



CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN CORPORATE CANADA:
A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Critical Relationships

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A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Critical Relationships

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Catalyst Publication Code D74; ISBN# 0-89584-276-9

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FOREWORD

Canada is expected to face an increasing shortage of workers over the next several years. Immigrants, most of whom are visible minorities, are predicted to account for all net labour force growth by 2011.

Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings, released in June 2007, presented data from more than 17,000 managers, professionals, and executives working in corporate Canada. The report showed that visible minorities were less satisfied with their careers, less likely to report positive experiences and perceptions regarding their workplaces, and more likely to perceive workplace barriers than their white/Caucasian colleagues. This illustrated that the challenges for visible minorities—as for women—do not end with getting in the door, but continue as careers progress.

Catalyst has now conducted a second phase for this study, using focus groups to provide texture to the original survey findings and to help identify and better understand subtle differences between visible minority and white/Caucasian women and men.

This report explores one important aspect of career advancement: the development of critical relationships. From our focus groups, we learned that having a network, having a mentor, and having a champion are necessary to career advancement. However, these relationships are frequently formed during informal networking opportunities, and visible minorities often feel excluded from such activities. Thus, visible minorities are disadvantaged in forming and developing connections that could help them advance their careers.

Because the workplace relationships of Canadian managers, professionals, and executives, regardless of visible minority status, predict two important proxies for organizational performance—career satisfaction and organizational commitment—these relationships are not only critical for individuals, but also for organizations.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

Current labour market trends predict a shortage of workers in the next several years,¹ largely as a result of the aging of Canada's labour force. However, immigrants are expected to account for all net labour force growth by 2011.² Approximately three-quarters of recent immigrants belong to a visible minority group,³ and it is expected that within the next decade visible minorities will make up approximately 20 percent of Canada's population.⁴

COMPANIES AND FIRMS HAVE NOT YET CREATED ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ALL EMPLOYEES BELIEVE THEY CAN SUCCEED

There is evidence that corporate Canada is simply not maximizing the potential "brain gain" available as a result of this influx of skilled immigrants, most of whom are visible minorities. *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings*⁵ examined the experiences of visible minority individuals who have been working in some of Canada's largest businesses for close to 16 years. The study told us that the challenges for visible minorities—as for women—do not end with getting in the door, but continue as careers progress.

Our findings showed that visible minorities were:

- Less satisfied with their careers.
- Less likely to report positive experiences and perceptions regarding their workplaces.
- More likely to perceive workplace barriers than their white/Caucasian colleagues.

VISIBLE MINORITIES PERCEIVED WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS LESS POSITIVELY THAN WHITE/CAUCASIANS

Past Catalyst research has emphasized the importance of relationships in facilitating career advancement. Colleagues can keep each other "in the know," sharing the information necessary to work more effectively. Influential role models can become sponsors, recommending employees for high-visibility assignments and championing them to others. Relationships with managers can help employees understand their career advancement opportunities and the unwritten rules of the organization. Indeed, certain relationships become *critical* to career advancement when they:

- Serve to inform employees about career advancement opportunities.
- Connect employees to the resources, including influential others, they need in order successfully tap into and benefit from these opportunities.
- Provide work-related information that is otherwise not easily accessible.

¹ C.I. Petros, "From the Chairperson," *Forum: National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development Newsletter* (Summer 2003): p. 1.

² Frank T. Denton and Byron G. Spencer, "Population Change and Economic Growth: The Long-Term Outlook," *QSEP Research Paper*, no. 383 (July 2003).

³ Barbara A. Mitchell, "Canada's Growing Visible Minority Population: Generational Challenges: Opportunities and Federal Policy Considerations" (2005). http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/canada2017/7_e.cfm

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Population Projections of Visible Minority Groups, Canada, Provinces and Regions, 2001-2017* (2005).

⁵ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

The original survey findings demonstrated that how survey participants evaluate their workplace relationships, along with how they perceive fairness and senior management commitment to diversity, predicted their organizational commitment and career satisfaction. When survey respondents perceived that their senior management was committed to diversity, and when they experienced high-quality relationships with their managers and colleagues, they were more likely to view their organization's career advancement processes as fair. This, in turn, predicted their commitment to their organizations and satisfaction with their careers—the more fair survey participants thought career advancement processes were, the more committed they were to their organizations and the more satisfied they were with their careers. This was true for both visible minorities and white/Caucasians. These outcomes are important for organizations because organizational commitment and career satisfaction are related to higher productivity and profitability and lower absenteeism and turnover.⁶

Figure 1 compares how visible minority individuals and their white/Caucasian colleagues perceived their workplace relationships and career advancement processes. These results indicate that visible minority individuals experienced workplace relationships less positively than did white/Caucasians.

Visible minorities felt less informed than did white/Caucasians and agreed more often than white/Caucasians that career advancement was about “who you know” or “who knows you.” What did this mean? White/Caucasian respondents' *more positive relationships* with their colleagues and managers predicted their perceptions of career advancement processes as *more fair*. Likewise, visible minority individuals' *less positive relationships* with their colleagues and managers predicted their assessment of career advancement processes as *less fair*.

What Do We Mean by “Visible Minority”?

In Canada, the term “visible minority” refers to a person who is not an Aboriginal person*, who is non-Caucasian in race or who is “non-white” in colour, as defined under the *Employment Equity Act*. The following population groups** comprised the total visible minority group in the survey study: Arab, Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Indian, and multiple visible minority.***

Focus group participants self-identified as Black, East Asian, South Asian, or white/Caucasian.

We use the term “visible minority” in our research as it is widely understood within the Canadian context and is now firmly entrenched in Canadian legislation.

*Our analyses excluded those who identified themselves as “Aboriginal” (North American Indian or member of a First Nation, Metis, or Inuk). Under the *Employment Equity Act*, aboriginal peoples are considered a distinct group and are therefore not considered members of a visible minority.

**These categories are based on census population groups with slight modification as a result of early testing of the survey.

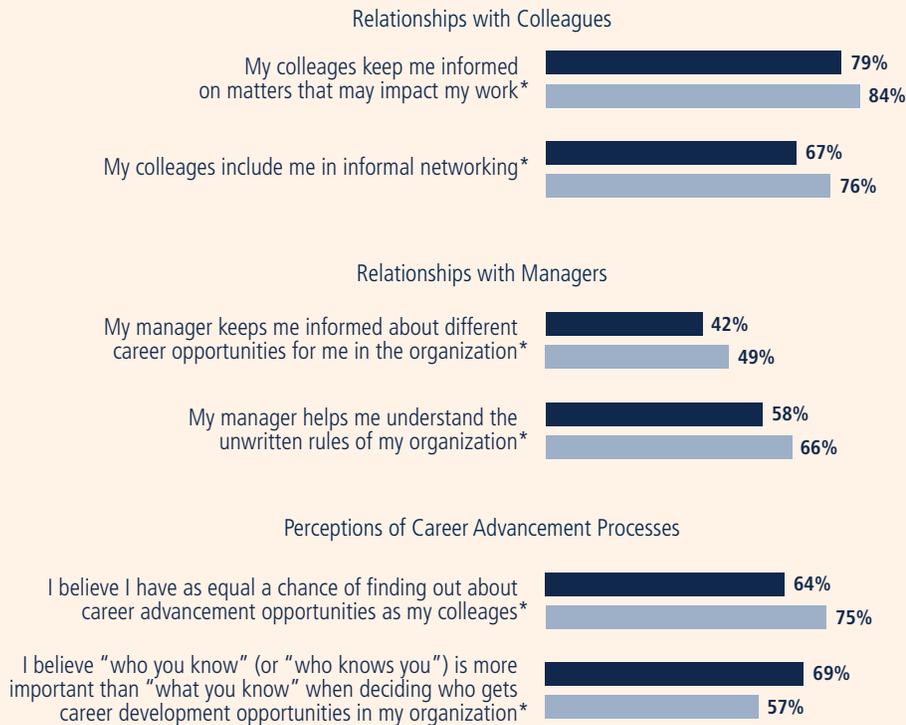
***“Multiple visible minority” refers to those respondents who identified as belonging to more than one visible minority group.

⁶ James K. Harter, Frank L. Schmidt and Theodore L. Hayes, “Business-Unit-Level Relationship between Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Business Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 2 (2002): p. 268-279.

