



EXCLUSIVE WORKING MOTHER RESEARCH



WHAT MULTICULTURAL WOMEN WANT: NEW FINDINGS FROM WORKING MOTHER'S FACE-TO-FACE INSTANT POLLING

WORKING
MOTHER
MEDIA

Research study underwritten by

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What Multicultural Women Want: New Findings from Working Mother's Face-to-Face Instant Polling

Introduction

"Despite their growing numbers in corporate America, women of color continue to lag in terms of salary and advancement," said Carol Evans, founder and CEO of Working Mother Media. "We must all pay attention to this inequity."

Based on the learnings from the groundbreaking Working Mother Best Companies, launched in 1986, Working Mother Media expanded its focus on the workplace to include a major initiative for women of color. Our goals? Celebrate companies with cutting-edge policies and practices that support African-American, Asian-American, Latina and Native American women. We wanted to identify the best practices of corporations where women of color hold the top positions. We wanted to learn whether managers were being held accountable for promoting diversity policies. How many mentors and sponsors were available to high-potential women of color? And most important, what did multicultural women across Corporate America need to thrive in the workplace?

In 2002, the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women's initiative was launched, and our application for the award addressed these issues, and many more. Our Advisory Board was led by noted author and Tuck professor Dr. Ella L.J. Edmonson Bell, with Dr. Evangelina Holvino from Simmons and many corporate leaders contributing their intellectual capital to shape the questions we explored and the formats we used at our first Women of Color Summit in New York City. More than 400 women representing dozens of leading companies gathered to exchange ideas. We all learned so much at this event. We learned that many women had never discussed race in public before. We learned that not all Latinas and Asian women identify themselves as women of color. We heard from Native American women who feel culturally violated by lack of respect for their holy days. African-American women told us they feel criticized when they take concrete actions. And white women, who consistently tell us they don't think of themselves as having a race, said they were afraid about mistakes they might make when speaking directly about race. In addition to hearing about challenges, we witnessed a sense of burgeoning hope about future success, shared by our attendees (employees and participating companies) as a result of these discussions. How could Working Mother Media help jump-start and deepen this important and sensitive dialogue among all women?

Working Mother magazine published the first list of the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women in 2003, followed by our first-ever Multicultural Women's Conference. More than 700 women of all races and at various levels in their careers attended this conference (including some men), helping to bring this initiative to life by joining in frank and provocative discussions. When we held that first conference four years ago, many companies were just beginning to build diversity programs and no one had fully explored the dynamics of where race/ethnicity and gender meet in the workplace. Companies were still working to grasp the top concerns, challenges and stresses facing women of color who were building their careers in corporate America.

To develop a clearer understanding of what was needed to better serve this important segment of the employee population, Working Mother Media followed up that first national conference with a series of regional Town Hall meetings. These gatherings sparked discussions around the country and across our borders to our neighbors in Canada, giving women a forum in which to have brave discussions about personal and corporate identities, about coworkers, about issues of networking, trust and authenticity. In each city, professional women broke out into separate racial and ethnic groups to talk about their strengths, concerns and needs. Some were sharing secrets that they had never spoken about publicly. After these smaller-group discussions, everyone joined in a general session to share conclusions so that all attendees could learn about differences and common ground.

To date, Working Mother Media has conducted 34 regional and industry Town Halls and four National Conferences. This research reflects figures from the first 23 Towns Halls and three National Conferences.

National Conference and Town Hall Markets

Atlanta, GA
Boston, MA
Chicago, IL
Houston, TX
Los Angeles, CA
New York City
Redmond, WA
San Jose, CA
Toronto, Canada
Washington, DC

New Markets

Charlotte, NC
Raleigh, NC
Sao Paulo, Brazil
Bangalore, India (08)

