



Women in Leadership

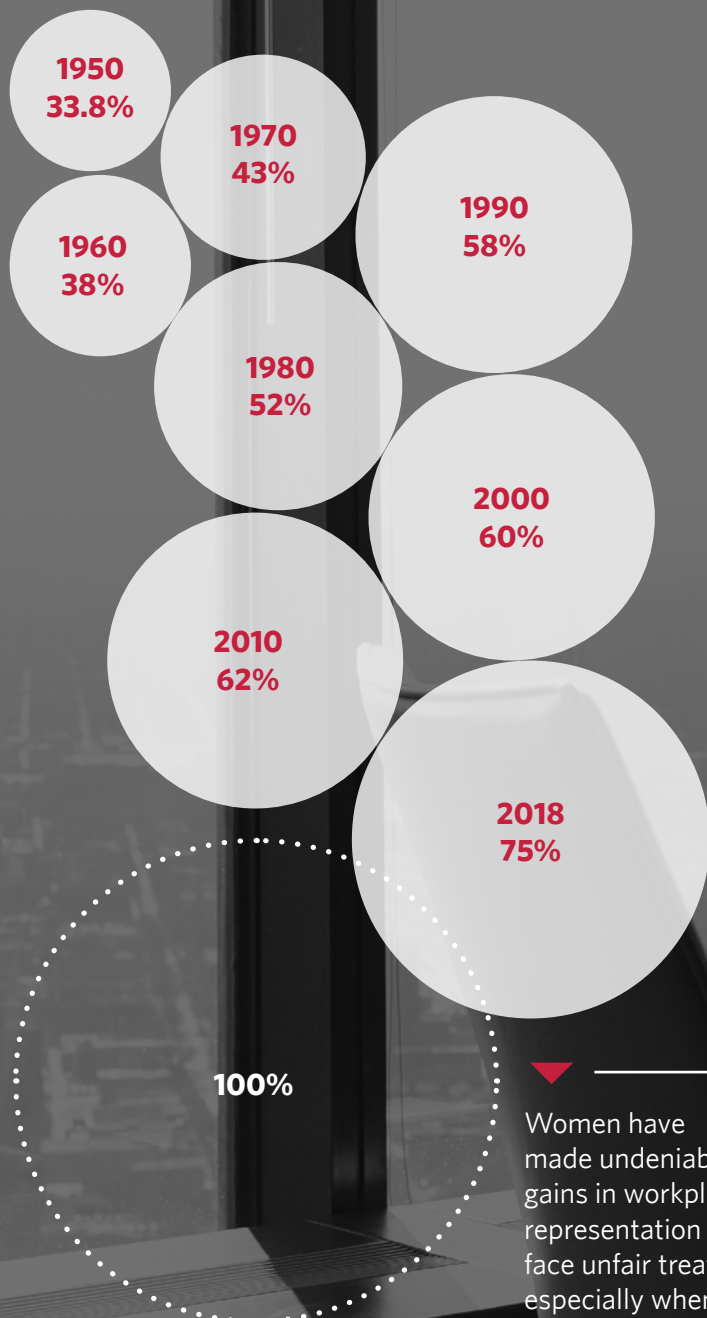
**The Data-Driven
Guide to Leadership
Skills for Women**

Introduction:

The 21st century has been an exciting time for women in leadership. In the past decades, women have made significant progress towards equality in the workplace, while excelling in an increasing percentage of management roles. The rates of employment and college graduation have risen sharply since 1950. However, there are still imbalances when it comes to women in leadership.

While American women have **overtaken men in higher education**, they still represent a small fraction of executive roles, and are **18% less likely to be promoted** than their male peers. Additionally, women are paid 80 cents for every dollar a man makes, according to US census data. The National Women's Law Center reports the average pay gap costs American women \$10,169 each year.

