

BEST PRACTICES PLAYBOOK



**FOR HIRING, RETAINING, AND ADVANCING
WOMEN IN THE SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY**

GSA WLI BEST PRACTICES PLAYBOOK: FOREWORD

The Best Practices Playbook for Hiring, Retaining, and Advancing Women in the Semiconductor Industry is presented to you by the Global Semiconductor Alliance Women's Leadership Initiative (GSA WLI). This endeavor would not have been possible without the benevolent support of our generous WLI sponsors. These companies have shown fervent commitment to the success of our Women's Leadership Initiative and its goal of uplifting women in the semiconductor industry. We are grateful for their continued dedication.

Champion of Women

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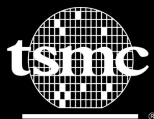
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A photograph of three women sitting around a table, engaged in a discussion. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored blazer, the woman in the middle is wearing a dark top with a necklace, and the woman on the right is wearing a yellow top. They are all looking towards the center of the table.

GSA WLI BEST PRACTICES PLAYBOOK: RECRUITING WOMEN IN SEMIS

Overall Advice

Throughout your recruiting and hiring process, if you have a Human Resources (HR) person or team, they must be involved. Additionally, if you have a Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) or Diversity, Equity/Equality & Inclusion (DEI) team, they should work closely with HR on your planning and development of these efforts. Their insight will be invaluable.

If you need outside assistance for your hiring and recruiting efforts, there are professional recruiting firms to help you. Find one that understands our industry, your company, and your job/personnel requirements.

If you prefer to keep your recruiting internal, our suggestions will help you create a strong engineering candidate pipeline.

Organically Grow Your Candidate Base Through Corporate Programs

Start constructing your base to attract potential employees by building rapport early and keeping them engaged throughout their educational development. Studies indicate that the more early intervention, encouragement, and mentoring in a girl's math and science education, the more likely she will be to continue her journey in STEM.

Create experiential programs for girls. One GSA member partners with a local Girl Scouts of America chapter to sponsor a two-week summer STEM camp. Any opportunity to educate girls in elementary school about STEM careers is a win for our industry. In addition to summer STEM camps, consider getting involved with local schools through hands-on/classroom demos, educational field trips, or other similar programs.

Create internships for high school students. Offering internships to local high school STEM students is valuable for their college applications and offers your current employees the chance to mentor and build rapport with the next generation of engineers.

Participate in national education campaigns. Supporting national campaigns at your local level is a great way to influence and encourage future engineers. For instance, "Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day" is a one-day event designed to increase interest in engineering among high school students. The day features hands-on activities and interaction with current engineers.

Target Your Top Universities. Create a tiered list of universities that you'd like to recruit from and proactively reach out to their engineering departments for more information on how you can enrich their current curriculum by creating tailored experiences for students. That can include offering to speak on your area(s) of expertise, mentoring students, organizing a tour of your facility and campus, and offering opportunities for career development.

Create a scholarship program. Whether for high school students enrolling in college to study engineering or existing college students in engineering programs, create a scholarship program and tie it to an internship or post-graduate internship with the company. Not only will you be helping create the next generation of engineers, but you'll be able to track their collegiate progress while building a relationship with them.

Offer college and post-graduate internships. These internships are not only valuable education and mentoring for students, but give you access to near-term potential employees who can learn and grow at your company. Use [GSA WLI's Internship & New Hire Portal](#) to post your open job opportunities. It's an easy-to-use interface and complimentary for our member companies to participate!

Participate in college recruitment fairs. These opportunities offer engineering students a chance to meet potential employers, as well as give the employers access to near-term employees or post-graduate interns.

Create and host your own recruitment fair. Work with local universities to help market your recruitment fair to their students. By inviting students to your facilities, they will have the opportunity to meet more people and tour your campus. Not only will this drive interest in working for you, but build rapport with the students.

Offer a College Day/Weekend. Invite university students to your campus for hands-on learning and a tour of your facilities. This will help drive interest and excitement in potential candidates.

Assemble a Diversity Recruitment Team. Create a team of diverse employees to assist with on-campus recruiting for women, non-binary people, and under-represented minorities. This affords students the opportunity to meet employees who look like they do. Not only will this help keep students in engineering – by showing them they're not an "only" – it also offers the opportunity to build rapport with students.

Use Social Media to Enhance Perceptions. Social networking platforms offer the opportunity to show potential candidates not only what you do, but who you are and how you value employees. Presenting your company as female-friendly by posting about your women's affinity group, female role models at your company, women speaking at various events, and the like will show that you not only value women, but are supporting their professional development and growth.

Create a Female-Friendly Hiring Process

A great deal of academic research⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾⁽³⁾ has gone into studying gender bias in job descriptions. Studies show that masculine-worded job descriptions significantly deterred women from applying to those jobs because subliminally, these descriptions tell women that they are not the right fit for the role and should not apply, regardless of their qualifications.

Being aware that this happens is a first step in combating this challenge. By making a conscientious effort at the recruitment level on how job descriptions are worded, companies can increase the number of qualified female candidates applying for those positions.

Start by using gender neutral titles in job descriptions. Titles can inadvertently prevent women from even looking at your job in a list of search results. Words in your titles like "hacker," "rockstar," "superhero," "guru," and "ninja," are considered male-oriented, which means women will be less inclined to apply. Instead, use neutral, descriptive titles like "engineer," "project manager," or "developer."

Be sure to check pronouns used in your job description. When describing work associated with the job description or the ideal candidate use "she/he," "they," or "you." Being gender neutral appeals to not only cisgender people, but non-binary and trans individuals too.

Create a diversity panel. Another way to keep unconscious biases out of your job descriptions is to involve more women, non-binary people, and under-represented minorities in the process. Create a diversity committee made up of people from different genders, backgrounds, and ethnicities to review the job descriptions as part of your internal approval process.