Industry Town Halls

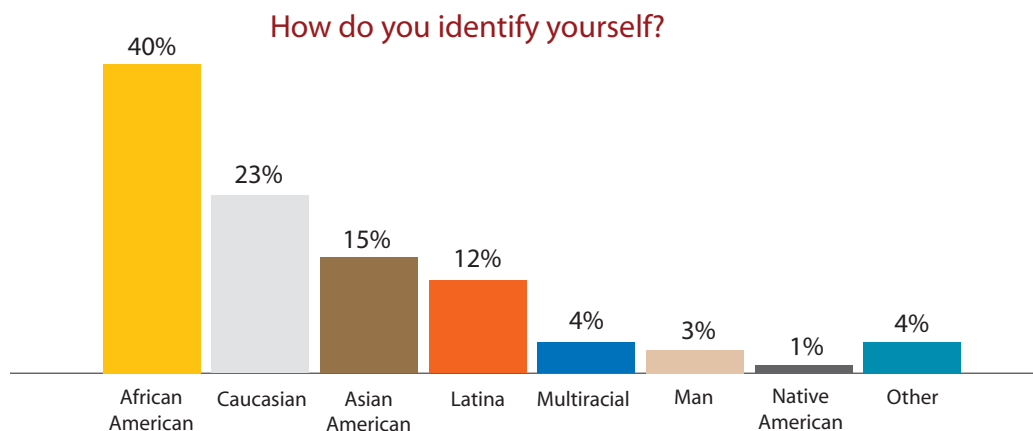
Pharmaceutical
Financial

One of our most important tools to develop a better understanding of the women attending our Town Halls and Conferences is the Instant Polling that we conduct at each of these events. These Instant Polling sessions have attendees voting on handsets in response to a variety of probing questions on sensitive topics. Moments later, tabulated voting scores are projected on a large screen for all to see—with dramatic results as well as opportunities for new insights. These instant snapshots of the thoughts and feelings of a broad cross-section of women of color across the country provide valuable insights to the many participating companies who strive to improve their programs and policies, their recruitment and retention capabilities, and their ability to help women of color advance.

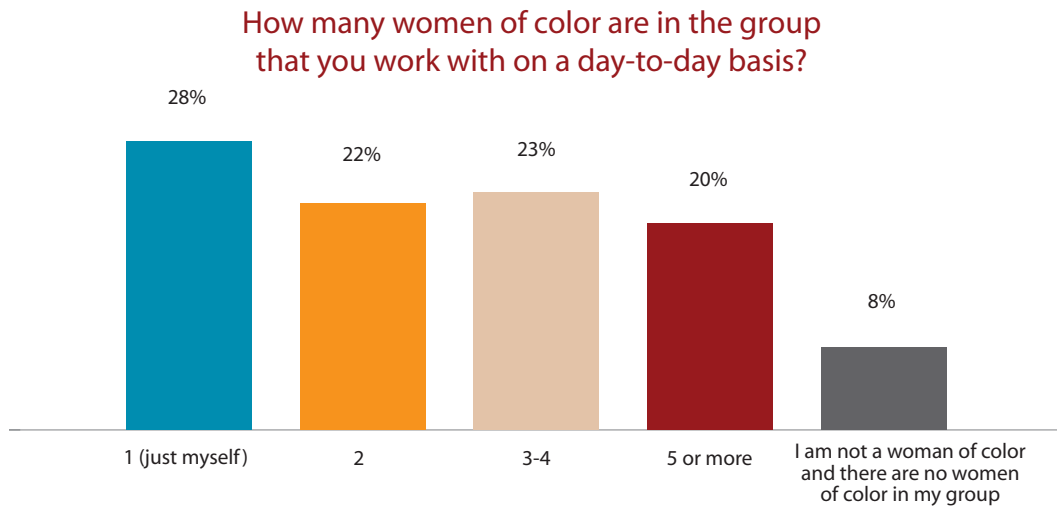
Our Instant Polling offers a significant body of demographic as well as psychographic data on the concerns, attitudes and perceptions of over 5,000 African-American, Asian-American, Caucasian, Latina, Multiracial and Native American women who have attended our events to date. This paper is a report on our first four years of face-to-face Instant Polling. Among the themes we have explored are: Identity, Networking (Mentors, Sponsors), Trust and Authenticity, as well as Best Practices to help multicultural women succeed in the workplace. By taking the pulse of so many women in different parts of the country, we move a step closer to achieving the overarching goal of Working Mother’s Multicultural Women’s initiative: to help women of color advance in the workplace and break down barriers in communication in work teams across the country.

