

## MAZARS PARTICIPATES IN THE WOMEN'S FORUM AND PRESENTS A SURVEY ON RUSSIAN FEMALE LEADERS

For the fourth year running, Mazars, an international auditing and advisory group, is a partner of the Women's Forum taking place in Deauville from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

**This year, Mazars, also sponsor of the France-Russia cultural season, invites 7 influential Russian Women to participate to the forum debates.**

*"Female career paths: What about the women in Russia?"*  
**Debate on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> at 10.20am, with**

- **Elena Fedyashina**, Executive Director, the Committee of 20,
- And **Philippe Castagnac**, chairman of Mazars in France.

### MAZARS AND THE WOMEN'S FORUM, AN INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE

- In **2007**, Mazars sponsored the participation of a **delegation of 50 Asian women** in positions of responsibility throughout the world (media, entrepreneurial, political, cultural...).
- In **2008**, Mazars organised two events with the Women's Forum: one in Russia and the other one in China.
- In **2009**, the Group sponsored the Egyptian and Turkish women delegation.
- **This year**, Mazars invites 7 Russian influential women to attend the meeting and presents the survey conducted by the Committee 20, association of influential Russian women.

### INTERNATIONAL MAZARS WOMEN' S NETWORK

Truly place to exchange and debated themes developed by and for women, the objective of **Mazars Connecting Women** is to share the experiences and best practices of Mazars women across the world (56 countries). The aim is to reflect together on solutions that will favour women in leadership positions and enable the Mazars women to build careers that manage to take account of their personal and professional objectives within the Group. Mazars Connecting Women already launched a dedicated collaborative platform in the group intranet.

### THE SURVEY\*

Most of the leadership studies conducted so far in Russia include general statistics such as proportions of men and women holding executive positions, gender distribution in various professions etc. Using available quantitative data one could make a detailed demographic portrait of an average executive and identify typically "female" and "male" jobs; but situation analysis and suggestions regarding what people who wish to make a career should actually do, are traditionally lacking. **The in-depth interviews and survey conducted in the course of this study allowed us to take a broader look at career development in today's Russia**, and suggest a number of things to keep in mind when developing your career. You'll find at the end of the survey some **recommendations for women managers**.

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## MAIN RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

### The study had the following objectives:

- determine the factors affecting men's and women's careers in Russia;
- understand incentives prompting men and women to reach top executive positions;
- identify internal and external barriers hindering career development of both genders;
- identify typically "female" career development barriers;
- Determine main gender-related social stereotypes affecting career development.

### Three main conclusions:

1. The study clearly showed that Russian **executives – men and women alike – believe the main career builders are professionalism and competency (97%),** personal qualities (91%), commitment (89%) and education (77%). These factors are traditionally considered the key career "enablers" by managers the world over.
2. **The study discovered significant differences between Russian and foreign-owned companies' approaches** to business operations, selection of managers and career development. E.g. having good connections is a much less important career development factor in foreign companies (35%, against 50% in Russian organisations).
3. Unfortunately we must note that stereotypes about women managers continue to play a significant role in Russia's business environment. E.g. **45% of the respondents agreed that it was impossible for women to combine a successful career with an adequate family life,** while 36% believed that by pursuing success in business, "women cease being women". Indeed, when companies place their executive vacancies with Russian recruiting agencies they still not infrequently specify that only male candidates will be considered. The in-depth interviews and the quantitative survey revealed that people still see some jobs as "men's" and others as "women's", and most of them believe that management jobs are for men while a third of the respondents (31%) thought female executives were "rather an exception".

## CAREERS DEVELOPMENT FACTORS

Note that women more often than men point at the importance of personal qualities for career development (99% vs 89%), but less often stress the role of connections (41% vs 55%). The in-depth interviews revealed that it was due to women's less thorough incorporation into business networks: they find it harder to maintain business contacts on equal footing, and not always can match the socialising format – especially when it's built around "male values" such as sauna, fishing and football.

The in-depth interviews also showed that the respondents saw their careers as a direct result of their own actions and pursuits. According to the executives, leadership phenomenon is based on certain qualities one has to be born with (personal characteristics).

### Role of education in career development

Practically all of the surveyed managers (98%) had higher education. Most of the executives (77%) recognised education and diplomas as an important career development factor. Also, 36% of the respondents listed insufficient education among barriers hindering career development. Only 11% believed education didn't play significant role in climbing up the career ladder in Russian companies.

Motivating factors to climb the career ladder

The forces driving women's and men's career development are largely similar, though there are significant differences too. Normally men make careers because they don't see any other way to realise their potential and live up to other people's expectations. A successful female leader is still seen rather as an exception, but women are very rational regarding their career development. Companies which actively bring women into management teams use their potential and get good results in the process, building well-balanced professional teams.