Optimize job descriptions by balancing – or avoiding – the use of gendered words. Textio, a language analysis tool, found that the gender language bias in your job posting predicts the gender of the person you're going to hire. Using a tool like [Textio](#) or [HireVue](#) can help to identify bias word choices and offer language that is more gender neutral and inclusive.

Avoid superlatives that can flag a job as more masculine. Excessive use of words such as "expert," "superior," "world class" can alienate female candidates who prefer more collaborative terms. Additionally, when referencing a candidate's background, you can inadvertently limit the pool of female applicants because there may be very few females currently "in leading positions at world class" firms.

What are the necessary requirements? Identify which requirements are "nice to have" versus "must have" and eliminate the former. In our HR research discussions, we heard from multiple GSA members that removing the term "preferred" – as in "preferred skills" – from job descriptions, resulted in more female applicants.

Express your commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion. Potential employees want to know they will be welcomed into your culture before they make the effort to apply. A simple statement in your job description lets candidates know that your company and workplace are friendly and inclusive. If your company values are well-defined, and promote D&I/DEI, take the statement further and include these specifics in your job description.

Promote volunteer and employee activities, especially if they advocate for diversity, equality and inclusion. If your company offers volunteer opportunities with organizations like Girls Who Code or STEM for Her, female-friendly employee resource groups (ERGs), or a mentor program, let candidates know by including this information in your job description. These are valuable to not only affirming your commitment to D&I/DEI, but also your commitment to professional development and career paths for women in your company.

Do you have family-friendly benefits such as parental leave, flextime, and childcare subsidies? If so, list these benefits. This lets your candidates know not only what [benefits] you offer, but the message that they can grow with the company and won't have to choose between a family and a career.

Remove Gender Bias from the Interview Process

Set recruitment and interview goals. If you're aiming for greater diversity, consider adding a goal of interviewing at least two women and two underrepresented minorities for your open job opportunity.

Setting the stage. When candidates come to your offices, what do they see? What does the environment say to them? Do they see people who look like them? If candidates feel that they would be an "only," it can be very isolating and unappealing.

Consider creating a space inside your company to host candidates such as an Innovation Center. This experiential space can be a large or small area where candidates are able to see your products, technology demonstrations, what you're enabling, and how your company fits into the global ecosystem. Videos, as well as photos and articles on the walls of the Center are an interesting way to tell your company's story. Be mindful that the media and images shown are diverse and inclusive. This space must be reflective of what you're trying to accomplish.

Train your interviewers. By training your interviewers on what questions to ask and how to most effectively engage with interviewees, you're making sure that candidates understand the business' value proposition, what the job entails, and what it's like to work for your company.

When interviewing female candidates, whether it's a panel or individual interviews, they must meet other women in the company with similar job titles and roles. Women want to see that diversity is valued.

Additionally, if your company has female senior leaders, include introductions to them during the interview process. If you want to inspire more women to work at your company, you need to present the women who already work there as strong role models. By seeing female senior leaders and role models, you're influencing the candidate's perception of what she believes she will be able to achieve at your company.

The bottom line is that candidates are trying to picture themselves at your company; make sure they can envision themselves fitting in, being happy, respected, and successful.

Onboarding

Onboarding and orientation, a crucial first impression for your new hires, prepares them for success. Plus, teaching her not only about her job but also the company culture, will outline how she can contribute and thrive. The training and support you provide from day one can set the tone for your employee's entire tenure at the company.

Expand the perception that onboarding happens only on the first day — this process of onboarding can last from day one until the first year or longer, ensuring that employees feel valued and appreciated for years to come. Effective onboarding reduces turnover and increases retention by providing a fun, valuable experience for new hires.

With onboarding comes paperwork, which is a necessity of starting any new job; however, it can be a tedious process and not the most welcoming or exciting on a first day. If possible, have your new hire complete as much of the paperwork online, in advance of her first day. For in person paperwork, have it divided into easy-to-navigate sections and have someone — preferably HR — walk through it with her and be prepared to answer her questions.

While many companies likely have an on-boarding process or check list, here are some additional engaging ways to welcome your new hire:

- **Welcome signage.** Let your new hire know you're excited to have her at your company.
- **Welcome email.** Send an email to the entire company, or at least her immediate team, to introduce and welcome her. Include a fun or interesting fact about her to encourage comradery and conversation.
- **Swag.** Company swag is a great way to welcome a new employee and introduce them to your company culture. By providing fun and useful company branded items, it reinforces the feeling of belonging.
- **Lunch.** Provide gift cards for local restaurants to employees so they can invite their new colleague to lunch.
- **Leaders Lunch.** Host a luncheon with the board members and/or executive team for the newly hired women. This offers them a platform to share their recruiting experience and receive valuable advice from business leaders. Plus, the small group setting makes them feel important and valued immediately upon joining the company.

Visibility

Internal recognition is important for female employees, but so is external recognition. GSA WLI has many opportunities for participation and visibility! A couple of new initiatives to highlight: we're looking for women who can speak on business trends, market drivers and technical issues. Encourage the women in your company to submit their information to our growing speakers bureau. We will look for women speakers for our events via this database, as well as allow our members to search for speakers for their events.

We're about to launch a new mentoring video opportunity for women called Woman to Woman (Mentoring Minutes for Women in the Workforce). Be on the lookout for that, but if you're interested in finding out more about it and how to participate, email marketing@gsaglobal.org.

Two opportunities that are ongoing with GSA WLI are our five committees that help drive our goals and measure results, as well as our social media visibility campaign to highlight the women in your company on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and WeChat. For more information, email marketing@gsaglobal.org. We'd be honored to highlight the diverse women at your company!

