

**ANNE LAUVERGEON,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, AREVA****Age:** 48 | **Nationality:** French**Education:** École Normale Supérieure, École des Mines. Advanced degree in physics.**Major Accomplishments:** Lauvergeon enjoyed a distinguished political career before moving to the private sector. From 1984 to 1995, she worked for French government agencies, advising French President François Mitterrand on international economics and trade. Mitterrand often said she knows how to say “no” with a smile. She then worked in French industry, with investment bank Lazard and the telecommunications company Alcatel. She became CEO of French nuclear fuel supplier Cogema in 1999. Dubbed “Atomic Anne,” she merged Cogema with rivals in 2001 to create Areva, the largest state-owned nuclear energy company in the world.

# Feminomics

## Women: an untapped resource as leaders

By Rhea Wessel

**Ask people to name the factors that have driven growth in the global economy in the past decades, and most will say China or the Internet. Actually, a quieter development has far surpassed what China has accomplished. It's women and their increased employment, particularly in developed economies.**

Around the world, women are flocking to the workplace and driving economies. They have contributed to the success of many of Asia's export economies since women hold 60% to 80% of jobs in many export sectors, according to The Economist newspaper. It calculated that the employment of women has not only added more to GDP than new jobs for men but has contributed more than either capital investment or increased productivity.

**SOURCE FOR GROWTH**

In emerging East Asian economies, the number of working women is higher than the OECD average—83 women work for every 100 men. In the United States, women make up half the workforce, and 55% to 60% of German and French women have paying jobs.

Although they contribute half the work, women certainly don't make up half of the executive boards of the world's largest companies. If they did, those companies might be even more profitable, new studies show. Call it “feminomics” if you will: Researchers are beginning to take note and document the impact of women on the economy.

A U.S.-based women's group called Catalyst determined in 2007 that companies with the most women in senior management achieved a return on equity that was an average of 35% higher than those whose boardrooms are dominated by men.

A McKinsey study last year called “Women Matter” reached a similar conclusion. Though still a minority in the upper ranks, more and more women are staking claims to corner offices, and there is growing evidence that companies are beginning to reconsider how they deal with their female employees. C looked at women who ranked highly

on the Financial Times list of Europe's most successful companies and talked to headhunters to understand what high-achieving women have in common.

Vanessa Delacourt, a headhunter for Intersearch in Belgium, has placed many a woman executive and says they all seem to have high IQs; high physical strength necessary to withstand stress; and high levels of so-called emotional intelligence, or the ability to lead people to optimal personal relationships.

A psychologist with more than a decade of experience, Delacourt believes women candidates for top positions often offer their employers more than men do.

“Women are more willing to share ideas, even if they differ from their own, they have stronger emotional competence, and women are more focused on interpersonal relationships than men,” she says.

In addition, since women typically have to balance a variety of responsibilities such as their jobs, organizing daycare and taking care of a majority of household tasks, they are often far better at multitasking than men and they have become more effective and efficient at work.

Anne Lauvergeon, arguably one of France's most powerful women, has described the male attitude to work as a contest to be the last to leave to show how important they are. Women do it the other way around, she says. “It's a race to get home by 8 or 8:30 p.m. because the family is waiting.”

Lauvergeon, the chief executive of Areva, famously returned to her desk just 12 days after giving birth to her first child. She recently declined French President Nicolas Sarkozy's offer of a job as finance minister. The move solidified her image as a strong leader who is not afraid to say “no.” Colleagues are known to call her “Madame Nyet.”

Delacourt says she has witnessed a shift among her client companies. More are thinking about diversity in their hiring practices since they need substantial emotional competence to deal with human resource challenges such as retention and developing talent.

This seems to be the idea behind a move by Anglo American plc, the world's largest mining conglomerate, in

**CYNTHIA CARROLL,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ANGLO AMERICAN PLC**

**Age:** 51 | **Nationality:** American

**Education:** University of Kansas, M.S. in Geology; Harvard Business School, MBA **Major accomplishments:** Carroll is one of only three women to head a FTSE-100 company. She became CEO of Anglo American in March 2007, becoming the first non-South African and first outsider to head the mining conglomerate with roots in South Africa. Before joining Anglo American, Carroll led the primary metals group at Alcan and spent eight years in gas and oil exploration for Amoco. Her appointment came as a surprise to many who had expected an internal candidate, but Carroll is seen as having a firm grip on the reins of the company, which saw net profits rise 18% in 2007 to 4.9 billion euros.



2007. The company surprised Wall Street by naming Cynthia Carroll, a little-known American woman, as chief executive. She became the first outsider, the first woman and the first non-South African to head the company.

“It was a seismic earthquake in Anglo American when she got the job. Nobody expected a woman to get it,” said Virginia Eastman, a London-based headhunter for Heidrick & Struggles. Gooding describes Carroll, a mother of four, as someone with personal charisma who leads from the front. “For her to have done it is an extraordinary testament to her ability,” said Eastman.

