Simply the Best

Support. Mentoring. Career advancement. These are just a few of the benefits you may reap when you have a strong women's network in place at the company at which you work. If you are fortunate to work at such a company, you can enjoy a number of personal and professional benefits designed to offer support and professional growth.

IEEE Women in Engineering Magazine received over 150 nominations and narrowed the field to the top ten “Best Companies for Women to Work.” Applications were judged by a panel of national experts in workforce diversity as well as engineering and science leaders from various science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.

Here are the ten leading the pack in providing women with flexibility and the resources to achieve success in engineering:

BAE Systems

BAE Systems is a global company engaged in the development, delivery, and support of advanced defense and aerospace systems in the air, on land, and at sea. With major operations across five continents, customers and partners in more than 100 countries, and strong positions in each of their six home markets, including Australia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, BAE Systems is the third largest global defense company and sixth largest U.S. defense company. BAE Systems, Inc., the U.S. subsidiary of BAE Systems plc, is headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, and is responsible for developing BAE Systems’ trans-Atlantic business, relationships with the U.S. Government, administration of BAE Systems’ Special Security Agreement, and managing its United States-based operating groups.

The company actively supports women’s forums that are employee driven and serve a business purpose. Based on business needs and employee interests, externally focused forums tend to promote educational readiness and involve employees in the classroom while internally focused forums are geared toward individual employee development and networking.
“As a result of the company’s relationship with IEEE Women in Engineering, we sent three women to a WIE-sponsored development seminar,” explains Cynthia Collver, director for equal employment opportunity and diversity, at BAE Systems Inc. “They returned excited by the open discussion of skills development with other women who had common interests and understandings. They initiated a teleconference call with women engineers across the company and discussed the most important things they learned. The call was both a learning opportunity and a way to connect with presenters and the participants. The feedback was ‘do more of this’.”

Career advancement is very important to women, Collver adds, and mutually compatible with the importance to the company of having a strong pipeline of talent. BAE Systems offers a full range of development programs targeted at various stages of one’s career. Tuition reimbursement is available, and partnerships are in place with external providers that offer additional development opportunities. The company supports memberships in professional organizations that offer targeted development programs and networking opportunities in a highly supportive environment. Some of BAE’s businesses offer a 9/80 work schedule, which compresses 80 hours of work over a two-week period into nine days rather than ten. By working eight nine-hour days and one eight-hour day, an employee can take off every other Friday.

“I have been allowed to work at home without hesitation under specific circumstances, for example, when the New Hampshire winter weather makes roads impassible,” says Stephanie Anastopoulos, systems engineer and manager, electronics and integrated solutions, BAE Systems, in Nashua, New Hampshire. “I have been encouraged to participate in women’s conferences and also have been treated extremely well when on business travel with coworkers even though I might be either the youngest member on the team or the only female. Also, my IEEE WIE membership fee is paid by the engineering leadership development program department, a four-year competitive program that gives new college graduates a rotation in various departments while they pursue a company-paid master’s degree. In turn, the employee must receive his or her master’s degree within that period, participate in, and take a lead role, in discretionary activities, and select a position from several offered following degree award.”

The Submarine Solutions team, 10% of which is female, has formed a women’s network that has provided a platform to inspire, develop, and support women. Every woman in the business is invited to participate in its core program, which consists of three conferences held throughout the year.

“This year our theme is ‘Team Working,’ a key theme within our business,” says Rosalind Murray, founder of the women’s network in Submarine Solutions, BAE Systems, Barrow-in-Furness, United Kingdom, and operations change manager for Submarine Solutions. “The conferences provide networking opportunities, and we invited senior men within the business to the networking parts of the program. We are also putting in place an apprentice-mentoring scheme so that the young people in the business have people to go to if they have problems. We have been hosting ‘Lunches with Leaders’ aimed at the more senior women so that they can share ideas and experiences with senior figures within the business. Our other work teams are looking at health and well being and engaging with local schools and careers advisors to make them aware that there are good opportunities within engineering businesses.”