Lastly, feature women in leadership roles in your recruitment campaigns. GSA is working on a brand and imaging campaign for the semiconductor industry. It's a great opportunity to feature role models in the industry. Women can relate to other women who look like them and are smart, capable leaders positively impacting the world through STEM degrees.

Metrics

While GSA has an annual survey of women in semiconductors,⁽⁴⁾ it's important that you have specific takeaways from the interview and hiring process so you can continually improve.

Track the genders of people submitting for positions, the people interviewed, and the people hired. Using the information tracked, measure and assess your year-over-year progress on diversity.

Surveys are a great option to show your progress too. They offer a quantitative and qualitative method to see where improvements are needed or where you excel. Companies such as Qualtrics, Typeform, or Survey Monkey, can assist with the creation and deployment of surveys for candidates and new hires.

Appendix

(1) Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality, University of Waterloo and Duke University

(2) Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality, American Psychological Association

(3) "Women Do Not Apply to Male Sounding Jobs", a study from Technische Universität München (TUM), synopsis published in TIME

(4) GSA: Women in the Semiconductor Industry Survey Results



GSA WLI BEST PRACTICES PLAYBOOK: RETENTION, ADVANCEMENT & LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN IN SEMIS

Today, women represent only 10-25% of the semiconductor industry workforce, and women representation in senior leadership is even smaller, about 1% at and above the director level.⁽¹⁾ As an industry, we have work to do in retaining and advancing women to leadership roles. We offer many suggestions in this Playbook and ultimately, you can decide which suggestions will work best for you and your company. Whatever your decision, we recommend bringing your HR and DI/DEI teams together with company leaders to discuss the right strategy for your organization. These efforts require commitment throughout your entire organization... from the C-Suite to junior staff. It cannot be underscored enough that to address underrepresented groups – whether this is women, people of color, non-binary humans, and others – the combination of HR, D&I/DEI, and corporate leadership are a dynamic team to help ensure a diverse, inclusive, successful workplace.

Surveys

Across the high-tech industry, attrition is typically higher among women than men.⁽¹⁾ When it comes to employee retention, communication is paramount. Take the guess work out of the equation and effectively address concerns or challenges by creating a corporate-wide survey at a cadence that's achievable for you, i.e. quarterly, semiannually, annually. The key to an effective survey is asking tailored questions that can identify feedback for actionable change and results. While anonymous surveys can result in greater participation and more candid comments, issues specific to individuals will not be able to be addressed. There are many third-party vendors able to create and deploy a survey for your company. Additionally, these companies can offer advice on the level of privacy for your survey. If you're unsure where to start, the [Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#) has a vendor database that includes survey companies, which can be found [here](#).

Consider taking your corporate-wide survey a step further with internal focus groups. These offer deeper interviews for employees and give you valuable insights on the needs and wants of individuals, teams, or departments. Thus, allowing you to make the necessary changes to retain your most important asset, your employees. These internal focus group sessions can be developed and deployed through a third-party vendor with the assistance of your HR and/or DEI teams.

An employee survey allows you to discover why employees are happy or unhappy and what it will take to make them stay. Conversely, exit surveys are also valuable. When you learn why people are leaving the company, you can adjust your communications, benefits, corporate objectives, etc. based on the feedback received, especially if you notice a theme or trend in exit surveys.

Essentially, surveys can help gather information and identify challenges before they become bigger issues, allowing you to analyze the data, prioritize your resources, and focus where adjustments are needed to mitigate the reasons why employees leave.

Manager Training and Communications

Whether someone is a first-time supervisor or a senior executive, they should receive continuous and progressive training on employee communications – from how to fairly evaluate direct reports, to fostering a diverse team of people, to ensuring an inclusive environment. All levels of management are vital to retaining employees; therefore, it's key that you invest in your management to help create this culture of success.

Creating programs for managers with associated actions and measurable goals will help to further employee retention and professional development – for both the employee and manager.

Consider creating and implementing a **manager or leadership scorecard**. Dashboards or scorecards are excellent internal measurement tools and offer managers complete pictures of where they are strong or areas for improvement. This can be integrated into their overall performance evaluation by tying into various skills training, knowledge, results, and employee retention. As part of this scorecard, you should consider including:

- **Educational training sessions** they attend or even training sessions they lead, both internally and externally.
- A **diversity dashboard** that covers training sessions taken, as well as how they are implementing diversity/inclusion initiatives within their team.
- **360-degree reviews**. While annual reviews from a manager to employee are "the norm", consider flipping the scenario with an employee review of her manager. Implementing 360-degree reviews can be invaluable in assessing the management style and mentoring efforts from the employee's perspective. Beyond the management scorecard, open communications and assessments of this nature help the manager improve as a mentor, as well as better understand what their employee needs.
- **Unconscious Bias and Inclusion Training** may be a sensitive subject for some, but it must be addressed. A one-time training session is rarely effective. A training program with regular feedback, analysis, and coaching is best. Your goal with this type of training is to equip your managers with a practice they can apply to ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees, which directly impacts that employee's professional development and career advancement. Your managers have the ability to increase equity and inclusion one decision at a time.

- **Accountability Metrics.** From C-suite to executive management to middle management, make everyone accountable for doing their part to help retention and inclusion. Once the metrics are determined, finalize how to incentivize and reward those participating and achieving real, measurable results. Basically, if you expect executives and managers to fully support diversity retention, development, and advancement, make it part of their KPIs and promotion and bonus criteria. This measure and reward approach has worked extremely well at various companies we spoke to, many of which reduced diversity turnover to below the company average.

To step up retention and inclusion efforts even further, consider instituting an **internal measurement program**. Working with HR, create an HR impact analysis and compare how your company measures up to the available workforce, as well as attrition and retention. This analysis should be available six months prior to evaluations and possible promotions so that managers know 1) where they stand and 2) what they need to do to move the needle.