Identity

What is the racial and ethnic makeup of Working Mother National Conference and Town Hall attendees? Based on self-selected racial identification, 40% of attendees were African-American women. The next largest group was Caucasian women, representing 23% of the audiences. Asian-American women represented 15% and Latinas 12%. We have worked to attract more Native American women, who represented only 1% of our attendees. Multiracial women, who represent 4% of our attendees, helped us discover that they needed their own category during our breakout sessions. Starting with our first Town Hall in Chicago, Multiracial women came to us asking, “What about us? Why doesn’t anyone recognize our group?” As a result, we have included a Multiracial breakout session in every subsequent Town Hall, attended by a small but dedicated group. Men of all races and ethnicities have represented about 3% of attendees.



In the general workforce today, women of color represent 20% of all working women and 9% of the total workforce, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those numbers came to life when we asked Town Hall attendees how many other women of color they worked with on a daily basis. Half responded that they were either the sole woman of color in their group (28%) or that they interacted regularly with just one other woman of color (22%). About 20% of those polled worked in groups with five or more women of color, even though 67% of all attendees are employed at Fortune 1000 companies with staffs of more than 2,000 people.



Our Town Hall participants hold a wide range of jobs—37% of attendees held Mid-Level Executive positions, followed by slightly smaller but nearly equal representations of Entry-Level Managers and Non-Manager Employees. Senior Executives accounted for 13% of the respondents to our Instant Polling. Two out of five of those polled said they were two or less reports away from their company’s CEO or similar title.

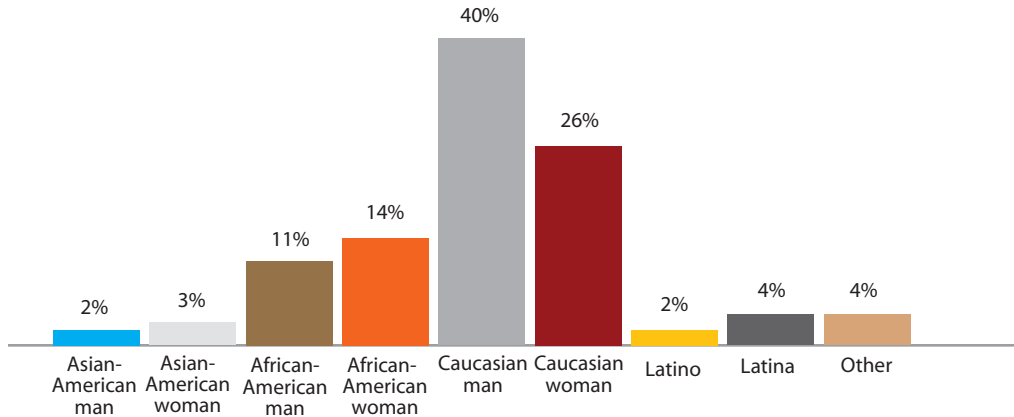
Networking — Affinity Groups, Mentors/Sponsors

When we asked attendees about their primary workplace networks, all racial/ethnic groups, except African American women, listed Caucasian women as their primary network. About a third of African-American women (38%) reported that their primary network was with women of their own race; a quarter listed Caucasian women as their primary network group. Latinas and Multiracial women reported that they network primarily with men.

We asked attendees to tell us about their most important career-related relationship and their current role model. Regardless of race/ethnicity, our Town Hall attendees told us that their most important career related developmental relationship was with a Caucasian man (40%) or a Caucasian woman (26%). When we examined responses along racial lines, Latinas (63%) were most heavily influenced by Caucasian men. The answers from Caucasian women were fairly evenly split between members of their own race: white

males (37%) and white females (41%). Other ethnic groups did not have the same experience with white females. Caucasian women provided the primary developmental relationship for less than one-quarter of African-American, Asian American and Latina coworkers. These findings highlight the fact that many women of color feel they have been unable to find influential career relationships with women of their own race.

