

# THE AWESOME MAKING WAVES ACTION AGENDA

## 16 Ways to Make Waves and Advance Women's Leadership



*"Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects."*

*- Dalai Lama*

### BACKGROUND

Since before AWESOME (Achieving Women's Excellence in Supply Chain Operations, Management and Education) was launched in 2013, people in almost every industry have been talking about what can be done to remove barriers and enable women to maximize their leadership potential.

We've been part of the conversation, too. We've listened and learned from organizations such as McKinsey, Catalyst, LeanIn.org, Paradigm for Parity and others who are sharing data and offering insights. We're well aware of the business imperative: It's a proven fact that companies with more diverse leadership at the top perform more productively and profitably. (See *Research Notes below.*)

Our own research – the annual Women in Supply Chain Survey, now in its third year in collaboration with Gartner Research – tells us that in spite of all the talk, the progress is slow. Based on the experience of our survey respondents, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of women at the top level (Chief Supply Chain Officer, EVP, SVP, and Chief Procurement Officer) but other levels – general workforce, first line managers, senior managers and directors, and VP – remain flat.

Ideas and theories as to what can and might be done to eliminate obstacles, correct inequities, and advance women's leadership are abundant. But women executives in the supply chain field have told us they're convinced waiting and watching won't make it happen. In leadership roles across a broad range of companies and organizations — with supply chain playing an ever more important role in strategic corporate decisions — they are in a position to influence what actions are taken and impact results in their organizations.

At our 2018 AWESOME Symposium, we tapped into that readiness to capture the momentum. In addition to our full Symposium program agenda of speakers and discussions, we held two "Making Waves" brainstorming sessions. The goal was to emerge with specific actions our leaders recognize as the most effective steps individuals can take to move women's leadership forward and make a difference. The result is this AWESOME Making Waves Action Agenda, developed BY women leaders FOR women leaders.

Of course, not all actions identified here will be right for every individual. Each of you will evaluate your situation and your organization's needs and progress in advancing women — and then take the actions where YOU can make the biggest difference.

Supply chain leaders are realists...pragmatists...problem solvers. You, and other women leaders across the supply chain field, are ready to toss some pebbles and make some waves.

#### Research Notes

The Peterson Institute for International Economics completed a survey of 21,980 firms from 91 countries and found that having women at the C-Suite level significantly increases net margins. The report notes: "A profitable firm at which 30 percent of leaders are women could expect to add more than 1 percentage point to its net margin compared with an otherwise similar firm with no female leaders. By way of comparison, the typical profitable firm in our sample had a net profit margin of 6.4 percent, so a 1 percentage point increase represents a 15 percent boost to profitability."

A study published by the University of California, Davis reported that big California companies with at least some women at the top performed considerably better than ones with mostly male boards and executives. Among the 25 firms with the highest percentage of women execs and board members, researchers found that median returns on assets and equity in 2015 were at least 74% higher than among the overall group of companies surveyed.

A collaboration between EY and the Peterson Institute for International Economics showed that increasing the percentage of women in top spots from zero to 30 percent is associated with a 15 percent jump in profits. As reported on *inc.com*: “Board membership and the CEO position matter far less than having women in top positions elsewhere in the company—and having a lot of them. One in three top executive positions should be filled by women for companies to enjoy increased revenue.”

An analysis by the bank Nordea of nearly 11,000 companies globally found that companies with a woman in the chief executive or chairman role performed far better than a major global index over a period of eight years. As reported by *Bloomberg*, results indicated “on average, companies with a woman in either of those two top jobs at the end of the calendar year more than doubled the performance of the MSCI World Index in the following year. The annualized return for female-led firms, based on an equal weighting, was 25 percent since 2009, compared with just 11 percent for the broader market.”

Conclusions by financial planning firm MSCI, after analyzing a body of research, are that having three or more women on a company’s board of directors helps performance by drawing from a greater diversity of ideas. In addition to having three or more female directors over the course of three years, these companies with three or more women on the board saw a growth in employee productivity that was 1.2 percentage points above the medians in their industries.