Employee Evaluations

Annual evaluations or reviews are an excellent benchmark to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback for employees. It also allows the employee to discuss her short- and long-term goals, as well as her future with the company. **Metrics** to career advancement should be transparent at all levels of your organization. No employee should be surprised on their evaluation with new criteria that inhibits her advancement and career path.

Successful managers create a productive, **open communications** environment that enables employees to address questions, concerns or ideas with her manager as needed. Managers should schedule meetings with each employee on a regular basis. This is a great way to offer guidance and mentoring while addressing areas of concern so that the employee can make necessary corrections prior to an annual review. Allowing performance issues to build pending an annual review can lead to unnecessary frustration for both a manager and employee.

It is important to **continually assess** your annual **review process** and how employees are evaluated. During our research discussions, one company shared that in a review of their employee evaluations, men were consistently judged based on their work performance and achieved goals, while women were judged on how pleasant they were to work with and her likeability. Terms like "warm," "friendly" or "holds the team together" were seen in numerous women's annual reviews, but never in men's reviews. This is where manager training, as well as unconscious bias and inclusion training comes into play. Women cannot advance professionally if they are evaluated and judged on character traits versus actual achievements.

Support Systems

Support and development for women or underrepresented people can be offered in a variety of big and small ways.

1) Give women a **platform for visibility** via opportunities through internal (i.e. affinity groups/ERGs) or external affiliations (i.e. GSA WLI), recognition, speaking engagements, and participation in advisory groups.

Encourage participation in technical conferences targeted to women such as Grace Hopper and Women in Tech. GSA WLI is excited to host its inaugural Technical Hardware Conference in fall 2021. Not only does this foster collaboration, but it brings women together and provides an opportunity to network with others like them, stifling isolation or being the “only”.

Internally, there are many chances for rich discussions to happen on gender roles, unconscious bias, and other gender-related topics through various ERGs or affinity groups. Whether it’s through your Women’s ERG or a department-led initiative, you can do a series of webinars or videos where you can leverage your female talent and male allies. The topics are up to you to develop, but as an enrichment to daily work, it’s a great opportunity for the company to come together and learn about specific topics taught by their colleagues.

By celebrating the women in your company and their achievements, and making them visible to the whole company, you’re supporting their career and personal development. Fortunately, there has been an increase in the number of programs companies offer women. Some programs include:

2) An **Ally or Advocacy Program** which can offer significant support to and stronger advocacy for women. While allyship is a life-long commitment and process for building relationships based on trust and consistency with underrepresented people, your company can encourage this kind of behavior in employees.

With a formalized ally program, i.e. name and define it, participants would commit to ally-conscious behavior happening in your gender-dynamic work environment. Design the program to help men within the company be better advocates and actionable allies for their female and non-binary counterparts.

Pay attention, commit, and take action. Actionable allies lift others up by advocating, sharing growth opportunities with others, recognizing systematic inequalities, and realizing the impact of microaggressions, believing underrepresented people’s experiences, ultimately: listening, supporting, self-reflecting, and changing. Make on-going (internal or external) educational allyship/advocacy training and development a goal for program participants, for instance, Better Man Conference. While this may sound like a daunting initiative, being an ally and inclusive is a choice. You can make simple decisions every day to advance the narrative.

3) Mentorship programs that start during onboarding can significantly, and positively, impact retention rates. Offer mentors – yes, multiple ones – other than her direct manager. For instance, a Peer-Mentor program and can be a short-term program where a new employee is assigned to a current employee to familiarize her to the organization. This guidance helps to welcome the new hire into your company.

Another opportunity is in a Mentor-Mentee program, which consists of one-on-one relationships that enhance personal and professional growth, improve cultural competency, assure skill building, and increase networking opportunities.

In either relationship, goals for each part of the program must be established such as, high potentials, young professionals, self-selected, etc. A successful mentoring program should be tied to organizational and career development metrics. It's key that there is staff accountability and infrastructure to support the program. Build effective matchmaking and provide orientation with training for the mentor/mentee matches. We heard from multiple companies that this [orientation and training] was a shortfall of their program. Orientation and training cannot be shortcut. These help to set expectations and the structure for the mentoring relationship. To determine the success of your program, it must be tracked, monitored, and reported to measure program results. As the program builds and matures, consider including rewards and recognition.

4) Focusing on the individual is important for retention, but when possible, give people the chance to work together as a team. By offering the opportunity to contribute and collaborate on ideas and solutions, you're not only **fostering teamwork**, but development, support, and inclusion too.

5) **Training and development** should be a priority for professional development and growth opportunities. All employees can build skills. By challenging employees to gain even more skills and knowledge, they become not only a better employee, but someone who feels a sense of accomplishment and success. Some companies pay fees and travel for employees to attend conferences or industry events each year, provide tuition reimbursement, or pay for continuing education training. Again, your employee benefits, but this also helps your company identify and groom strong internal candidates to move into key leadership positions as they become available.

6) Every person wants to feel appreciated for the work they do, which is why **recognition and rewards** are important too. A well thought out employee recognition program is an easy, effective way to retain your talent. Some companies have formal rewards systems that incentivize great ideas and innovation, but recognition programs can be instituted on any sized budget. For instance, thanking someone for her extra effort, whether it's with a sincere email, a gift card or an extra day off, and explaining how her hard work helps the company, reinforces that she is a valued member of the team and creates a culture of recognition.

7) Similar to recognition efforts, acknowledging **milestones** also benefits retention. Whether the team just finished a huge project or an employee celebrated a work anniversary, seize the opportunity to celebrate together with a shared meal or group activity.

8) Create a friendly **corporate culture** that is 1) contributing to making the world better by implementing sustainability practices and 2) values volunteerism in its employees. Many companies offer time off for employees to participate in volunteer efforts while others offer matching donations for an employees' favorite charity.