Figure 1: Relationships and Fairness in Career Advancement: Differences Between Visible Minorities and White/Caucasians⁷

Visible Minority
White/Caucasian

Proportion of respondents who strongly/somewhat agreed with selected survey statements:

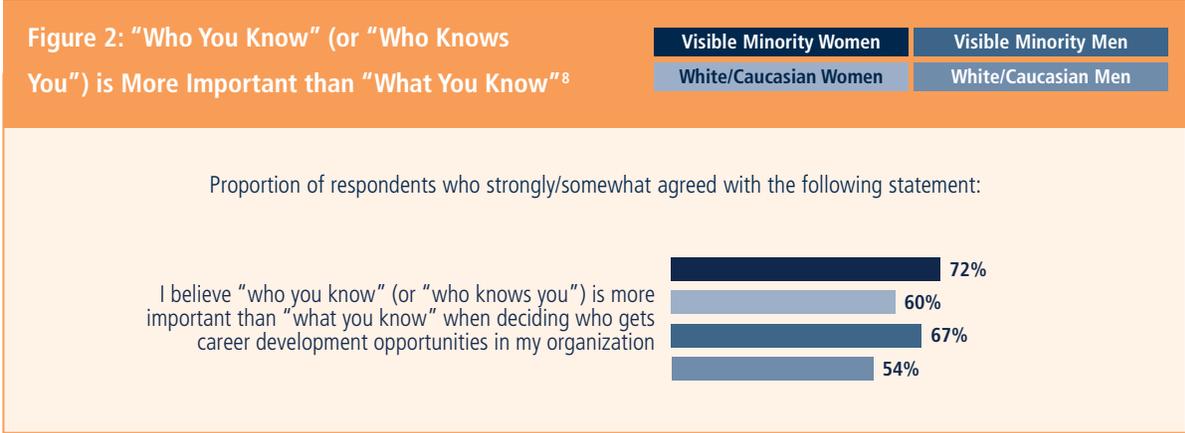


*p<.05

⁷ Chi-square tests and z-tests of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minorities and white/Caucasians was significant at p<.05 for each item. Logistic regressions were performed to determine if the difference between visible minorities and white/Caucasians still held after taking into consideration the following: (1) human capital characteristics - including educational attainment, foreign educational credentials, tenure with the organization; (2) job characteristics - including whether respondent was a manager/professional or executive, whether the respondent was in a staff/line role or both, annual income, region of work, and industry; and (3) demographic characteristics - including age, marital status, whether the respondent identified as a person with disability or LGBT, and whether the respondent was born in Canada. The differences were still statistically significant at p<.05.



While the original survey found differences between visible minorities and white/Caucasians, few differences between visible minority women and men’s perceptions of advancement and development within their organization were discovered. There was one notable exception to this: more visible minority women than any other group reported that who you know (or who knows you) is more important than what you know when deciding who gets ahead (see Figure 2).



⁸ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women and all other groups was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that all groups were still significantly different at $p < .05$ after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.



NETWORKS, MENTORS, AND CHAMPIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO CAREER SUCCESS

Focus groups with visible minority and white/Caucasian managers, professionals, and executives from companies and firms across Canada were conducted to provide texture to the original survey findings. Visible minorities who participated came from the groups with the highest representation among our original survey respondents: Black, East Asian, and South Asian.

The focus groups go beyond baseline attitudes and perceptions by capturing the observations, experiences, concerns, and attitudes of visible minority and white/Caucasian employees. Analyzing their stories gave rise to themes, or rich explanatory descriptions, that were linked together to create a holistic understanding of their situation.⁹

Visible minorities in the focus groups named three types of relationships that are critical for career advancement: having a network, having a mentor, and having a champion. The participants likened navigating critical relationships to a “game” that must be played within the organization. Visible minority women and men know the rules, but, in comparison to their white/Caucasian colleagues, they felt excluded from the opportunities that would allow them to “play the game.”

Consistent with the survey findings, the focus groups revealed that the experiences of visible minority women often paralleled those of visible minority men. However, in some cases, there were strong similarities between the stories of visible minority women and white/Caucasian women, indicating that there are some commonalities in the experiences of all women in corporate Canada. Finally, there were instances when the stories of visible minority women differed from all other groups—evidence that visible minority women may at times experience “double-outsider” status as a result of being different from the majority with respect to both visible minority status and gender—and therefore may face unique challenges related to developing critical relationships in the workplace.

NEXT STEPS

Catalyst will release two additional reports for this phase of the study. The next report will explore culture, cultural fit, and stereotypes, and how they affect the career advancement of visible minorities in corporate Canada. The final report will examine organizational practices that can support the advancement of visible minorities, and it will incorporate results from interviews conducted with senior leaders and human resources professionals.

⁹ See Appendix 1 for a detailed description of our research methodology, Appendix 2 for our focus group protocols, and Appendix 3 for a description of the qualitative data analysis process used in this study.

Terms Used in This Report.

Network: In general, networks serve to connect people to each other and provide access to information and support. Formal networks are organization-sponsored groups and may be instituted in response to the needs of traditionally marginalized employee groups. Informal networks are made of contacts that are personally developed over time; individuals often meet those in their informal networks in non-work locations, but may turn to their informal networks for assistance with a variety of career-related issues.

Mentor: A mentor is someone who takes an active interest in developing the mentee’s career. A mentor provides the mentee with recognition, attention, and guidance to optimize personal and professional growth. Mentors can provide both career and social support.

Champion/Sponsor: A champion or sponsor is senior to an employee and supports her by nominating and advancing her candidacy for promotions or high-visibility assignments. In other words, the champion speaks up on her behalf when advancement decisions are made. Champion roles may be formed through working relationships or through connections made in broader networking interactions.

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS: KEY FINDINGS

Visible minorities, especially women, appear to be excluded from informal networking opportunities.

- Visible minorities and white/Caucasian women often felt uncomfortable in informal networking opportunities involving activities such as drinking in bars and playing or watching sports.

A lack of available mentors is a career advancement barrier for visible minorities.

- Both visible minority women and men expressed an unmet need for multiple mentors (as well as multiple role models who could potentially become mentors) given their complex set of needs within organizations. Visible minorities desired some mentors who share their gender and/or visible minority status as well as others who are influential in the organization and therefore probably different from them demographically.

Visible minority women and men described mentoring relationships in different terms.

- Visible minority men identified mentoring as a strategic relationship for career advancement, and many specified a mentor who was not their manager. Visible minority women, however, spoke more generally about mentoring-style support from their managers and were less likely to have a clearly defined mentor.

As with other groups, visible minority women and men recognized that having a champion's sponsorship is instrumental in career advancement.

- Visible minority women and men recognized the need to have a champion to speak up on their behalf when critical decisions are made. This is particularly important to visible minorities who do not feel that they are in the "club."

In spite of the importance of self-promotion to obtaining a champion, visible minority women expressed discomfort at self-promotion.

- Focus group participants indicated that self-promotion helps potential champions know why they should take on the champion role.
- Visible minority women—significantly more so than visible minority men—frequently expressed discomfort at the idea of self-promotion.



STUDY HIGHLIGHTS: RECOMMENDATIONS

To support organizations in helping all employees gain access to the relationships critical to career advancement, a set of recommendations using the knowledge gained from the focus groups follows. For more details, refer to Chapter 5.

- 1. Think critically about informal networking.** Because relationships with peers, managers, mentors, and champions are necessary for career advancement and are often developed through informal networking opportunities, both employees and employers should think critically about the potential consequences of sharing career advancement information during informal networking activities that are not available to all employees. Organizations should critically assess where informal networking takes place and how this may exclude certain people.
- 2. Provide formal and targeted networking opportunities for visible minorities.** Visible minority participants indicated that formal, organization-sponsored networking opportunities would prevent exclusion and that a variety of activities would allow more people to feel comfortable at events. Focus group participants also wanted networking opportunities to include a diverse group of people, providing opportunities for networking within gender or racial/ethnic groups as well as in mixed environments.
- 3. Formalize mentoring programs and encourage and train strategic mentoring behaviour.** Leaders should ensure that employees at all levels have time allocated for mentoring relationships, and should reward employees who mentor others. Mentors and mentees should be trained in how to best leverage their mentoring opportunities.
- 4. Ensure the availability of a diverse pool of mentors and encourage diversified mentoring relationships.** Formalized mentoring programs should consider the diverse needs of the talent pool. This is essential because visible minorities and white/Caucasian women reported a lack of mentors who “look like them” and identify with their specific needs. White/Caucasian male mentors should also be engaged in diversified mentoring relationships to allow for reciprocal mentoring, which would help increase awareness of issues faced by visible minorities.
- 5. Base career advancement decisions on formal performance evaluations that are consistent for all employees.** Ensure that managers and employees are trained about formal evaluations processes. Formal processes will help managers focus on actual performance and not rely on stereotypes or self-promotion of accomplishments by employees.
- 6. Provide employees with the necessary resources to communicate their achievements and engage champions.** Employees must be provided with clear guidelines about the type of information and level of detail they are to include in self-evaluations and trained in how to most effectively summarize their accomplishments, recognizing that visible minority and white/Caucasian women are particularly uncomfortable with self-promotion. Senior leaders should be encouraged to champion highly talented employees.



