

The Value of Mentoring in Facilitating the Retention and Upward Mobility of Women in ICT

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Abstract

The low employment and poor retention of women in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) work force remains a serious issue at a time when there is a shortage of skilled ICT workers. Effective intervention strategies such as mentoring have been found to assist ICT women to senior decision making positions. Using a family of concepts inherent in organisational and the ICT occupational cultures as a framework of analysis this paper presents the results from interviews with 90 professional women in the New Zealand ICT workforce. The large Government and international organisations provided formal mentoring programs, in which 12 of the women had participated. Forty of the women had developed mentoring relationships serendipitously, usually with senior male colleagues. These relationships were often informal. A number of women wanted mentors but were unable to find them. If the industry is concerned about the lack of women in ICT then it is recommended that where formal programs are not available access to external mentoring programs should be a part of the human resource management strategy.

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