Younger generations are passionate about knowing they work for a company that cares about them and is actively working to make a positive impact on the world.

9) Potential pitfalls can happen when your company is **dealing with change**. Change is inevitable and every workplace must deal with it in some manner. Employees will look to leadership for reassurance. If your organization is going through a merger, a layoff, or another big shift, keep your staff as informed as possible. This helps to manage expectations and stave off unfounded rumors. Make big announcements face-to-face and allow time for questions.

At Risk Employees

Prioritizing at risk employees is essential to retention.

First prioritize your employees based on their position, impact, and performance. Within that group, you should next prioritize the employees who are most at risk. You can do this in a few ways:

- Work with data scientists in HR to accurately identify these people
- Some employees will self-identify by speaking up either to a manager, mentor, or colleague
- Garner this information from your corporate survey, internal focus groups, manager evaluations, working groups, etc.

Evaluating at risk employees with a simple color scale (red, yellow, green) is a visual and easy way to assess, manage, and retain them. To retain them, HR and their manager must engage in a plan of action.

Some companies we talked to have a hot or warm [phone, text, email] line for unhappy employees or those who believe their co-workers are at risk of leaving. This is a confidential line for an employee to call and discuss their manager or issues they are having at work. It was noted in our discussions with HR professionals at a variety of companies that many times women do not leave the company, they leave because they are not happy with their manager.

Stay interviews are relatively simple to enact and an effective action for reinforcing why employees stay. These are one-hour meetings held at least twice a year between the manager and their employee help to identify and reinforce the positive reasons as to why that employee would stay at your company. The bottom line is that early intervention is best and keeping the lines of communication open to address the situation is vital to retaining her.

Life Changes Program

The US is the only developed country without a national statutory paid maternity, paternity or parental leave.⁽²⁾⁽³⁾ This means that companies can offer zero maternity or paternity leave; however, we can and must do better for employees in our industry, and to continue to attract and retain top talent.

Some of our member companies offer generous parental leave benefits and programs for new parents. One company we interviewed offers maternity leave and transition process for returning to the company. At a high-level, they offer six-months of paid maternity leave and two-months of paid transition. This program allows the new mother to transition back to work at 80% activity with 100% pay. They noted that most women returned to the company at 100% almost immediately; however, the policy offers a significant level of comfort and security knowing they had the option of being able to leave work to attend to their newborn child. For fathers, that same company offers four-months paid paternity leave to allow time for bonding with their baby. This generous paternity leave program has proven [at the company] that men have less resentment towards women's maternity leave and better management of other new fathers on their team when they take leave. Continuing to support women and men as they enter parenthood and beyond as their children grow, shows that you value them and encourages good work-life balance. Companies should review their benefit programs annually to ensure they are appealing to women.

Additional parental benefits offered by GSA member companies include:

- Nursing Rooms and/or Mother Rooms
- Subsidized or on-site daycare
- Back-up or emergency childcare for when schools close early or the usual babysitter/nanny is unavailable
- Subsidized or on-site after school care, which includes assistance with homework or tutoring, as well as fun activities to entertain children of all ages
- Adoption assistance
- Fertility benefits including infertility treatment/in vitro fertilization

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance, which has been mentioned repeatedly, has been a hot topic for years across all industries. For decades, women have been told they can have it all — a career and a family, but the reality is much more difficult than the simple phrase suggests. The added pressure and stress to be “superwoman” and not let anything falter with work or family can be overwhelming.

To alleviate this pressure, to keep employees happy, and to attract potential employees, companies have implemented measures to assist in achieving a more balanced life. Initially, we discussed with members their offering a compressed work week, e.g., four 10-hour days, or flextime, where employees work from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Telecommuting or working from home was not an option that companies were in favor of, mostly due to the legacy mindset of “this is how it’s always been done” or “employees won’t actually be working from home” or would they just see it as an opportunity to “slack off?”

We rang in 2020 with great expectations and as each month as passed, our ways of thinking have been challenged, to say the least. Given the current COVID-19 situation, the majority of your employees are likely working remotely out of an abundance of caution and concern for their health and safety. What’s been incredibly interesting is that this forced telecommuting/working from home, due to the pandemic, has shown us that people can and will work even harder at home. Many companies are now considering permanent work from home options.

Granted, there are new challenges faced by everyone. From always being online and an extended work day with little or no downtime, to juggling even more responsibilities if they have children, regardless of age, who are also schooling from home. There’s been a further blurring of work and life, throwing the balance off for everyone.

A note of caution, which is not only relegated to the pandemic, be careful to avoid a culture that encourages or rewards 24/7 availability as this is not conducive to employee retention. Encourage staff to take their vacation time, and if late nights are necessary to wrap up a project, offer late arrivals or an extra day off to compensate. One company we talked to during this time is offering “Friyays”, defined as the option to take Fridays off or the option to leave work three hours early, if possible. Many companies implemented this prior to the pandemic during slower times.

Before your office reopens (or opens to more onsite employees), work with your HR team to collaborate on a formalized work-life balance policy. Consider keeping the benefits of telecommuting. For your employees, avoiding the dreaded traffic during commute times a few days a week can be a significant stress reliever and retention booster. Your policy should also take into account flexible schedules. Of course, not all jobs can offer flex time, but the goal should be to make it **the most flexible for the employee’s job**.

We realize this hybrid work environment works so use this as an opportunity to expand benefits to employees. A healthy work-life balance is essential to job satisfaction, and employees need to know that their managers understand they have lives outside of work.⁽⁴⁾

Advancement of Women to the Next Level: Leadership

Examine your organization’s progression pipeline and succession planning. Ultimately, succession planning should reflect the way an organization needs to change to achieve its strategic goals. Specifically, are enough women being promoted through the company to senior management positions? Or are they leaving before they reach that stage? Before hiring externally, have you looked internally to see if a woman could do the job? If the results are not what you expected, look to determine what barriers could be preventing this. If you don’t know the reasons why, then you can’t make any changes.