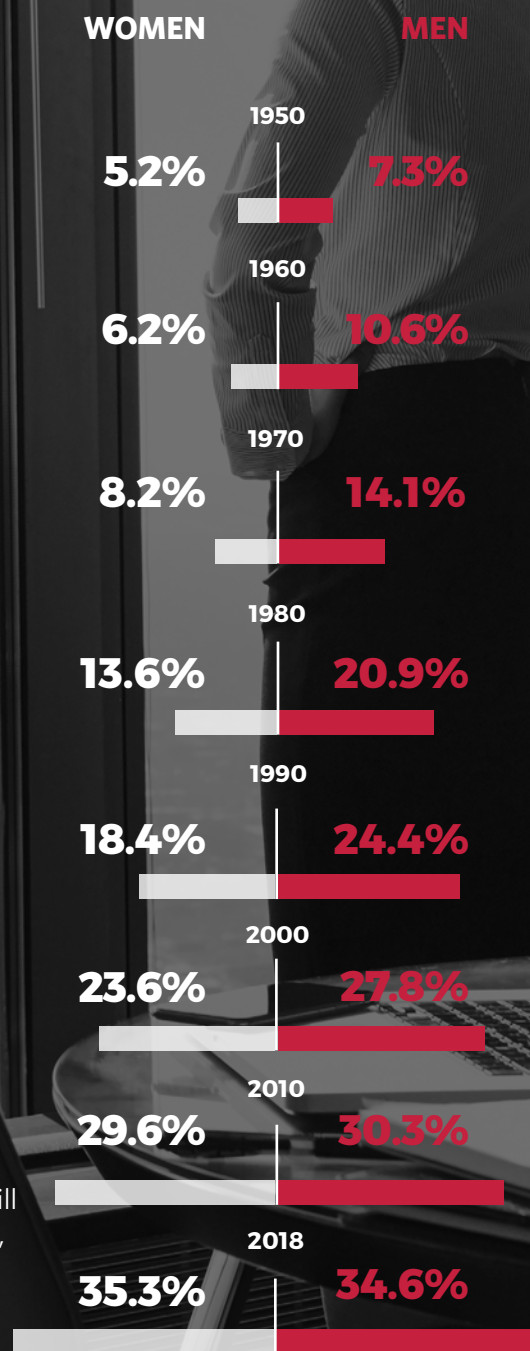
Percentage of Women Working Full-Time



Women have made undeniable gains in workplace representation but still face unfair treatment, especially when it comes to leadership roles.

*Source: Pew Research Center

Percentage of Women and Men with 4-Year Degrees



Obstacles for Women in Leadership Roles:

Though the modern workplace has made tremendous strides towards gender equality in the past decades, there is still a great deal of gender bias and discrimination in the workplace. A short time ago, a minority of women had jobs at all, and an even smaller percentage had roles in leadership.

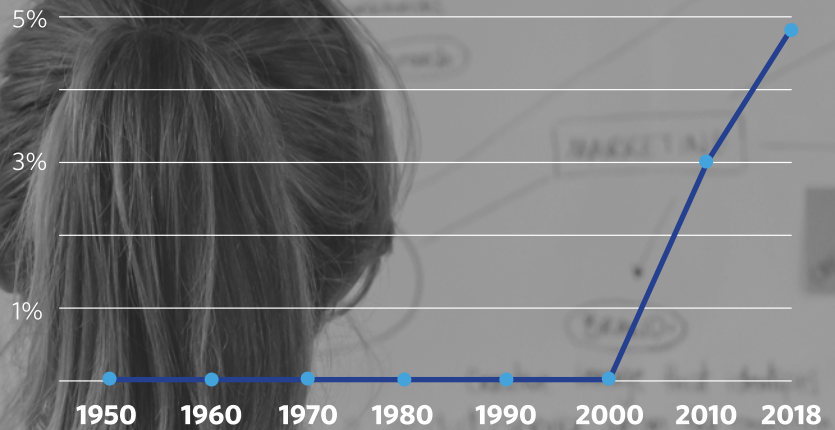
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 33.8% of women had jobs in 1950, compared to 75% today.



Of the nearly 4.5 million new jobs in management created since 1980, **women have obtained the majority of them.**

These are all great trends for gender equality, but women in leadership roles still face challenges, prejudice, bias, and unfair treatment.

