance around measurement can arise because there's an assumption that it requires a quota. Measurement does not equate to a quota. The goal illustrates a company's commitment to the progression of women. Measurement shows clearly what is effective and what is ineffective.

In Boston, biotech talent is in high demand. Biogen, a top biotech firm, is known for their focus on women and as a result, women are seeking them specifically out for employment, and other biotechs are losing out. Xerox was able to recruit top female engineering talent because one-third of their research teams were female. It became a self-reinforcing cycle of talent.



## 9. SUPPORT THROUGHOUT.

As with all significant organizational change, this level of systemic change requires senior leadership support and championing. Additional ways the change can be supported include:

- **Incorporating business-based change agents:** Change agents that are predominantly sourced from HR can often be seen as outsiders thus increasing resistance. When coupled with people from other functional areas or business units to help foster the change, efficacy is increased.
- **Making ERGs/Affinity groups effective:** Effective affinity groups provide more formalized professional development directly tied to the organizational goals around strategy and gender. They include a wider variety of participants (e.g. incorporating white men) – but not for all sessions. They also take responsibility for certain aspects of change within the organization. Some are incorporated as part of the recruitment process; some even help build market share. The common ingredient to successful affinity groups: they matter, are listened to, and enabled to make an impact on the business.
- **Creating peer support groups that hold people accountable for the change.** Those involved meet periodically to share progress, advice for dealing with challenges, and connection across organizational siloes.
- **Incorporating Skillsoft's eight phases of workplace learning to embed the new mindsets, skills, and changes:** 1) Prepare me; 2) Tell me presentation; 3) Show me; 4) Let me practice; 5) Check me assessment; 6) Support me assistance; 7) Coach me experience and 8) Connect me collaboration.

Companies need talent. Companies have latent, underleveraged talent. The key is to mobilize that latent talent which lies within their female workforces. It's possible. It's doable. And it yields long-lasting competitive advantages and bottom line profitability benefits. By reframing biases, making decision making processes more objective, and measuring progress, companies can attract, retain and promote the best talent and realize significant financial benefits.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> "Designing Blended Programs using the Eight Phases of Workplace Learning." Skillsoft, 2016.

## HOW SKILLSOFT CAN HELP

Skillsoft can help L&D leaders jumpstart leadership programs for all women in their organizations. Skillsoft has just released 3 new state-of-the-art and engaging 30-minute video-based courses on the most critical topics for women in leadership. These courses leverage high-impact, high-quality pedagogical approaches to teach the topics they cover, including use of a host, panel discussions and real-world scenarios which all serve to ensure that the material is fully contextualized for the learners.

The first course covers gender and leadership and discusses the traits typically associated with leadership and the obstacles that women face on their paths to leadership. The course helps learners discover how to change their personal views in order to overcome these issues, including discussing why gender still matters. Female leaders who take the course will also learn how to develop competence, confidence and a personal brand. The second course is on choosing to lead as a woman. The course teaches female leaders how to capitalize on their natural strengths as women in order to showcase competence, enhance leadership skills, and communicate and network effectively. The final course covers career and family challenges female leaders face, especially balancing work and family. The course teaches how to conquer some of the challenges of career and family, including building a support system, overcoming the “perfectionist” mindsets and reframing limiting beliefs.

The women in leadership learning path, which encompasses all three courses, really helps women internalize how to capitalize on the leadership skills that come naturally to women, as well as how to enhance the skills that all effective leaders have, regardless of gender. These courses can help any organization jumpstart a leadership development effort at scale across all levels of women leaders.

Skillsoft has other offerings as well to assist L&D professionals in advancing their female leaders.

One of the biggest problems organizations face in terms of providing leadership training to both established and emerging female leaders is no way to consistently provide short, high impact training to all levels of their women leaders in order to ensure continuous learning and constant reinforcement of that learning. Skillsoft's Women in Action leadership program is an ideal complement to formal leadership development programs. It is also an effective standalone program for organizations that cannot afford to provide leadership training programs specifically for women.



The Women in Action leadership program is a curated collection of high-impact multimodal training assets which are organized into competency areas and intended for both established and aspiring leaders. The content is highly relevant and focused on the key competencies women need for effective professional development in today's workplace. This time efficient program can fit into any busy woman's time-pressed day by providing one topic per month, featuring brief leadership videos, book summaries, along with provocative questions and learning activities. It is also highly flexible so that organizations can set their own development cadence.

Content is organized into monthly templates that can be delivered via email calendar invites or posted on a server for easy access. The collection includes assets organized around management and leadership competency areas, including specific assets which offer advice and insight from renowned external experts. The solution offers an economical scalable and easily implemented approach towards developing leadership skills for women in today's organizations.