The basics of succession planning include:

- Identify the most important roles in the company that will need to be filled quickly if an employee exits the role/the company.
- Define the main responsibilities, competencies, and requirements for each role, including what gender-neutral characteristics or traits best suit the role.
- Use these criteria to assess candidates and to determine who has the potential to grow into a leadership position.
- Based on the initial assessment, establish a segment of high-potential employees to eventually fill key roles in the company.
- Develop these employees through training and valuable work experience so they are ready to take over leadership positions when the time comes.

An effective succession plan for women considers their goals and aspirations for personal and professional growth in conjunction with the company's goals and aspirations for business growth. It must be a mutually beneficial partnership. Processes should be in place to provide talented women with access to internal resources (i.e. mentors, sponsors, training) that can benefit her rise within the organization. Visibility is also essential, which means she should be exposed to assignments that provide the best possible display of her talents and abilities as a potential leader.

Create a Formalized High-Potential Program for Women

To do this, you will need to define the program, identify high-potential women, find sponsors for these women, develop the employee, and measure your results.

In defining the program, it must include:

1) Identify high potential women in your company to build your succession pipeline.

A Harvard Business Review article about the science of high potential individuals found three factors in determining high-potential employees. Those are: ability, social skills, and drive.⁽⁵⁾

2) The role of the sponsor and what it means to be a sponsor. Sponsorship is a highly critical part of the program. Nearly all people in executive ranks have had someone help them along the way, someone who can speak on their behalf at meetings or guide them through the corporate maze of development. The presence of senior role models and mentors is a significant factor in the ability of organizations to retain top talented women.

3) The sponsor must ensure the woman has a wide range of development opportunities during this time that include:

- Professional development programs — this can take the form of conferences or seminars external or internal to the company, additional schooling or advanced degrees, etc.
- Rotational assignment to gain company exposure — this rotation allows for your high-potential candidate to advance her skills and knowledge while gaining key relationships with executives and others in the company.
- Networking opportunities both internal and external - networking is critical to advancement. For women to effectively showcase their professional skills and talents, they must first be recognized. High-level networking provides the opportunity for these women to make key connections that can rapidly and positively affect their professional development journey. Inclusion in a women's professional network is a good opportunity to gain skills and rapport.
- Assignment of impactful projects - high-profile projects and responsibilities are the ones that get noticed. If a woman is not receiving assignments that allow her to effectively demonstrate her range and ability as a potential leader, how can she expect to get noticed or considered for promotion?
- Monthly business insight calls with executives or other opportunities that offer business and strategy, i.e. the bigger company picture.
- Visibility platforms that offer internal and external opportunities to speak and engage with others in the company. These can include:
 - Town Hall meetings
 - Executive leadership meetings
 - Internal communications

4) Program measurement. In addition to the retention and advancement of your high-potential candidates, characteristics and data driven results will be valuable in your assessment of the program. These are just a few considerations in measuring the success of your candidate and high-potential program:

- Leaders inspire coworkers, does she do that?
- Does she uphold ethical standards and business values of the company?
- How is criticism received and what steps are taken to make improvements?
- Does she understand the business' mission and goals?
- How is her strategic approach to business?
- Are her solutions fact-based or have sound reasoning?
- Are her ideas innovative and help improve the business?
- Does she meet KPIs regularly?
- Does she meet deadlines with work that is complete, accurate and effective?

Compensation

We'd be remiss to not address compensation.

Overall, when speaking about compensation, a competitive compensation package for new hires or candidates is typically the most attractive factor when considering a new job. You need to adjust your compensation plan regularly for two reasons:

1. You can lose potential new hires because there are many job opportunities available and candidates can quickly learn what they could be paid elsewhere.
2. New hires may be offered market rates to secure them, while long-term employees have not been adjusted and are still earning previous year/years market rates.

If we drill down further by gender, the wage gap is significant for women [compared to men] and even more so for women of color.⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾ While discrimination is illegal, it is still widespread.

The National Women's Law Center offers this statistic on the wage gap, "Women in the U.S. who work full-time, year-round are typically paid only 82 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. This gap in earnings translates into **\$10,157 less per year in median earnings**, leaving women and their families shortchanged."⁽⁹⁾⁽¹⁰⁾

The World Economic Forum states that, "women will be waiting 107 and **202 years** to respectively **close** political and **economic gender gaps**."⁽¹¹⁾

The semiconductor industry is facing an engineering deficit that will continue to expand unless we all do our part and make a change. Part of GSA WLI's mission is to attract women with STEM degrees to our industry. If we want to successfully recruit, retain, and promote women in our industry, we must do better than other industries. Employees should be given an annual review with salary increase at least once a year. We need to not only pay fair, living wages to all employees, but pay women – all women, regardless of color – the same as a man for doing the same job.

The **solution** is simple: You must **commit to making a difference and act!**

In closing, companies should revisit your employee retention, development strategies, and compensation packages once a year. If your company has not already instituted a regular, internal HR evaluation program of reviewing female vs. male compensation that it does so at least once a year. Your review process should focus on predetermined metrics that provide the most objectivity when making compensation assessments. These can include, but are not limited to, comparative data such as length of tenure, defined job descriptions, management and/or role responsibilities, and current/historical promotion and compensation advances. Keep your employee relations and workplace culture strong with an ongoing cycle of assessments. Take time to evaluate possible improvements. Continue to evolve to best meet our employee's needs and pay fairly across your organization.

