Role Negotiation and the Pursuit of Hot Jobs

CATALYST

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About Catalyst

Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit organization accelerating progress for women through workplace inclusion. With operations in the United States, Canada, Europe, India, Australia, and Japan, and more than 800 supporting organizations, Catalyst is the trusted resource for research, information, and advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women's advancement with the Catalyst Award.

Role Negotiation and the Pursuit of Hot Jobs

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Role Negotiation a Positive for Employees and Employers

Pay is probably the first thing that comes to mind when you hear about workplace negotiations and gender equality. In reality, individuals negotiate many aspects of their careers, including bids for more satisfying and challenging roles.[1] But does success in role negotiation predict high potentials' access to the "hot jobs" that are so essential to their advancement?[2]

We examined just that question in this study and found that women *and* men high potentials who reported greater success in role negotiation also:

- Reported greater access to two important types of hot jobs: roles with P&L responsibility and projects with C-suite visibility.

- Saw themselves as more innovative in their work.

- Saw themselves as more likely to remain with their current organizations.

ABOUT THE SAMPLE[3]

These findings are based on responses to a 2015 Catalyst survey from 923 high-potential women and men who graduated from MBA and executive education programs around the world. Participants were working in both for-profit and nonprofit firms across industries at the time of the survey, and 73% worked for global firms.

Taken together, our findings suggest that role negotiation is a win-win-win strategy—one that benefits individuals in their pursuit of hot jobs, leaders who want to foster innovation in their teams, and organizations that are increasingly worried about retaining top talent.

Negotiating Roles, Gaining Access to Hot Jobs

In a previous study, Catalyst dispelled the myth that high-potential women and men receive the same leadership-development opportunities.[4] This basic story has not changed: in this study, women were still less likely than men to have access to two critical hot jobs: roles with P&L responsibility[5] and highly visible projects.[6]

This persistent gender gap in access to hot jobs prompts the question: what can women do to maximize their access to the hot jobs so essential to their career advancement?

In this study:

- Women who reported greater success in **role negotiation**[7]—regardless of their job level and experience—were more likely to have **P&L responsibility**, and the same was true for men.[8]

- High potentials who reported the greatest success in role negotiation were **42% more likely to have P&L responsibility** than those who reported the least success in role negotiation.[9]

FIGURE 1

Percentage Who Reported Having P&L Responsibility, by Level of Success in Role Negotiation

Percentage Who Reported Having P&L Responsibility

31%   44%

Least
Greatest

Success in Role Negotiation
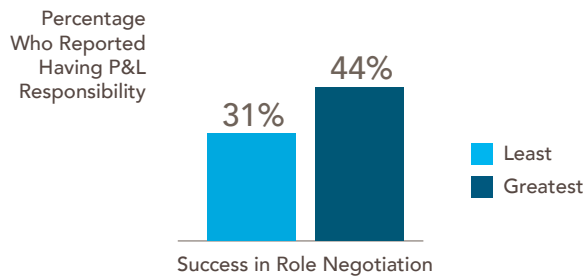
- Women who reported greater success in **role negotiation** also led projects with greater **visibility** to the C-suite—a finding that also held true for men.[10]

- High potentials who reported the greatest success in role negotiation were **30% more likely to lead projects with "very great" visibility** than those who reported the least success:[11]

FIGURE 2

Percentage Who Reported Having "Very Great" Project Visibility, by Level of Success in Role Negotiation

Percentage Who Reported Having "Very Great" Project Visibility

27%   35%

Least
Greatest

Success in Role Negotiation
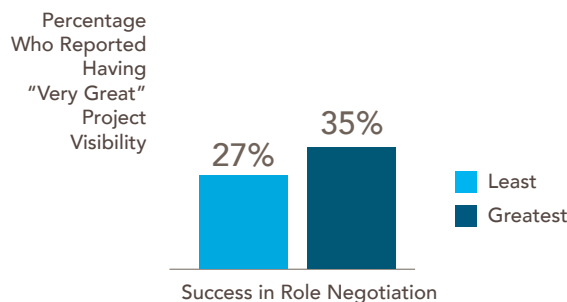
That role negotiation predicts access to roles with P&L responsibility and projects with high visibility for both genders is encouraging. It's particularly so with respect to **project visibility**, where we found no gap in the visibility of women's and men's projects once we factored in role negotiation.[12]

