

# Global Women in Leadership Initiative Drives Culture Change at Avanade

**“It is inspiring to see the participants realizing their full potential as leaders. They are becoming even stronger role models capable of challenging themselves and others—not only within Avanade, but with our clients and beyond.”**

—Pamela Maynard, *President, Avanade Europe*

**A**vanade is a leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions, and designed experiences. Founded in 2000, they currently have over 4,000 clients, offices in 23 locations and 29,000 digitally connected professionals globally. In an effort to grow their competitive advantage and increase their market potential, they set out to attract new talent and develop their Director-level women leaders.

They also wanted to create a community of leaders equipped with the practical skills and tools necessary to successfully lead the organization into the future.

The Leadership Development team concluded that a targeted curriculum delivered in a structured format with measurable outputs would fill the need. They also determined that executive engagement and action learning would be critical components in this process in order to ensure business impact.

The team at Avanade engaged Linkage to co-create a multifaceted curriculum known as the *Avanade Leadership Program for Women*. Additionally, Harold Weinstein & Associates led the design and implementation of the action learning component.

In addition to other elements, the content of the program was based on seven common hurdles that women often face as they ascend the leadership ranks: Recognized Confidence, Branding and Presence, Clarity, Networking, Making the Ask, Proving Value, and Bias.

## GLOBAL REACH, IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Thirty global manager-level leaders from six continents were selected to participate based on recent performance reviews. The initiative was structured to provide focused learning and support over a period of six months, bringing participants together for both in-person and virtual learning programs. This gave them the ability to apply what they learned about the hurdles in real time and to get feedback and support from their peers during the process.

The learning period consisted of:

**Linkage's Women in Leadership Assessment™**, a 360° tool that evaluates the 11 competencies proven to accelerate leadership growth. The Assessment was administered before the kick-off session, and discussed in a webinar focused on interpreting the assessment results.

A **2-1/2 day kick-off** brought participants from 15 different countries together with executive sponsors and senior leaders, who set expectations for the program and also shared their own leadership stories.

The kick-off also signaled the start of the action learning teams, where each participant had the opportunity to begin to develop a strategic plan for overcoming leadership challenges in the context of the Avanade environment.

**Three virtual skill-building sessions** followed, each of which focused on topics critical to succeeding at Avanade: Networking, Powerful Storytelling, and Communicating Powerfully. In addition to practical, tool-based content, each session invited open dialogue and information exchange, allowing participants to develop a trusted network that would mentor and support them as they advance as leaders at Avanade during and after *Avanade Leadership Program for Women*.

Each participant also received three hours of **individual coaching** based on the 360° assessment results to help them understand their strengths and areas of opportunity as a leader.

Simultaneously, they completed **action learning projects**. Each team identified a hurdle to their advancement and they then created an actionable plan for overcoming it together. This gave them additional opportunities for networking and relationship-building.

In May of 2016, the *Avanade Leadership Program for Women* concluded with a 1-1/2 day capstone program, which featured in-person presentations from each action learning team. Participants had the unique opportunity to present their results to the executive sponsors, reflect on their progress as leaders at Avanade, and share more about their plans to contribute fully to the future growth and success of the company.

## ALPW LEARNING JOURNEY

