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BUSINESS | JOURNAL REPORTS: LEADERSHIP

Networking Isn't Easy for Women, but It Is Crucial

Women executives trail men in connections that can help their careers. New programs try to counter that.



JANETTE SADIK-KHAN | 'Women don't ask for help. Women see it as a sign of weakness.' PHOTO: OLUGBENRO PHOTOGRAPHY

By **LIZ RAPPAPORT**

Updated Oct. 1, 2015 6:35 p.m. ET

Go to lunch with an ask. Don't be afraid to be transactional. Make yourself go to the cocktail party.

“Networking is like exercise,” says Candace Corlett, president of WSL, a retail strategy consulting firm. “You know you must, but do you? And you know if you do, you’ll feel better.”

Professional relationships create opportunities and outlets for sounding off about career challenges, say senior executive women, who attribute most of their advancement to having connections. But women have fewer ties than men to colleagues and cohorts at work and outside work that can help them, according to data collected in a study of 118 companies by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Co.

JOURNAL REPORT

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According to the study, 10% of senior women executives said they had the aid of four or more executives helping them advance, compared with 17% of senior men executives. But, more than half of the senior women said it is extremely important to have a higher-level sponsor help set them on a path, compared with 42% of senior men who prioritize such relationships.

Work and home

Making connections is often challenging for women who want to maximize their time at work and get home for dinner, say executives. Others fear looking like they are bragging or inappropriate for seeking favor and guidance from a male superior, even though it is likely that any executive above them will be a man, they say. Now, there are numerous

organizations and corporate programs to help women find higher-level executives to advocate for them at work and to establish ties with other women in their fields.

Diane Schumaker-Krieg, Wells Fargo & Co.'s global head of research, economics and strategy, says she has always been more comfortable managing her subordinates than relating to higher-level executives. She was gun-shy, she says, about introducing herself to John Mack, the CEO of her former employer Credit Suisse First Boston at the time of a holiday-time social event in 2001. Her husband, Stanley, persisted.

"If you don't, I will," he said, and introduced himself to Mr. Mack as the husband of "one of your biggest producers." He pointed to Ms. Schumaker-Krieg. "She's right behind me in the pink suit."

The encounter led Mr. Mack to call her into his office to discuss how she built up her business selling research on Wall Street to new clients. By February 2002, she was promoted to co-head of the equity-research department, a role that gave her continued contact with Mr. Mack and other senior executives at the Wall Street firm.

"I'm an introvert who works hard to be an extrovert," says Ms. Schumaker-Krieg. It has taken her years to realize how important it is to network, but she adds that she frequently mentors and sponsors women and men at Wells Fargo.

Visual aid

It is critical to take 10% to 20% of your time at work to network, says Alison Mass, a partner at Goldman Sachs Group Inc. who is co-head of the investment banking group that covers financial companies such as private-equity firms. She is deliberate about networking: She sets up reminder alerts on her computer to stay in touch and keeps a list of her important people at eye-view by her desk.

"It reminds me by looking at their names if I haven't spoken with them in a while," says Ms. Mass, adding that keeping in touch needn't take much effort. Last month she shot off a quick email to colleagues featured in a news article. Her firm frequently hosts events to help women connect. This fall, senior women executives will act as sommeliers while younger Goldman women meet them and taste wine.

Women often think of their network as social contacts, says Debora McLaughlin, a leadership coach and author. Friendships can happen naturally, but it isn't essential for a network to be built on close, intimate ties, she and other executives say.

"It's OK to be transactional," says Sallie Krawcheck, a former bank executive who now

runs the Ellevest Network for women, adding that sometimes women need to compare notes with other females. Once when she was running the wealth-management unit of Citigroup Inc. and was having trouble communicating with then-CEO Vikram Pandit, she says that she realized a certain woman's point of view would help.