### **Leadership as a conscious choice**

During the study it turned out that most of the executives consciously worked to get to executive positions, and money wasn't always their key incentive. In many cases financial prosperity wasn't the primary motive but rather was seen as "icing on the cake" of formal recognition of professional achievements.

**The respondents believed the following factors for career development were the most important ones:**

- financial independence and freedom (93%);
- professional independence and freedom (91%);
- self-realisation (91%);
- professional development (91%).

**Power hunger, craving for recognition also were important career building incentives for most of the surveyed:**

- Respect and recognition by peers (75%);
- Willingness to take control (74%);
- Desire to lead and manage (70%).

Financial interest (craving for riches) was mentioned by 61% of the respondents. Compared with Russian companies' staff, personnel of foreign firms were more often motivated by willingness to become leaders (78% against 66%) and peer respect and recognition (84% against 72%), and less often by the prospect to obtain professional independence and freedom (84% against 93%).

### **BARRIERS TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Men and women alike – those interested in promotion – move on to their goals or review their priorities based on many personal considerations. Pressure from family and friends, expectations of their peers, lack of self-confidence and stereotypes programmed in by their upbringing may significantly affect career aspirations.

#### **Common barriers**

Men more often mention lack of connections and patronage as career barrier than women (55% against 35%). It's the key factor to them, while to women it's only one of the three most important ones, together with insufficient education and experience (34%) and having other interests apart from work (31%).

Gender-related stereotypes (24% against 5%) and blocking by superiors (23% against 3%) as career development barriers are much more common in Russian companies than in foreign-owned ones. That's confirmed by the in-depth interviews whose participants stressed that Russian business was by default oriented towards male management – due to the general framework for doing business in Russia and predominance of people with engineering and technology education among top management.

#### **Barriers hindering women's careers**

The study shows that most of the surveyed executives, regardless of their gender, region of residence and employer, admit there are both external and internal barriers hindering women's careers.

When asked about external barriers to women's career development, men more often mentioned close friends and family (60% against 50%) and negative stereotypes of female bosses (67% against 43%), while women mostly pointed at informal deals (38% against 29%) and more stringent requirements to them than to men (27% against 7%).

Interestingly, speaking about their personal barriers (“What hindered / still hinders your career development?”) Only 6% of women executives mentioned “Pressure by family/friends”, while 50% of the same respondents believed this factor was a common barrier to women’s career development generally.

**The respondents named the following internal barriers hindering women’s careers:**

- Women’s belief that their first priority is family, and work comes second (42%);
- Opportunities to realise their potential not just at work but at home (40%);
- Career “setbacks” (maternity leave) (40%);
- Underestimation of their own leadership potential (40%).

**Women mentioned the following internal barriers more often than men:**

- Underestimation of own leadership potential, lack of confidence (50% vs 24%);
- Inability to present themselves in the right way for promotion (37% vs 6%).
- Inability to “sell themselves” was more often mentioned by representatives of Russian companies (30% against 11%) and large businesses (35% vs 20%).

In-depth interviews confirmed that in many cases desire to “make a career at home rather than at work” slows women’s careers down (there were examples of women actually refusing big promotions).

**“Male” society**

According to the in-depth interviews participants, an important factor affecting their career development is the fact that in many cases it’s hard for them to take part in negotiations taking place in informal settings. The format of such meetings implies participation in “purely male events” which isn’t always convenient to women.

*“We’ve got a kind of “muscular” society in Russia. From the point of view of making contacts, building business networks we’ve got a lot “men only” events going on, where men executives can comfortably socialise. But there are no formats for women executives to socialise”* **(woman, deputy general director, a large Russian power supply company).**

**WHY RUSSIAN WOMEN UNDERESTIMATE THEIR POTENTIAL**

The qualitative stage of the study also confirmed that a serious barrier on women’s career path was their psychological state, lack of self-confidence and (maybe as a result of that) inability to present themselves and their ideas the right way.

*“I think an important factor is that most women are simply not sure this particular project will be a success. Because there are very few female executives in our country. Even if you look at our Duma, our government, the big business, women would say, so what? You’d be running around there and everybody would be looking at you as if you were a ... and kicking you with their hind legs”* **(woman, deputy general director, a large Russian power supply company).**

The study shows that women are not always ready to fight the stereotypes the society forces on them, so they abandon their career aspirations. In the end the only really successful leaders are women who’re better prepared to face that sort of barriers and associated problems.

## GENDER STEREOTYPES AND LEADERSHIP

### Man the leader and the housewife myth

Stereotypes about gender roles and social expectations of men and women play a huge role in career motivation.

