

Press Release  
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## Five myths about the glass ceiling revoked International Women's Day – 8 March

- Women are more ambitious than ever, yet men are more likely to move ahead in senior ranks.
- According to several reports by [McKinsey](#) and [Catalyst](#), companies that consciously embrace gender diversity within the company are generally more successful.

**Sydney, 4 March 2016** - According to a report by the Business Council of Australia<sup>1</sup>, Australian men are nine times more likely to make it up the senior ranks, yet women are graduating more than men and moving ahead faster educationally<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to widening opportunities backed by female ambition, more women are taking on leadership roles, forging pathways for other women and girls to follow.

Data compiled by Australian Institute of Company Directors reveals the percentage of women on the Boards of ASX 200 listed companies has grown from 8.3% in 2010 to 18.6% in August 2014<sup>3</sup>. The proportion of female directors who held more than one ASX 200 directorship is also significantly higher than male directors: 27.2% compared to 12.4%<sup>4</sup>. More women are climbing the corporate ladder and showing more ambition across leadership positions in Australia, yet for many it remains challenging to get to the top.

**Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half Asia Pacific** said: *"Many figures today show that women are still to a lesser extent represented in executive positions, but women today are more ambitious than ever. Companies increasingly try to play into this, but also we as women can actively cooperate and help break the glass ceiling."*

*"Women who want to hold a leading position within a company need to make their ambitions and achievements apparent and profile themselves clearly within the organisation. It is not only important to be able to see opportunities, we also need to grab them. The glass ceiling is still alive, albeit it's gradually showing some cracks."*

### Five myths about the glass ceiling contradicted:

1. *"There is **no improvement** in sight to break the glass ceiling."* **WRONG**

The traditional role division between men and women is for many still present in mind. While men and women are equally ambitious, have the same skill set and are in the same family situation, it is still often the men who grow their career faster than women. However, the job market is evolving thereby entering a **changing climate**:

**Gender Diversity to get ahead of the competition:** The differences coined by the term 'gender diversity' can lead to innovation, better insights and, according to several reports by [McKinsey](#) and [Catalyst](#), also to better financial results. In today's competitive market it's more important than ever to take this into account.

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<sup>1</sup> Increasing the Number of Women in Senior Executive Positions: Improving Recruitment, Selection and Retention Practices, BCA, November 2013

<sup>2</sup> 2015 Graduate Careers Australia report: Beyond Graduation 2014

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Company Directors, Appointments to ASX 200 Boards (viewed at 15 September 2014)

<sup>4</sup> AICD, 2013, ASX 200 Snapshot Report

**Impending exit of the baby boomer generation:** Many baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) have already left the job market, and this also affects senior management positions which creates new opportunities for female talent.

**Importance of employer branding:** Companies where both men and women hold managerial positions are more attractive to work for (especially for ambitious female candidates). In a job market where the majority of companies say it is challenging to find qualified talent, it is more important than ever to give sufficient attention to employer branding.

2. *"A top management role requires quasi permanent availability. **Women who combine their job with a family, are because of that reason not eligible for a top management role.**" **WRONG***

A top career can indeed be combined with a family. This can even benefit a company's level of efficiency: women, and this might include women with families, want to end the working day usually on time while making sure they finish all their tasks in a timely manner. As it is important to take into account generational differences, it is equally as important for employers to look at the specific needs of women in the workplace.

**Demand for flexibility and work-life balance:** Measures such as flexible working hours, child care services at work and homeworking have become part of the new workplace. Such initiatives allow women, particularly women with children, the necessary support to further increase their chances in landing that senior executive job. Companies realise they can thereby attract and retain female top talent.

3. *"Women today have **equal promotion opportunities to men.**" **WRONG***

Even though women's chances to climb the corporate ladder has increased over the years, there is still a marked difference in promotion opportunities: previous Robert Half research revealed that **55% of Australian HR managers confirm the career gap** by saying that women are not advancing their careers on par with men in the workplace.

Management must actively promote gender equality in senior functions within the business. But women should make sure others know of their accomplishments and profile themselves clearly as a valuable asset within the enterprise. If no one knows about their successes and accomplishments, how would they expect to get ahead?

4. *"Women **lack ambition.**" **WRONG***

There are more influential women at the top of world organisations than ever. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund; Janet Yellen, Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; and Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, are just a few examples. **Women today are more ambitious than ever.**

5. *"Only a tough (male) management style brings employees to the top." **WRONG***

There is a common belief that women should compete with the hard management style of men while they typically take on a softer approach. But why should we think that? Companies with an

organisational culture in which consultation, communication and flexibility come first are often also more customer-oriented.

Also, women typically approach ‘the human aspect’ in a very different way: where men usually focus on hard financial figures, women tend to give greater attention to 'softer' elements, the surrounding factors, as well as to the balance between work and private life that has become increasingly important for all employees. According to several reports by [McKinsey](#) and [Catalyst](#), **companies that consciously embrace gender diversity within the company are generally more successful.**

The existence of the glass ceiling is maintained by the myths that surround it. Women have the perception often against them; it is up to women, men and the company to clear the workplace of such prejudices.

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## Notes to editors

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