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**How do Gender and Political Skill Combine to Influence Career  
Advancement?**

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## Abstract

Women are making advances in shattering the proverbial 'glass ceiling'; however, significant gender disparities still exist in many organisations and the pace of change is excruciatingly slow. Thus, this research set out to add to the existing body of research by identifying factors that could expedite the change and help realise equality in the workplace. This study utilised a policy-capturing methodology to determine how an employee's gender and level of political skill combine to influence their career advancement. A sample of 101 experienced managers from New Zealand and Australia reviewed a set of orthogonally designed performance appraisal results for fictitious male and female employees with varying levels of political skill (i.e., interpersonal influence and networking ability). The managers judged the career advancement prospects of these employees and their likelihood of proactively seeking career advancement. A three-step method of data reduction, regression and analysis of covariance was utilised to analyse the managers' judgements. No interaction was found between an employee's political skill level and gender; however, both factors were found to have an important role in aspects of career advancement. Specifically, an employee's level of political skill had a significant influence on both their career advancement prospects and the likelihood that they would proactively seek career advancement. Both male and female employees with higher levels of political skill were judged significantly more likely to advance in their careers and proactively seek advancement. Female employees were judged significantly less likely than male employees to proactively seek career advancement. The implications of these findings are discussed, including the

need for targeted training programmes for female employees aspiring to progress to leadership.

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