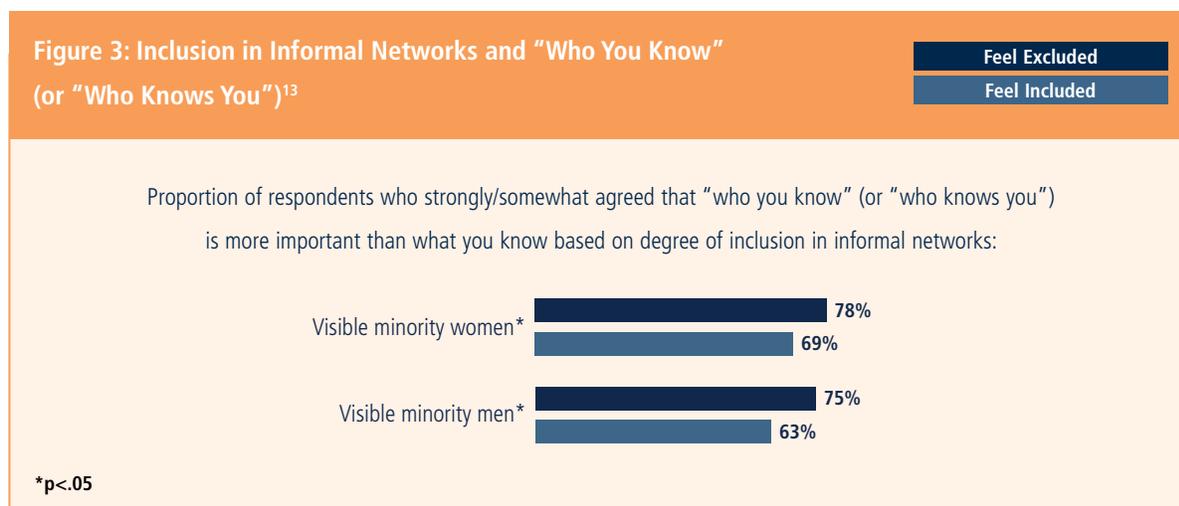
Having access to networks provides employees with opportunities to acquire essential resources for career advancement, such as inside information, recommendations for promotions, access to clients, and social support.¹⁰ Involvement in networks can increase an employee’s visibility to senior leaders in the organization, which can build trust and also increase the likelihood of being tapped for high-profile assignments.

EXCLUSION FROM NETWORKS CREATES A BARRIER FOR VISIBLE MINORITIES

Previous Catalyst research has shown that of the factors necessary to succeed, establishing relationships with influential colleagues is among the most challenging for visible minority women in the workplace.¹¹ Catalyst research has also indicated that a lack of access to networks of influential others underlies all major barriers identified by visible minority women, including a lack of influential mentors and sponsors.¹² These findings were strongly supported by the stories shared by the visible minority women who participated in our focus groups.

Visible minorities perceive links between informal networking opportunities and career advancement. Visible minority women and men who did not feel included by colleagues in informal networking (compared to the visible minority women and men who did feel included) were:

- More likely to agree that who you know (or who knows you) matters more than what you know (see Figure 3).
- Less likely to feel they had an equal chance of finding out about promotion opportunities (see Figure 4).



¹⁰ Herminia Ibarra, “Paving an Alternative Route: Gender differences in Managerial Networks,” *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 1 (1997): p.91-102.

¹¹ Catalyst, *Women of Color Executives: Their Voices, Their Journeys* (2001).

¹² Catalyst, *Connections that Count: Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).

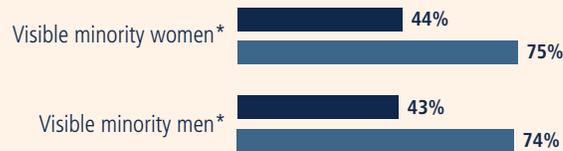
¹³ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women who did and did not agree and visible minority men who did and did not agree was significant at p<.05. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at p<.05 after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

Figure 4: Inclusion in Informal Networks and Promotion Opportunities¹⁴

Feel Excluded

Feel Included

Proportion of respondents who strongly/somewhat agreed that they have as equal a chance of finding out about promotion opportunities based on degree of inclusion in informal networks:



* $p < .05$

These results suggest that visible minorities feel that information relevant to important career advancement decisions may be shared in these informal networking sessions. If visible minorities do not have access to these critical informal networking opportunities, their career advancement may be hindered. For example, they may not be as well-known or trusted by others in the organization, which may limit the number of high-profile assignments they receive. While such exclusionary practices may be unintentional, they nonetheless result in barriers to career advancement.

It is crucial for business leaders and managers to establish more inclusive work cultures that facilitate interactions among employees of diverse backgrounds.¹⁵ Exclusion of employees from both formal and informal networking opportunities often happens when employers and fellow employees do not take into consideration the interests, availability, or religious and cultural practices of women and visible minority colleagues as they plan social activities. As stated by one focus group participant:

A lot of [visible minorities] don't drink or they don't socialize in that environment, and that's where a lot of connections are made...You can go and not drink but there's that persona—why are you not drinking? That's what a lot of the executives do and a lot of them play golf and I don't know a lot of visible minorities that actually like golf.

—Visible minority man

¹⁴ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women who did and did not feel included and visible minority men who did and did not feel included was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at $p < .05$ after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

¹⁵ Catalyst, *Connections that Count: Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).



While many visible minority focus group participants knew that networking was important, visible minority women also indicated that realizing the importance of networking might not be enough. This quote is from a woman who sees that the spaces that networking occurs in are gendered.

“Men...they go golfing, they go play hockey, and the bar room talk... they have this networking venue that they always meet on a regular basis...It’s true, the deals are always made at the bar. Women, we don’t have these types of networks and venues. We don’t have hockey, we don’t have golfing, and sometimes I find that women are not as encouraging to each other and I don’t know why that is.”

— Visible minority woman

WOMEN—ESPECIALLY VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN—ARE ISOLATED FROM NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Visible minority men and women and white/Caucasian women all reported some exclusion from informal networking opportunities. When visible minority men described exclusion, they stated that they do not feel comfortable in the locations that networking generally occurs because of cultural differences. For example, some men expressed that they do not drink alcohol and/or are not interested in popular Canadian sports. While some visible minority men may feel this exclusion, visible minority women are particularly isolated from networking opportunities. In fact, many visible minority women participants perceived barriers to gaining access to networks of influential colleagues as more of a gender issue than a visible minority status issue.

This visible minority woman feels that being excluded from the “club” has career-limiting consequences:

If you’re not in the club, you can have all the best skills in the world, but if you don’t have the knowledge and the information you cannot accelerate yourself. And so [some industries are] notorious... for choosing the one woman that they call the token, right, and the rest of us, we just don’t get the information.

—Visible minority woman

Both visible minority and white/Caucasian women felt that there is more male bonding in the workplace than female bonding and that men generally take other men under their wing more often than women do.

There were a couple of [mixed gender] social events here and there, but the males all sort of banded together and they had their weekly boys’ night out... They’d all hang out, and when a new guy joined the department they would take him under their wing and bring him out, which is obviously saying that [women] can’t get in there... because [we] don’t really blend in with the guys.

—White/Caucasian woman

Men are so much more encouraging of each other. As women, we don’t get together the way guys do.

—Visible minority woman



Visible minority and white/Caucasian women also identified the environments in which important networking takes place as a barrier to their participation. They frequently felt excluded from crucial networking opportunities because activities often took place in stereotypically male dominated spaces such as sports games and bars. The women stated that invitations to informal networking opportunities in these locations were generally not extended to them:

You do see guys hanging out together, so you'll see the men going out for golf and beer... They'll invite the guys and it's kind of an afterthought, "Oh, did you want to come?"... Whereas in the cafeteria you'll see everyone maybe have lunch together but it's within the confines of business hours... It's outside of that, when those informal relationships form, that you do see there's a split.

—Visible minority woman

In response to the extent of male bonding they see in the workplace, some women are attempting to create their own separate networking opportunities. Visible minority women expressed a desire to have more networking opportunities with other women in order to hear how they have succeeded in the workplace and overcome gendered career barriers. At the same time, however, they also want to gain access to networks with people in power, whom for the most part they identified as white men.

It would be nice to have some sort of venue where women can collaborate the way men do outside of the walls of work... That's where true networking happens.

—Visible minority woman

This visible minority woman tells a story of working hard, getting good performance ratings, but not seeing her career advance in the ways she had hoped or expected.

"The first couple of years that I was with [this company]... I didn't know, at that point yet, how to play the game right, so I just came to work and I just did what I needed to do and I went home and had my life with my family and friends and I'm kind of like, "How come nothing is happening for me? I keep getting good ratings... how come...nothing's happening?" It wasn't until a couple of years into the business that I started to understand the advantages of networking and things like that and how important it is to try to fit in... with your team and to build other networks and really support those around you."

