



Leadership Careers in High Tech: Wired for Success

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January 10, 2002



Catalyst's Mission

- To help professional women achieve their full career potential
- To help employers capitalize fully on the talents of their women employees

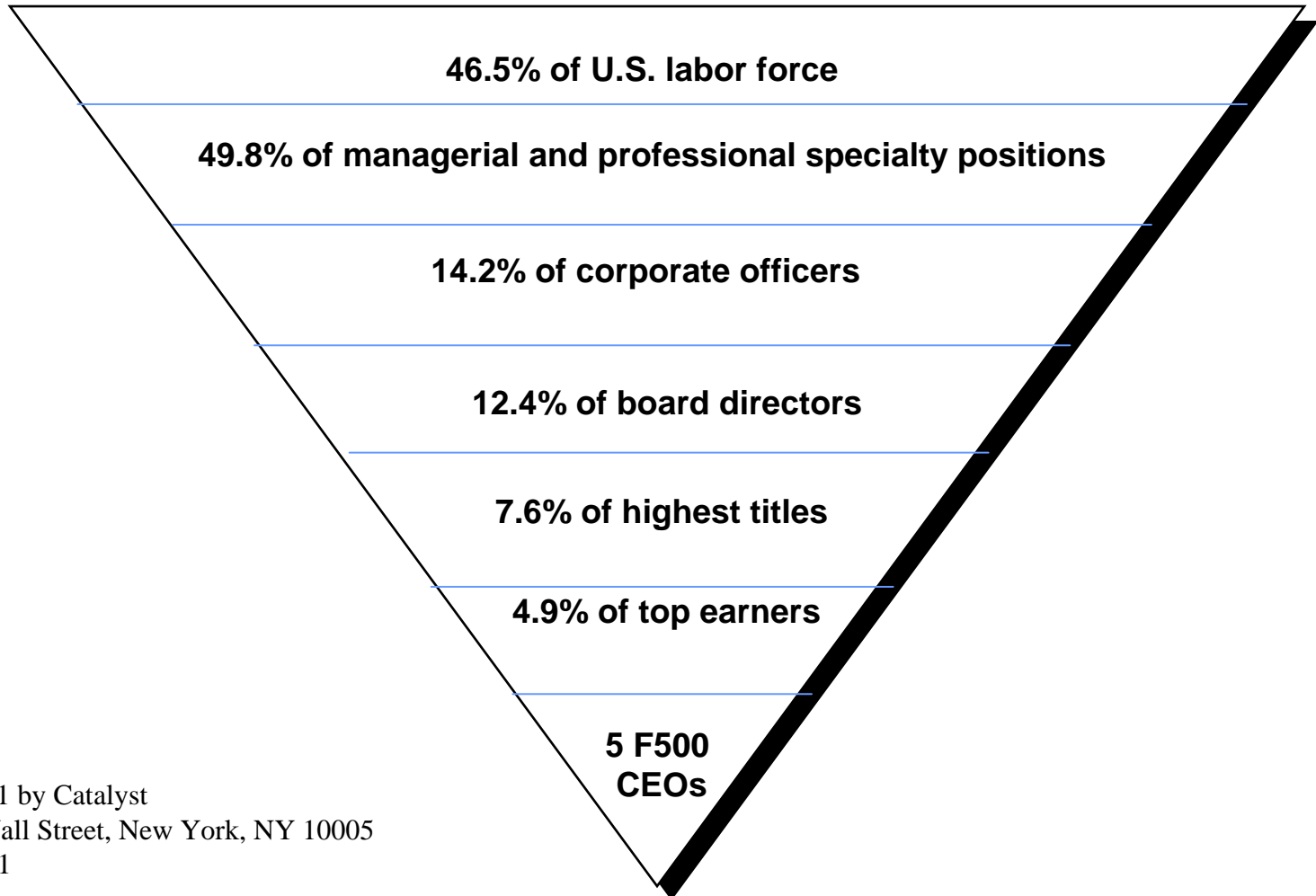


How Are We A Catalyst?

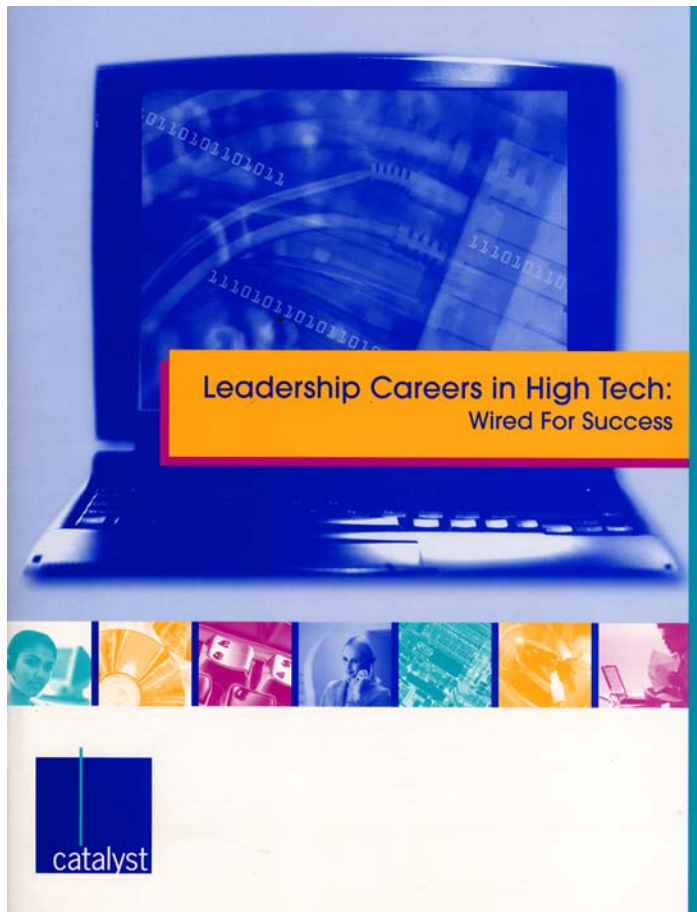
- **Research**
- **Advisory Services**
- **Corporate Board Placement**
- **Catalyst Awards Program**
- **Publications and
Information Center**



