

Encouraging Women into Senior Management Positions: How Coaching Can Help

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a report researched by IES

This research examines the factors underlying women's progress through organisational structures and the reasons why women in senior management positions in the USA and in Europe decide to accept or decline board-level jobs. We hope that the research will inform the debate in the US and worldwide, and illuminate the development of further coaching topics and strategies that might be needed to help greater numbers of women progress into board-level positions.

Our interviewees had experienced a range of barriers to progression into senior management and board-level positions. These included perceptions about women's management style, difficulties with masculine organisational cultures, general experiences of discrimination, and difficulties in gaining the right experience and gaining access to the right people in an organisation in order to be able to advance. Other issues discussed included overall confidence problems, the difficulties caused by having non-linear careers, and the problems of family commitments.

We asked interviewees how coaching could help them to progress in organisations and to overcome some of the barriers they outlined. From their responses, it is clear that coaching can make a key contribution. The areas in which coaching can help women progress into senior positions include:

- confidence building
- providing a sounding board for ideas
- dealing with organisational cultures
- networking
- identifying values and goals
- identifying and obtaining access to development opportunity
- making the right impression
- coping with a new role
- achieving specific goals.

This research will benefit: those involved in offering executive coaching, line managers of executives and senior-level staff, women hoping to obtain a senior management or board-level position, and anyone interested in research and/or policy in this area.

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