— Visible minority woman



Given the importance of networking to career advancement and the difficulties in forming these critical relationships, visible minority women are often faced with a choice between two informal networking strategies: “blending in” or “sticking together.”¹⁶ Each of these strategies—integrating with those who are different or forming networks with those who are similar—can provide benefits to visible minorities in the workplace. This issue is explored in the next chapter as it relates to finding mentors and role models who may potentially become mentors.

Visible minority women and men and white/Caucasian women are excluded from informal networking opportunities. It is important for managers and employees, as well as senior leaders, to step back and think critically about how they contribute to their work environment.

ASK YOURSELF...

Who do I interact with outside of work? Are these colleagues similar to me?

What kinds of activities do we participate in, and where do we do them?

Who gets invited to activities outside of work? How are the invitations extended?

Questions like these may help uncover the roles that we as individuals play, often without thinking about it, in informal networks. Here are a few more questions to think about:

Have I asked others about what activities they are interested in?

Who do I eat lunch with?

When I plan social events for my team, do I take into consideration the religious beliefs and cultural preferences of my team members in regards to the activities/and or locations they may be most comfortable with?

Where have I met the people who have been most influential in my career?

What kind of information do I share in informal situations?

What kind of information do I solicit in informal situations?

¹⁶ Catalyst, *Connections that Count: Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).



CHAPTER 3: MENTORS

Having a mentor was another critical relationship that was often discussed by both visible minority and white/Caucasian participants in the focus groups. A mentor is someone who takes an active interest in developing a mentee's career. There are many roles a mentor can play, including providing both career and social support and development.¹⁷ Past research has shown that mentors are important to career advancement because they can provide the mentee with recognition, attention, and guidance that can optimize personal and professional growth. Career outcomes such as compensation, promotions, satisfaction, and commitment are significantly better for those who have a mentor compared to those who do not.¹⁸

In the focus group discussions, three major findings emerged regarding visible minority women and men and mentorship.

- The exclusion of visible minority women from networks may influence how women experience and speak about their mentoring relationships. While both visible minority women and men identified that having mentors is crucial to career advancement, men were more likely than women to have a mentor who was not their manager.
- Both visible minority women and men identified having few role models that “look like them” as a barrier to finding a mentor.
- Focus group participants stated that they would like different mentors to support various aspects of their careers.

VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN AND MEN HAVE DIFFERENT MENTORING EXPERIENCES

Previous studies have shown that more male executives than female executives identified mentoring as a top career advancement strategy.¹⁹ Indeed, visible minority men in our focus groups specifically identified mentoring as a strategic relationship through which they could gain advice and insight on how to advance their careers. According to this visible minority male, a mentor should be:

Somebody who's going to take you under their wing, who's going to take care of you and who's going to really see you through and say, "Okay, this is where you are today, this is where you need to be, how do we get you there? And what baby steps can we take to get you there?" Unless you have somebody who does that, who takes the time, who really, really cares for your career, you're not going to get there. Because you're just going to get sucked through the process, you're just going to get pushed aside, because unless somebody does that for you it's not going to happen.
—Visible minority man

¹⁷ Belle Rose Ragins and John L. Cotton, “Mentoring Functions and Outcomes: A Comparison of Men and Women in Formal and Informal Mentoring Relationships,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 84, no. 4 (1999): p. 529-550.

¹⁸ Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Mark L. Poteet, Elizabeth Lentz and Lizzette Lima, “Career Benefits Associated with Mentoring for Protégés: A Meta-analysis,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2004): p. 127-136.

¹⁹ Karen S. Lyness and Donna E. Thompson, “Climbing the Corporate Ladder: Do Female and Male Executives Follow the Same Route?,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 85, no. 1 (2000): p. 86-101.

Visible minority women, however, generally referred to their mentoring experiences as a positive relationship with their superiors. Like men, they identified the important role mentors play in career advancement, but they made little distinction between mentorship and other forms of guidance from leaders, such as their managers. This finding corroborates past Catalyst research on women of color in the United States that suggested that, when women of color have no mentors, they may have to rely on their managers, both for advice about their current job as well as active support for their candidacy for key development assignments and promotions.²⁰

Visible minority women's and men's experiences compared.

Visible minority men mainly approached their mentoring relationships strategically, directly describing the impact these relationships had on career advancement.

"I will tell a new hire to get a mentor. I think this is very common in [this department]. I think everybody agrees that a mentor can help you select the right career within [this department] and advance a lot. Give you a lot of tips on how to get around."

—Visible minority man

Visible minority women described relationships as a more general form of support, and often did not discuss having mentors directly or did not distinguish them from managers and other leaders.

"I did have, a very long time ago, a leader who... it wasn't a mentorship, it was just a leader of mine who certainly changed my whole outlook on how I perceived myself, as well as projected myself to the rest of the company, and he was an amazing person. He was just a regular manager whom I reported to... He saw way more potential in me than I saw in myself, and... it was eye-opening for me."

—Visible minority woman

EXCLUSION FROM INFORMAL NETWORKS IMPACTS THE AVAILABILITY OF MENTORS

While visible minority men did encounter barriers around accessing mentors, visible minority women seemed to have greater difficulty finding strategic guidance and support for the various challenges in their careers. This difference may result from the greater isolation of visible minority women from informal networks demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Networking is an important part of obtaining the mentor that is "right for you." Because visible minority men were less likely than visible minority women to report exclusion from informal networks, they may have more access than visible minority women to the resources necessary to create and sustain critical relationships.

²⁰ Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers* (1999).



Research has shown that women often believe that potential mentors are unwilling to develop relationships with them because of their gender.²¹ In addition, previous Catalyst studies on women in corporate management have found that women often indicate a lack of access to mentors as a barrier to their advancement.²² These perceptions help explain women focus group respondents' positive opinions about leaders in their organizations who have "open door" policies: access to more frequent communication with these leaders may provide more mentoring-like support for women. According to one visible minority woman:

I'd say my current manager [is my mentor]... We all love her... She again has an open door policy... She helps [me in] thinking about my career, even for thinking about what I should be doing.

—Visible minority woman

A lack of role models can make finding mentors challenging for visible minority individuals.

"I think that one of the barriers is [that]... we don't have enough higher executives [who are] role models ... who mentor, and give you a lot of tips that we can follow."

— Visible minority man

Because of this, some visible minority individuals recognized the importance of finding diverse mentors.

"[After] seeing all these people who have less education, less experience, I had to form my own route, so I stepped out of my box and I went to a mentor that didn't look like me."

— Visible minority woman

LACK OF ROLE MODELS LEADS TO A LACK OF MENTORS

While all focus group participants identified mentors as essential for their career advancement, visible minority women and men were more likely to identify barriers around accessing mentors and finding mentors that matched their visible minority status and gender. Visible minority survey respondents were also more likely to identify a lack of role models than were white/Caucasians.²³

A role model is someone whom an individual identifies with and who serves as an example of what the individual may achieve in their future.²⁴ While a role model is not necessarily a mentor, people may gravitate toward role models to fulfill a mentoring role. Therefore, a lack of role models can lead to a lack of mentors. Visible minority focus group participants identified a lack of role models who "look like them" as a barrier because it limits their pool of potential mentors who can help guide them in their current experiences.

²¹ Belle Rose Ragins and John L. Cotton, "Easier Said Than Done: Gender Differences in Perceived Barriers to Gaining a Mentor," *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 34, no. 4 (1991): p. 939-951.

²² Catalyst, *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects* (1996); Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers* (1999); Catalyst, *Cracking the Glass Ceiling: Strategies for Success* (2000); Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (2004).

²³ Fifty four percent of visible minorities strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that "There are few role models for me in my organization," while only 39 percent of white/Caucasians agreed with this statement. A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women and men who did and did not agree was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the difference between visible minority and white/Caucasian survey respondents still held at $p < .05$ after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

²⁴ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).



We don't have enough higher executives...who mentor.

—Visible minority man

The presence of role models of their own race/ethnicity and gender is important for people from traditionally marginalized groups because it conveys the message that advancement to senior levels is possible.²⁵ However, because mentors tend to mentor those who are or look similar to themselves, and because there are few women or visible minorities in the most senior roles in organizations, the likelihood of connecting with influential similar others is minimal.²⁶ Research demonstrates that common identification and interpersonal similarities can lead to more supportive mentoring relationships.²⁷ Visible minorities, especially women, face a number of barriers in accessing influential mentors and have fewer chances to strategically forge mentoring relationships, which ultimately affects their career advancement.

One visible minority woman explicitly addressed the lack of visible minority role models:

When we say we're not seeing enough visible minorities at the executive level, well, I'd like to know where are all the possible candidates that could be... a really good mentor?

—Visible minority woman

One visible minority male described the disparities between him and his white/Caucasian colleagues:

They do have someone at an executive level who's already there who's... helping to guide that career and giving advice. And we don't have enough role models up there to do the same thing.