Women in Corporate America 2001



Purpose of the Study



- Define the career paths to leadership positions in high tech
- With this research, help launch the Catalyst Western Region office
westernregion@catalystwomen.org



“Wired for Success” Participants

- AOL/Time Warner
- Nortel Networks
- Autodesk
- Oracle
- HP
- Sun Microsystems
- Intel
- TiVo
- Moai Technologies
- Yahoo!



We interviewed:

- 30 leaders
 - 11 Men
 - 19 Women
- 5 considered themselves people of color/minorities
- 22 were married/in partnerships
- 18 have children
- The majority were between 40-44 years of age



Study Participants Work In

- R&D (11)
- Marketing and Sales (7)
- E-Commerce (3)
- Corporate Strategy (3)
- Operations & Manufacturing (2)
- Finance, Legal and Communications (4)

Image of Leader's Career



“What comes to mind is a spiral that goes around and around and around. It starts off really small, but as you go around you can look back and see that your reach keeps getting broader and more powerful.”



Key Findings

- There is no necessary or preferred starting point for advancement in high tech. And, there is no preferred route to the top.
- 17 of the 19 nineteen women said mentors were extremely important to their success.

“Mentors can open doors.”

Key Findings

■ Networks are critical to success.

“It’s an incestuous industry. People tend to work within the same circle of people from company to company year to year...In fact, it’s like an electron cloud where people hover all over the place...land for a while, make a bunch of connections, then move around again. You never burn bridges because...eventually it would get back to you...think about it, everyone is in the same technology space...first it was shrink-wrapped software, then CD/multimedia software, then animation, now internet. Same people, new technologies.”



Key Findings

- Men say it is a meritocracy, while women find there is still subtle stereotyping and agree who you know still makes a real difference.
- Technical training is not a pre-requisite for success - 13 of the people we interviewed did not have formal technical training before they entered the industry.



Key Findings

- Participants did not have to sacrifice their personal life for professional success

“Work comes second. My family is first.”

“Work comes second, but no one could say I am not very committed to my work.”

- But it takes extraordinary discipline



Building a Leadership Career

- Identify an area of focus
- Gain a broad base of professional experiences. Lateral moves are important.

“Keep in mind that you can’t just go through four jobs and then you’re the chairman. You have to move laterally at some point.”

- Seek P&L (profit and loss) experience
- Break out of staff positions*

*Staff positions are those that provide direct functional support to the business, e.g., human resources, finance, legal, public relations, etc. In contrast, line positions are those with profit and loss or direct client responsibilities.



Building a Leadership Career

■ Look for strategic staff assignments

“Shortly after I came to the corporation, the company had one of the toughest product releases. Things were not gelling. The CEO asked me what I thought was really happening. She knew she’d hear a straight story from me. After this experience, I think she started to think of creating a chief of staff role for me to play. I didn’t really want a staff job. In fact, I said no three times. By the fourth time, I had to say yes. It was 18 months long. This job enabled me to see the overall picture. It was a totally different business perspective I was seeing. The universe went from my seeing the Earth to seeing the entire solar system.”



Building a Leadership Career

- Get a strong technical start (if you're technically trained)
- Develop a track record

"It's pretty simple. What worked for me was to commit and deliver."

"There's no elevator to the top; you have to take the stairs."

- Create your own business or product line

I learned how to run a business and how to ask for what I wanted. Having to convince the CEO and COO to take money away from others and to invest in my ideas - that was a big experience."



Building a Leadership Career

- Develop your skill base
- Take risks; learn how to bounce back from failure

“My last job was brutal. It had accelerated learning on every front. I ran the company’s operating system group, and there was a real need for change...I had to restructure the whole team. You could call it the root canal of all jobs. But it set me up perfectly for this job. Once you’ve done one of those jobs, you can do anything....Bring it on!”



Building a Leadership Career

- Women tell us again and again that they need mentors

“Lacking a high level sponsor or mentor and not being able to align myself most effectively within the organization has been a real barrier for me. I’m now in my second, middle management job and wonder how to break into the third level. I am thinking about making a move to a product that’s more directly customer-focused, but I have no one I trust to talk with about that.”

(Quote not from a study participant, but from a mid-level manager at an executive training program)



Building a Leadership Career

■ How were mentors helpful?

“My former boss - who was my mentor - encouraged me a great deal. He reviewed my white papers when I was new at writing them. I welcomed his feedback because I had a lot of confidence in him. He had a career path that I wanted to emulate. He also gave me recognition.”

“It’s about having a personal relationship and feeling comfortable and getting advice...it’s also about having an influential person who can affect the outcome of where you end up.”

Wisdom for Aspiring Leaders

“Being flexible is key because the environment changes so rapidly that if you don’t take in new information, you’ll be constantly hitting your head against the wall.”

“Try to treat every situation as a learning experience rather than a regret.”

“If you are feeling stuck, change. Get out!”

“Follow your heart and believe in yourself. If it’s something you really want to do, keep the desire alive no matter what.”

Image of Leader's Career



*“It’s like a road trip.
You’re in a convertible.
People are with you.
The hood is down. It’s
fun....Uh, oh, you’ve
got a flat tire! So
you’ve got some
problems....But it’s an
adventure....”*