Abstract

Reversing the Brain Drain in Science, Engineering and Technology

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This paper presents findings from a research project targeting women with degrees in science, engineering and technology who had pursued corporate careers. Considerable research has been done on women in the academic environment, but much less is known about corporate women in the science, engineering and technology sector, or “SET.” Over an 18 month period, the research team fielded four major surveys of women and men and conducted 28 focus groups across the US and in the UK, Switzerland, China and Australia. The resulting rich data sets give us a much sharper perspective on the problem that we had previously.

The paper begins with a description of the nature of the problem. At its simplest, although many women enter SET fields, huge numbers abandon their jobs mid-career. It then lays out the causal factors that underlie this attrition. To conclude, the paper describes some examples of how leading edge firms are addressing these challenges.