—Visible minority man

The survey findings also indicated that visible minority women and men who agreed that there were few role models for them in their organization were:

- Less likely to agree that talent identification processes were fair (see Figure 5).
- Less likely to agree that they have an equal chance of finding out about promotional opportunities (see Figure 6).

²⁵ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

²⁶ Catalyst, *Connections that Count: The Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006): p.4.

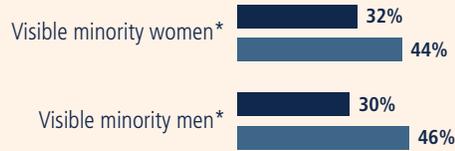
²⁷ Belle Rose Ragins, "Diversified Mentoring Relationships in Organizations: A Power Perspective," *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (April 1997): p. 482-521



Figure 5: Role Models and Fair Talent Identification Processes²⁸

Few Role Models
Role Models Available

Proportion of respondents who strongly/somewhat agreed that talent identification processes are fair based on perceptions of the availability of role models:

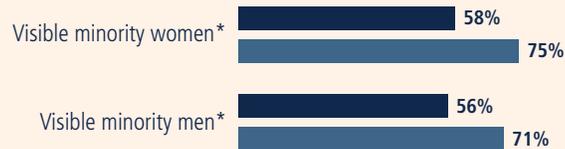


*p<.05

Figure 6: Role Models and Promotion Opportunities²⁹

Few Role Models
Role Models Available

Proportion of respondents who strongly/somewhat agreed that they have as equal a chance of finding out about promotion opportunities based on perceptions of the availability of role models:



*p<.05

²⁸ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women who did and did not have role models and visible minority men who did and did not have role models was significant at p<.05. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at p<.05 after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

²⁹ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women who did and did not have role models and visible minority men who did and did not have role models was significant at p<.05. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at p<.05 after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.



Because of the importance of mentoring to career advancement, it is essential that organizations understand the many unintended consequences of a lack of role models with whom visible minorities and women can identify, especially the great challenges these employees face when looking for mentors who meet their career and personal needs.

VISIBLE MINORITIES WANT VARIOUS TYPES OF MENTORS

There was no consensus among visible minority focus group participants around what the ideal mentor would look like. Visible minorities cannot look up exclusively to similar others, because there are so few visible minorities at the top of organizations. As a result, visible minorities must look to a variety of individuals for career and personal guidance. One visible minority man explained that:

I would love to have one mentor from my cultural group and certainly also other mentors who have the skill set that I need.

—Visible minority man

Women expressed mixed opinions about whether they thought male or female mentors were more beneficial. A number of participants reported seeing the benefit in having multiple mentors, each providing guidance and insight into different aspects of career advancement. According to one visible minority woman:

It's not always what you know, it's who you know. You need to create your own executive board behind you, to help support you.

—Visible minority woman

Many visible minority and white/Caucasian women explicitly stated that they would like to have access to both male and female mentors. For example, women frequently identified wanting to find a male mentor because men often hold the most senior roles. Past research has shown good reason for this strategy: visible minority women who had white male mentors advanced significantly beyond visible minority women with visible minority mentors.³⁰ One visible minority woman suggested that:

In any mentor situation, I think you need to have men there. The business is dominated by men; you'd be foolish to say, "Oh, let's be mentored by the people who aren't running the show."

—Visible minority woman

Research has shown that mentoring relationships with senior men can provide women with advice and strategies to help them access informal networks dominated by men, as well as techniques to deal with workplace environments that are not supportive for women.³¹ Previous Catalyst research in the United States found that women of color identified blending into networks with white and/or male colleagues as a career advancement strategy.³²

³⁰ George F. Dreher and Taylor H. Cox, "Race, Gender, and Opportunity: A Study of Compensation Attainment and the Establishment of Mentoring Relationships," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 81, no. 3 (1996): p. 297-308.

³¹ Belle Rose Ragins and Eric Sundstrom, "Gender and Power in Organizations," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 105, no. 1 (1989): p. 51- 88.

³² Catalyst, *Connections that Count: The Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).



While women often indicate that their male mentors have more power in the workplace, past research shows that women may be uncomfortable engaging with male mentors.³³ Female focus group participants stated that they also want to be mentored by other women in order to gain knowledge from leaders who have struggled with similar barriers and challenges in their career. According to one white/Caucasian woman:

We have a number of extremely successful women at the VP or director or above levels, and I cannot tell you how many mentees they have, and they just can't keep up with them there's so many of them...Women want to be mentored by women, because they want to know, 'What's your secret to success? How do you manage this? How do you prioritize? How do you have a family and a full-time job and soccer and everything else?'...We're sitting there where you've got all these balls up in the air, and we look at some women...they're balancing all these balls and I want to know what this person does.

—White/Caucasian woman

While mentors play an important role in helping others by sharing career advice and advancement strategies, our focus group participants also discussed the importance of having a champion who would support their career advancement by nominating and advancing their candidacy for promotions or high-visibility assignments. The following chapter expands on the importance of champions, including the barriers to getting a champion and the implications of not having a champion to career advancement.

ASK YOURSELF...

How would I describe the role of a mentor?

Do I have a formal mentor? Is my mentor also my manager?

Do I mentor others, if appropriate given my role in the organization? If so, how do I meet potential mentees?

This chapter demonstrated that visible minority women and men described mentoring relationships in different terms. Also, focus group participants described how multiple mentors are necessary for career advancement. Here are a few more questions to consider:

Do I have a mentor that looks like I do? Do I have a mentor that looks different than I do?

How does my mentor's race/ethnicity and gender influence questions I may ask?

How much time do I feel I can spend on mentoring relationships?

Am I rewarded by my organization for mentoring others?

³³ Belle Rose Ragins, "Diversified Mentoring Relationships In Organizations: A Power Perspective," *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (April 1997): p. 482-521.



CHAPTER 4: CHAMPIONS

Many mentors increase the visibility of their mentees by sponsoring or championing them in the organization.³⁴ Someone other than a mentor may also choose to champion specific employees in the workplace—making the champion role potentially distinct from that of a mentor. Indeed, our focus group participants often described champions as separate from mentors, with managers or others in their network who are more senior playing this role. For example, senior leaders often champion people whom they wish to see advance in the organization. A champion or sponsor may also introduce the employee to important executives or clients, recommend her for assignments, appoint her to high-profile taskforces, or nominate and advance her candidacy for promotion.³⁵

CHAMPIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Unless you have somebody banging the table for you—who has a loud voice, and a well-respected voice, and a senior voice—you can be in trouble.

—Visible minority man

Visible minority women and men both recognized that champions who would speak up on their behalf when critical decisions were made are crucial to their career advancement. Often individuals attributed past promotions to their champions' advocating for their advancement:

My present manager said, "[She is] a wonderful person, you should hire her instead of those other people." I know that's a big reason as to why I got it...Not to say I'm not good, but there are lots of people who were just as good. But I had that person who picked up the phone and said, "She's great, she's wonderful."

—Visible minority woman

Visible minority women and men both reported that gaining access to developmental opportunities is easier for those who have someone on the "inside" advocating on their behalf:

The most powerful thing a woman can do is have a male champion who is in the club, sits there smoking a cigar and says, "You know that girl, she's the one."

—Visible minority woman

Key career development opportunities were described as often becoming available through informal chance encounters, such as on the golf course, the squash courts, or over drinks after work:

I think the most important thing for advancement, no matter where you work, is sponsorship. If you have the right sponsor, your career will advance... And the best way to get the right sponsor is through networking.

—Visible minority woman

³⁴ Catalyst, *Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide* (2002).

³⁵ Catalyst, *Mentoring: A Guide to Corporate Programs and Practices* (1993).

Sponsorship, many visible minority individuals explained, is critical to advancement:

"It's also a question of whether or not you're visible. And I agree, you have to be on the right project at the right time working with the right people if you want to move forward. So it's something that would need the assistance of your managers, or it would need the assistance of somebody senior but not necessarily who you'd report to. But you need to voice out your aspirations to a number of key people which you think would help you to push for the right projects. Because, over the years, I've seen individuals who are on the hot projects and then they get recognized for it and it's just a matter of time before they move on and you see an announcement that they have been promoted. So you can work hard but it's a matter of being recognized for that hard work that would get you that promotion that you're aspiring for."

— Visible minority woman

However, while visible minority women knew how important sponsorship was, they told stories of how limited access to networks inhibited their ability to find one.

"I think the most important thing for advancement, no matter where you work, is sponsorship. If you have the right sponsor, your career will advance. But if you don't have the right sponsor, you have to get the right sponsor. And the best way to get the right sponsor is through networking. But if you're new to the organization and you don't really know how to network... I could spend 10 years trying to figure out how to go through this organization or if I get a better job offer I'll just go someplace else. So, I think people feel comfortable with their own kind. And I think the more and more you have visible minorities being senior, being out there, helping other visible minorities, it's going to make others feel more comfortable. And if you feel more comfortable, you fit in more. And if you fit in more, you get the right sponsor... It all just is a big circle."

