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## Few women landing top jobs

### Change 'glacial' for Chicago firms

By Melita Marie Garza and Susan Chandler  
Tribune staff reporters  
Published December 2, 2003

Plenty of women are filling the management pipelines at Chicago's 50 biggest companies, but they aren't breaking into the ranks of executive officers and top earners quickly enough.

That's the conclusion of an annual survey by The Chicago Network, an organization of professional women that began tracking women's progress in the corporate ranks five years ago.



"The pace of including women in key roles is glacial," the survey's authors say. "Most of our metropolitan area's business leaders still fail to groom and select women for senior management spots."

Five of the largest Chicago-area companies still had no female directors in 2003, slightly worse than last year, when four companies had no female board members. Three of the companies were listed both years: Old Republic International Corp.; Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. and USF Corp. (formerly USFreightways Corp.).

Representatives from the companies could not be reached for comment Monday.

Only 16 of the top 50 firms listed women as among their top five-earning executives. Thirty-four others, or 68 percent, had no women at that level.

Two Chicago-area firms had no women among their executive officer ranks, including Illinois Tool Works Inc. and Motorola Inc., the Schaumburg-based cell phone giant.

But Jennifer Weyrauch, a Motorola spokeswoman, noted that Motorola had several women in senior leadership positions. They include the company's chief technology officer, Padmasree Warrior, who is responsible for Motorola's annual \$3.8 billion investment in research and development; the chief procurement officer, Theresa Metty; and Wendy Vittori, who is president of Motorola Computer Group.

A spokesman for Illinois Tool Works did not return a call.

"The most depressing thing is we're not seeing movement in the executive officer ranks. If you see movement there, then it's just a matter of time," said Jane DiRenzo Pigott, who chaired the 2003 survey and is managing director of her own Chicago-based diversity consulting firm, Fuse3.

There has been some progress. Food giant Kraft Foods Inc. and TruServ Corp., the cooperative of True Value Hardware store owners, now are headed by female chief executives. And the percentage of executive officer posts held by women in Chicago crept up to 13.7 percent from 11.4 percent.

"Yet overall, there is almost no change over the five years the survey has been conducted," said Sheli Rosenberg, retired president and chief executive of Equity Group Investments.

"Since 1975 about 30 percent of the population in major business schools and law schools have been women," said Rosenberg, a founder of The Chicago Network and the Center for Executive Women at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. "To suggest that companies cannot find suitable candidates for the board and the executive suite is to be disingenuous."

Rosenberg said she believes that women will get a boost from the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which requires that independent directors serve on firms' corporate governance, audit and compensation committees.

"Companies increasingly have to look beyond the old-boy network to fill these positions, and these are on the committees in which most of the work of the boards is done," Rosenberg said. "When women start walking into the boardroom, women start to walk into the corporate suites."

Betsy Holden, Kraft's co-chief executive, argued that there is no "pipeline issue." After exploring the problem at Kraft, Holden found that the "real issue seemed to be that women got to a certain point and then they were moved into staff roles. Women were not given the key line jobs that were the traditional route to higher leadership positions."

Line positions hold some profit-and-loss responsibility, as opposed to staff jobs in human resources or communications.

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Among Fortune 500 companies nationwide, women held 9.9 percent of line officer positions in 2002, up from 7.3 percent in 2000, according to New York-based Catalyst, which charts the progress of women in U.S. business.

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The lack of women in line jobs is a question under study at the Kellogg School of Management's 2-year-old Center for Executive Women.

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"The question is: Are women guided to those positions or do they choose those positions?" asked Victoria Husted Medvec, the center's executive director. "In a staff position, women really have a chance to show off their expertise. As chief marketing officer, a marketing expert can shine."

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But in profit-and-loss positions, executives spend a lot of time on things that they may not be as good at, she said.

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"For women, that could be less attractive because women have less room to take risks and fail," Medvec said. In fact, research at Harvard University suggests women face a different standard of review on performance appraisals, she said.

"For example, on a man's performance appraisal it might say, 'He's open to anything.' On a woman's performance appraisal it might say, 'She's not sure what she wants to do,'" Medvec said.

The center is launching a senior leadership program, a series of best-practice sessions to find out what is working to move women to top management, Medvec said.

Representatives of The Chicago Network plan to meet with directors and CEOs to talk to them about how they can attract and retain more senior women.

"We've been nice about it for the last five years," said Barbara Provus, a principal in the executive search firm Shepherd, Bueschel & Provus Inc. "Our role was to do the homework, gather the data and present it, hoping that everyone would come to the same conclusion we did—that there's something wrong with this picture. We'd get 24 hours to 48 hours of reaction: 'Gee, that's too bad.' Now, we would like to see some action come as a result of that report."

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