Percentage of Women CEOs in Fortune 500 Companies

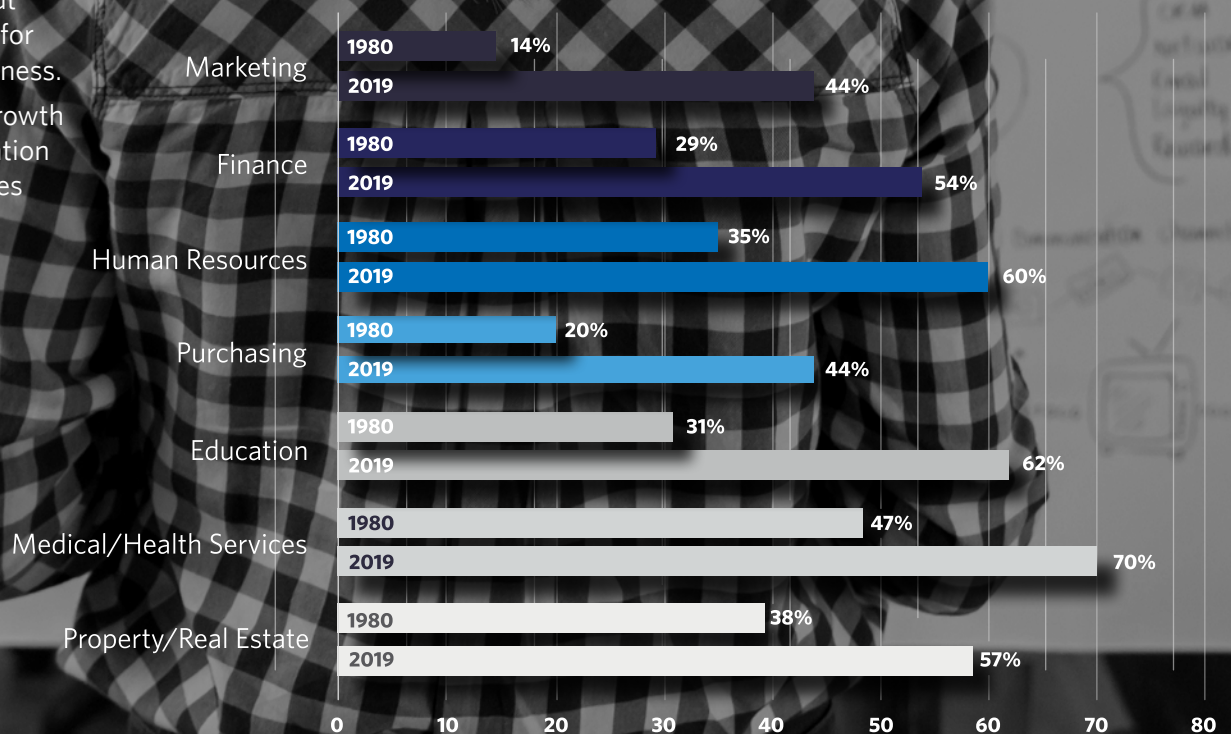


*Source: Pew Research Center

Lack of Women in Executive Roles

Women occupy a significant proportion of management roles but are scarce in executive and C-Suite roles. In today's corporate culture, a woman is likely to rise to the ranks of middle management, but very rarely get selected for the top echelons in business.

▼ Women have seen growth in leadership representation in the following industries since 1980.



Obstacles for Women in Leadership Roles:

Data on the percentage of women in the C-Suite:

Remarkably, there were no women in the C-Suite in a Fortune 500 company in 1980, with **4.8%** in 2019, at 24 out of 500.

In **2016-2017**, women accounted for:



Gender Bias in the Workplace

On top of imbalances in sheer numbers of women in management roles, women experience higher rates of gender bias in their roles. Several instances of gender bias include:

23% of women are treated as if they were **not competent because of their gender** (23% of employed women versus 6% of men)

13% of women have access to **maternity leave**

Women's median full-time, year-round **earnings in 2017 were \$41,977** compared with \$52,146 for men

54% of women have **experienced unwanted sexual advances** in the workplace. 23% of women report that the harassment involved a supervisor.

Nearly 6 million American mothers caring for young children have **no health insurance**

Single mothers pay nearly **36% of their income** for child care expenses for one child

Women who were managers in 2017 were 22% more likely than male managers to be rated as **"top performers,"** but received lower salaries and were less likely to be promoted

Clearly, women experience unfair gender bias in the workplace, and women in leadership are held to different standards than men. These challenges can be demoralizing and may stunt a woman's career growth.