An analysis of Fortune 500 companies conducted by the University of Arizona, Eller College of Management, found that diverse companies become more creative. According to Joe Carella, assistant dean, in an interview for CNBC, “We found that companies that have women in top management roles experience what we call ‘innovation intensity’ and produce more patents — by an average of 20 percent more than teams with male leaders.”

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the 2018 AWESOME Symposium, which involved leading women in the supply chain field as well as leaders from other fields, two collaborative brainstorming “Making Waves” sessions produced a list of specific actions to be taken to advance women. These leaders were asked to decide which steps taken by an individual will have the greatest positive impact for women on their teams, in their organizations and in the industry. Many of these insights and direct actions can serve as a guide to women in other fields as well.



“Creating a diverse and representative workforce is a matter of survival, growth and competitiveness.”

– Girish Rishi, CEO of JDA Software, AWESOME 2018 Symposium Host Partner

Making Waves participants were asked to apply their problem-solving skills to recommend specific steps in four areas:

- Increasing the number of women in top leader roles**
- Advancing your own career and leadership potential**
- Increasing the pipeline of women in Supply Chain roles/careers**
- Engaging men as advocates for change**

Recommendations surfaced in the Making Waves sessions were collected and studied so that consensus and patterns of actions – “waves” you might say – could be identified. We set out to determine where these leaders believe energy and effort will achieve the best results. Their thinking, as reported in this Action Agenda, is supplemented by insights from discussions at AWESOME Symposiums and other events, as well as conclusions reached by the third annual Women in Supply Chain Survey, a collaboration of AWESOME and Gartner Research.

At the end of each of four sections, specific comments in AWESOME Leaders’ own words further explain and elaborate on the conclusions.

# CONCLUSIONS

## 16 Specific Ways for AWESOME Leaders to Make Waves to Advance Women

<p><b>WAVE ONE: Increasing the number of women in top leader roles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take an interest and active role in helping high potential women inside and outside your organization.</li><li>2. Organize and lead company initiatives to develop policies and practices that will increase diversity.</li><li>3. Act as a role model for others.</li><li>4. Create and nurture an organizational culture that supports women.</li></ol>	<p><b>WAVE TWO: Advancing your own career</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Own your career trajectory within your organization.</li><li>6. Continue to build and expand skills, competence, and expertise.</li><li>7. Don't shy away from recognition or downplay your achievements.</li><li>8. Develop and use networks to your advantage.</li></ol>
<p><b>WAVE THREE: Increasing the pipeline of women in Supply Chain roles/careers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Re-brand and represent supply chain as a desirable field for women; use your own story to inspire others.</li><li>10. Be actively involved in recruiting and hiring.</li><li>11. Participate in outreach efforts to introduce girls to the field at an early age - universities, high-schools, youth programs.</li><li>12. Develop and leverage tools such as internships and scholarships.</li></ol>	<p><b>WAVE FOUR: Engaging men as advocates for change</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>13. Have candid conversations, be inclusive and find common ground; address unconscious bias and help men understand it.</li><li>14. Identify male "champions" and involve them in initiatives and as sponsors, mentors and advocates.</li><li>15. Continue to emphasize and articulate the business imperative.</li><li>16. Track progress by department and throughout your organization; recognize and celebrate success.</li></ol>

### 1. Take an interest and active role in helping high potential women inside and outside your organization.

Advocate for, sponsor, and promote women. Coach, mentor, encourage, give honest feedback. Provide development opportunities and stretch assignments.

### 2. Organize and lead company initiatives to develop policies and practices that will increase diversity.

Establish metrics and have your organization hold leaders accountable for achieving diversity goals.

**Research Note:** According to the 2018 AWESOME/Gartner Women in Supply Chain Survey, "integrated pipeline planning" is recommended – a holistic effort that includes recruiting, development, mentoring and sponsorship, rewards and recognition, and succession planning.