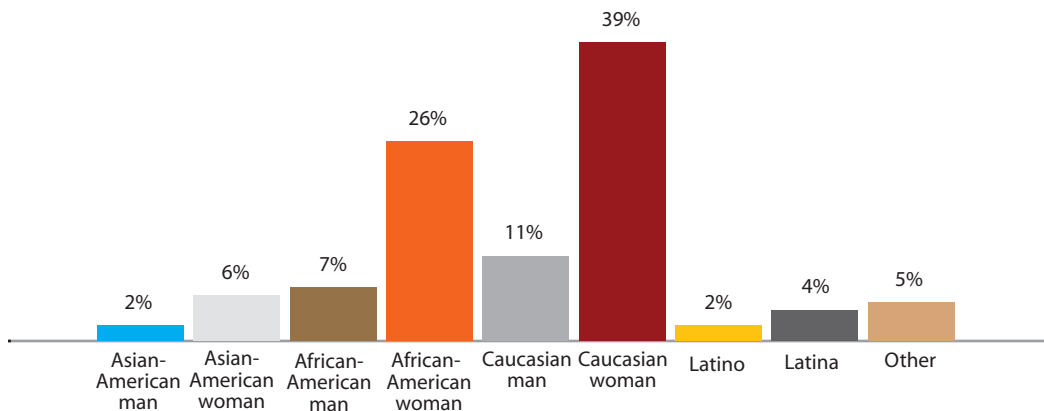
The most important career-related developmental relationship I have had in my career was/is with:



Who serves as the primary role model for women of color in Corporate America? Almost 40% of attendees agreed that their current role model was a Caucasian woman. About a quarter (26%) reported that their role model was an African-American woman. Once again, the breakdown by racial groups was informative: 62% of white women chose other white women as their career models, compared with 44% and 43% of Latinas and Asian Americans. Only African-American women veered from this trend, with 39% identifying other African-American women as their current role model. However, 27% of African American women acknowledged having a Caucasian woman as their role model.

A further divergence was revealed depending on the responder’s job title. Only 13% of Senior Executives chose a Caucasian woman as their role model, compared with 39% overall. More than half this group identified both white men and African-American men as their current role model.

Who is your current career role model?



Affinity Groups

Affinity groups served as a source of support and information for many of the people polled. These groups trace their origin in the United States back to the 1960s, when college students organized themselves by gender and race to promote political agendas. In the 1990s, the business world adopted the format by creating in-house groups to achieve greater involvement by minorities and women in corporate culture. About half of the respondents to our Instant Polling (53%) said they are currently members of an affinity group and exactly half said their groups were founded on race. A quarter reported that gender served as the basis of their workplace affinity group.

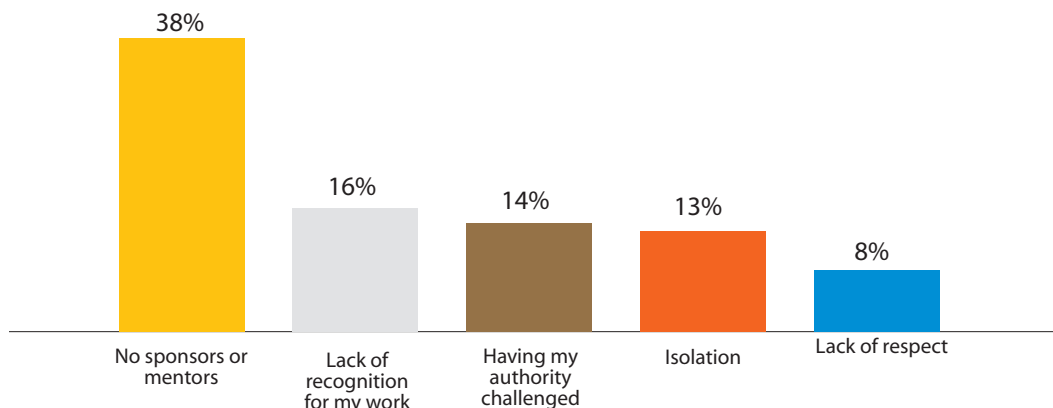
Mentors/Sponsors

We have learned through the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women surveys that the companies with most successful diversity programs, and those that continue to appear on our list, create networking opportunities for their diverse employee groups. One of the most popular programs is mentoring: 100% of the 2007 Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women offer *formal* mentoring programs to their women of color employees.