Tips for Overcoming Challenges

Despite the glacial pace of workplace improvement for gender equality, and rates of women in leadership, there are ways to make the best of an unjust situation. As Sian Beilock of the Harvard Business Review writes,

“Highly skilled women succumb to stereotype-driven expectations. It begins early when girls as young as six stop believing that girls are the smart ones, while boys continue to believe their gender is gifted. As women get older, these stereotypes discourage them from pursuing careers thought to be typically reserved for men. And, with fewer women in a field, subsequent generations of women are deterred from pursuing them. It’s a vicious cycle, but it can be broken.”

Here are some actionable tips for overcoming these challenges and inequities from women in leadership positions:

Report discrimination and gender bias:

There are varying levels of gender bias in the workplace, from the mildly offensive comment to downright hostile behaviors. It can be hard to know what to do when discrimination occurs, but the vast majority of businesses have policies on gender discrimination.

For milder cases, talk about gender discrimination to a trusted colleague or HR professional at your organization. For more severe instances of sexual harassment and hostility, file an official report in writing.

Find a female mentor:

There’s a good chance your organization or industry has a woman you look up to. There’s also a good chance that woman has experienced similar unfair treatment and challenges. Connecting with a female mentor in your professional life is a great way to bring experience and wisdom to your workplace challenges.

Additionally, a mentor may be a resource for future work opportunities.

“First, find a mentor and leverage them! The world of business is a complicated one, and it always helps to have someone to bounce ideas with and maybe even recommend you for opportunities if needed.”

-Stephanie Horton, Chief Marketing Officer at FarFetch.com

Avoid obsessing over work:

For many driven women in leadership, their career can dictate their sense of self-worth. This phenomenon can lead to extremely long hours, and workaholism. Though hard work is valued, compulsive working can be detrimental to a leader’s health, and her ability to lead.

“Ultimately, the challenge for anyone is to identify a compulsive work mentality and prevent its consequences. Focusing on one’s engagement and ability to ‘switch off’ will go a long way in helping employees feel happy at work and outside of it.”

-Nancy Rothbard, Harvard Business Review

Journaling:

A distinct psychological phenomenon occurs when putting pen to paper. Getting stresses and anxieties related to “imposter syndrome” off your chest can really put things in perspective and allow you to gather your thoughts.

“In a new job or position? Worried about whether you can make the cut? Try journaling. The act of committing thoughts to paper has been shown to decrease worries and rumination and boost the ability to concentrate and focus.”

-Sian Beilock, President of Barnard College

Opportunities for Women in Leadership Roles:

In the business world, challenges are often met with reward. Uncertainty and chaos can present opportunities. In the case of women in leadership roles, there are plenty of opportunities for women and businesses to find mutualistic benefits.

The Global Leadership Forecast 2014-2015 found that greater gender diversity was associated with improved problem solving and transparency throughout the organization.

According to the Pew Research Center, 30% of the people surveyed felt that women made better mentors. Only 5% believed men made better mentors.

Millennial women are better educated than their male counterparts. 46% of millennial women have a bachelor's degree, versus 36% of millennial men.

Better Shareholder ROI:

Along with creating a more welcoming culture, improved gender diversity in leadership positions has been shown to increase productivity, innovation, employee retention, and employee satisfaction. As you can imagine, these benefits contribute to increased profits for shareholders.

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“With regards to business performance, we find clear evidence that companies with a higher proportion of women in decision-making roles continue to generate higher returns on equity, while running more conservative balance sheets. In fact, where women account for the majority in the top management, the businesses show superior sales growth, high cash flow returns on investments and lower leverage.”