**3. Act as a role model for others.** Create or take advantage of opportunities to be a visible leader from whom others can find inspiration and learn leadership lessons.

**Research Note:** The AWESOME/Gartner 2018 Women in Supply Chain Survey found that increasing the visibility of successful women leaders as role models is one of the most important things companies can do to impact recruitment and retention, as well as advancement of women to senior levels.

**4. Create and nurture an organizational culture that supports women.** Provide opportunities for flexibility and work/personal life integration. Support and encourage affinity groups.

**More specifics:**

- Convince women of their own capabilities.
- Mentor women early in their career.
- Discuss career options and paths.
- Encourage women to take stretch assignments.
- Broadcast success within the organization.
- Be aware of unconscious bias – call out double standard.
- Advocate for broader skill set inclusion.
- Focus on potential vs experience.
- Set targets and have meeting them part of leadership evaluations.
- Review slates of candidates to ensure a diverse pool of prospective hires and promotions.
- Build a program to hire and promote women who are “reactivating” their career.
- Develop a succession plan.
- Create flexible schedule options that promote greater work/life balance

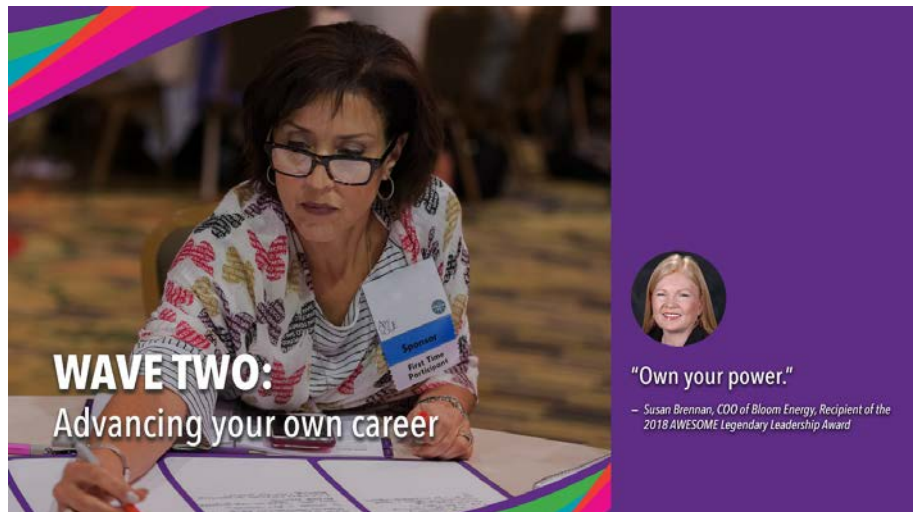
**Research Note:** According to the 2018 AWESOME/Gartner Women in Supply Chain Survey, the most important factors influencing a company’s ability to recruit, retain and advance women are:

- Change in cultural values, leadership orientation and behaviors
- Increased visibility of women leaders, highlight success stories
- Better outreach and candidate identification
- Integrated pipeline planning
- Improved family-friendly policies
- Expanded and more visible opportunities and stretch assignments

**5. Own your career trajectory within your organization.** Be willing to take risks, be flexible, step outside your comfort zone.

**6. Continue to build and expand skills, competence and expertise.** Adopt the lifelong learner’s mindset and keep adding to your competence and expertise.

**7. Don’t shy away from recognition or downplay your achievements.** Come forward from the background. Be more visible in the company and in the industry.



**Research Note:** A study by Catalyst concluded that when women were proactive in making their achievements known, they advanced further, increased their compensation growth, and were more satisfied with their careers. They also advanced further when they proactively networked with influential others.

**8. Develop and use networks to your advantage.** Build relationships with people both inside and outside your organization.