The Boeing Company

Boeing has over 164,000 employees in 49 U.S. states and over 70 countries, providing a vast network where a potential employee is almost sure to find a job that fits. Deb Limb, director of airplane payloads and structures engineering has been at Boeing for 20 years, working her way up to become the first woman to hold her current directorship. Though she laughingly tells the story that she only had one doll as a child and even then put a cape on her and chucked her out the window to see how far she would fly, Limb didn’t always work in airplane program engineering. She spent a fair amount of time in Boeing’s customer service department, “which is fantastic if you like to work with people, solve problems, and organize and communicate across cultures,” she recalls.

Now, she and her team work to support development and delivery of a variety of commercial airplanes to clients, managing the airplane structures (parts that make up the physical plane) and payloads (items that make the plane functional for customers—seats, lavatories, galleys, overhead bins, and so forth).

Thinking back to when she started at Boeing, Limb remarks that there were very few women in structures engineering and, in fact, she can remember only
one who held a leadership position. “After 20 years,” she says, “we at Boeing have made tremendous inroads in representing and creating a workplace where all people can really engage and work in a positive environment.” Limb credits the company for supporting all of its employees such that many women now hold leadership positions across the enterprise.

The company provides employee support in a variety of ways. On-site or near-site fitness centers, health assessments, day care centers, a generous family leave policy, and the freedom to work “virtually” and telecommute, when appropriate, all help employees create a necessary work-life balance.

Employees are also encouraged to participate in numerous internal and external affinity groups, such as the Society of Women Engineers or Women in Aviation, which help members to build networks and mentoring relationships within their interests. Boeing provides a group of its own, Boeing Women in Leadership, which offers panel discussions, mentoring, speaker programs, and other opportunities for employees to further their development and explore career growth options. Women in Leadership is open to both men and women, clarifies Limb, and there are always some men at the meetings.

Boeing makes a point of providing this encouragement for employees of all backgrounds. With policies established to ensure that the company provides an open, inclusive, and positive work environment, Limb confirms that the faces of Boeing are definitely becoming more diverse.

Most of all, Boeing supports each employee’s diverse passions. “Each of us is blessed with a different set of gifts and the key is to align these skills with the job. That is the area in which you can excel,” Limb says. To that end, Boeing publishes a broad base of employment assignments in which nearly every type of job is available: from engineering and manufacturing positions to careers in the company’s medical facilities, security staff, and fire department, to jobs in finance, travel, and human resources. With such an enormous number of opportunities available, it is easy to find the career that will be most exciting for the individual at Boeing. Employees can proudly declare, as Deb Limb does, “I’ve never had a boring day at work.”

**DRS Technologies**

Working at a leading global supplier of defense technology systems that provides support to military forces, intelligence agencies, and prime contractors, DRS employees are faced with highly demanding problems every day—challenges that bring a deep sense of satisfaction when they are met.

“We work for the young men and women who serve our country,” says Richard Goldberg, vice president of public affairs. “Our employees are proud to support their efforts to succeed in their mission.” But DRS’s approximately 10,000 employees worldwide are lucky to have more than just a sense of purpose when they come to work each day. They also have a strong network of company resources guiding them as they achieve their goals.

DRS emphasizes training and career development programs that amplify the opportunities available to all employees. The company also supports conferences, events, activities, and job fairs held by the IEEE, Women in Engineering, Society of Women Engineers, American Society for Quality, National Society of Black Engineers, Society of Hispanic Engineers, and others. To further promote professional development, DRS pledges a work environment that is up to date and integrates the latest technology, trends, engineering systems, and product designs.

In addition to keeping employees stimulated at work with innovative equipment, DRS is also devoted to supporting employees at home. A company newsletter, *Connections*, highlights employees who are making a difference in their jobs and at home in their com-
munities. The company has also initiated an employee action team (EAT) and survey system to address the needs and concerns of employees.

