



# ***Best Practices for the Advancement and Retention of Women in Technology***

**A prioritized collection of practices from companies in Southeast Michigan that improve the advancement and retention of women in technology related roles. This report is intended to be used by companies who are looking for specific ways to improve their own advancement and retention for these employees.**

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# Summary

This study was created to identify and promote some of the best practices for retaining and advancing women in technology-related roles in organizations in southeast Michigan. Our goal is to increase the number of women in technology-related roles by improving job satisfaction, opportunity and overall equity within our workplaces.

The need is driven by three major factors:

1. There is an ever-growing global demand for technology workers while enrollment in technology degree programs is declining for everyone, and at higher rates for women. The demand appears unlikely to be satisfied by the available and projected future resources. New approaches must be employed to ensure adequate skills to maintain competitiveness.
2. There is a global shortage of knowledge workers today, and in certain industries such as technology, this problem is already severe with women. The data projects a growing decline in numbers each year. Aside from the well accepted need for a diverse workforce in today's global business climate, men generally bring a technical focus and women add a more user-oriented perspective – both necessary for success.
3. Technology workers' attitudes towards their work are changing rapidly and quality of life has become important. Technology workers (women and men) crave new working arrangements that allow them to build work around their lives more so than before.

This project is basically a collection of best practices from companies and organizations in Southeast Michigan that are proven to improve retention and advancement of women in technology related fields. The core team identified a large set of practices and then a survey was conducted of the MCWT membership to prioritize this list. The core team then documented specific practices related to the five highest priority topics in advancement and retention. The practices are intended to be as simple and practical as possible, in order to easily enable organizations to deploy some on practices quickly.

Based on the study, there are many options with costs ranging from nearly nothing to considerable. Whether adopting one or many of these practices, you should remember two key items:

1. Executive level commitment is necessary for success. This cannot be viewed as just another HR program. Know and believe the business case for making a change and lead by example.
2. The changes that are implemented within an organization will benefit the entire organization, not just women. Quality of life for everyone will improve; retention, advancement and overall job satisfaction will sky-rocket.

The best practices identified in this project range from making benefit packages more flexible, to valuing self management, to having female senior management and role models in place. Many topics here revolve around practices that provide recognition of accomplishment without self-promotion and elimination of assumptions about whether or not people would be interested or qualified, in favor of results or merit-based organizational decisions.

Here are the top five priorities, in order from the MCWT survey for both retention and advancement.

### **TOP 5 OVERALL RETENTION FACTORS**

1. Overall Benefit Package& Flexible Benefit Choices
2. Flex Time, Alternative Work Schedules, Telecommuting, Satellite Offices
3. Emphasis / Value placed on self-management
4. Existing female senior management
5. Overall culture of non-gender focus with visible support of senior management

### **TOP 5 OVERALL ADVANCEMENT FACTORS**

1. Professional Coaching
2. Mentoring Programs
3. Training
3. Job Shadowing or Rotation programs
4. Formal, understandable career paths
5. Existing female senior management
5. Receiving clear deliverables / non-vague objectives

*Implementing practices leading toward a more equitable workplace will guard your organization against a continuing loss of women in technology related roles while reducing turnover costs, improving customer satisfaction, increasing organizational flexibility, building new leaders and increasing shareholder value.*