— Visible minority woman

ABSENCE OF INFLUENTIAL SPONSORS AFFECTS PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE FAIRNESS

To further understand the implications of not having these important relationships with influential others, we compared survey respondents who said that the lack of an influential sponsor, mentor, or role model was one of their top three barriers with those who picked other top barriers in the workplace such as a lack of education or line experience. Fifty-eight percent of visible minority women who indicated the lack of an influential sponsor, mentor, or role model as a top barrier agreed that they have an equal chance of finding out about career advancement opportunities as their colleagues, significantly fewer than white/Caucasian men (70 percent).³⁶

³⁶ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women and white/Caucasian men was significant at $p < .05$. Sixty-five percent of visible minority men and 67 percent of white/Caucasian women who identified the lack of an influential sponsor, mentor, or role model as one of their top barriers strongly or somewhat agreed that they have as equal a chance of finding out about career advancement opportunities as their colleagues. The differences between visible minority women, visible minority men, and white/Caucasian women were not statistically significant.



Figure 7: Lack of Influential Sponsor, Mentor, or Role Model and Being Connected ³⁷

Visible Minority Women	Visible Minority Men
White/Caucasian Women	White/Caucasian Men

Proportion of respondents who identified the lack of an influential sponsor, mentor, or role model as one of their top three barriers and who strongly/somewhat agreed with the following statement:

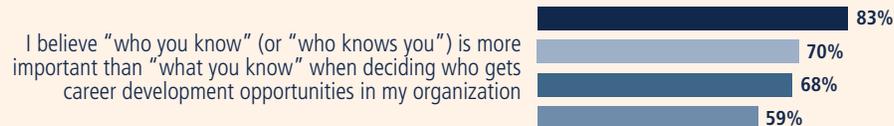


Figure 2 demonstrated that visible minority women are the most likely to feel that who you know (or who knows) you is more important than what you know. The lack of an influential sponsor, mentor, or role model magnifies this feeling for visible minority women: the visible minority women who selected this as a top barrier are even more likely to agree (83 percent) that who you know (or who knows you) is more important than what you know (see Figure 7). In contrast, 71 percent of visible minority women who did not select the lack of influential sponsors, mentors, or role models as a barrier generally agreed that who you know (or who knows you) is more important than what you know in determining who gets career advancement opportunities.³⁸ The same pattern holds for white/Caucasian women and men.³⁹

For visible minority men, 67 percent of those who did not indicate a lack of influential sponsors, mentors, or role models as a top barrier agreed that who you know (or who knows you) is more important than what you know, which is not significantly different from the 68 percent of those who did identify this as a top barrier.⁴⁰

³⁷ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women and all other groups was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at $p < .05$ for comparisons between visible minority women and visible minority men, and visible minority women and white/Caucasian men after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics. The difference between visible minority women and white/Caucasian women was not statistically significant after controlling for human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

³⁸ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority women who did and did not select this as a top barrier was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at $p < .05$ after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

³⁹ For white/Caucasian women and men respectively, 60 percent and 54 percent of those who did not indicate a lack of influential sponsors, mentors, or role models as a top barrier agreed that who you know (or who knows you) is more important than what you know, compared to 70 percent of the white/Caucasian women and 59 percent of the white/Caucasian men who did identify this as a top barrier. A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between white/Caucasian women and white/Caucasian men who did and did not select this as a top barrier was significant at $p < .05$. Logistic regressions demonstrated that the results still held at $p < .05$ after taking into account human capital, job, and demographic characteristics.

⁴⁰ A chi-square test and z-test of proportion difference were employed to ascertain that the difference between visible minority men who did and did not select this as a top barrier was not statistically significant at $p < .05$.



SELF-PROMOTION ATTRACTS CHAMPIONS

Visible minority women and men expressed the need for champions to help guide their careers and think strategically about what opportunities would best help them succeed.

At [my organization] it seems like... you've got to work on your own career here. Your boss is not holding your hand.

—Visible minority man

Many potential champions select people to champion for strategic reasons—for example to gain support at lower levels, to have additional sources of information, or to demonstrate their ability to identify and develop top talent.⁴¹ However, employees can improve the likelihood of being selected by a champion by making efforts to let others know about their aspirations and successes. By promoting themselves, they increase their visibility within the organization and attract champions.

Because relationships with a champion are typically developed informally, without intervention by the organization, individuals can play a role in finding someone who will champion them. Visible minority women and men both saw self-promotion—to make oneself visible and to make successes known—as one of the “rules” necessary for advancement. In many cases, focus group participants described self-promotion as equally important as strong performance: strong performance will only help in your career advancement if it is known to influential others.

Tooting your own horn... It's not just your manager, but it's other managers, and other people who have influence over where you want to be. If you want to be somewhere you need to start making sure those people know how wonderful you are before you try and get there.

—Visible minority woman

Visible minority men tended to report that because they know that this strategy of self-promotion is necessary for advancement, they make it a point to engage in this behaviour.

I don't think it's fair for me to expect that [my manager] will come to me. I take that initiative and go and have an informal discussion with him.

—Visible minority man

Although visible minority women also recognized self-promotion as a necessary strategy for career advancement, they frequently expressed discomfort at the idea of self-promotion. These women most frequently attributed their difficulty with vocalizing and publicizing their achievements to their gender—to the fact that they perceive women to be less good at “tooting their own horns.”

One thing I've noticed watching younger women in the organization is that we don't do a good job—white or black, women in general—I don't believe do as good a job in professing their success.

—Visible minority woman

⁴¹ Belle Rose Ragins, “Diversified Mentoring Relationships In Organizations: A Power Perspective,” *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (April 1997): p. 482-521.



Indeed, Catalyst research has demonstrated that women in leadership roles often have to walk a fine line between being perceived as “too soft” or “too tough.”⁴² Engaging in assertive self-promotion may be seen as inconsistent with stereotypical female gender roles, which makes it challenging for women to engage in this behaviour despite the fact that it is perceived as critical to advancement:

If you're doing a good job... you have to make it known to people around you so they know what you're doing and how well you're doing. I don't have that kind of a personality, where I go around telling people, "Hey, I'm great." So it's tough, but to a certain extent, I find that you have to do that.
—Visible minority woman

For members of some visible minority groups, self-promotion runs counter to their cultural values. In the few cases where men expressed discomfort at self-promotion, they typically spoke about how highlighting individual achievements is inconsistent with their culture.

[In this company] you have to promote yourself. A lot of Asians... they're not into promoting themselves... Personally, I'm more of a team player, so I like to promote the team, but in this company... it's all about self-promotion and saying "I did this" or "This is what I did on the team."
—Visible minority (East Asian) man

Because champions are seen as critical to career advancement, and relationships with champions seem to be frequently developed through informal networking opportunities, organizations that are concerned with developing and advancing the most competent and qualified people should think critically about the unintended consequences of seemingly innocuous, inconsequential actions such as sharing information regarding developmental opportunities at social events.

ASK YOURSELF...

Do I have a champion? If so, how did I meet my champion?

Are there certain individuals in the organization whom I vocally support more than others?

Our participants told us that having a champion's support is instrumental in career advancement and that self-promotion is necessary to attract a champion. Here are a few more questions to think about:

Do I feel comfortable promoting my achievements to my leaders and colleagues?

Do I share my successes with others? How? To whom?

How do I learn about the successes of individuals on my team?

⁴² Catalyst, *The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't* (2007).



CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings described differences in the perceptions and experiences of visible minority women and men and their white/Caucasian counterparts.⁴³ The study provided new evidence that companies and firms have not yet created environments where all employees believe they can succeed. Visible minorities were:

- Less satisfied with their careers.
- Less likely to report positive experiences and perceptions regarding their workplaces.
- More likely to perceive workplace barriers than their white/Caucasian colleagues.

Although the study found some gender differences between white/Caucasian women and men, few differences were found in the perceptions and experiences of visible minority women and men, who tended to have less positive experiences and perceptions than both white/Caucasian women and men.

Fewer visible minority women and men than white/Caucasian women and men survey respondents agreed that their colleagues included them in informal networking. As we have explored in this report, employees pick up important information that facilitates their career advancement through networking. Both formal and informal networking opportunities provide opportunities to connect with colleagues and managers on a more personal level, to communicate aspirations and achievements informally, and meet influential others who may become mentors or champions.

To support organizations in helping all employees gain access to the relationships critical to career advancement, recommendations follow that draw from both the original survey findings and the insights gained through our subsequent focus groups.

NETWORKS

Visible minority women and men felt excluded from informal networking. In this report, we explored how this exclusion happens, how visible minority women and men address this barrier, and what their experiences mean for employers. Both visible minority women and men describe networking as a “game” with rules and settings that are very much gendered. While visible minority women largely thought that their gender rather than their visible minority status led to their exclusion from these networks, some visible minority men also felt uncomfortable in the environments in which networking generally occurs.