DRS actually begins investing in its workforce at an early age, participating in recruitment fairs, sponsorship initiatives, and youth programs that encourage students interested in engineering and technology. Goldberg believes recruiting prospective employees, especially those from varied backgrounds, is vital to the company’s performance. Diversity is a core value of DRS, and “a diverse workforce expands the knowledge base within our company,” says Goldberg. “This expanded knowledge base promotes the innovation that has made DRS successful.” Mark Newman, chair and CEO of DRS agrees, saying, “It’s a tribute to our workforce that we are a leader in virtually every area in which we compete.”

Women make up a significant part of DRS’s employee base. Stating that his company felt honored to have been named to WIE’s top ten list, Goldberg adds, “We have always valued the contributions that women make to the success of DRS. They serve in critical leadership roles and contribute to our overall success.” These leadership roles range from the senior vice president of human resources to the vice president of investor relations to senior engineers and much more.

Paulette January, a senior software quality engineer employed with the company for more than 13 years and editor of IEEE Women in Engineering Newsletter, excitedly notes, “I have an extremely challenging and interesting career with a company that respects me as an individual and values my contribution to the organization. It’s enjoyable to come to work as DRS has a nice and friendly work environment—and it’s fun.”

DRS continues to see an ever-changing composition of its workforce, especially in regard to women. “In recent years, we have seen a dramatic increase in women graduating from engineering schools across the country,” confirms Goldberg. “We believe that we offer unlimited opportunities to women within our ranks and encourage the development of everyone’s professional growth plans.”

**GE Healthcare**

GE Healthcare provides transformational medical technologies and services designed to provide a new age of patient care. GE Healthcare’s broad range of products and services enable healthcare providers to better diagnose and treat cancer, heart disease, neurological diseases, and other conditions earlier. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, GE Healthcare is a US$17 billion unit of General Electric Company.

The Women’s Network was created in 1997 to help the women working at GE advance their careers and the company’s business. This effort includes sharing the experience, best practices, and knowledge of successful women role models—the executive team represents a diverse group of women from each of GE’s businesses and critical corporate functions. This thriving network has evolved into a worldwide organization of over 125 hubs (chapters) in 39 countries, while helping thousands of women around the world.

Past events held by the network have included workshops, speaker engagements, mentoring, and networking activities. It has also reached out to the communities in which it operates to partner with local organizations to contribute physical and financial resources for those in need.

Seeking to impact the global landscape, it has established a scholarship pro-

**Google**

If you ask a computer engineer or computer science student if they would like to work at Google, their eyes light up and a smile always comes to their face. Google employees also exhibit this same enthusiasm for their company. Inevitably, when asked to describe Google’s workplace, the first word used to describe the company...
is “fun.” This amazing company has the ability to inspire and encourage innovation in their employees. Google has earned a place on this list due to its unique nature in breaking traditional corporate work culture rules and “doing the right thing” for their employees and the community.

Imagine having a company actually allocate an employee’s work hours to pursue projects of the employee’s choosing. Not only is this quite unusual but also a brilliant plan for Google to bring new innovations into its products and services. What most people don’t know about Google is that it is not a company purely comprised of electrical, and computer engineers and computer scientists. Google hires engineers and scientists from almost every engineering and science discipline. The company has accomplished much more than creating the world’s premiere search engine. It is the world’s leading example for the true power that collaboration in the workplace can bring to industry success.

While the company has internal support groups to encourage diversity within the company, Google has had a tremendous impact encouraging women and minorities to pursue engineering and science outside the University. At several Google outreach events, which WIE members attended, it was clear that the Google employees reflected the diversity of the audience at the event. Young children connected with their Google hosts and hostesses because the Google employees brought to life the fact that “engineers are real people” with broad creative interests beyond engineering and science.

Many mothers who had left their technical positions to raise their families were also in attendance at Google events. Google was commended by these women for not only reaching out to young children but also for encouraging these mothers to re-enter the technology workforce. Google employees found unique ways to encourage displaced engineers to get back to work and brought to life that Google’s dedication to their workplace family, extended to real families in the community.

