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Women Matter: Women at the top of corporations

Worldwide, women represent an immense pool of leadership talent that is largely under-leveraged by corporations. Since 2007, McKinsey & Company has driven a research initiative, called “Women Matter,” to assess the importance of women in leadership positions, and the most effective levers to improve their representation at the top.

In 2007, McKinsey research demonstrated the correlation between company performance and women representation at the top, and identified the main barriers to progress. In 2008, our research focused on how leadership models favored by women contribute to the richness of senior management teams. In 2010 and 2011, our research in Europe revealed the critical impact of visible CEO commitment, and of individual development programs to help women succeed. Our 2012 report examines the situation in 10 countries in Asia, including Japan and suggests specific actions needed in the Asian context.

Today’s speech will summarize the key learnings from McKinsey’s “Women Matter” research, underscore the importance of fostering successful women leaders, and outline the current situation, and finally propose some practical actions to generate the needed momentum.

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Georges Desvaux is the managing partner of McKinsey & Company, Japan. Before transferring to Tokyo in July 2011, Georges worked in McKinsey's Beijing office from 1999 to 2006, and Paris office from 2006 to 2011.

In Japan, Georges advises top management in insurance, banking, consumer electronics, and logistics companies on global growth strategy, marketing capabilities, and organizational design.

Georges is a leader of McKinsey's Marketing Practice. He has authored and contributed to articles and research on consumer and macroeconomic trends

Georges devotes much of his time and energy to developing McKinsey's global talent, and particularly women. He has initiated and co-led McKinsey's USD 20 million "Women Matter" research initiative on the role of women in corporations since 2007, co-authoring four Women Matter reports that highlight the contributions of women to company performance, and the levers companies can activate to support and promote women leaders.

Georges Desvaux is a French citizen. He graduated from École Centrale Paris and earned an M.S. in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He joined McKinsey & Company in 1988, after four years as a senior sales manager at an industrial component manufacturer.