If important career advancement decisions and information are shared through informal networking sessions, the exclusion of visible minority women and men will be a significant barrier to their career advancement. In order to address this barrier, organizations can create networking opportunities that are more inclusive of a diverse workforce.

Recommendation: Think critically about informal networking

Because relationships with peers, managers, mentors, and champions are critical to career advancement, and these relationships are often fostered or strengthened through informal networking opportunities, both employees and employers should think critically about the potential consequences of sharing career

⁴³ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

advancement information during informal networking activities. Throughout this report we have provided questions for employees and managers to ask themselves to better understand their roles in critical workplace relationships. Organizations should encourage and train employees and leaders to critically assess where informal networking takes place and how this may exclude certain people. Another way for organizations to address issues raised by informal networking is to provide formal networking opportunities for their employees.

Recommendation: Provide a variety of formal networking opportunities

In the survey report, we recommended that organizations create networking opportunities for their employees. Respondents who reported that their organizations offered networking programs were significantly more satisfied with their careers than those who reported that their organizations did not have networking programs.⁴⁴ Employers were reminded that networking opportunities can take many forms—from biweekly lunch discussions to elaborate conferences—and that organizations can use networking opportunities to showcase successful individuals from a variety of backgrounds, enhancing the availability of role models for their diverse employees.

Focus group participants agreed that they need a variety of formal networking opportunities and that both affinity-based networks and diverse networks are important.

Based on these additional insights, Catalyst recommends that organizations:

- Formalize a variety of inclusive networking opportunities. When networking opportunities are created and implemented by the organization, care can be taken to design activities that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of all employees.

Formal networking opportunities should comprise a mix of women-only networking events, events specific to racial/ethnic minorities, and events that are open to everyone. Organizations should offer a variety of activities geared toward both large and small groups. Organizers should be sensitive to those with commitments outside of work and those who may not feel comfortable at events focused around stereotypically gendered activities such as going to a bar after work or watching or playing sports. Having events that are formally sponsored by the organization can reduce the likelihood that networking opportunities are seen as exclusively available for those who are “in the club.” Leaders are encouraged to attend events and think critically about the spaces where they interact with employees.

We had a couple of colleagues who were from a certain background and the concept of them going out after work for drinks, the concept of them going out in the evening for dinner with peers, or going on retreats overnight, was completely against their own ethnic and religious behaviours, and so an organization who did that periodically as a way of team-building—for good intentions—was completely segregating a certain section of the workforce.

—White/Caucasian woman

The networking groups that we have for diversity groups pull in a range of band levels and we're united by our diversity. In those situations, there's a lot of networking between upper bands and lower bands and that's a social situation.

—Visible minority man

⁴⁴ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).



MENTORS

Access to potential mentors is reduced for those who are not included in informal networking opportunities. While both visible minority women and men recognized the importance of mentors to career advancement, they spoke about mentoring relationships in very different ways. Visible minority men described mentors in distinct and specific terms and directly noted how mentors helped advance their careers. Visible minority women, on the other hand, spoke more generally about guidance from others as helpful and often described their leaders and managers as playing a mentoring role. While some visible minority women spoke about formal mentor-mentee relationships, many did not identify someone as a formal mentor.

In the survey report, we recommended that organizations create mentoring opportunities to support the development and advancement of their diverse workforce. Organizations were encouraged to develop both formal and informal mentoring programs, create peer mentoring programs, and create forums where visible minority women and men can gain exposure to senior people who may be role models.

Recommendation: Formalize mentoring programs and encourage and train strategic mentoring behaviour

Based on the new insights offered by focus group participants, Catalyst recommends that organizations:

- Ensure the availability of a large pool of mentors by educating employees on the importance of mentoring to career advancement, encouraging leaders to seek out mentees, and reward mentoring behaviour.
- Formalize mentoring programs, including allowing time for mentoring activities, setting expectations that leaders in the organization participate in mentoring others, and pairing individuals based on their complementary needs and similar interests, particularly those employees who are new to the organization.
- Train mentors and mentees in how to *strategically* tap these formal programs and informal opportunities by critically assessing their career development needs and developing multiple mentoring relationships to facilitate progress.

It's really a cultural issue from a firm perspective... Unless our senior partners mentor the junior partners, and they start mentoring us, and we start mentoring our team, it's very hard to go out and do. So while we may want to help someone, if we're really busy, and we're getting squeezed from top to deliver, we're not going to have time.

—Visible minority man

I've looked around and I've read the intranet that said you should get a mentor... But the point is, how do I go about doing that? I can't go to my boss and say I want a mentor. So, maybe we need groups that are mentoring groups... "Hey, I met you when we did this focus group, can you mentor me in terms of your experiences and what did you do to move ahead to where you are?" ... We do need groups like that, committees like that. Not that you have to be invited to join one, but you can just phone up someone and say, "You know, can I talk to you?"

—Visible minority woman



Recommendation: Ensure the availability of a diverse pool of mentors and encourage diversified mentoring relationships that allow for reciprocal mentoring and mutual learning

Mentors of the same race/ethnicity and/or gender as visible minorities are desirable because employees can ask these mentors specific questions about their experiences as visible minorities. Both visible minority women and men felt that the lack of role models who “look like them” is a barrier to their ability to secure this type of mentor. However, participants indicated that mentors in positions of influence, who often do not look like them, are also important to career advancement, which demonstrates the importance of access to a diverse group of potential mentors. In addition, findings from the survey data showed that a lack of mentors decreases individuals’ perceptions of equal ability to advance in their careers.

To address the diverse mentoring needs of employees, Catalyst recommends that organizations:

- Ensure that employees are exposed to diverse senior leaders with whom they may establish mentoring relationships. The establishment of formal diversified mentoring relationships has the potential to meet the varying needs of employees.
- Consider the diverse needs of your talent pool and encourage multiple formal mentoring relationships that address various career development needs, such as visibility, guidance, and support. While diverse mentoring opportunities are important, it is crucial that the mentee feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues related to their gender or visible minority status.

In addition to the benefits of diversified mentoring relationships for visible minorities, engaging white/Caucasian mentors, especially men, in diversified mentoring relationships allows for reciprocal mentoring, in which white/Caucasian leaders can learn more about the challenges and barriers experienced by visible minorities.

CHAMPIONS

Visible minority women and men both recognized the importance of having a champion speak up on their behalf when critical decisions are made. Related to this, visible minority women and men felt the need for self-promotion so that others would know about their successes and potentially take on the role of a champion. However, visible minority women and men both noted that exclusion from informal networking opportunities means that they do not meet senior people who might champion them to others.

It's not just about networking and getting to know people, and knowing people who could possibly put you in a job but... make sure they know how good you are.

—Visible minority woman

Organizations need to ensure that career development and advancement practices are fair and that all employees are trained in how to appropriately communicate their achievements.



Recommendation: Base career development and advancement decisions on formal performance evaluations that are consistently applied for all employees

In the survey report, Catalyst recommended clearly defining and communicating performance evaluation criteria and creating explicit decision rules about how evaluation criteria are weighted.⁴⁵ In the report, we recommended that organizations:

- Implement a system of checks and balances to safeguard against exclusionary practices.
- Review managers' performance evaluations of subordinates by race/ethnicity and gender.
- Hold managers accountable for the retention and advancement of visible minority women and men.
- Monitor the representation of visible minorities on slates for promotion and high-visibility assignments.
- Integrate the promotional system with the formal mentoring and sponsorship programs, since the objective of the mentoring program is to increase individuals' capacities to become leaders.

In our focus groups, visible minority women repeatedly expressed their frustration with watching colleagues receive promotions before them because these colleagues were more comfortable publicizing their accomplishments. Many visible minority women expressed discomfort with "tooting their own horn," even in formal performance evaluations. Women felt much more uncomfortable than did men at the idea of self-promotion to bring a champion on board. These findings suggest that visible minorities—and visible minority women in particular—may benefit from support in completing self-evaluations during the performance evaluation process.

Recommendation: Ensure that employees have the necessary training and resources to communicate their achievements and engage champions

Formal and transparent career advancement processes are critical, and organizations should ensure that the implementation of these processes strategically considers the diverse talent pool and varying comfort levels with self-promotion. Going further, organizations should:

- Ensure employees are trained about formal evaluations processes. Provide them with clear guidelines about the type of information and level of detail they are to include in self-evaluations, training in how to most effectively summarize their accomplishments, and additional guidance and support where necessary.
- Encourage senior leaders to play a champion role for highly talented employees. As mentoring relationships—including diversified mentoring relationships—develop, they can grow to include support raising the employee's visibility.

