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The most powerful women business leaders in the U.S., whether CEOs or in other senior positions, are proactively engaging external audiences and are also being acknowledged for their roles as effective leaders, according to an ongoing study by Weber Shandwick on how the most powerful women in business are engaging. A full 60 percent of women who speak at executive conferences also have a seat on today's boards, demonstrating a direct "speak and sit" correlation.

Weber Shandwick examines the engagement activities of the world's top executives each year to determine how these leaders position themselves in the eyes of their key stakeholders. For this year's study, the firm examined speaking engagements, board memberships and honors of the most powerful women in business, based on Fortune's 50 Most Powerful Women (MPW) U.S. list.

The majority of women (72 percent) on this list spoke at one or more conferences in 2012, and, on average, had 2.1 speaking engagements during the year. While the same number of most powerful women spoke at conferences in 2011 and 2012, each spoke at nearly one fewer conference on average in 2012. This suggests that these executives continue to recognize the value of conference visibility, but they are more selectively choosing their speaking engagements.

The leading speaking forums in 2012 for these most powerful women included Fortune's Most Powerful Women Summit*, The Wall Street Journal's Women in the Economy, MIT Sloan Women in Management, Catalyst Awards Dinner, Fortune Brainstorm TECH and the World Economic Forum in Davos. A categorization of all

of the conferences found that, by far, these women spoke at more industry-focused

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Weber Shandwick's research also shows that these executives are being acknowledged for their roles as leaders. On average, these female business leaders sat on 2.6 boards, the most prevalent type being industry/professional. Six in 10 women received an award or a place on a rankings or "best of" list. Of the honors bestowed upon the most powerful women in business, most (72 percent) were rankings compared to awards.

"Conferences, rankings and awards are essential for company storytelling," said Carol Ballock, executive vice president at Weber Shandwick. "Women business leaders are leveraging these tools to communicate their companies' messages and reinforce their company brands."

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