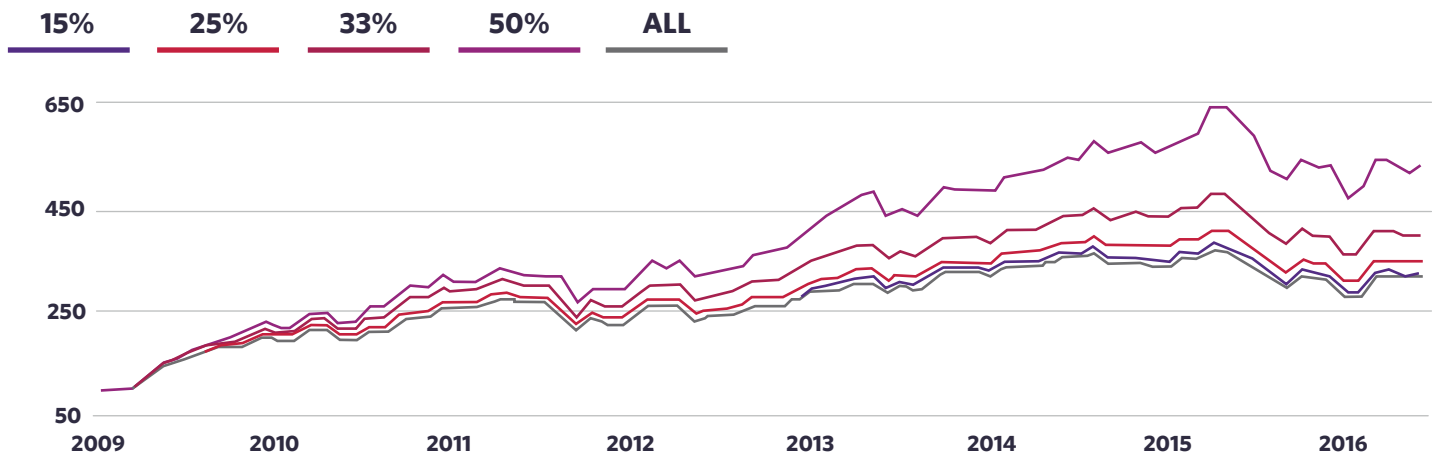
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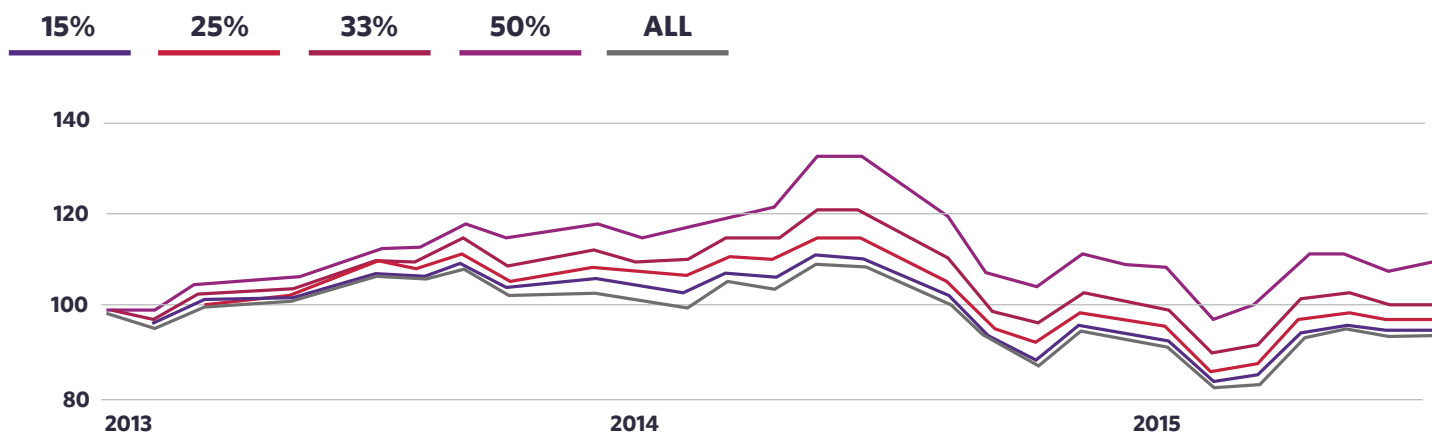


Better Shareholder ROI Continued:

Share price performance for baskets with different tiers of female participation in senior management



Share price performance for baskets with different tiers of female participation in senior management (since 2013)



Source: Bloomberg, CS Gender 300

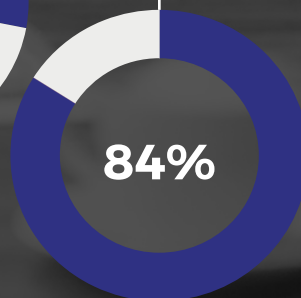
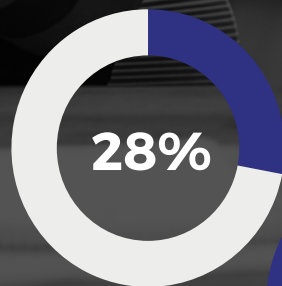
Management Shortage in the Coming Years:

Nearly half of the American workforce consists of millennials, who have been coined

"The Job-Hopping Generation"

by Gallup.