For managers who want to develop and promote the most skilled employees, it is important to understand that self-promotion is challenging for employees when it runs counter to their cultural values. Organizations should include managers in the training process to ensure that they understand both the challenges that some people face with self-promotion as well as the potential talent management concerns for organizations that rely on self-promotion for talent identification. Having formal and transparent processes will help managers focus on employees' actual accomplishments and avoid relying on stereotypes in performance evaluations.

⁴⁵ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).



NEXT STEPS

Because of the intense competition for talent in Canada's changing labour market, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool. The original survey report, based on responses from more than 17,000 managers, professionals, and executives working in top companies and firms in corporate Canada, served as a wake-up call to corporate Canada and provided a comprehensive set of recommendations for employers.

Qualitative findings from the focus groups described in this report reinforce those recommendations and reveal some of the intricacies of workplace experiences. These details—the stories behind the numbers—have also allowed us to supplement our initial recommendations with tailored, sophisticated, and actionable insights.

Next, Catalyst will release two new reports also based on the data collected from the focus groups. The first will explore how culture, cultural fit, and stereotypes affect the career advancement of visible minorities in the workplace. The final report will examine organizational practices that can support the advancement of visible minorities, incorporating results from interviews conducted with senior leaders and human resources professionals. The final report will help organizations leverage this series of reports to build their business cases for diversity and inclusion, determine how best to assess their workplace environments, and implement critical programs and policies effectively.



APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following the release of *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings*, a subset of the 43 organizations were contacted based on an examination of the number of visible minority and white/Caucasian survey respondents. Those organizations with higher numbers of visible minority respondents were selected for focus group recruitment.

Selection was also based on recruiting an equal number of focus groups with women and men as well as representation across Canada and industries. White/Caucasian groups were used as a control to observe any distinct differences between visible minorities and their white/Caucasian counterparts.

Organizations were asked to send an email to employees requesting their participation. Focus group requirements included having a group of between three and eight individuals of the same gender and visible minority status, who had preferably been with the organization for at least six months. No supervisor-subordinate pairs were in the any focus group, and furthermore, no employees working in human resources participated for confidentiality reasons.

Focus groups were conducted on-site in a private conference room to protect individual confidentiality. They were moderated and observed by individuals of the same gender and visible minority status as the group. Focus groups lasted approximately two hours and were digitally recorded for transcription purposes. Confidentiality was promised to all participants and no individual participant was identified.

A total of 16 focus groups were conducted and transcribed for this report.

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

A standard protocol was used as the primary guide for each focus group; however, moderators allowed groups to continue discussion if the group felt particularly strongly about one issue. Although the protocols covered the same topics, they were modified slightly for visible minority groups and white/Caucasian groups.

The following issues were covered in focus groups with visible minority and white/Caucasian individuals:

1. Current Position and Career History

2. Workplace Environment

- Likes and dislikes about working at this organization
- Workplace culture
- Employees' "cultural fit"
- Stereotypes
- Areas in the organization where visible minorities are more/less successful

3. Relationship with Colleagues/Reports

- Social interaction
- Respect
- Authority

4. Relationship with Manager

- Qualities of managers
- Differences among managers of different backgrounds

5. Career Advancement

- Promotion process
- Performance ratings
- Performance expectations
- Strategies and barriers
- Foreign education or professional credentials
- Role models/mentors
- Career advancement expectations

6. Diversity and Inclusion

- Organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Existence of company practices for development and advancement
- Work-life challenges

7. Recommendations

- Factors for successful relationships between white/Caucasians and visible minorities
- Factors for successful relationships between women and men
- Suggestions for how to improve company policies for career development and the advancement of women and visible minorities

APPENDIX 3: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze qualitative research, the research team first developed a list of relevant themes. The list was informed by issues that emerged from the original survey findings⁴⁶ as well as by a review of past Catalyst qualitative research on the experiences of women of color in the United States.⁴⁷

A codebook for the analysis of focus group transcripts was created based on these themes. Members of the research team listened to two entire focus group recordings, making note of additional recurring topics that should be coded. Finally, if content did not fall into one of the previously established codes, the two coders were given the opportunity to identify new themes while coding.

All of the coding and analysis of the focus group transcripts was conducted in NVIVO 7, a qualitative software analysis program that provides tools for organizing and sorting qualitative data, allowing the research team to identify patterns, uncover themes, and develop meaningful conclusions about the data.

Two raters coded two focus groups together in order to establish decision rules and then independently coded all other focus group transcripts. After this initial coding was complete, two other team members reviewed the coding to ensure accuracy and consistency.

The research team analyzed patterns in the frequency of discussions of specific topics by gender and visible minority status (i.e., for visible minority women, visible minority men, white/Caucasian women, and white/Caucasian men). Patterns were identified based on similarities and differences in what was discussed during the focus groups. The team also looked for nuances in responses by each of these groups. The major trends and themes were then drawn out into the emergent storyline.

Findings from these focus groups were also used to generate new hypotheses to test using the existing survey data. These new survey findings are presented in this report.

⁴⁶ Catalyst and The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

⁴⁷ For example: Catalyst, *Advancing African-American Women in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know* (2004); Catalyst, *Connections that Count: The Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).

APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The term “visible minority” refers to a person who is not an Aboriginal person, who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. The following groups were represented in this study: Black, East Asian, South Asian, and white/Caucasian.

A total of sixteen focus groups were conducted, with the majority located in Ontario, in the Greater Toronto Area, and others conducted in British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec.

The table below provides further detail on the focus group participants:

Sample description					
	VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN	VISIBLE MINORITY MEN	WHITE/ CAUCASIAN WOMEN	WHITE/ CAUCASIAN MEN	OVERALL
AVERAGE AGE (YEARS)	38.6	37.5	44.5	44.5	38.8
AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	15.6	12.9	22.5	23.0	15.3
AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS EMPLOYED FULL-TIME IN CANADA	14.4	11.1	17.9	23.0	13.6
AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS IN CURRENT ORGANIZATION	9.2	6.2	12.4	17.0	8.5
% WITH GRADUATE LEVEL EDUCATION	28.0	44.4	12.5	100.0	34.4
% WITH FOREIGN EDUCATION	22.0	33.3	37.5	0.0	27.1
% MANAGERS	53.5	62.9	75.0	0.0	58.0
% PROFESSIONALS	34.9	37.1	25.0	0.0	34.1
% EXECUTIVES	4.7	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.5
% OTHER POSITIONS	7.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Catalyst research team is grateful for the continued guidance and insight provided by the *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities* Research Advisory Board. We are especially thankful to all who reviewed preliminary findings and the draft report and who provided critical feedback and editorial commentary along the way.

We are grateful to Ilene H. Lang (President, Catalyst) for her leadership as the project developed. Thanks to Deborah Gillis (Vice President, Catalyst Canada) for providing her support and guidance at all stages of this project.

Katherine Giscombe, Ph.D., (Vice President, Women of Color Research, Catalyst) directed the development of the focus group protocols and provided strategic support and guidance on qualitative research methodology. Laura Jenner (Senior Associate, Catalyst Canada) drafted the focus group protocols. Emily Pomeroy (Associate, Catalyst Canada) and Alicia Sullivan (Research Assistant, Catalyst Canada) managed all aspects of recruiting and conducting the focus groups. Janet Bell Crawford (former Director, Catalyst Canada) provided report development ideas.

Christine Silva (Associate, Catalyst Canada) developed the analysis plan and directed analysis. Christine Silva, Monica Dyer (Research Assistant, Catalyst Canada), and Lilly Whitham (Research Assistant, Catalyst Canada) conducted the qualitative analysis. Laura Jenner, Emily Pomeroy, and Christine Silva conducted the quantitative data analysis. Christine Silva, Monica Dyer, Lilly Whitham, Laura Jenner, Emily Pomeroy, Alicia Sullivan, and Katherine Giscombe contributed to the drafting of this report.

Special thanks also to Nancy Carter, Ph.D., (Vice President, Research, Catalyst), Meryle Mahrer Kaplan (Vice President, Advisory Services, Catalyst), and Debbie Soon (Vice President, Marketing and Public Affairs, Catalyst) for their insights along the way. This report was produced under the leadership of Liz Roman Gallese (Vice President and Publisher, Catalyst). Joy Ohm (Senior Associate, Catalyst) edited the document and Sonia Nikolic (Graphic Designer, Catalyst) reviewed the design of the report.

As well, a special thanks to Ulrike Balke (Art Director, Ulrike Balke Art & Design), who completed the design and layout of the report; to Charmain Emerson (President, Building Blocks Communications Inc.) and George Emerson (Vice President, Building Blocks Communications Inc.), and Susan Nierenberg (Senior Director, Public Affairs, Catalyst) for their work to publicize the series and for their strategic advice on media dissemination.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to all focus group participants, and to the 17,908 respondents to our survey, whose participation was truly invaluable.

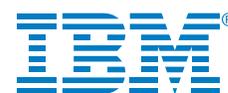
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