## WHERE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION ON THE CONTINUUM?

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
<b>SEVERE TALENT LOSS</b> <p>Gender is not on the radar. There are no women on the board. Less than 10% of the senior management team is female. Women are siloed in HR, marketing and administrative roles. Women leave at high rates to seek more conducive environments; those who stay are stuck in roles for 5 years or more.</p>	<b>TALENT BLEEDING STOPPED</b> <p>Gender is recognized but is not a priority. Women are sent out for training. There are occasional events to help women network. Awareness has increased but substantive change is not happening.</p>	<b>TALENT SUSTAINED</b> <p>Gender is recognized and discussed. Measurement of gender starts. The organization creates affinity groups to provide arenas for discussion and support. Mentoring programs may be started. A diversity council responsible for identifying ways to increase diversity may be established.</p>	<b>TALENT GROWTH</b> <p>Gender is a priority. There may still be some talent siloes but talent is looked for more broadly across the organization. Women are part of the promotion process in larger numbers. Measurement is tied to performance. Processes are reviewed for gender bias. Work is designed differently. Sponsorship programs have started. A diversity council or senior team is responsible for ensuring diversity is fully integrated into the talent strategy.</p>	<b>TALENT MAXIMIZED</b> <p>Gender is embedded in the talent strategy. There is gender parity across the organizational hierarchy and within functional areas. Processes have minimized bias. Work is designed with flexibility around joint employer, client, peer and employee goals. Women are integrated into the promotion process and are key decision makers around strategy.</p>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### JODI DETJEN

Jodi Detjen is a clinical professor of management at Suffolk University and is the Academic MBA program director. She co-authored *The Orange Line: A Woman's Guide to Integrating Career, Family and Life* in May 2013. She focuses on consulting and leadership development on these principles in her consulting firm, Orange Grove Consulting. Her vision is to help organizations globally achieve gender parity in leadership.

Jodi has been consulting around leadership and organizational effectiveness for over 25 years. She teaches, consults and writes in areas of leadership development, managing change, increasing impact, and how women can realize their power. Her MA in International Development Policy is from Duke University and her B.Sc., from Virginia Tech in Management Science.



**Jodi Detjen**

Managing Partner,  
Orange Grove Consulting

**in** [linkedin.com/in/jodidetjen](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jodidetjen)

**tw** [@jodidetjen](https://twitter.com/jodidetjen)

### HEIDE ABELLI

In her role at Skillsoft, Heide is responsible for driving innovation and growth in the Leadership & Business Skills content portfolios. Heide has extensive experience in the publishing, media and educational technology / training sectors. Prior to joining Skillsoft, Heide spent almost a decade working at Harvard Business Publishing, where she developed award-winning eLearning products in the leadership and business skills content areas. Prior to that, she held several roles at the global media giant Bertelsmann. Heide is passionate about leveraging technology to improve the practice of management. She has held leadership roles in product development, innovation and product management for Fortune 100 companies and has her finger on the pulse of what organizations need to train and develop today's workforce. She holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and is on the faculty of the Management and Organization Department of Boston College's School of Business.



**Heide Abelli**


VP, Leadership & Business Skills, Skillsoft

**in** [linkedin.com/in/heideabelli](https://www.linkedin.com/in/heideabelli)


**tw** [@habelli](https://twitter.com/habelli)




 [linkedin.com/company/skillsoft](https://www.linkedin.com/company/skillsoft)

 [facebook.com/skillsoft](https://www.facebook.com/skillsoft)

 [twitter.com/skillsoft](https://twitter.com/skillsoft)

 [skillsoft.com](https://www.skillsoft.com)

 US 866-757-3177  
EMEA +44 (0)1276 401994  
ASIA +65 6866 3789 (Singapore)  
AU +61 2 8067 8663  
FR +33 (0)1 83 64 04 10  
DE +49 211 5407 0191  
IN +91-22-44764695  
NZ +64 4 473 3488

## ABOUT SKILLSOFT

Skillsoft is the global leader in corporate learning, delivering beautiful technology and engaging content that drives business impact for modern enterprises. Skillsoft comprises three award-winning solutions that support learning, performance and success: Skillsoft learning content, the Percipio intelligent learning platform and the SumTotal suite for Human Capital Management.

Skillsoft provides the most comprehensive selection of cloud-based corporate learning content, including courses, videos, books and other resources on Business and Management Skills, Leadership Development, Digital Transformation, IT Skills and Certification Training, Productivity and Collaboration Tools and Compliance. Percipio's intuitive design engages modern learners and its consumer-led experience accelerates learning. The SumTotal suite features four key components built on a unified platform: Learning Management, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition and Workforce Management.

Skillsoft is trusted by thousands of the world's leading organizations, including 65 percent of the Fortune 500. Learn more at [www.skillsoft.com](https://www.skillsoft.com)