This finding is important to women for three reasons:

1. Of nine expert-recommended career-advancement strategies, just two worked for women: **making their achievements visible** and **gaining access to powerful others**.[13]

2. Unlike men, women have an uphill battle to get due credit for their achievements.[14]

3. Also unlike men, women don't have the same access to mentors in powerful senior-leadership roles.[15]

To the extent that role negotiation increases women's odds of leading projects that are highly visible to the C-suite, it could also bolster their efforts to harness these two winning career-advancement strategies.

SAMPLE ITEMS FROM THE ROLE NEGOTIATION SCALE[16]

To examine high potentials' reported success in role negotiation, we asked them the extent to which they agreed with the following kinds of items on a five-point scale, with one being "strongly disagree" to five being "strongly agree."

- I have successfully asked for extra responsibilities that take advantage of the skills I bring to the job.

- I have asked my manager for tasks that better fit my personality, skills, and abilities.

- In response to my distinctive contributions, my manager has granted me more flexibility in how I complete my job.

Role Negotiation as a Win-Win-Win

Role negotiation positively predicted two other important outcomes beyond access to hot jobs.

- Both high-potential women and men who reported greater success in role negotiation reported being more **innovative** in their roles.[17]

- High potentials who reported the greatest success in role negotiation were **more than twice as likely to report being "most" innovative** in their roles than were high potentials who reported the least success in role negotiation[18] (see Figure 3). They "more frequently identified opportunities for new products or processes" and "tried out new ideas and approaches to problems."[19]

- High potentials who reported greater success in role negotiation also indicated that they were **more likely to remain with their current firms** over the coming year.[20]

- Those who reported the greatest success in role negotiation were **143% more likely to indicate the "strongest" intentions to remain** with their current organizations than were those who reported the least success in role negotiation[21] (see Figure 4).

These findings suggest that role negotiation not only helps high potentials maximize their access to hot jobs, but also inspires them to be more innovative in their work and more intent on remaining with their current organizations.

FIGURE 3

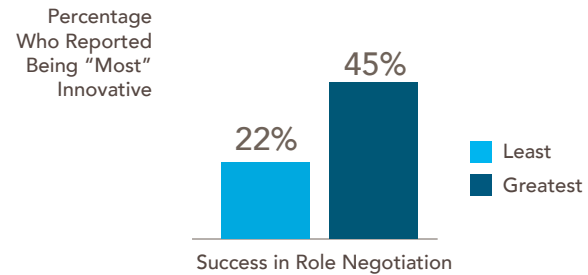## Percentage Who Reported Being "Most" Innovative, by Level of Success in Role Negotiation

Percentage Who Reported Being "Most" Innovative

22%   45%

Least
Greatest

Success in Role Negotiation

FIGURE 4

Percentage Who Indicated "Strongest" Intentions to Remain With Current Organization, by Level of Success in Role Negotiation

Percentage Who Indicated "Strongest" Intentions to Remain With Current Organization

21%   51%

Least
Greatest

Success in Role Negotiation
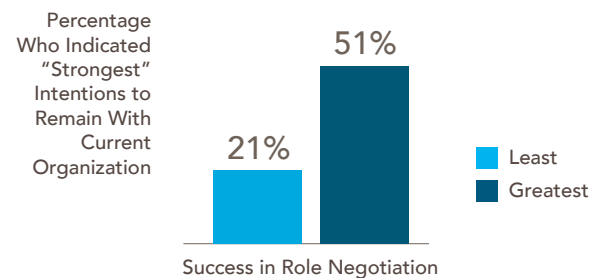
What Can Leaders and Organizations Do to Support High Potentials' Role Negotiation?