However, the women polled at our Town Halls and Conferences reported much different numbers when asked about their access to networking programs. Only a quarter of attendees reported having a *formal* mentor. (An additional 49% said they have an *informal* mentor.) The barriers to formal mentoring were not impacted by race, company size or job level as there were no differentials in the responses. Although nearly half our attendees reported having an informal mentor, the other half said that they feel excluded from informal mentoring. The numbers were particularly high for Latinas and Asian-American women. This finding supports the importance of establishing formal mentoring for women of color. Our Town Hall participants are acutely aware of the value of mentors, who can help them build relationships across racial lines and provide insights into how to perform their job better. While mentors have coached and supported women of color, they haven't necessarily boosted them to the executive ranks. That's where sponsors come in. Our Town Hall attendees understand that to climb to the senior ranks in their companies, sponsors can play a critical role. Sponsorship programs assign an advocate to help women of color manager their rise up the corporate ladder. They fast-track careers, sitting behind closed doors in succession planning meetings and advocating for their protégées.

In Instant Polling across the country, mentors and sponsors consistently rated as a top need. For example, at the Town Halls, 38% of attendees rated the lack of mentors and sponsors as the No. 1 "most serious problem related to race and gender in my work culture." A lack of mentors and sponsors was considered a more serious problem than a lack of recognition for work, having one's authority challenged, isolation or lack of respect. Asian-American women felt particularly concerned about the lack of available mentoring and sponsorship programs, with 54% citing this as their greatest concern.

The most serious problem related to race and gender in my work culture is:



Trust

Attendees expressed a lack of trust in the workplace, especially when it came to Caucasian women (and men in general). While 59% of attendees reported trusting women of the own racial/ethnic group, the responses were very different when we asked whether they trusted co-workers of different races/ethnicities.

In fact, no single question has sparked more gasps of surprise than when Town Hall attendees were asked whom they did not trust at work. Thanks to the Instant Polling technology, seconds after attendees voted on their handsets, the results flashed up on a 12-foot screen: 7% said they distrusted African American women in their workplace, 7% distrusted Asian-American women and 8% distrusted Latinas—but a whopping 32% of those polled said they didn't trust Caucasian women. (The only group less trusted than white women was men, with 47% of respondents saying they did not trust this group.) An audible gasp filled the room, followed by an awkward silence. Many Caucasian women looked around the room in disbelief wondering: Could I be part of the problem? The feelings of hurt were summed up by one Senior Director of Work/Life and Diversity Programs who attended our Town Hall: "I am upset as a white woman to hear that we're not trusted. As a member of a large group of white women who try to do the right thing for all women—especially women of color—and as someone who works in human resources and likes to think I have an impact on all employees, I am hurt to hear about this lack of trust." At our Town Halls across the country, Instant Poll results echoed these findings.

Women of color told us how they felt about their white female colleagues—loud and clear. To be sure, many nonwhite women have forged strong, long lasting friendships with white women at work. Still, we wanted to explore what was behind the 32 percent of multicultural women who saw their white counterparts not as allies but as adversaries. What we learned by following up with our attendees:

- *Part of the problems starts with the companies that lump all women together when developing recruitment and advancement strategies. The best intentions may be at work, but the approach is not effective.*
- *While many white women are acutely aware of the impact of their gender on their careers, they have not had to pay a great deal of attention to issues of race. But women of color want to discuss gender and race. In fact, for many women of color, race trumps gender.*

How much do you trust each group in your workplace? (excluding your own group)



Most attendees (85%) also reported that someone had betrayed an important trust in the workplace. What is the most important factor in establishing trust at work? Demonstrating mutual respect and following through on commitments, attendees told us.