Perception of women's and men's roles in business and society affect appointment decisions just as much as women's lack of confidence in their leadership potential. Female executives feel the pressure of stereotypes every day – when they interact with colleagues, subordinates and partners. The in-depth interviews participants demonstrated these stereotypes very clearly. The women told how they were seen by male bosses, while male respondents boldly voiced the most popular gender-based stereotypes.

The quantitative survey confirmed that the respondents shared some of the stereotypes about female executives prevailing in the Russian society.

**The most popular gender-related stereotypes the respondents agreed with included the following:**

- Women can't combine a business career and an adequate family life (45%);
- Women lose femininity struggling for a successful business career (36%);
- A male boss is the norm; a female boss is rather an exception (31%).

Less than 20% of the respondents shared the following wide-spread stereotypes about female leaders:

- Women do not take sufficiently tough positions when they manage other people (13%);
- Women can be successful only in traditional for them spheres (15%);
- Women are not ready to take risks when making decisions (18%).

Men compared to women, top executives compared to second-tier managers and residents of provincial regions compared to Muscovites were more strongly in favour of the above gender stereotypes. At the same time managers of foreign-owned companies and large corporations shared these widely popular notions less often than respondents employed by Russian companies or companies with up to 200 staff.

### PERCEPTION OF FEMALE BOSSES

More than half of the respondents (60%) agreed that women must be present on top company management teams. This notion is more often supported by Muscovites (71%) than by residents of other Russian regions (49%). However it's mostly women who share this belief (74%), and not men (38%). Second-level and top-managers also have different support for this idea (72% against 48%), as well as managers employed by large and small (70% and 56%), foreign and Russian-owned companies (84% vs 52%). A portrait of a typical opponent of women's presence in boards of directors would look like this: it's a man holding a top management position in a Russian company. On the other hand, a proponent of female presence on top management teams would look quite differently: a woman, second-tier manager, employed by a large foreign firm.

Despite the declared acceptance of the need to involve women in dealing with strategic tasks, 40% of the respondents would like to work for a male boss, and only 4% would prefer a woman as their immediate superior. Breakdown of answers to the question, "Who do you find easier to work with" exactly matches preferences regarding the boss's gender: to half of the respondents it didn't matter and 40% opted for a man. Men more often than women wanted to work under a male boss (49% against 35%). At the same time the in-depth interviews showed that in principle men executives are ready to invite women to management positions under their own supervision (a step below them), provided the candidates match the necessary requirements.

### More balanced teams

According to the participants of in-depth interviews “mixed” teams are always more successful than single-gender ones (regardless of the gender).

#### The main factors which affect efficiency include the following:

- The team has a wider horizon (regarding both its approach to assessing a business situation and generally), which helps making a more accurate assessment and more considered decisions.
- Using various approaches to tasks allows making more efficient decisions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO WOMEN MANAGERS

Many women who’ve made very successful careers admit that the conditions most of them have to work in do not allow them to be efficient and optimistic. Lack of confidence further increased by upbringing and expectations of family and the immediate circle – i.e. that women should realise their potential first of all as mothers and housewives and only then as a company executives – plays a major role in this process. The need to break - day in and day out – the stereotypes about women being clumsy and unbalanced managers who cannot be trusted, doesn’t add any enthusiasm either. The surveyed top managers recommended to counter that pressure by appealing to partners’ and subordinates’ logic and emotions, on all fronts.

#### How to break the glass ceiling

At the quantitative survey stage, the respondents more often opted for “emotional” recommendations, such as “trust yourself” (26%), “don’t be afraid of anything” (14%). “Rational” advice was offered less frequently: “be logical and follow your principles” (7%), “work on your problems, get training” (4%).

Unlike the participants of the quantitative stage of the study, respondents to the in-depth interviews more often gave advice which boiled down to “take action”. Not just be confident, logical and concentrated but take actual steps to get to where you want to be.

#### \*Methodology of the survey

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141 respondents from 11 Russian regions took part in the survey. They included top o company managers (general directors, board of directors members, deputy general directors, commercial directors); second-tier managers (heads of financial departments, HR departments, marketing directors, other major departments and divisions heads). The ratio of men and women in the sample was 40/60. The survey was conducted between 22 June and 13 July, 2010. During the **qualitative stage** of the study seven in-depth interviews were conducted. The respondents included recognised Russian business leaders (three men and four women), heads of major companies with huge experience, models of bright and successful careers. The level of their current positions was at least deputy general director, with hundreds and thousands of staff under their supervision. The in-depth interviews were conducted between 15 May and 9 July 2010. Website: <http://www.kom20.ru/>

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