Leaders Can Empower Team Members to Negotiate Their Roles

The more inclusive high potentials perceived their leaders to be,[22] the more success they reported in negotiating satisfying and challenging roles.[23] In particular, for both high-potential women and men,[24] their perceptions of their managers' **empowering** behavior were the key predictor of reported success in role negotiation.[25]
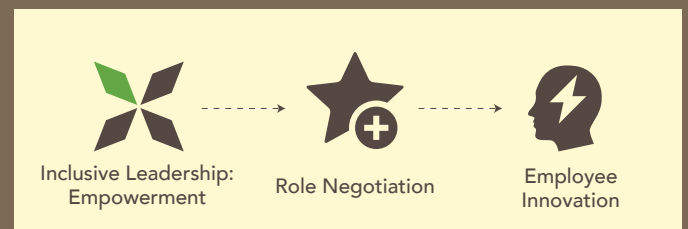
- High potentials who perceived their leaders to be most inclusive were **4.5 times more likely to report the greatest success in role negotiation** than were those who perceived their leaders to be least inclusive.[26]

FIGURE 5
Percentage Who Report Greatest Success in Role Negotiation, by Level of Inclusive Leadership
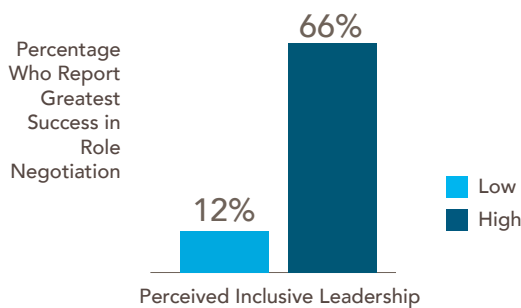
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP, ROLE NEGOTIATION, AND INNOVATION

In a previous Catalyst study, perceptions of inclusive leadership behavior positively predicted individuals' self-reported contributions in the workplace; specifically, employees' willingness to "go above and beyond" to help their teams ("team citizenship behavior") and their ability to innovate.[27] A second study dug deeper to examine how a leader's inclusive behavior might help foster innovation. Those findings suggested that inclusive leadership helps foster innovation by creating a sense of psychological safety that enables team members to take the calculated risks inherent in the innovation process.[28] This study expands our understanding of how **inclusive leaders** may help foster innovation: by empowering[29] team members to **take the risk of negotiating their roles** to make them more satisfying and challenging and, in doing so, shape roles that allow them to be **more innovative**:[30]

Organizations Can Support High Potentials' Role Negotiation

The more **supportive** high potentials perceived their **organizations** to be, the greater success they reported in negotiating more satisfying and challenging roles.[31] Individuals perceived their organizations to be supportive when they felt their contributions were valued, their goals and values were strongly considered, and their requests for special favors were granted.[32]

- High potentials who perceived that their organizations provided a high level of support were **nearly four times more likely to report the greatest success in role negotiation** than those who perceived that their organizations provided a low level of support.[33]

- Perceived organizational support predicted high potentials' reported success in role negotiating even *after*

Percentage Who Report Greatest Success in Role Negotiation, by Level of Perceived Organizational Support

Percentage Who Report Greatest Success in Role Negotiation

64%

13%

Low
High

Perceived Organizational Support
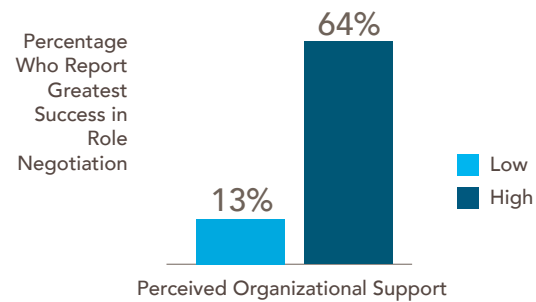
taking into account how inclusive they perceived their managers to be. This finding suggests a "both and," with high potentials' ability to negotiate more satisfying and challenging roles dependent upon *both* their managers' inclusion *and* their organizations' support.[34]

Actions Managers and Employees Can Take

Role negotiation is a strategy that benefits employees in their pursuit of hot jobs, benefits managers who want to foster innovation in their teams, and benefits organizations that are increasingly worried about retaining top talent. At its best, role negotiation is a collaborative process between employees and their managers, which leads to mutually beneficial results. Thus, each has a critical role to play. Managers' empowerment behavior, in particular, emerged as the key predictor of high potentials' success in role negotiation in this study.