Appendix

- (1) GSA: Women in the Semiconductor Industry, 2019 Survey
- (2) The World's Richest Countries Have Some of the Worst Parental Leave Policies, Thompson Reuters Foundation appearing in Global Citizen, June 2019
- (3) Maternity leave: US policy is worst on list of the world's richest countries, 2019 UNICEF report appearing in The Guardian, January 2020
- (4) COVID-19 could keep workers home 'well into next summer', Yahoo! Finance, October 2020
- (5) How to Identify High Potential People, October 2017
- (6) The State of Gender Pay Gap in 2020, PayScale
- (7) Quick Facts About the Gender Wage Gap, Center for American Progress, March 2020
- (8) National Partnership for Women & Families, September 2020
- (9) The Wage Gap: The Who, How, Why, and What to Do, September 2019
- (10) Measuring the Wage Gap, National Women's Law Center
- (11) Only 202 years to go: U.S. backsliding on closing gender pay gap, Washington Post, December 2018

A photograph of two women in an office setting. One woman with dark hair is looking at a laptop screen, and the other woman with blonde hair tied back is looking down. They appear to be collaborating on work.

GSA WLI BEST PRACTICES PLAYBOOK: WOMEN'S NETWORKS

Many companies have employee resource groups (ERGs) or employee business resource groups (BRGs). Whether called employee networks, business resource groups, or affinity groups, these groups are a way for employees to connect with one another. Whether the ERG is created for women, LGBTQIA employees, people of color, or working parents, they are essential to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. However, they are much more than social groups and should be viewed as such. ERGs are strategic business drivers because they help develop future leaders, foster employee engagement, build allies, drive innovation, and nurture an inclusive culture. It's well-documented ⁽¹⁻¹¹⁾ that diverse perspectives and people produce better decisions, better outcomes, and better business performance. It's a win-win for employees and companies.

Benefits of an ERG can be immeasurable, but here are a few ways that employees benefit:

- Gain exposure and visibility to leadership, as well as larger internal and external networks
- Learn a broader set of skills by collaborating on projects and initiatives
- Seize leadership opportunities within ERGs that they may not have in their current role
- Create a strong employee community which assists with recruitment, retention, and advancement
- Build support for those with common interests, identities, and goals by cultivating relationships
- Increase cultural and civic awareness

Your company benefits from ERGs as well through empowered and connected employees who:

- Build valuable talent development
- Effectively onboard employees and build stronger company loyalty
- Harness diverse workforces for common business goals
- Create a comfortable environment that encourages open dialogue where new ideas and opportunities can flourish
- Assist with core business objectives like recruitment, retention, and advancement of employees
- Establish and develop community relationships that enhance your company's reputation

If your company does not already have an ERG and specifically, a women-focused ERG, here are the steps to create one and successfully keep it going.

1. Research

Every good plan starts with research. Why should your ERG exist? What is your company's history and policies with regard to ERGs? Consider looking at similar organizations and their ERGs to identify the problem you will be solving with your group. Talk to your HR and D&I/DEI departments about starting a group. Both departments are excellent resources to offer information about the company's policies and support for ERGs. If there are existing ERGs at your company, consider what they're doing and why yours is also essential. Your HR and DEI groups may also be able to provide templates and guidance on establishing the group's structure, setting objectives and goals, budget, etc., as well as information on what has previously worked or not worked when creating an ERG.

If you're starting without guidance, historical company data or templates, consider using this Playbook as a guide to get your ERG started.

Whether there are women running your company and/or in leadership positions, a women's ERG is a valuable resource to increase awareness and provide guidance to your company's leadership on important issues such as the financial benefits of women in leadership and the general disparity that exists, professional development, bias training, and more. If there is a lack of female leadership at your organization, a women's ERG will also offer a common mission and united voice and support for women at your company.

Ultimately, identify the need and then gather evidence as to how a women's ERG will meet it. It's important to have plenty of information so that you can offer data and facts when garnering support, gaining funding, seeking out leadership and sponsorship, and recruiting members.

2. Leadership

Often, the founder of the ERG will serve as its initial leader. If you're appointing someone as the leader of the ERG, who is the best person to spearhead your mission? It should be someone who is passionate about your mission and goals, and able to take charge. Since you are starting a women's ERG, it's likely that your leader will be a woman.

Along with a leader, consider establishing a committee or other officers within your ERG. They will be responsible for different tasks related to your mission. As the ERG grows, consider adding term limits to leadership positions so there are opportunities for others to serve in these roles. Lastly, be inclusive and encourage male allies to join your ERG. The more diverse and welcoming your ERG is, the stronger it will be.

3. Mission & Goals

You've done your research and identified leaders, now it's time to decide on your mission statement, which is vital to attract members and garner additional support as your ERG grows. Your ERG's mission statement should explain who you are, what you're providing, how you provide it and the impact you want to make. Simply stated, what's your vision, what do you want to accomplish, and how will you accomplish it?

Additionally, consider how your ERG will positively impact your company. Is your ERG's mission aligned with the company's overall mission and vision? Also ensure alignment with the mission of your company's D&I/DEI program, if one exists.

Your group's goals should reflect your mission, and specifically, how you will measure the success of your group. Consider internal and external objectives, for instance:

- Internal objectives could include creating professional development for women in your company
- External objectives could support your local community, such as creating mentorship or leadership programs for girls and young women in STEM

4. Executive Sponsorship

Having support from a senior leader within your company is a **must** for any successful ERG. Sponsors act as the voice of your group to the leadership team. They are an important ally to have if your group tries to advocate for organizational change. For example, the executive sponsor for a woman-focused ERG could bring the group's request for unconscious bias training to the executive team and help expedite the approval process.

You may already have the executive sponsor identified. If not, connect with company leaders by soliciting sponsors. ERGs offer excellent opportunities for leaders to engage with colleagues on a deeper level. You're looking for someone who will serve as your group's mentor and assist your group with budgeting, promotion, and influence. They will also help garner resources and funding for your group.

