

Want to attract and retain top-notch female talent?

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It may be easier than you think.

Creating a female-friendly work environment can involve everything from offering leadership training to flexible work schedules. The No.1 indicator may be a no-brainer: Women want advancement opportunities. "Show them women can rise up the ladder," says **Leslie Grossman**, author of *SELLsation! How Companies Can Capture Today's Hottest Market: Women Business Owners and Executives* and co-founder of the **Women's Leadership Exchange**.

Some companies, especially those in male-dominated fields, have found success in programs aimed at training and promoting women.

Intel Corp. formed the Women at Intel Network to do just that. Imelda Castro, director of technology manufacturing group training, says the program helps women achieve their career goals and develop leadership skills. The company hosts an annual in-house conference geared toward women. It includes speakers, panel discussions and "speed mentoring" designed to inspire.

Phoenix-based Avnet Inc. has an Executive Women's Forum to provide training and help women network. They've brought in Gap International Inc. to do three-day "breakthrough intensive" learning sessions.

"We encourage them to be bold and think big and enroll other people in the business to help them achieve these extraordinary results," says Lisa Hershman, forum chair. "It really challenges the way you think."

Beyond career growth, **Grossman** says that job sharing, flextime and the ability to work at home also are important to women.

Last year, Women in Cable Telecommunications named Cox Communications one of the two best companies for women to work. Cox's culture promotes work-life balance, says Penny Malone, director of marketing intelligence for Cox Arizona. "You don't have to worry about the complexities of life interfering with your job," says the mother of two.

Equal pay, an executive-training program, a mentoring program and wellness programs all contribute to a female-friendly culture.

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