Managers can empower employees in multiple ways. For example, they can talk with their employees about strategic organizational priorities and:

- Help them think creatively about their roles and how they can best contribute to the organization's success.

- Make sure they understand that the perfect role might not yet exist   but could be negotiated and shaped to fill a strategic need in the organization.

Employees also play an important part. For example, they can identify their interests and priorities before approaching their managers about changes to their role by:

- Reflecting on the type of work they most enjoy.

- Considering which opportunities would be challenging and most supportive of their growth while also advancing key business objectives.

Endnotes

1. Christopher Rosen, Daniel Slater, Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang and Russell Johnson, "Let's Make a Deal: Development and Validation of the Ex Post I-Deals Scale," *Journal of Management,* vol. 39, no. 3 (March 2013): p. 709-742.

2. "Hot jobs" refers to large and highly visible projects, mission-critical roles that include things like P&L responsibility and direct reports, and, lastly, international assignments. These jobs—which were found to significantly predict high potentials' career advancement—are described in greater detail in Christine Silva, Nancy M. Carter, and Anna Beninger, *Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution? Women Get Fewer of the "Hot Jobs" Needed to Advance* (Catalyst, 2012).

3. The sample includes 61.5% women (N = 568) and 38.5% men (N = 355), with an average age of 43 years. Respondents graduated from 26 of the top business schools (58%) in Asia, Canada, Europe, and the United States or the Smith College Executive Education for Women program (42%). Eighty-three percent of participants were working at for-profit or professional services firms at the time of the survey, and 17% were either self-employed or working in the nonprofit, government, or education sectors. 73% were working in global organizations. Respondents were working across a range of industries at the time of the survey: 18% in finance and insurance, 35% in tech-intensive industries, and 47% in all other fields.

4. Silva, Carter, and Beninger.

5. The Chi-square statistic (29.950) associated with gender is significant; $p<.05$: women (30%) were less likely than men (49%) to have P&L responsibility. Note, when considering potential explanations for this result and all others outlined in this report, particular attention was paid to whether women working in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) industries or functions had unique experiences. There were no consistent, significant differences across functions or industries.

6. For this analysis, we first created two groups consistent with: Silva, Carter, and Beninger: those who reported leading projects with "very great" C-suite visibility vs. those who reported leading projects with "great" to no C-suite visibility. The Chi-square statistic (52.989) associated with gender is significant; $p<.05$: women (19%) were less likely than men (44%) to report leading projects with "very great" C-suite visibility.

7. We used Rosen, Slater, Chang, and Johnson's (2013) six-item scale to measure "Role Negotiation," which they referred to as task- and development-focused "idiosyncratic deals"—or "I-deals," for short. We examined whether there were gender gaps in reported success in role negotiation using analysis of variance, controlling for organizational characteristics (firm size, scope, and industry), job characteristics (function and level), and work experience (age and time in role). Taking into account these controls, gender is n.s.; $p>.10$. Estimated marginal means (EMM) = 3.806 for women [95% CI: 3.717 to 3.894]; 3.936 for men [95% CI: 3.816 to 4.057].

8. Logistic regression included role negotiation as the predictor and a binary ("Yes" vs. "No"), single-item measure of P&L responsibility as the outcome. Taking into account all previously noted controls, role negotiation is significant at $p<.10$. Role negotiation does not interact with gender to predict P&L responsibility; $p>.10$—hence, the statement that role negotiation predicted P&L responsibility for both genders. For both, for every unit increase in role negotiation, there is a .245 increase in P&L responsibility. It's also important to note that, even after taking into account role negotiation, gender remains significant; $p<.10$. Men were still 62% more likely than women to have P&L responsibility.

9. This figure of 42% is for illustrative purposes only; it doesn't take into account earlier-cited control variables such as firm size, job level, etc.

