



New Report by Korn Ferry & The Conference Board: Majority of HR Executives Say Gender Parity in Company Leadership is Significant Issue

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--Inequity Dramatically Increases at Higher Levels in an Organization --

-- Nearly Half Believe Women are Not Gaining Necessary Experiences to Help them Advance --

-- New Report Outlines Actions to Increase Female Leader Representation --

LOS ANGELES & NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Mar. 6, 2019-- As International Women's Day approaches (March 8), a new study by [Korn Ferry](#) (NYSE: KFY) and [The Conference Board](#) shows that, while there has been some progress in advancing women in business, there is still significant work that needs to be done to move toward gender parity.

Researchers surveyed nearly 300 human resource executives as part of the study, *Effective Leadership Development Strategies at Pivotal Points for Women: Chief Human Resources Officers and Senior HR Leaders Speak**. While 62 percent of respondents believe representation of women in leadership positions has improved during the last five years, 66 percent believe that there still is an inadequate representation of women in leadership positions in their organization today.

Inadequate Female Representation Increases at Higher Levels

According to the survey and other bodies of research, gender inequity is significantly higher at top levels within organizations. While nearly half of individual contributors are women, that percentage dwindles to little more than a fifth at the senior vice president and c-suite levels.

The study found a high level of dissatisfaction with female representation in leadership roles, with 66 percent of respondents saying the number of women at the vice president level at their own organization was inadequate, and 65 percent agreeing that there was not enough female representation in the c-suite.

Pivotal Points to Building a Robust Pipeline

Half of respondents believe there are not enough women in the pipeline to fill open leadership positions. In addition, 40 percent do not believe women are gaining the experiences necessary to help them advance.

The authors of the study believe incremental actions will not be enough to close the gap, and that leaders must disrupt the status quo, take a strong position, and focus on programs that drive greater outcomes.

"The obstacles a woman faces exist across the entire lifecycle – from hiring to promotion and throughout development," said Beatrice Grech-Cumbo, Korn Ferry leader of Advancing Women Worldwide and senior client partner. "In the study, we identified two pivotal points where women's representation drops significantly: first-line leaders and senior leaders. While organizations are focusing on increasing the representation of women in senior leadership, it is equally important to work to place women in first-line manager roles. This point in the pipeline significantly impacts the promotion pool of female talent."

"HR and business executives need to take a step back to better understand and address the systemic reasons behind the gender imbalance," said Rebecca L. Ray, Ph.D., executive vice president of Human Capital at The Conference Board. "Reasons include pay inequity, hiring manager bias and accountability, a lack of sponsors and champions, as well as the lack of programmatic support for the integration of work and life."

The report by Korn Ferry and The Conference Board also identifies key steps that are necessary to help women advance at all levels of the organization, including:

- Challenging women early in their careers
- Redesigning talent management systems to mitigate bias and disrupt historical practices
- Creating an intentionally inclusive climate
- Providing differentiated development opportunities and experiences
- Developing a sponsorship program aimed at women advancement opportunities
- Offering stretch assignments and personalized leadership experiences

The report also includes case studies of organizations that have enacted effective female development initiatives.

**Editors Note: A full copy of the new report can be obtained by emailing Joe DiBlasi at Joseph.Diblas@conference-board.org or Tracy Kurschner at Tracy.Kurschner@kornferry.com.*

About the Survey

The Korn Ferry and Conference Board survey of 291 senior HR professionals, 74 percent of whom are women, took place in late 2018.

About Korn Ferry

Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We help clients synchronize strategy and talent to drive superior performance. We work with organizations to design their structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people to bring their strategy to life. And we advise them on how to reward, develop, and motivate their people.

About The Conference Board

The Conference Board is the member-driven think tank that delivers trusted insights for what's ahead. Founded in 1916, we are a non-partisan, not-for-profit entity holding 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status in the United States. www.conference-board.org

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