New Study Cites Gender Bias in Science, Engineering, & Technology Fields as a Barrier to Advancement for Women and Cause of Flight Risk

NEW YORK, February 12, 2014 – Despite the aspirations of women in SET to hold a top job at their company, a sizable proportion of SET senior leaders (31 percent in the U.S, 22 percent in Brazil, 51 percent in China, and 57 percent in India) report that a woman would never get a top position at their company, no matter how able or high performing. Thus, across geographies, women are much more likely than men to report that they plan to leave the industry within the year. These findings are part of the “Athena 2.0 Factor: Accelerating Female Talent in Science, Engineering & Technology” report, the second report by the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), a global think tank, exploring the challenges and opportunities for women in SET fields.

Women in SET in the U.S. are 45 percent more likely than men to leave the industry within the year. In Brazil, women in SET are 29 percent more likely than men to leave the industry within the year and in China, women are 50 percent more likely than men. The fundamental reasons women are languishing in the middle-rungs of their organizations and planning to leave the industry include:

- **Isolation.** SET women no longer find themselves the sole female on a team or at a site. Yet they still feel excluded from informal “buddy” networks among their peers and lack female role models (33 percent of women in SET in the U.S., 22 percent in Brazil, 18 percent in China, and 53 percent in India).
- **Bias in training and performance evaluation.** Seventy-two percent of women in the U.S., 78 percent in Brazil, 68 percent in China and 81 percent in India perceive bias in performance evaluations.
- **Struggles to conform to biased standards of executive presence.** SET women struggle to decipher and embody leadership attributes, and receive little useful feedback to correct this perception.
  - Forty-four percent of women in the U.S., 33 percent in Brazil, 57 percent in China and 66 percent in India list behaving like a man as an advantage to becoming a leader in SET fields.
  - Seventy-two percent of SET women in the U.S., 84 percent in Brazil, 82 percent in China, and 89 percent in India feel unclear on how to correct feedback.

“Across the globe, there is high demand for top SET talent but short supply. Women are central to the solution as they comprise nearly half of the SET talent pipeline worldwide,” stated Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder and president of CTI. “The success of our global economy depends on our ability to develop and leverage our high-performing women.”

SET companies recognize they can ill afford to lose top women and some have launched initiatives to address the barriers. The report highlights initiatives from organizations like American Express,
Boehringer Ingelheim and BP that can be used as templates for other organizations working to strengthen and promote top female talent.

The report also includes roadmaps for both ambitious SET women and business leaders seeking to correct for some of the inequities that beset this talent pool. To view the report findings, visit www.talentinnovation.org.

Research Sponsors
American Express, Boehringer Ingelheim, BP, Genentech, McKesson, Merck KGaA, Schlumberger and Siemens

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SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT is an economist and the founding president of the Center for Talent Innovation, a non-profit think tank where she chairs a task force of 80 global companies focused on fully realizing the new streams of talent in the global marketplace. For nine years she directed the Gender and Policy Program at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs and is ranked number 16 on the “Thinkers 50” listing of the world’s top business gurus. She is the author of 11 Harvard Business Review articles and 11 critically acclaimed nonfiction books including Off-Ramps and On-Ramps; Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets; Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor and Executive Presence: The Missing Link Between Merit and Success (forthcoming). Her writings have appeared in the New York Times and Financial Times, and she is a featured blogger on HBR.org. She is a frequent guest on television, appearing on Oprah, Newsoure with Jim Lehrer, Charlie Rose, the Today Show and CNN Headline News. Hewlett has taught at Cambridge, Columbia, and Princeton universities. A Kennedy Scholar and graduate of Cambridge University, she earned her PhD in economics at London University.

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CATHERINE FREDMAN, vice president and senior fellow, is a core contributor to CTI’s research pipeline. She has collaborated on Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets: Why Women Are the Solution and Top Talent: Keeping Performance Up When Business Is Down, and continues to contribute to CTI research reports, articles, and blogs. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College.
About the Research
The research consists of a survey, Insights in-Depth® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) involving more than 100 people from our Task Force organizations, and more than 60 one-on-one interviews. The national survey, conducted online in June and July of 2013, sampled 5,685 respondents (3,336 men and 2,349 women: 3,385 U.S., 754 Brazil, 796 China, and 750 India), aged 25–60, with at least a bachelor’s degree. In addition, screening was done to confirm experience in the science, engineering or technology industry at a private sector company. Data in the U.S. were weighted to be representative of the U.S. population of university/college graduates on key demographics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, and region). Data for Brazil, China, and India were not weighted. The base used for statistical testing was the effective base.

About the Center for Talent Innovation
The Center for Talent Innovation is a nonprofit think tank based in New York City. CTI’s flagship project is the Task Force for Talent Innovation—a private-sector task force focused on helping organizations leverage their talent across the divides of gender, generation, geography and culture. The 80+ global corporations and organizations that constitute the Task Force, representing nearly six million employees and operating in 192 countries around the world, are united by an understanding that the full realization of the talent pool is at the heart of competitive advantage and economic success.

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