

# BREAK THE CYCLE

## Eliminating Gender Bias In Talent Management Systems

Our research shows that gender bias can seep into talent management systems and create an endless cycle that cascades down to every employee at every level of an organization.<sup>1</sup>



### SENIOR LEADERS

set the tone and cultural norms for the behaviors that are rewarded and those that aren't, and they determine the kinds of leaders who are promoted, often because "like likes like."

**RESULT:** Since senior leaders tend to be male, they may also tend to value stereotypically masculine behaviors and skills.

### HR EXPERTS

translate senior leaders' expectations into talent management programs, processes, and tools.

**RESULT:** Everyone is judged against masculine standards, disadvantaging women.

### MANAGERS

use HR's tools and processes to evaluate direct reports, identify high potentials, allocate "hot jobs," and promote individuals.

**RESULT:** Managers see emerging male leaders as the "best fit" because stereotypically masculine behaviors are baked into the system.

### ALL EMPLOYEES

are assessed on their performance regularly.

**RESULT:** Based on potentially biased evaluations, some people are rewarded, some are not, and the cycle starts again.

## TAKE ACTION TO BREAK THE CYCLE



### SENIOR LEADERS

Your behavior matters. Become a model for inclusion by championing people who are different from you and building inclusive teams with diverse voices.



### HR EXPERTS

Your process matters. Check yourself and your recruitment systems for cracks where biases can seep in.



### MANAGERS

Your assignments matter. Make sure you offer development opportunities and "hot jobs" to everyone on your team, not just the usual suspects.

### ASK YOURSELF:

Who gets visibility in your organization? Who gets rewarded?

What competencies does your organization value? Are these competencies gendered?

Who has access to "hot jobs"? Who have you identified as an emerging leader?

Source:

1. The findings from this report are based on an assessment of 110 talent management systems representing 19 industries. Anika K. Warren, *Cascading Gender Biases, Compounding Effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems* (Catalyst, 2009).

Research Partners: Altria Group, Bank of America, Bloomberg, BMO Financial Group, The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Cargill, Incorporated, Chevron Corporation, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, Dell Inc., Deutsche Bank, EY, IBM Corporation, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, McDonald's Corporation, Merck & Co., Inc., Sodexo, UPS, Verizon Communications Inc.



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