



# POWERING WOMEN'S PATH TO *leadership*



## A Strategic Guide to Advancing High-Potential Women

To help organizations remove systemic barriers that stall high-potential women at the manager-to-VP level and activate proven strategies to drive advancement, retention, and inclusive recruitment.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Despite equal ambition and credentials, women face persistent barriers in mid-career leadership transitions. These challenges are not isolated—they are systemic and cumulative.



### Key Data Points

#### REPRESENTATION

Women decline from 48% of entry-level roles to 29% of the C-suite (McKinsey).

Career Level	Women's Representation
Entry	48%
Manager	39%
Director	37%
Vice President	34%
SVP/C-Suite	29%

#### SCOPE

Women manage fewer people and smaller budgets (Forté).

#### PAY

Post-MBA, women earn 10–12% less than men in the same roles (Forté).

#### PROMOTIONS

Women are promoted ~15% less often than men (Forté).

#### PROXIMITY

Women are, on average, one level further from the C-suite (Forté).

## BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT

1

### Lack of Career Path

53%

of women report no formal development plan.

56% of men reported the same, but because women already face fewer stretch opportunities, the lack of clarity has a disproportionate impact.

2

### Lack of Sponsorship

42%

of women lack someone advocating for them, compared to 31% of men.

Without sponsorship, women miss access to strategic projects and visibility.

3

### Confidence Gap

40%

of women cite low confidence as a barrier, compared to 29% of men.

This is reinforced by undervaluation and too few visible role models.



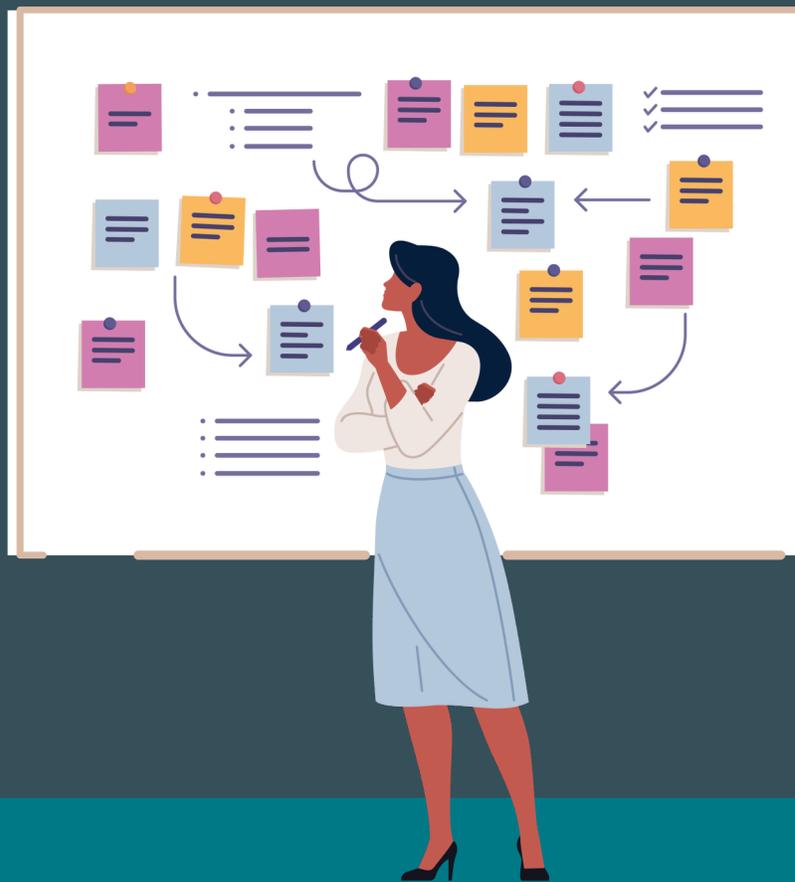
## STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS



### ACTION ITEM #1

#### Codify and Communicate Advancement Pathways

- Define promotion criteria, skills, and milestones.
- Publish frameworks and share real advancement stories.
- Use development plans and feedback loops to keep progress visible.



### ACTION ITEM #2

#### Activate ERGs as Engines for Growth and Recruitment

- Host panels and workshops to demystify advancement.
- Create mentoring and sponsorship bridges.
- Showcase leadership role models to build confidence.





### ACTION ITEM #3

## Equip Managers to Lead Inclusively and Develop Talent

- Train managers to recognize diverse leadership styles.
- Provide tools for inclusive feedback and coaching.
- Tie talent development to performance reviews and reward inclusive leadership.



### ACTION ITEM #4

## Track and Address Systemic Gaps with Data

- Monitor equity across gender and race at each career level.
- Use benchmarks like post-MBA outcomes, promotion rates, and budget authority.
- Intervene with targeted strategies where women lose ground.



## RECRUITING ADVANTAGE: Make It Visible

Highlight manager development and advancement clarity on your careers site.

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Share structured development plans and success stories with candidates.

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Use ERGs and managers to humanize the recruiting process.



## FINAL THOUGHT

### Transparency Drives Trust

Build an internal snapshot of your talent pipeline. Show the percentage of women at each level—not just overall headcount—so everyone can see how advancement works and where gaps emerge. That level of visibility signals a real commitment to equity, retention, and growth.

	Women's Representation at Your Company
Entry	
Manager	
Director	
Vice President	
SVP/C-Suite	



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