



UNLOCKING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Generally speaking, what gives **one** company a competitive edge over another? Is it a unique operational efficiency? Perhaps it's an exclusive strategic or tactical approach to bolstering the company's bottom line. Better yet, maybe it's a large-scale investment in corporate culture and leadership development.

What if it's no *one* thing, but a combination of many separate variables that, when segmented appropriately, allows some entities to outperform others? With that in mind, *Insigniam Quarterly* presents you with our "competitive edge" issue.

To get an acute understanding of how leading companies distinguish themselves, we went to the sources — Ritz-Carlton, Beechcraft, Cisco, Zappos, and BGITech — to investigate the myriad ways these standouts outperform their fiercest competitors.

In our cover story, *IQ* publisher Gordon Price Locke speaks to Michel Landel, CEO of Sodexo — the world's 18th largest employer — regarding Landel's ardent commitment to diversity and inclusion on a grand scale, and how he's consistently leveraged his life experience as a "world citizen" to position the global services company as a bastion of success.

During the course of our research on competitive advantage, it became alarmingly clear that amongst the endless sea of contenders fighting for the same dollar, euro, and yen, the vast majority are not utilizing their most impactful and transformational resource to unlock breakthrough results: women in executive leadership positions.

A quick glance at Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 companies reveals startling truths as to the lack of female representation in the C-suite. In the U.S., for instance, just 3 percent of Fortune 500 companies have women at the reins, and in the U.K., just four women helm FTSE 100 firms.

In our special section, beginning on page 40, we'll examine the barriers impeding female advancement into the C-suite, as well as the scientifically proven benefits that women bring to the office of chief executive. Furthermore, we'll explore what men — long the gatekeepers of corporate succession planning — can do to cultivate corporate environments conducive to the advancement of executive women, from men who have done exactly that.

And for those of you in a position to influence your boards or executive committees, take a page from Henry Ford, who once said, "Competition is the keen cutting edge of business." With that in mind, allow this issue to serve as a bellwether for what is possible when all of your competitive weapons are unleashed on your competitors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shideh Sedgh Bina".

Shideh Sedgh Bina
Founding Partner, Insigniam