Approach your potential executive sponsor with the research data collected, your ERGs mission and leadership, as well as the needs of your ERG. This person will be championing your efforts to the leaders of your company so be persuasive for your case. The benefits for executive sponsors and ERGs are mutual. Sponsors connect with communities they might not otherwise know about, while the ERG and its members receive informal mentorship and support from a company leader.

A side note, the executive sponsor does not need to be a member of the ERG; however, in some companies, she/he/they may be. Regardless, you may want to consider an executive who is a non-member to offer an outside perspective, which is highly beneficial and could help you gain even more support from other non-members.

5. Planning & Budget

Working with your ERG leaders, create a plan to accomplish your goals, as well as a coinciding budget. A plan will offer ways to tackle each of your goals. If you're unsure how to structure it, ask your HR department what resources they have available such as, templates or guidelines. Your executive sponsor will have valuable input as they will help you finalize the plan and budget for approval.

If you do not have internal plan guidance, this article from [Smartsheet](#) is helpful on what to include in a plan and offers a downloadable spreadsheet. You may not need to include everything in their suggested spreadsheet. We suggest using what you need or what is most beneficial to support your initiative.

6. Membership Recruitment & Promotion

Start by looking for people who will be interested in your group. Be sure to be inclusive, a women's group doesn't necessarily have to be all women. Male and Non-binary allies are invaluable gender equality supporters. Work with HR, perhaps information about the group can be included in the New Employee Orientation and/or HR Handbook. And it's helpful to position members as ambassadors. Each member acts as an ambassador to share the story of the ERG to others to spark interest and create and sustain momentum.

To help spread the word about your women's ERG, you will need to promote it. Consider kicking off the ERG by hosting an inaugural meeting or networking event to make your organization's employees aware of its existence.

Keep your momentum going by continuing to promote the group to attract and retain members. Update employees regularly, even if they are not members. This alerts them of the group's mission, meetings, and activities. Depending on your company's communications policies, you may not be able to email employees directly. You may be required to have them opt-in to your ERG emails.

Some ERGs create and distribute marketing and communication collateral such as flyers, posters, and brochures to help raise awareness around the office or at an all-employee meeting. Share the exciting news on Slack or spread the word on your company's social media channels. Consider creating your own social media accounts to promote the ERG. Also, if your company keeps an updated list of all your company's ERGs, their missions, and leaders be sure to have your group added to the list. That way new and existing employees can find your group and know who to contact about joining.

Please note: advertisements, collateral, social media, or Slack may require approval from various departments, your executive sponsor can offer guidance on who and what departments should offer advice and/or approval.

7. Schedule Meetings & Plan Events

Organize regular meetings so your members can come together, discuss relevant topics, plan events, and deliberate on any workplace initiatives the group is working on.

Be sure to post the meeting schedule and send out meeting notes so members who weren't able to attend can still be involved and not miss out on volunteer opportunities. Slack or other messaging channels are also helpful so your members can share interesting articles and hold discussions outside of your meetings.

8. Advocate for your ERG

Financial support is essential to keep the ERG running. Your executive sponsor will champion your efforts to gain funding, but your ERG may need to fundraise as well. You will likely be allocated a budget by your company, but the ERG's officers will be responsible for allocating, tracking activities and expenses and reporting to leadership as required.

If you're new to fundraising, there are a variety of ways to secure funds for your ERG. Numerous online resources exist to assist you with fundraising ideas. In the meantime, here are some ideas and links to help get you started:

Online crowdfunding – resources and platforms like GoFundMe are helpful for grassroots efforts. Members of your ERG can share the campaign on their social networks to raise awareness and funds.

Events – take a page from political fundraiser “super events”. You recruit several hosts to hold themed, simultaneous events. The events can be in person or virtual. The ERG founder, its leaders/committee or executive sponsor, can be the evening's guest speaker(s) to talk about the ERG, how it benefits employees and the local community through planned, charitable events. All of which could not happen without the donations from that evening's fundraiser.

[EventBrite's Blog](#) has 100 fun ideas that may help you tap into your creative, fundraising side.

9. Partner with other ERGs

If there are other ERGs within your company, rather than viewing them as competition for resources and funding, collaborate and work together. Often, you will be championing similar values and missions, so think about how you can support each other in your efforts to improve diversity and other aspects of your company. You might, for instance, co-sponsor events and develop business plans together. If your company has regional offices, it is also beneficial to connect with other ERGs in each region.

10. Succession Planning

When you establish initial leadership, have a plan of succession in mind. Leading an ERG should be viewed as a fixed-term responsibility. Consider other employees who might have the skills or be capable of building skills to elevate the leadership roles. Focus on finding people who are interested in leading, letting them shadow the leads, learn from the committee, and ultimately take over leadership roles. This often happens organically because ERGs provide the visibility and pathways for new leaders to take on responsibility gradually, such as planning events or running programs within the group.

11. Evaluation & Measuring Success

It's important that your ERG works with HR and your executive sponsors to determine measures of success. In addition to the obvious — achieving your goals — there are other ways to measure and evaluate your ERG as you progress. From participation tracking to a member survey to a quarterly report highlighting your plan, goals, and achievements to leadership, make your ERG's successful business case. And, of course, celebrate accomplishments by acknowledging and rewarding the members. It is important to remember and recognize that participation is on a volunteer basis and each member is offering their time and talents to the effort. The rewards and accolades are up to you and your budget.

Additionally, ERG leaders are taking on additional responsibilities other than their normal workload, so their managers should not only be aware of this commitment, but also consider it in their performance review.

In closing, ERGs are an important driver of employee inclusion and engagement. They contribute to a culture of allyship and the growth of not only employees, but also of business. They do require time and energy investments, but you can expect higher employee engagement and satisfaction thanks to the role ERGs can play within your company.

Appendix

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