

**IGNITING FEMALE  
LEADERSHIP  
AT MCCORMICK  
& COMPANY**  
**CASE STUDY**



*The global flavor company's  
program for advancing women  
is a model for diversity and  
inclusion practices.*



“Hi, remember me? I applied to this program last year and didn’t get in, so I’m back again this year.” That’s how a recent video application for McCormick’s Ignite female leadership program started—and this time around, the candidate’s blend of ambition, confidence, learning agility, and risk-taking landed her a spot.

Started in 2017, McCormick’s Ignite program advances women to mid-level positions as leaders within the company, with the intention to contribute more to the long-term growth of the business. The program is targeted toward strong-performing talent with high potential for more senior roles. The impetus for Ignite, according to Alexandra Rizzuto, vice president of global talent management at McCormick, stemmed from data that showed while McCormick hired more women than

men in entry-level and early career positions. However, women weren’t advancing into senior leadership roles at a proportional rate. Three years later, nearly 40% of the women who completed the Ignite program have been promoted or moved into a position with expanded responsibilities, making McCormick a leader in diversity and inclusion practices.

“The expectation with regards to Ignite was to not only prepare women for advancement but to also equip them to address diversity-related headwinds, which are not addressed sufficiently in mainstream leadership development programs,” Rizzuto says. “Because these headwinds can come from multiple sources, they need to be addressed both by the individual, her manager, and organizational leaders in order to progress in this space.”



## Increasing visibility—literally

McCormick features four levels of leadership that align with a career trajectory from entry level to executive. They are defined as informal (early career workers with leadership potential), emerging (people who are first time management), strategic (managers in charge of other managers), and executives. Ignite aims to increase women's visibility by focusing on promoting them throughout the levels. The selection committee—which includes members of the company's talent management team in diversity and inclusion, learning and development, as well as executive leadership and Korn Ferry consultants—decided to take a literal approach to increasing visibility. They asked candidates to submit a two-minute video answering four specific questions about their hopes for the program and their career aspirations. This represented a departure from other leadership programs within the company, where nominations came through human resources or individual managers. "We heard from the participants that they viewed the video as the beginning of their Ignite journey, as it required them to reflect on why Ignite was the right development opportunity for them," says Rizzuto. "We wanted to make candidates put themselves out there in a way they never did before, so they could define and articulate their career goals sometimes for the first time."

About 60 applicants from around the world applied for the first global program, launched in May 2017. Selection committee members evaluated every video separately and then came together to rank applicants by score. From there, 24 women were selected to be part of the initial group, representing global offices in Asia, Europe, and North America. Those who weren't selected received feedback forms with detailed notes and suggested next steps for their development. They also had the opportunity to receive personal coaching from members of the selection committee.

## About McCormick

Founded in 1889, McCormick & Company is a global leader in flavor. The company manufactures, markets, and distributes spices, seasoning mixes, condiments and other flavorful products to the entire food industry. The company employs nearly 12,000 people globally, including at its new headquarters in Hunt Valley, Maryland. In addition to its eponymous spices and seasonings, McCormick's brand portfolio also includes Frank's RedHot, French's, Old Bay, and Lawry's products.

McCormick & Company products are sold in over 150 countries and territories and the company works with a majority of food chains to provide flavorful products. In 2019, McCormick was named the world's 13th most sustainable corporation on the Global 100 Sustainability Index and ranked 1st in the food products industry. This year, the company ranked 8th among DiversityInc's Top Companies for Executive Women, and has ranked as a DiversityInc Top 50 Company for the last three years."



## The ignite experience

For the first Ignite workshop, McCormick brought the 24 participants to its Maryland headquarters for a three-day, in-person program led by Korn Ferry's Peggy Hazard and Wendy Beecham. The bulk of the program centered on building skills and behaviors that specifically address some of the hidden headwinds women face regarding leadership influence, political savvy, adaptability and agility, strategic direction, executive communication, and more.

After the first day of the workshop, participants are invited to a "mentor dinner,"

where male and female senior executives sit at one of three tables with eight of the women for a three-course meal, rotating tables with each course. The aim is to bring the women together for a facilitated dialogue and expose them to one of the common obstacles they face to career advancement: connecting with senior leadership so that they become more visible to the senior executives.

"These women work all over the world, so bringing them together goes a long way to helping them understand and relate to each other, increase performance, and allows for powerful cross-enterprise connections that are so critical

for transitioning to higher levels," says Hazard. "It also reframes how they think about networking from something they may not have been approaching as a priority or strategically to becoming a critical part of increasing their business impact." To be sure, in follow-up evaluations, women who experienced the Ignite program called the dinner and other networking events "powerful" and "a fantastic development opportunity."

Other activities include leadership assessments and feedback, a mentoring panel discussion, and Korn Ferry-led development on career mapping, network analysis planning, and more.

## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

MCCORMICK RANKED  
**514TH**  
ON THE 2017  
FORTUNE 1000 LIST.

THE COMPANY GENERATED **\$5.3 BILLION**  
IN REVENUE IN 2018. A **GROWTH RATE** OF NEARLY  
12%, AND AN ADJUSTED NET INCOME OF  
**\$662 MILLION,**  
AN **INCREASE OF 21%.**

MCCORMICK'S **ANNUAL  
SHAREHOLDER RETURN**  
WAS UP **50%** IN 2018, WITH  
A MARKET CAPITALIZATION  
OF APPROXIMATELY  
**\$20 BILLION.**

AN ANNUAL DIVIDEND OF  
**\$2.13 PER SHARE**  
WAS PAID IN 2018, AN **INCREASE**  
OF **10%** OVER THE PRIOR YEAR.