10. Regression included role negotiation as the predictor and a 5-point, single-item measure of project visibility as the outcome. After taking into account all control variables, role negotiation is significant; $p<.05$. Role negotiation does not interact with gender to predict project visibility; $p>.10$—hence, the statement that role negotiation also predicted project visibility for men. Regardless of gender, for every unit increase in role negotiation, there is a .190 increase in project visibility. After taking into account role negotiation, gender approaches, but does not reach, statistical significance; $p>.10$.

11. Again, this figure of 30% is for illustrative purposes only, because it doesn't take into account previously-noted control variables.

12. As reported earlier, gender is not significant once we take into account role negotiation; $p>.10$.

13. Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva, *The Myth of the Ideal Worker: Does Doing All the Right Things Really Get Women Ahead?* (Catalyst, 2011).

14. Madeline E. Heilman and Michelle C. Haynes, "No Credit Where Credit is Due: Attributional Rationalization of Women's Success in Male-Female Teams," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 90, no. 5 (2005): p. 905-916.

15. Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva, *Mentoring: Necessary But Insufficient to Advancement* (Catalyst, 2010).

16. Rosen, Slater, Chang, and Johnson.

17. Regression included role negotiation as the predictor, a 5-item (composite) measure of self-reported innovation as the outcome, and all previously noted controls. Role negotiation interacted with gender to predict self-reported innovation; $p<.05$. However, follow-up examinations of the parameter estimates for women and men revealed that role negotiation positively predicted self-reported innovation for both; $p<.05$. The interaction is likely driven by the fact that the slope for women ($R2[linear] = .038$) is shallower than the slope for men ($R2[linear] = .138$). For women, a unit increase in role negotiation corresponds to a .125 increase in self-reported innovation; for men, a .268 unit increase. Again, though, the parameter estimates for role negotiation were significant for both genders; $p<.05$.

18. The precise figure is 105%, and is for illustrative purposes only. It doesn't take into account previously-noted control variables.

19. These two examples are taken from the five-item innovation scale used in this study, which was a modified version of one originally developed and validated by Pamela Tierney, Steven M. Farmer, and George B. Graen, "An Examination of Leadership and Employee Creativity: The Relevance of Traits and Relationships," *Personnel Psychology*, vol. 52 (1999): p. 591 – 620.

20. Turnover intentions were measured using a 3-item scale validated in a previous Catalyst study: Cynthia G. Emrich, *Mind Your Culture Gap to Keep Your Top Talent* (2015). The scale was previously adapted from Sandy J. Wayne, Lynn M. Shore, and Robert C. Liden, "Perceived Organizational Support and Leader-Member Exchange: A Social Exchange Perspective," *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1997): p. 82 – 111. Regression included role negotiation as the predictor, the 3-item (composite) of high potentials' intentions to remain with their current organizations as the outcome, and all previously noted controls. Similar to the findings reported for self-reported innovation, gender and reported success in role negotiation interacted to predict intentions to remain; p<.05. Again, though, follow-up examinations revealed that role negotiation positively predicts intentions to remain for both genders; p<.05. However, the trend line that best captured the relationship between role negotiation and intentions to remain varied by gender: for women, a cubic trend line provided the best fit (R-squared = .213 vs. .183 for linear trend). In contrast, for men, a linear trend line sufficed (R-squared = .244 vs. .247 for cubic trend). Nonetheless, separate parameter estimates were significant for both genders; p<.05. For women, a unit increase in role negotiation corresponded to a .618 increase in intentions to remain with their current organizations. For men, a unit increase in role negotiation corresponded to a .862 increase in intentions to remain.

21. This figure of 143% is for illustrative purposes only; it doesn't take into account the control variables outlined previously.

22. We measured high potentials' perceptions of their managers' inclusive leader behavior using the same 15-item, four-dimension composite included in Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014). The four dimensions of inclusive leader behavior are Empowerment, Accountability, Courage, and Humility. This measure was developed and validated in Dirk van Dierendonck and Inge Nuijten, "The Servant Leadership Survey: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure," *Journal of Business Psychology*, vol. 26 (2010): p. 249–267.