**ARE YOU GETTING INVITED TO DINNER?**

Eastman is particularly satisfied when she’s able to place a female executive because she feels she’s doing something for the cause of women. Before becoming a headhunter, Eastman worked for BBC Television and became the broadcaster’s unofficial “sexism correspondent” after she

produced an award-winning documentary called “Sexism in the City.” The ideal female candidate for an executive position, says Eastman, is someone who is clever, discreet and fun to work with—somebody you’d like to have at your dinner party—rather than an overbearing woman.

Wanda Rapaczynski, eastern Europe’s biggest media mogul, is certainly clever and fun, but discreet might not be the right way to describe the former president of the management board of Poland-based Agora, a name which comes from the Greek word for market square.

Frustrated by a law that kept her company from acquiring a television presence, Rapaczynski agreed in 2002 to talk to a politically connected film producer who offered help. He said he could grease the legislative wheels for the small price of \$17.5 million. Rapaczynski got the whole conversation on tape and printed it in her company’s newspaper, starting a year-long scandal that resulted in at least one death threat.

**WANDA RAPACZYNSKI,  
PRESIDENT OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD, AGORA**

**Age:** 60 | **Nationality:** Polish **Education:** Doctorate in psychology from City University of New York and a business degree from Yale School of Management **Major Accomplishments:** The head of Poland’s largest media group began her career in the research lab, but quickly realized she was more interested in running a business than doing brain research. After a degree in management from Yale and a job at CitiBank in New York, she returned to Poland to become a media mogul. She started a company with friends who ran an underground newspaper under communism. She took the company public in 1999, raising \$93 million, and grew its revenues to \$530 million in 2007. She banned the phrase “It can’t be done in Poland” from meetings.



She told C that women who are successful executives are those who know how to build teams and make fast decisions: “Sometimes making a decision fast is more important than making the right decision. The organization moves quickly and the market moves quickly. If you’re in charge, you’ve got to be brave.” Rapaczynski believes women frequently have a greater capacity to make quick decisions, since men have a tendency to put greater faith in the numbers than women.

**YOU HAVE TO WANT IT BAD ENOUGH**

“You don’t have to analyze everything to death. Sometimes you just have to decide. If you’re wrong, you’ll find out later.” Rapaczynski cites a recent example of a fast decision. She just bought a house after considering it for half an hour. “My son-in-law nearly had a heart attack,” she says.

same destination as men. They trickle out of the stream along the way. As European countries and companies face up to their aging workforces and competition from Asia, they would be well-served to examine how to patch the pipeline so that women can fill the demographic gap.

If the employment rate for women remains constant, Europe can expect a shortfall of 24 million people in the active workforce by 2040, McKinsey says. If the rate can be raised to the same level as for men, the projected shortfall drops to 3 million.

In the developing world, the under-utilization of women may even stunt economic growth, a 2005 study by the World Economic Forum suggests. Research also shows the power of educating girls as an antipoverty strategy. “It is probably the single best investment that can be made in the developing world. Not only are better-educated women

**ANTONIA AX:SON JOHNSON,  
CHAIRMAN, AXEL JOHNSON INC.**

**Age:** 64 | **Nationality:** Swedish

**Education:** Master in psychology and economics, University of Stockholm **Major accomplishment:** Ax:son Johnson took over her family’s company in 1982. With roots in coal, steel and shipping, the company branched out into retail, business-to-business and real estate. In 2006, the company had nearly 2 billion euros in sales and employed 15,000 people. Ax:son Johnson is one of Sweden’s wealthiest woman. She is active in politics and is a trustee of a family foundation that supports research in the humanities and social sciences. She owns a stable with 30 horses and values doing business in an environmentally correct and sustainable manner.



Finally, Rapaczynski says women who want to reach the top have to really want it because the job will demand more of them than of their male colleagues. She was a high-flyer at Citibank in New York while she raised her daughter alone. “It’s very tough, and you have to contend with the fact that you forever have a million pingpong balls up in the air if you want to do both jobs. You have to ask yourself if you’re willing to do it.”

The McKinsey study backs this point by showing that many women simply choose against the dual strain of career and children. The higher women climb on the corporate ladder, the fewer children they have, while the higher men climb, the more children they have. In effect, many women executives feel forced to choose one or the other. Forget the so-called glass ceiling. What women really face is a leaky pipeline that starts off gushing full of young, university-educated females but doesn’t carry them to the

more productive, but they raise healthier, better-educated children,” The Economist says. And forget the idea that more working women mean fewer babies. The statistics in Scandinavia show the opposite, and Europe’s lowest fertility rates are indeed in the countries where the fewest women work: Germany, Italy and Spain.

Antonia Ax:son Johnson is a Swedish mother of four and widely recognized as Sweden’s most influential businesswoman. Now chairman of Axel Johnson, a diversified trading company, she presided over the company’s turnaround and years of success. In a recent and rare interview with a German magazine, Ax:son Johnson said that the symbol of the ladder should be replaced by the image of scaffolding when describing the climb to the top.

“You climb up a bit, hold on, move to the side, and then climb again. Only when everyone involved changes their viewpoint will women with children have a chance.” ■