MCCORMICK HAS PAID A  
**DIVIDEND TO INVESTORS**  
SINCE 1925, AND HAS  
**INCREASED THE PAYOUT**  
ANNUALLY FOR THE LAST  
**33 YEARS.**



## The game changer

But the key to Ignite is that even though it is designed for women, it specifically includes their managers and other senior executive sponsors within the organization. This is one of the most unique and successful parts of the program, creating shared responsibility for growth. Other programs may involve managers and sponsors, but not in such a meaningful way. Engaging and enabling managers to proactively take part in identifying and tackling obstacles to accelerate development directly impacts the performance of the participant and her manager. The one-on-one dialogue is applied learning, leveraging the insights and clarity the woman has gained regarding her career aspirations as the scaffolding for having a pointed conversation that zeros in on the highest-impact actions she can make to accelerate her advancement.

“Familiarity, comfort, and trust are the foundations of a strong reporting relationship,” says Beecham. “This helps to improve the quality and depth of the employee-manager relationship and enables the manager to comfortably provide specific developmental feedback that is actionable for the woman leader.” That’s particularly true, Beecham says, with diverse pairs, enabling constructive dialogue and mutual feedback that tends to be more difficult when the two are different in gender, race, culture, or ethnicity.

Korn Ferry calls this process “SuccessPath Pairs,” but internally at McCormick they call it “the game changer.” “Directly engaging managers in this setting allows them to see and hear what challenges their female reports are facing, and together they can develop an action plan to overcome them,” says Rizzuto. If, for instance, more visibility with a broader range of people is needed, the manager can construct a relationship map with the participant that covers who she knows, who she needs to know, and how to get to know them. “SuccessPath Pairs enables the manager and the delegate to have conversations they might not otherwise have had,” says Rizzuto. “It’s about creating a safe place for [them] to speak about delicate topics and build more positive relationships. Access to influence within the organization is critical, and women need their managers’ support to help make that happen.”

Feedback thus far suggests that applying this learning experience in real time is impactful not just for the women, but also for their managers. “Providing managers with tools and techniques to be more inclusive doesn’t just benefit one individual. It benefits the entire team. Managers have told us they are using their insights with other direct reports and colleagues,” says Beecham.





## Keeping the flame lit

As important as the workshop experience is, even more important is the follow-through once it is completed. Indeed, post-program is when most diversity and inclusion initiatives fall apart.

McCormick is determined not to let that happen. To ensure long-term sustainability, the company developed a multi-pronged feedback loop to collect data and measure results. A development accountability meeting is held between graduates and managers to set and review goals. Bimonthly calls with fellow program graduates that feature a specific discussion topic or agenda keep the women connected. Social media groups were created to facilitate communication and support between and among graduating classes. “Ongoing communication is important, because change like this doesn’t happen immediately, and at times it can feel like nothing is being

accomplished,” says Rizzuto. “But after talking with each other they realize that little things are happening along the way that together will result in big change not just for them but for the organization.”

Beyond emotional support, ongoing communications also serve to reinforce and apply lessons and techniques from the learning experience. One graduate, for instance, discussed how she used influence and conversation training to ask for a promotion, something she said she wouldn’t have done or received had she not participated in the workshop. Hearing a story like that creates a virtuous cycle of inspiration and motivation for the others. In fact, it’s part of the reason why many graduates from the program go on to become mentors and sponsors for subsequent candidates. Accountability to each other is taken seriously, and it is not uncommon to be called out for falling short on individual contributions to achieving goals and applying teachings.

## 3 keys to success

How your organization can re-create McCormick’s approach:

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**INVOLVE MANAGERS AND OTHER SENIOR EXECUTIVES** IN THE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE.

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**IDENTIFY THE INVISIBLE FORCES** THAT HOLD DIVERSE PROFESSIONALS BACK FROM CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR FULLEST.

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**KEEP DEVELOPMENT ALIVE** WITH POST-PROGRAM EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION.



## The results

Measurable data is being gathered since the first program launched in 2017. What we know so far is that demand is increasing with each successive workshop. The number of applicants have continued to increase steadily over the course of its inception. The first program attracted 60 applicants, in 2018 the second program held in Warsaw, Poland attracted more than 70. The latest program held April 2019 in the US had more than 80 applicants.

Roughly 40% of program graduates have been promoted or moved into an expanded role with more responsibilities. McCormick says more than 40% of its emerging-level leaders and its strategic-level leaders, along with 30%+ of its executive-level leaders are women. The company has a goal to increase female representation of 50% females in leadership roles by 2025.

The program's impact has resulted in the company creating a similar leadership development program for ethnically diverse talent that was implemented in June 2018.

## Key takeaways

What McCormick learned that could apply to your organization:

### START EARLY.

SUBMITTING THE VIDEO APPLICATION PROMPTED THE DELEGATES TO THINK MORE DEEPLY ABOUT THE VALUE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY.

### MANAGER INVOLVEMENT

IS CRITICAL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HIGH-POTENTIAL TALENT.

### FOCUS ON BEHAVIORS

AS WELL AS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

### CREATE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

BETWEEN MANAGERS AND REPORTS.



## Key Outcomes

McCormick's efforts resulted in these positive effects:

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**STRONG SUPPORT** FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BY TALENT, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER LEADERSHIP TEAMS.

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ROUGHLY 40% OF IGNITE GRADUATES HAVE BEEN **PROMOTED OR SEEN THEIR ROLES EXPAND.**

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DEVELOPED A SIMILAR PROGRAM FOR **ETHNICALLY DIVERSE TALENT.**

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**ESTABLISHED FEEDBACK LOOP** BETWEEN MANAGERS AND REPORTS TO HELP IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF BOTH.

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**CROSS-COHORT COLLABORATION IS GROWING,** ENABLING THE DELEGATES TO CONTINUE INCREASING THEIR VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORGANIZATION.