

CRAIN'S

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THE MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

IN CHICAGO BUSINESS

YES, CORPORATE AMERICA STILL HAS A WOMAN PROBLEM. And Chicago isn't exactly a capital of progress on this front: Of the area's 100 largest public companies, only seven are helmed by women.

But now for some good news: We've recently witnessed a string of high-profile promotions of female executives. And more of them are being named to major corporate boards outside the city. This movement prompted Crain's to conduct a fresh examination of the area's most powerful businesswomen *and* assemble this first-ever ranking.

This list is strictly business. You won't find politicians or philanthropists or the city's culturati. On the following pages you'll read about high-performing CEOs and, perhaps, future CEOs. To compile it, editors considered four criteria: size and importance of a company; title and performance; career trajectory; and an individual's sphere of influence civically.

LINDA MYERS

50, partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP



At Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Chicago's version of an elite Wall Street law firm, where partner pay averages nearly \$2 million, Linda Myers heads the debt finance practice while sitting on the management committee *and* chairing the administrative committee. In 1994, the Berwyn native was Kirkland's second debt finance hire. There are now 110 lawyers involved in what firm bankruptcy guru James Sprayregen terms "a piece of our secret sauce" in completing restructuring assignments like United Airlines' in 2006.

Outside of handling billion-dollar-plus financings, Ms. Myers co-heads management training for younger Kirkland lawyers—a subject, she says, she would like to see be better taught to law students.

Steven R. Strahler