Raytheon
Raytheon is a technology leader specializing in defense, homeland security, and other government markets throughout the world. With a history of innovation spanning more than 80 years, Raytheon, headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts, provides state-of-the-art electronics, mission systems integration, and other capabilities in the areas of sensing, effects, command, control, communications and intelligence systems, as well as a broad range of mission support services.

The Raytheon Women’s Network-North East (RWN-NE) was formed to provide women with a professional network within the company, one that could provide resources as well as opportuni-
ties to meet other employees that may have common interests or issues. The network is valuable in both attracting and retaining female employees, which contributes to an inclusive culture.

“RWN-NE provides members with both a network of other employees, approximately 600 in the Northeast, as well as professional resources that help members to achieve full potential in their careers,” describes Judy Durkin, president of RWN-NE. “Primary areas of focus for activities and events include career development, time with leaders within the company, training, as well as community outreach. One of our ongoing lunch and learn series currently is ‘Presenting Confidently.’ This series provides tips and tools for women who want to improve their communication and presentation skills. Another recent event, ‘Craft Your Path,’ involved members spending time with leaders to discuss key leadership skills. Other events have focused on women’s health issues, providing awareness as well as resources to obtain help. These events allow women to seek out and confide with one another on issues and concerns that could impede productivity in the workplace.”

In response to a survey that RWN-NE issued to its members earlier in the year, career development was reported as the number one focus for its members. Women noted that they wanted the chance to perform at their best and be recognized for it. As a result, the network has placed an emphasis on this area for many of its events. Along with the sharing of leadership skills, it holds training sessions to educate members on the company and its technology. The other benefit members see in this area comes from mentoring, both formal and informal, through other members in the network as well as through the leaders that speak at or join our events, Durkin adds.

One of the most challenging times for many women in the workplace is returning to work after having a child. There have been some real improvements in this area in some parts of Raytheon, Durkin recalls, including where several sites have established a privacy room for new mothers. The recognition of this type of need is very supportive for women and would be beneficial if expanded to more sites, she admits. The company also provides resources in this area from its work/life toolkit, which includes backup care and guides for expectant parents and is helpful to all employees.

“One of Raytheon’s goals is to leverage diversity efforts as a competitive advantage,” Durkin says. “This involves creating an inclusive culture and valuing diverse opinions. The support Raytheon provides for RWN helps in this area, particularly to attract and retain women by providing a network that provides significant resources to maximize one’s potential. By helping women attain their potential, the company overall will be more successful.”

Texas Instruments

On its Web site, Texas Instruments (TI) states that it “develops analog, digital signal processing, RF and DLP® (digital light processing) semiconductor technologies that help customers deliver consumer and industrial electronics products with greater performance, increased power efficiency, higher precision, more mobility and better quality.” TI’s activities encompass technologies ranging from mobile phones to classroom projectors to prosthetic devices and much more. Tegwin Pulley, vice president of diversity, work-life, and workforce development, says, “I would never say it’s easy to excel in our business. It is a tough industry from a technology perspective, very competitive and very innovative.”

But while the work may provide all sorts of challenges, the company does a lot to ensure that its employees are well cared for. TI offers on-site fitness centers, credit union and concierge services, and a 24-hour resource and referral service where employees can find information on child care, elder care, financial issues, and other work-life questions. Employees may also take advantage of flexible workplace arrangements that enable them to work when and where they want.

They can also choose to participate in the company’s diversity network system. The first of these networks was established in 1989 to focus on career opportunities for women. “Members meet on company time, supported by company funds, to examine how women can continue to make progress at Texas Instruments.”
explains Pulley. “And we now have a broad range of networks that all employees can get involved in to foster an inclusive environment across the company.” To help all employees continue to advance, TI focuses on development opportunities, mentoring, and leadership programs.

