

## ***Despite Progress, Women in the High-Tech Industry Continue to Face Barriers***

Technology companies are making progress at creating more diverse work environments, according to *Women in Technology: Maximizing Talent, Minimizing Barriers*, the latest Catalyst report examining the climate for women working in technology and technical fields. Women surveyed were less likely to perceive barriers compared to those surveyed earlier in the decade.

Despite the positive findings, women in the high-tech workforce still face barriers to advancement such as a lack of role models, mentors, and access to networks. Women in technology expressed particular concern around supervisory relationships and around company decisions and opportunities to voice opinions during decision-making processes. These issues represent substantial obstacles in the increasingly competitive war for talent in the high-tech industry, and companies that do not address them will lose out on valuable and well-qualified employees who serve as assets to their organizations, according to the report.

While the overall percentage of jobs held by women in technical fields has declined in recent years, the findings revealed that women in technology were relatively satisfied with their jobs and workplace cultures. However, the study also showed that women in technology were less satisfied with their interactions with supervisors and their companies' approaches to fairness and voice compared to men in technical roles and women and men in non-technical roles. Furthermore, failure of companies and supervisors to provide employees with opportunities to speak up and participate in decision-making processes posed another significant hurdle for women in technology. These barriers can lead to lower employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance appraisals.

Catalyst believes building a truly diverse and inclusive workplace can provide a competitive advantage in an industry that is driven by the best and brightest talent, and should be a business imperative for the expanding high-tech sector. Through its strategic advisory engagements, Catalyst has observed that people join companies but leave supervisors. This study highlights the importance of taking action to improve employee-supervisor interactions. Management training is essential to retain top talent, and companies that attend to employees' concerns around fairness, a voice in the decision-making process, and supervisory relationships will deepen levels of organizational commitment among women, signal the importance companies place on their employees, and reduce the cost of losing employees to competitors.

*Women in Technology: Maximizing Talent, Minimizing Barriers* was sponsored by IBM, Cisco Systems, Dell and the National Center for Women & Information Technology. Catalyst embarked on Phase I of this study in 2005, in partnership with Towers Perrin-ISR, using Towers Perrin-ISR's employee survey satisfaction data from 21 global high-tech companies to compare the attitudes of women to men and to subgroups of women based on features such as job roles, employee age, and type of company. The online survey in Phase 2, conducted from January through February of 2007, examined two groups of women: 1) women working for technology companies in any role; and 2) women working for non-technology companies in technical roles. Catalyst received 471 completed responses to the survey.

**On the Web:** [www.catalyst.org](http://www.catalyst.org)

To view all of the latest *CPST Comments* articles, click [here](#).

To visit the CPST webpage, click [here](#).