23. Regression included role negotiation as the outcome and the 15-item measure of inclusive leader behavior (described above) as the key predictor. After taking into account all previously noted controls *and* gender, perceptions of inclusive leader behavior are a significant predictor of reported success in role negotiation; p<.05. For every unit increase in inclusive leadership, there is a .672 unit increase in role negotiation.

24. Using the same regression model noted earlier, we examined whether inclusive leadership and gender interacted to predict role negotiation. They did not; p>.10. Moreover, women and men perceived their leaders to be equally inclusive; p>.10.

25. After taking into account all previously noted controls, Empowerment was the only dimension of inclusive leadership to significantly predict success in role negotiation; p<.05. Neither Accountability, Courage nor Humility predicted role negotiation; p>.10.

26. This finding is for illustrative purposes only, because it doesn't take into account previously-noted control variables.

27. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014).

28. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *The Secret to Inclusion in Australian Workplaces: Psychological Safety* (Catalyst, 2015).

29. We single out Empowerment here, because in an earlier regression, Empowerment was the only dimension of inclusive leadership to significantly predict success in role negotiation; p<.05.

30. We used Hayes's PROCESS macro (within SPSS) to examine the links among perceptions of inclusive leadership (predictor), reported success in role negotiation (potential mediator), and self-reported innovation (outcome). After taking into account all previously noted controls, results indicate that the link between inclusive leadership and innovation can be completely explained by success in role negotiation. Put another way, this finding indicates that inclusive leadership predicts innovation *because* it predicts high potentials' success in role negotiation. Once we factor in role negotiation, the direct effect of inclusive leadership on innovation is not significant; b = .0084, p>.10. In contrast, the *indirect* effect of inclusive leadership (via role negotiation) is significant; b = .1207, p<.01, 95% CI [.0729 - .1856]. This same pattern held true when we included just the empowerment component of inclusive leadership. The direct effect of empowerment on innovation is not significant; b = .0218, p>.10. In contrast, the indirect effect of empowerment (via role negotiation) is significant; b = .1085, p<.01, 95% CI [.0600 - .1706].

31. Regression included role negotiation as the outcome and a unidimensional, 11-item (composite) measure of "Perceived Organizational Support" (POS) as the predictor. This previously-validated measure of POS is described in Stephen Armeli, Robert Eisenberger, Peter Fasolo, and Patrick Lynch, "Perceived Organizational Support and Police Performance: The Moderating Influence of Socioemotional Needs," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 83, no. 3 (1998): p. 288-297. Results from the regression revealed that POS is a significant predictor of role negotiation, even after taking into account previously-noted controls; p<.05. For every unit increase in POS, there is a .418 unit increase in role negotiation. POS did not interact with gender to predict success in role negotiation—meaning, POS positively predicted role negotiation for both women and men. Additionally, women and men perceived their organizations to be equally supportive; p>.10. This means that POS positively predicted role negotiations for both women and men.

32. This statement reflects sample items from the measure of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) described in Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Lynch. Specific items can be found here: Robert Eisenberger, Robert Huntington, Steven Hutchinson, and Debora Sowa, "Perceived Organizational Support," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 71, no. 3 (1986): p. 500-507.

33. This finding is for illustrative purposes only; it doesn't take into account previously noted control variables.

34. We repeated the regression, this time including perceived inclusive leadership as an additional control along with previously noted controls. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) remained a significant predictor of reported success in role negotiation; p<.05. For every unit increase in POS, there is a .270 unit increase in role negotiation. The same was true for perceptions of inclusive leadership: even after taking into account POS, inclusive leadership predicted success in role negotiation. For every unit increase in inclusive leadership, we found a .409 unit increase in role negotiation.

Acknowledgments

This report is part of Catalyst's longitudinal project, *The Promise of Future Leadership: Highly Talented Employees in the Pipeline*, which develops timely reports on the retention and advancement of high potential women and men. This report is the result of the ongoing teamwork and dedication of many individuals.

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