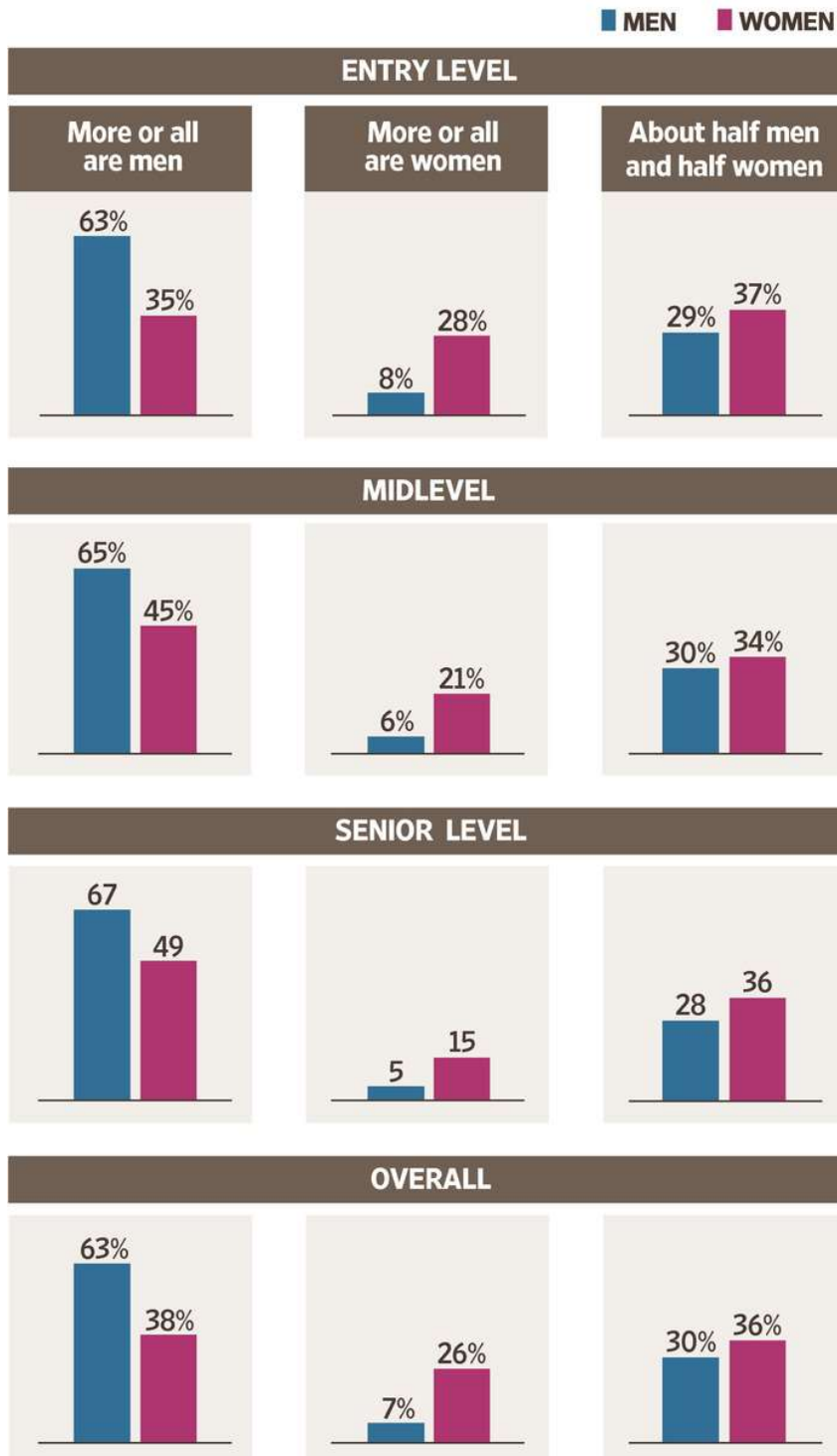
She had lunch with Zoe Cruz, the former co-president of Morgan Stanley who had worked with him in one of his previous roles. Ms. Krawcheck had never met with Ms. Cruz before, she said, though she got great advice that helped her navigate the issues she was facing. Ms. Krawcheck eventually stepped down from Citigroup.

"It doesn't always have to be a meal or a golf game," says Ms. Krawcheck, adding that it is helpful to know what you want from the person you are reaching out to. It makes the person across the lunch table feel they've been effective and that they used their time wisely. She has seen women's networking accelerating as more organizations like

Weaker Links?

Women and men have vastly different professional networks. Their networks are similar in size, but men have predominantly male networks, while women have more female or mixed networks. Given this, women likely have less access to senior men.

When asked whether senior staff members who have assisted them in their careers have been mainly men or women, people surveyed said:



Women's networks are an important contributor to opportunity creation, but they appear to lag behind those of men at senior levels.

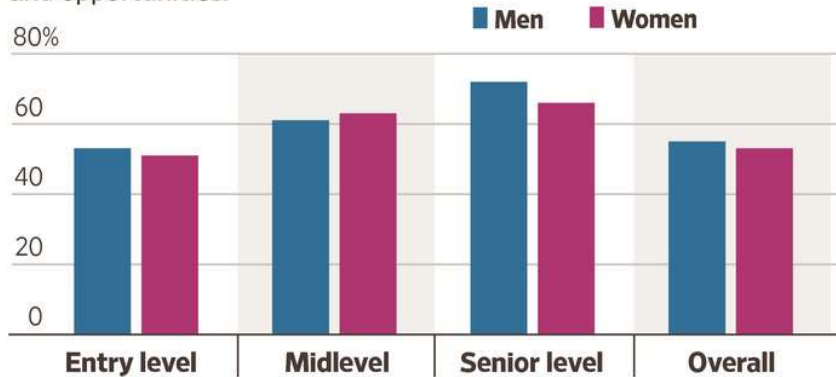
Ellevest and others emerge to get women together and open doors.

Women get stuck in the middle of their careers sometimes, and they look around to find they are the only female in the room, says Janette Sadik-Khan the former commissioner of New York City's Department of Transportation when Michael Bloomberg was mayor. She now works with mayors around the country and transportation officials to build up and redesign their cities as a principal at Bloomberg Associates.

Insights, perceptions

Ms. Sadik-Khan helped create a leadership program for women in the middle of their transportation careers with the Women's Transportation Seminar, an organization devoted to advancing women in the field. The three-day program offers one-on-one coaching, style assessments and exposure to other industry leaders—who provide insights into how they are perceived from people they relate to and can learn from. All of the participants in the

The percentage of those surveyed who "strongly" or "somewhat" agree that their professional network has directly helped them obtain jobs, get promoted and have access to key assignments and opportunities:



Source: LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Co. Women in the Workplace 2015 survey of nearly 30,000 men and women

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first three years of the program, which she oversaw, were subsequently promoted.

“Women don’t ask for help,” says Ms. Sadik-Khan. “Women see it as a sign of weakness.” She meets regularly with women heads of transportation networks in big cities such as Los Angeles, Mexico City, Toronto, Salt Lake City and elsewhere, she says. “The phone will ring late

in the evening sometimes. They need a reality check.”

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(https://twitter.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fgraphics.wsj.com%2Fvin-the-workplace%2F%3Fslide%3D-1&text=Women%20in%20the%20Workplac

Women in the Workplace: By the Numbers
Despite support from the top, gender equality is a long way off at most U.S. companies. A study by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Co. reveals why.
<https://twitter.com/leaninorg>
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What's your gender?

- Man
- Woman

Thinking specifically about your organization's sponsorship from senior level staff, how important is it to you?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Not too important
- Not important at all

You must answer all of the questions to submit.

Submit

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