



## NEWS RELEASE

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### *The Leader's Edge™ Research* Finds Dramatic Behavioral Shift as Executive Women Climb the Corporate Ladder

Philadelphia...*The Leader's Edge Research™* recently conducted a nationwide study of Fortune 500 and other executives in order to develop a profile of senior executive women. The purpose of the research was to determine the styles and strategies of the most successful women in business and see how they contrast with senior executive men, as well as more junior executives.

“What emerged from the study was a compelling portrait which reveals striking behavioral differences with male counterparts and more junior women in a number of key areas including networking, self-promotion and communication style,” according to Molly D. Shepard, Founder and CEO of *The Leader's Edge™*. “The research shows that the senior executive women are less assertive, more formal, and more risk averse than their male counterparts and more junior executives. They network less, are more dependent on promotion from within their company; and underutilize their mentors, using them for protection rather than for obtaining top assignments.” The sample consisted of 341 executives with salaries of \$100,000 and above who were contacted through direct mail and email. Key findings (see attached tables) include:

The research indicates that senior executive women do not make effective use of networking to advance their careers. While **networking skills** increase in importance for males, they decrease for women as they move up the ladder, with only 65.9% of senior executive woman versus 75.3% of senior executive men rating networking skills as important.

Although **self-promotion** skills are reported as important factors by 72.6% of the more junior females, they decrease significantly to 50% for women at the highest levels, suggesting that women may not be taking advantage of self-promotion as they rise in an organization.

While women at all levels have a less assertive **communication style** in meetings than men, women are dramatically less confrontational at the highest levels. Only 69.4% of senior women versus 82.4% of senior men responded that they “like to challenge thinking.” Women may feel “at risk” and therefore temper assertiveness as they are promoted.

The importance of **reputation** increases for senior executive women and is significantly higher than for their male counterparts. Over 95% of the most senior women cite reputation as an important factor in reaching their current position, which would indicate that they are less likely to take risks which may prove damaging.

A large percentage (79.4%) of women at the highest level utilized **mentors** as protective allies, rather than actively using them for help in obtaining assignments and gaining visibility. This implies a possible underutilization of mentors by high level women.

**Recognition** is consistently more important for women than for men and the importance of this factor increases to 81.4% in the highest level women, suggesting that career success is gauged less by money and promotion and more by how they are perceived.

As they rise in the organization, women become increasingly reliant on **formal meetings** for influencing senior management (15.3% for more junior women versus 28.4%), indicating that they rely on scheduled meetings with superiors, rather than informal interactions on or off the job.

Women at all levels were much more dependent on **promotion from within** the company than are men, with the largest contrast between top men (35.1%) and top women (51.8%). This tendency for some women to stay with their current companies to get ahead correlates with less active use of networking and mentoring.

“The research uncovers a number of provocative issues about why women change some of the important behaviors which got them to their present positions. Alternatively, companies may need to explore how they can encourage women at the top to continue to be entrepreneurial, risk-taking and self-confident,” said Ms. Shepard. “*The Leaders’ Edge* will address these topics in our work as we endeavor to assist woman leaders.”

Molly D. Shepard, founder of *The Leader’s Edge*, has more than twenty years’ experience in career development consulting, leadership development and executive coaching. She founded *The Leader’s Edge* to help enhance executive women’s effectiveness as senior leaders and to help them take on greater roles in their organizations. To learn more about *The Leader’s Edge*, visit [www.the-leaders-edge.com](http://www.the-leaders-edge.com).

*The Leader’s Edge Research* division has fully analyzed the data for this study and has compiled a summary report as well as a respondent profile. Additional information is available by contacting *The Leader’s Edge* at 610.660.6684.

## Leader’s Edge News Release Attachment

### Tables 1-8

|   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | How important was the following in reaching your current position?<br>NETWORKING SKILLS     |       |
|   | ...to Senior Exec. Women  | 65.9% |
|   | ...to Senior Exec. Men  | 75.3% |
| 2 | How important was the following in reaching your current position?<br>SELF-PROMOTION SKILLS |       |
|   | ...to Junior Exec. Women  | 72.6% |
|   | ...to Senior Exec. Women  | 50.0% |

3 In group meetings with my peers...  
I LIKE TO CHALLENGE THINKING

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Senior Exec. Women | 69.4% |
| Senior Exec. Men   | 82.4% |

4 How important was the following in reaching your current position?  
REPUTATION

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ...to Senior Exec. Women | 95.4% |
| ...to Senior Exec. Men   | 67.8% |

5 How has a mentor helped your career?  
PROTECTED INTERESTS

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Senior Exec. Women | 79.4% |
| Senior Exec. Men   | 65.1% |

HELPED OBTAIN ASSIGNMENTS

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Senior Exec. Women | 69.8% |
| Senior Exec. Men   | 76.7% |

6 Rate the following in its importance to your career success...  
RECOGNITION

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Senior Exec. Women | 81.4% |
| Senior Exec. Men   | 58.9% |

7 Where are you most effective in influencing senior mgt?

FORMAL, ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Junior Exec. Women | 15.3% |
| Senior Exec. Women | 28.4% |

8 What was the most important action that led to your position?

PROMOTED FROM WITHIN

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Senior Exec. Women | 51.8% |
| Senior Exec. Men   | 35.1% |

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