In a typically male-dominated industry, the success these policies have had with women is notable. Pulley says she frequently hears feedback from training course attendees who say that the programs helped them realize that they could do more. She’s also gotten positive responses to flexible workplace arrangements, citing one story where a female engineer worked remotely for two weeks, enabling her to spend precious time with ill family members. Currently, TI boasts a U.S. workforce that is about 23% women and, Pulley adds proudly, “these women fill a variety of significant roles. Twenty-seven percent of our company officers are women, while four of our 11 board members are women.” With such support of women, it is no surprise that, in addition to this WIE list, TI has been on Working Mother magazine’s 100 Best Companies list, Fortune magazine’s 100 Best Companies to Work For list, and the National Association for Female Executives’ Top Companies for Executive Women list.

TI not only focuses on its own employees but on development for its communities as well. The company makes a concerted effort to promote educational development opportunities for students, especially girls, in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The Women of TI Fund, set up by some of the company’s female executives, encourages employees to pool their donations to the “High-Tech High Heels” strategic initiative, which sponsors training programs and camps for girls and their teachers to develop STEM capabilities and dispel gender stereotypes. With extensive work-life support for present employees and such a dedicated investment to future science and engineering professionals, it seems TI will have a long run as a top company for women to work.

**Textron Defense Systems**

Textron Defense Systems Corp., a Textron Inc. company headquartered in Wilmington, Massachusetts, has been providing innovative solutions to the defense, homeland security, and aerospace communities for over 50 years. Known for its precision smart weapons, intelligent battlefield and surveillance systems, software solutions, aircraft control components, piston engines, armored vehicles, and unmanned aircraft systems, the Textron Systems family includes AAI, HR Textron, Lycoming Engines, Overwatch Tactical Operations, Overwatch Geospatial Operations, Textron Defense Systems, and Textron Marine and Land Systems. Working as both a prime contractor and supplier/partner, Textron Systems plays a major role in the preparedness of United States’ armed forces and its allies.

The Textron Defense Systems’ (TDS) women’s network was established in July 2005. One hundred and twenty-five women, with the support of senior management, worked together to identify important topics of interest to women in the workplace. Through outreach efforts across the company, such as a survey and organized focus groups, the company uncovered that expanding career opportunities, job flexibility, and professional development were of most importance. A steering committee of 19 volunteers was established to maintain engagement with these topics and partner with senior management to move team recommendations and activities forward.

The women’s network has established open communications with senior management and through this exposure its priorities have raised awareness and aligned with company goals of diversity and inclusiveness, according to Deb Valley, director of program management integration at TDS and chair of the women’s network steering committee. The network is built on trust among its members and senior management and it allows both

Textron Defense Systems, which provides defense and aerospace technology solutions, engages its employees through surveys and focus groups.
groups to work together to accomplish common goals that not only benefit women, but all employees. Examples of these accomplishments include a network of support, mentors, and career advancement opportunities for women, offering training opportunities aimed at providing the tools required to take charge of individual career goals and learning how to communicate and deliver effective messages. The women's network also sponsored a motivational speaker event that was open to all employees, reviewed existing job flexibility policies and aligned with recent corporate objectives to encourage more widespread use and acceptance of a flexible schedule for all employees and successfully worked with senior management to identify and support areas of growth potential and advancement for women.

Addressing women's needs and the needs of a diverse workforce is beneficial to every company because it creates an environment of inclusion, which can increase employee satisfaction and can contribute to talent retention. This environment also supports a diverse outlook on business solutions by encouraging out of the box thinking, says Valley and Judy Bewig, senior manager, systems and software design lab, and member of the women's network. TDS is dedicated to fostering a culture of continuous improvement and the women's network is one of the many diverse groups being formed and supported to focus on employee engagement and talent development, adds Valley and Bewig. They are excited about the future and will continue to generate ideas and activities that make Textron Systems a great place to work.

