

BE LEADERLY

Contact:

Jo Miller

CEO, Be Leaderly

(650) 776-4438

info@beleaderly.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Be Leaderly Releases New Research Report on How Men and Women View Stretch Opportunities

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — January 22, 2019 — Be Leaderly, a nationally recognized provider of women's leadership development and inclusion solutions, released a new research report today focusing on professionals' perceptions of stretch opportunities. The report sample, comprised of professional men and women in the US – mainly at individual contributor and managers levels - found that working women (51%) have equal, if not slightly greater, ambition than men (48%) to move into top roles ranging from VP to the C-suite.

The report points to steps companies can take to address the challenges of offering stretch assignments that are accessible and meaningful to both men *and* women: "We know stretch opportunities can be disproportionately career-making, especially for those reaching top ranks – and yet women consistently obtain fewer of these plum assignments," said Selena Rezvani who led the study for Be Leaderly. "The more coveted the stretch opportunity, often the more political and unclear the path is to obtain it. That perception, plus a lack of organization-wide coordination or oversight over who gets stretch opportunities, can hinder women's involvement."

The study highlights that a significant part of assessing any stretch role involves assessing one's own perceived readiness. Be Leaderly data shows that women (55%) are less likely than men (65%) to be comfortable applying for a stretch role with only the 'bare minimum' requirements - and women (73%) are more likely than men (60%) to disagree that they round up, or overestimate, their skills rather than round down, or underestimate, their skills when considering a stretch job opportunity.

Male and female professionals alike are motivated to take on stretch assignments when there are key factors in place, such as perceived autonomy or personal influence to lead an assignment to a positive outcome (40% women, 43% men) and alignment of the assignment with career goals (33% for both men and women). In the qualitative data, men and women also cite some similar logistical and personal considerations in taking on a stretch role - such as concerns around bandwidth to take on more work and increases to weekly hours worked, and family and work/life balance considerations.

Yet men and women differ in prioritizing the importance of exposure to key mentors and sponsors in a stretch assignment, where women (18%) are more likely to prioritize this factor than men (11%). Be Leaderly research also reveals that men are 3.5 times more likely than women to cite 'pay' as an important stretch assignment determinant. The latter finding suggests a different expectation of the employer/employee contract concerning stretch assignments – one where for men, there is a stronger expectation of reciprocity.

Strikingly, the study data affirms that professional women (67%) in the U.S. are less likely than men (77%) to be engaged and passionate in their role. And in a potentially related finding, women are

significantly more likely than men to disagree that with the statement, *my company makes it easy for me to gage my readiness to advance internally*.

"Women and men alike, will need to continually up-skill if they're going to compete in the future of work," says Jo Miller, founder and CEO at Be Leaderly. "Organizations that engage talent with a thoughtful and equitable approach to stretch assignments won't just engage more of employees' best contributions and thinking, they'll enable more women to carve out paths to the top of organizations."

To view the report findings, visit <https://beleaderly.com/stretch-assignments/>.

Research Authors

Jo Miller is dedicated to helping women around the world advance into positions of leadership and influence—especially in male-dominated industries, such as technology, finance, and energy. Through [keynotes, workshops, and webinars](#), she shares the steps women can take to succeed. Jo speaks at leadership conferences, professional associations, and corporate women's networks at companies like Amazon, eBay and Microsoft. Each year she delivers more than 70 presentations to audiences of up to 1,200 women in Europe, North America, Asia Pacific, and the Middle East. Jo writes columns for [Forbes](#), [The Muse](#), and [Business 380 Magazine](#). Jo is CEO of Be Leaderly.

Selena Rezvani is a recognized consultant, speaker and author on women and leadership. A seasoned human capital consultant, Selena uses workplace culture assessments to help corporate clients be more inclusive and welcoming to women. She's also the author of two leadership books targeted at professional women – [Pushback: How Smart Women Ask—and Stand Up—for What They Want](#) (Jossey-Bass, 2012) and [The Next Generation of Women Leaders](#) (Praeger, 2009). Selena has been featured in the LA Times, Oprah.com, Todayshow.com, wrote an award-winning column on women for The Washington Post and writes today for Forbes. Selena has led numerous workplace culture research campaigns and studies on women in the C- suite, [millennials](#), [managers](#) and [negotiating habits](#), which have been covered by international media. Selena is Be Leaderly's Vice President of Consulting and Research.

About the Research

The research consists of a sample of 1,549 US-based professionals, who completed a 21-question electronic survey between December 2017-April 2018. The professionals queried represent a broad range of organizations, with no single organization representing more than 3% of our sample, from industries as varied as Consumer products, Financial services, Healthcare and Technology, among others. Questions were both qualitative and quantitative, focusing on the experience of taking on stretch opportunities as well as higher level roles.

About Be Leaderly

[Be Leaderly](#) is dedicated to helping emerging women leaders advance into management and leadership positions. Clients include Amazon, Bank of America, Boeing, eBay, GM, Homeland Security, MetLife, Microsoft, Siemens, Society of Women Engineers, the USDA, Verizon and more than 400 additional organizations in the commercial, academic, nonprofit and government sectors.

Be Leaderly works with organizations to develop a pipeline of qualified and engaged emerging women leaders. Its corporate programs help women employees gain both clarity on how their talents can contribute to the organization's success and the tools necessary to take ownership of their career

advancement. In addition to diversity and inclusion consulting and research, Be Leaderly offers workshops, webinars and keynote speaking presentations by [Jo Miller](#) and [Selena Rezvani](#).

Press Contact

For more information please contact info@beleaderly.com.

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