Millennials are unlikely to stay at a job longer than 3 years, and only 28% of millennials are managers.



As a result, 84% of organizations anticipate a shortfall of leaders in the next 5 years.

This upcoming shortage in management, paired with the benefits of gender diversity, presents an opportunity for women to excel in leadership roles in the coming years.

Tips for Advancing Your Career in Leadership:

Despite the shortage of managers and the benefits of women in leadership roles, getting a management role can be a challenge. Management positions often require management experience, which presents a bit of a catch-22.

Communicate with leadership:

Internal hires are often overlooked for leadership roles because they haven't communicated. To start your journey to management, speak up to a decision-maker in your organization to get the ball rolling.

Hone your skills:

Continuing education is one of the best ways to let managers know you want something more. Postgraduate degrees and certifications may lead to management opportunities down the road.

Demonstrate leadership expertise:

Being a subject matter expert is important, but being a great specialist doesn't necessarily mean you'll be a good leader. Though it's important to know the ins and outs of your industry, management is a different skill altogether. Demonstrating your expertise as a leader by taking charge of group activities and volunteering whenever possible.

Build relationships:

Fundamentally, management is about people. If you can build relationships in your current role, it will likely lead to other opportunities for networking. Whether it's mentoring, professional partnerships, or collaborations, maintaining relationships is crucial to getting into leadership positions.



The Road to the C-Suite

Promotions onto the C-Suite are extremely hard to earn, especially for women. Of the 128.57 million full-time workers in America, 248,760 are Chief Executives. This means CEOs make up 0.2% of the working population. In the case of working women in America, 0.016% are CEOs. On such a large scale, rising to the C-Suite may seem impossible. However, the right skills, education, and career choices may make a future in the C-Suite more likely than you think.

Strategy and Leadership Beat Technical Expertise

Technical and industry expertise are important components of leadership. On the C-Suite, strategy and leadership skills have been shown to be more important than technical skills.

“The most important factor in determining whether you will succeed isn’t your gender, it’s you. Be open to opportunity and take risks. In fact, take the worst, the messiest, the most challenging assignment that you can find, and then take control.” -Angela Braly, Wellpoint, Inc. CEO

The ability to lead strategically is absolutely crucial in business, and the ability to see the forest for the trees sets C-Suite leaders apart from other managers.

The Importance of Education and Experience

Though there are some outliers that dropped out of college or never attended, 97% of S&P 500 CEOs have undergraduate degrees. Don’t be discouraged if your degree isn’t in business, though; most CEOs have degrees in math, science, and engineering.

“You must continually increase your learning, the way you think, and the way you approach the organization.” -Indra Nooyi, Chairwoman & CEO, PepsiCo

Notably, the average age for a C-Suite member is 54, with decades of experience in their fields. If you don’t get into an executive position right away, don’t worry. With some extremely rare exceptions, it takes years and leadership and proven business strategies to earn the experience and skills necessary for the executive level.

In the meantime, you can develop your leadership and management skills with Wharton’s Leadership and Management Certificate Program.

Network (Even For Internal Promotions)

According to Hubspot, 85% of jobs are filled through networking, and the average company would lose 17% of its profits if it eliminated business travel. The importance of networking is especially important for women, as the “likes attract” principle can exacerbate inequality in organizations.

“Networking is really important for building a book of business and business development. And I think that a lot of people don’t tell you that you need to start that early on in your career. Because by year seven, everyone’s turning around going, ‘Well, what relationships do you have? And how are you bringing in business?’ And networking is really an important part of that.”
-Susan Pelczynski, UPWARD Women DC Metro Advisory Board Member

As mentioned before, leading is all about relationships and people. Finding a mentor in your industry or taking the reigns on an important project can make a world of difference on your journey to the C-Suite.

Learn More About Leadership and Management

The inequalities women face in today's workplace presents unique challenges and opportunities, especially for women looking to advance their careers in leadership. Knowing as much about leadership as possible empowers you to thrive in leadership positions at any business.

To learn the essential skills and strategies for women in leadership of the modern workplace, apply for Wharton's Leadership and Management Certificate Program.

[Learn More](#)

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