Verizon Communications
Verizon Communications Inc. is an American broadband and telecommunications company that was formed in 2000, when Bell Atlantic, one of the regional Bell operating companies, merged with the General Telephone & Electronics Corporation. It consists of Verizon landline and Verizon Wireless and is currently the second largest telecom company in the United States.

For over 25 years, the Women’s Association of Verizon Employees (WAVE) has built a detailed history of community service. With active chapters across the United States, WAVE provides its members with professional and personal development opportunities and serves as a resource to Verizon, providing counsel and support on issues affecting women employees.

“The WAVE organization provides an incredible network of both men and women, but predominantly women, to share problems, ideas and solutions that are both work related and personal,” explains Cissy George, director of North Atlantic regional engineering at Verizon and former president of WAVE. “It provides training opportunities to its members and helps develop them for their current and future jobs. WAVE has many mentoring circles that meet monthly and brown bag lunches on a regular basis. This gives employees the chance to meet with executives and learn more about what’s going on in the business. It also gives them a chance to get some visibility with and get to know some of the executives better. These are great opportunities for women to develop themselves.”

Among its successful endeavors, WAVE established a partnership with the national nonprofit literacy organization Reach Out and Read. WAVE members were matched with Reach Out and Read programs in their home communities and assisted Reach Out and Read sites in a number of efforts including reading to young children in clinic waiting rooms, conducting local book drives, and sponsoring Scholastic Book Fairs with the proceeds benefiting their local programs.

Young children at home are also in the forefront of Verizon’s mind as the
company’s employees may opt for maternity and paternity leaves of absence for newborn and newly adopted childcare. Verizon also provides a gradual return to work option that makes it easier for women to return to the job after having a child. Depending on a person’s position, flexible options are offered including working from home full time, part time, or once in a while. This flex schedule helps people take care of personal issues like doctor’s appointments and child care issues.

The Walt Disney Company

Though many years have passed since Walt Disney roamed the halls of a Disney office, his influence can still be found there. Company culture is grounded in his philosophy of a Disney “family,” meriting employee name tags that have first names only and hallways where office doors remain open, like they do in Disney’s ride engineering branch, Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI). WDI designs all of Disney’s theme parks, attractions, resort hotels, cruise ships and other regional entertainment venues from concept through completion. “I’ve been here 20 years and you couldn’t pry me out of this place,” extols Mike Withers, WDI’s vice president of ride engineering.

As the group responsible for the design, development, and production of the ride systems in Walt Disney theme parks, WDI ride engineers have an important duty to their customers. “We are responsible for anything that conveys guests,” explains Withers. “It is a very high level of safety, and there is a real badge of honor around that.” Ride engineers are accountable not only for the technical aspects of their work but also for the business side. Project engineers must monitor the budgets of their rides, many of which are multimillion dollar expenses. With challenges arising every day, “Imagineers” perform work that is both exciting and creates a sense of pride in all involved.

For women specifically, Withers believes the thrill is in the wide range of work opportunities available. Women are still a minority in engineering in general, but at Disney, they don’t have to pick just one specialty. “Engineers are not pigeonholed into one particular area,” confirms Withers. “You can see a project from the beginning concept through cutting the ribbon on opening day.” WDI employees are able to participate in all phases of the project, even taking on business responsibilities as well.

Being able to try so many types of exciting work can help attract women interested in trying an engineering career, even if they are unsure which position is right for them. At Disney, Imagineers easily widen skill sets from the vast job responsibilities and, consequently, advance their careers. Add in the welcoming atmosphere of first names, open doors, and the general camaraderie that results from such bonding activities as group camping or canoeing trips, and WDI becomes a true environment of encouragement. The company further motivates employees to reach goals with training and educational development programs, mentor relationships, and diversity initiatives.

Disney also sponsors the ImagiNations Design Competition, a program to engage university students by asking teams to come up with a creative design for the parks. According to Frank Reifsnyder, a media relations representative for the company, the competition has “drawn teams made up of individuals who really populate this place with great ideas,” and many participants have been offered internships or jobs with the company.

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