

For International Women’s Day 2025, study on Asian American women corporate leaders reveal career strategies

In-depth interviews yield how culture, expertise, networking play a role

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In support of International Women’s Day (IWD) 2025, the Asian American Business Development Center (AABDC) is proud to release the results of a study on Asian American women in corporate leadership.

At a time when Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs are being discredited across businesses,

academia and the government in America, AABDC continues to stand firm in its mission to recognize the business value contributed by Asian American corporate executives and entrepreneurs. The study, based on a series of in-depth interviews with accomplished, award-winning women in a cross-section of industries and roles, provides valuable insights into their careers, contributions and aspirations.

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This is the second study commissioned by AABDC on professional Asian American women. In 2020, it worked with Nielsen to understand the role of race, gender, stereotypes, and opportunity for Asian American women. It is a topic that has received little attention despite the prevalence in the workforce of this well-qualified, highly-educated, culturally fluent segment.

Among all gender and ethnic groups, Asian American

women have the smallest share of CEO and C-level roles in corporations, according to a report by SHRM, the world’s largest HR organization. In 2021-2022, Asian American women accounted for



1.8 percent of CEO and 1.9 percent of other C-level roles. This compares with the next biggest group, Asian American men, at 6.2 percent and 5.9 percent of CEO and other C-level roles, respectively.

Aligning with the IWD 2025's theme of "accelerate action," AABDC commissioned the study to provide a better understanding of the dynamics in the careers of Asian American women business leaders. Research company Iris Flex™ conducted 21 in-depth interviews with the C-level and executive women leaders over a period of two months this year. It discovered that this group navigates corporate America powered by their business acumen, integrity and cultural formation.

A mix of immigrants and first-generations who witnessed their parents' journey to America, they presented a picture of "corporate alchemists" who have taken their differences and distinctions and turned them into advantages, according to Idil Cakim, founder of Iris Flex. "Asian American women leaders emphasize that advancing in corporate America requires being vocal about achievements, securing sponsor support and networking. Accustomed to being seen as different, they boldly explore uncharted territories and innovate. They champion inclusion and value diverse perspectives," notes Ms. Cakim based on the study findings.

Key findings include:

□ Leadership style: A fine balance of business-first directives, consideration for stakeholders and an astute understanding of cultural differences. While they lead with business insights, they consistently honor diversity of thought and culture.

□ Decision making: When making business decisions, they operate through a series of concentric circles, weaving together individualistic and communal values. At the epicenter of their process is data with a view towards corporate goals. Next is their consideration for the people involved in the initiatives. Then comes building consensus while drumming up support for their ideas from a broader group of stakeholders.

□ Upbringing influence: They consistently credit their upbringing and the challenges they faced early in their careers for the times they can see the opportunity in the midst of adversity. For them, thinking differently and standing out in a corporate setting is akin to their experiences of being one of the few non-white students in a classroom or moving to an area with few Asian families. They are used to navigating differences and earning acceptance.

Read the executive summary for the views of the study group about DEI programs and the advice they offer to the future generations of Asian American women.

"Throughout our 30+ years of operations, AABDC has paid tribute to some of the most accomplished female business leaders from our community, among them – Indra Nooyi, Lisa Su and Anne Chow – and each year, I am awed by the caliber of every new cohort of talented women who are admitted into our Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business award program," said John Wang, founder and president of AABDC.

“For this year’s IWD, we wanted to go a step further and to provide some actionable insights from some of our exceptional women leaders. Change can’t happen if we sit by passively. We hope that the perspectives we have uncovered yield wisdom for not just the Asian American community, but serve as an inspiration for everyone,” Mr. Wang added.

About AABDC:

The Asian American Business Development Center, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization established in 1994. It assists Asian American businesses in strengthening their capacity to compete in the mainstream market, to expand business opportunities and to promote recognition of Asian American businesses’ contributions to the general economy.

For more details, please visit: www.aabdc.com

Media interviews: please contact evelyn.liu@aabdc.com for interview requests with the study participants and AABDC.

About Iris Flex™

Iris Flex is a research company dedicated to helping businesses stand out and grow through tailored thought-leadership platforms. By conducting scientifically designed studies, Iris Flex differentiates brands, sets the agenda and elevates conversations on key social and business issues. For more information, visit www.irisflex.com.

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