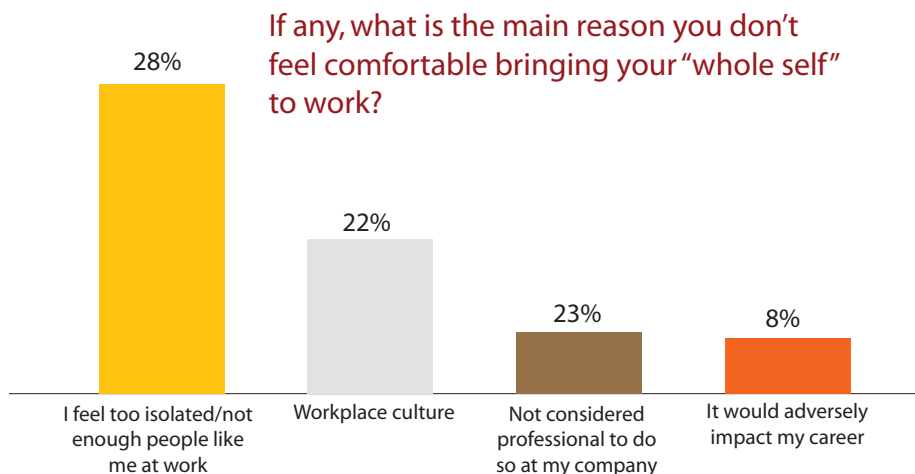
Ways to restore trust were discussed at length at our Town Halls and Conferences. Of course, change does not happen over night, or with one gesture. However, the general consensus was that all women need to keep talking, keep taking chances, and keep reaching out to one another, even if their first overtures are rebuffed. Such efforts not only help build trust but also promote cross-cultural learning. Said one Human Resources Director: "White women need to reach out to women of color, and women of color need to take a chance and trust white women." She cautioned that broken trust couldn't be repaired overnight. "This has to happen one relationship at a time."

Authenticity

A complaint many multicultural women voiced repeatedly at our Town Halls is that they feel the need to hide or downplay aspects of their identity to succeed at work. From ethnic hairstyles and clothing choices to religious observances and parenting status, many attendees reported modifying or concealing their lifestyles to conform to what they believed to be a more acceptable corporate style. Nearly half of the respondents described their companies as not sensitive to diversity issues. In addition, two out of three reported that gender and racial pay equity problems exist at their workplace.

When asked whether they had separate identities at home and on the job because of their race or ethnicity, 63% of Caucasian women reported that they did not. By contrast, the largest groups, by percentage, that believed they needed two personas were Native American and Multiracial women. African American women were split down the middle with half admitting that they have separate identities and the other half saying they don't feel at all like they do. About one-third of the Asian-American women and Latinas also reported feeling the pressure to maintain separate lives. One African-American woman echoed the sentiments of many attendees when she said she has kept parts of herself hidden at work—deliberately and defensively. She believed her success required becoming fluent in a different language with different customs, and that she could never forget that she is something of a stranger.

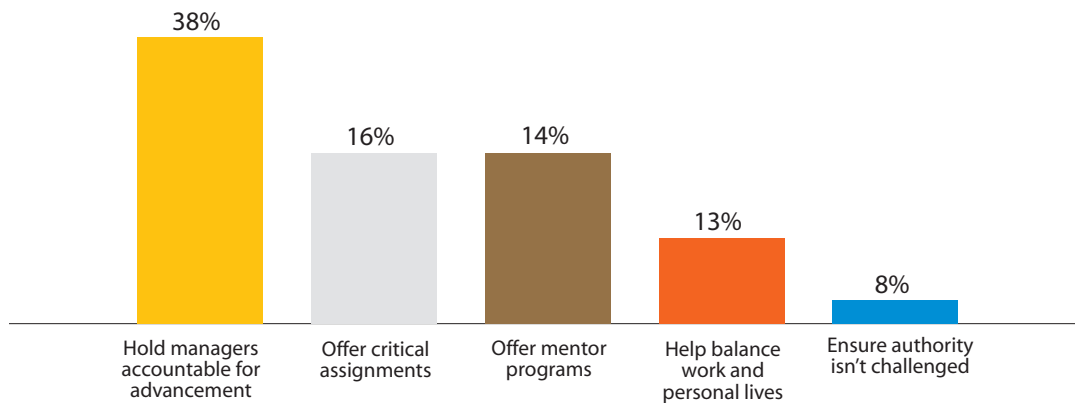
Attendees were also asked to identify the main reason they felt uncomfortable “bringing their whole selves to work.” Half said it was the lack of others like themselves in the workplace, which fostered a feeling of isolation. A quarter said workplace culture was the greatest cause of discomfort, followed by much smaller percentages of those who believed their authentic selves would adversely impact their careers or would come across as unprofessional. Some of our Town Hall attendees said that being authentic at work is what they aspire to: “I look to women who bring their whole selves to work,” said one African-American female executive. “And they’re forcing their organizations to get used to it to.”