## More specifics:

- Take a lateral assignment if it will help you build new skills.
- Test yourself with difficult projects.
- Get feedback and ask for help.
- Ask for the role you want.
- Take a seat at the table – speak up.
- Prioritize learning.
- Connect to the strategic goals of your organization.
- Create a brand for yourself.
- Know what you bring that is valuable.
- Stop apologizing.
- Use members of your network as a sounding board.
- Build your own personal Board of Advisors.

**Speaker Note:** Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Chair and Director of the Harvard University Advanced Leadership Initiative, was a speaker at the 2015 AWESOME Symposium. Professor Kanter emphasizes the three career stages that matter most in an individual's career: **Inclusion** (having the technical skills to get "in the door"), **Influence**, (being "at the table" where decisions are made) and **Impact** (doing something in the wider world for the organization, the community or the world.) AWESOME's Executive Director Heather Sheehan, who interviewed Professor Kanter at the Symposium, has commented, "The priority for AWESOME is to ensure supply chain women are successful in these three career steps and are able to advance to the level to which they aspire. This happens when each of us takes a step to engage more with each other, support each other and gain confidence from each other."

**9. Re-brand and represent supply chain as a desirable field that is challenging, exciting, and welcoming to women;** use your own story to inspire others. Emphasize potential for career growth and global opportunities.

**10. Be actively involved in recruiting and hiring.** Demand a diverse slate of candidates. Look for talented women with other backgrounds and degrees.

**11. Participate in outreach efforts to introduce girls to the field at an early age** – universities, high-schools, youth programs, career fairs.



"(It) was to make a statement that a women can do this job. And it's that we don't need to blend in. We are who we are. Men and women are different and the beauty of it is that we complement each other. We don't have to be the same."

– Ilya Marotta, EVP for Engineering and Programs Management for the Panama Canal Authority. Recipient of the 2018 AWESOME Legendary Leadership Award, on wearing her signature pink hard hat on the job

**12. Develop and leverage tools such as internships and scholarships.**

## More specifics:

- Be able to speak to what you are doing and why it matters.
- Talk about how supply chain impacts bottom line and top line.
- Emphasize connection to technology and sustainability.
- Share more on social media.
- Demonstrate the path.
- Seek out diverse candidates
- Make sure interviewers also represent diversity.
- Connect with college – be available as speaker or guest professor.
- Attend college career fairs.
- Leverage alumni.
- Give talks and host projects at high schools.
- Reach even younger – youth programs, Junior Achievement
- Offer opportunities to women in other pipelines.
- Create rotation for young employees that includes supply chain.

**13. Have candid conversations, be inclusive and find common ground;** address unconscious bias and help men understand it.

**14. Identify male “champions”** and involve them in initiatives and as sponsors, mentors and advocates.

**15. Continue to emphasize and articulate the business imperative.** Reaffirm that diversity is a competitive advantage and critical for your organization’s success.

**16. Track progress by department and throughout your organization – recognize and celebrate success.** When diverse teams experience success, bring that to others’ attention.

**More specifics:**

- Be courageous – call out groups or cliques.
- Cite specific examples of bias – educate others about alternatives.
- Point out to executives the reason for having more women in the room.
- Ask: How are you developing people who are different from you?
- Identify men who have daughters and encourage them to assist your efforts.
- Recognize positive efforts of men who support diversity.
- Line-up male mentors and sponsors. Set up “reverse mentoring” where more experienced executives learn from newer leaders.
- Bring a male “ally” into affinity groups.
- Use data.
- Use gender intelligence as part of leadership assessment.



**WAVE FOUR:**  
Engaging men as  
advocates for change



“Men are 85% of senior leadership, which says we’re 85% of the problem. But we’re also 85% of the solution.”

– Jeffrey Tobias Halter, President of YWomen, author of *The Business Imperative to Advancing Women and Engaging Men*, and speaker and moderator at 2018 AWESOME Symposium

**“THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN PROFESSION DEPENDS ON THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS. THAT’S THE ONLY WAY CHANGE WILL HAPPEN.”**



- Ann Drake, founder of AWESOME and CEO of DSC Logistics, 1994-2018

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