

## Women At Mid-Cap Companies Have The Most Trouble Breaking The Glass Ceiling

By Meredith Lepore

According to new data from mid-cap companies, women are having more trouble breaking into the executive circle than their peers at larger and smaller companies.

They far less likely than their male counterparts to reach top leadership positions at those firms, according to research.

Researchers at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business surveyed about 2,000 executives at companies with stockmarket capitalization of \$1-billion to \$7-billion, so-called mid-cap firms. They looked at top executives from 400 companies such as AOL, JetBlue and Nordstrom that comprise the S&P MidCap 400 index. Such companies make up about 7% of the U.S. equities market.

They found that women made up 4.5% of the top leadership in 2010. That is far less than at larger firms, where other data show women make up about 14% of executive positions.

"What I find sobering about it is that we are still having an enormous difficulty getting through that ceiling," said Georgetown business professor Catherine Tinsley, who led the study. Margaret Spellings, a former U.S. education secretary now working on policy issues for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said gender equality is not scrutinized at this level as much as among the Fortune 500 companies.

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Catherine Tinsley  
Georgetown University's  
McDonough School of Business

Interestingly though in 2010, top female executives on average saw \$2.2-million (U.S.) in potential compensation a year, compared with \$2.5-million for men, a difference that was not statistically significant, Prof. Tinsley said. Between 2000 and 2005, women executives saw an average of \$1.3-million, compared with \$1.9-million for men.

"It does appear that when women are at a certain critical mass, above 10% in an industry, they are being valued as much as their male colleagues and we're seeing that in pay," said Tinsley.

In the mid-cap arena, the industries with the highest average number of female executives were media with 21%, pharmaceuticals 14% and retailers 13%.

*The Grindstone  
Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business  
March 22, 2012*

The study combined these three industries for analysis and found in that grouping, women executives earned more than men on average. According to the research, in 2010 potential compensation for women in that multi-industry group was \$3.9-million a year, compared with \$2.9-million for men.

Though the glass ceiling is hard for women at mid-cap companies, it still isn't easy for women in the Fortune 500. In 2009, women held 15.2% of Fortune 500 board seats, according to women's issues research group Catalyst. In both 2009 and 2010, 12% of Fortune 500 companies had no women serving on their boards. Female leaders also only make up about 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs which is just a 1% increase from seven years ago.