Best Practices — Accountability

We asked women of color to tell us what they would set as the top priority for their company. The answer? Accountability—37% said companies need to hold managers accountable for advancing multicultural women. Offer mentor programs and critical assignments were tied for second place, with 22% of the votes.

If you could set priorities, what should your company do first for women of color



We have learned through the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women application that more and more companies are coming up with creative strategies for holding managers accountable for supporting and advancing their diverse employees. One of our winning companies requires that its leaders set and meet diversity goals, and an annual survey measures employees' satisfaction in numerous areas, including diversity. Up to 60% of managers' pay is based on the results. At another winning company, senior managers set goals for advancing women of color and report progress to the CDO and CEO. Those with the best results for the year are rewarded with higher merit increases and personal bonuses. And at another winning company, if officers don't meet individual diversity goals, their bonuses are reduced by up to 15%.

Other best practices we have learned from our surveys include succession planning programs that identify and then groom high-potential women of color executives to run operations; leadership training sessions tailored for women of color; and mandatory diversity training for all managers and new hires.

Summary

The vibrant dialogue about race/ethnicity and gender that began with Working Mother's first Multicultural Women's Conference has continued through national, and now international, Town Halls, one-day events that bring executive women of all colors together in a safe forum to share experiences and build bridges across multicultural lines. Over the first four years of the initiative, the Town Hall and National Conference Instant Polling sessions identified unexplored areas of divergence and convergence among racial/ethnic groups, helping companies learn how to build powerful networks across races and ethnicities. Among our findings:

Networking styles: When we asked attendees about their primary workplace networks, all racial/ethnic groups, except African American women, listed Caucasian women as their primary network. However, for 38% of African-American women, their primary network was with women of their own race. Latinas and Multiracial women reported that they network primarily with men.

Mentors and sponsors: The No. 1 most serious problem related to race/ethnicity and gender in the workplace, reported by 38% of attendees, was a lack of formal mentors and sponsors. Our winning companies recognize this, and 100% of the 2007 Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women offer *formal* mentoring programs to their women of color employees.

Trust: Perhaps the most surprising data was on trust. While women of color tended to trust their own race first and other women of color second, all groups concurred that they did not trust Caucasian women—even though white women were the most-named race/gender for role models, by 40% of respondents. This came as a surprise to many Caucasian women attendees—and provided an opportunity for learning.

Authenticity: When asked whether they had separate identities at home and on the job because of their race/ethnicity, 63% of Caucasian women reported that they did not. By contrast, the largest groups, by percentage, believing they needed two personas were Native American and Multiracial women. Half of African American women said they maintain separate identities. About one-third of the Asian-American women and Latinas also reported feeling the pressure to maintain separate lives.

Attendees at our National Conferences and Town Halls brought back these findings, and so many more, to their workplace. Certainly among the most revealing discoveries were those made by Caucasian women, discovering their complex role in the corporate journey of women of color. White women learned they are the least trusted race in the work place, at the same time that they are the primary role models for most women of color. In addition to continuing to explore these findings, our 2007 conference theme is paths to power for women of color. Instant Polling sessions will continue to collect demographic and psychographic data on workplace composition and attitudes on power, and other issues. Each year, we are moving closer to establishing a benchmark to promote best gender/diversity practices in all workplaces.

Since we published the first Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women list, women of color have made some noteworthy advances. Among the highly visible success stories in our country since we launched the list: Condeleezza Rice became the first female African American to be appointed

U.S. Secretary of State; Indra Nooyi became the first Indian American to be named CEO of a major company (PepsiCo); and Nina Tassler, President of CBS Entertainment, became the first Latina to head a major television network. While the number of women of color in management positions has increased, they are still underrepresented in the executive suite and on corporate boards.

"It's a marathon – not a sprint," said Carol Evans, founder and CEO of Working Mother Media. "There is still more work to be done."

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