

Celebrating Diversity Champions – *Insights* from AmCham Inaugural HERo Awards 2019

About the *Insights...* series

AmCham Women’s Research and Publications Committee presents a series of short articles sharing promising practices to promote gender diversity.

What makes a HERo?

As the second season of the HERo Awards approaches, AmCham Women thought it appropriate to share some of the inspiring best practices that won over the judging panel for the inaugural HERo Awards in 2019.

Members organizations and individuals that were able to cogently demonstrate some or all of the following best practices stood out:

1. Gender Composition

Organizations that stood out in this category had tracked progress against established internal targets as well as external benchmarks for reaching milestones—on both employee and senior management levels. The efforts were supplemented by features, assets, or resources including: strong diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies, dedicated D&I leaders and/or councils, investment in stretch assignments to develop talent across gender, career trajectory measurement, balanced recruitment and advancement policies, and leadership competencies and training requirements; along with strong commitment from senior leadership.

2. De-biasing Organizational Policies and Practices

Frontrunners included organizations that had carved out policies and practices that enabled female talent to manage work life balance. The more advanced organizations went a step further and implemented gender-neutral policies and practices—not policies and practices for just women—to encourage a systemic culture of inclusion.

HERo Awards Categories
<p><i>Individual</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifetime Achievement HERo: A female leader who has dedicated her efforts to advancing women in the workplace, having made outstanding contributions over the course of her career, and generated greater economic and workplace equality through equal access to employment and leadership opportunities for women in Singapore.• Trailblazer HERo: An individual who has driven significant and systemic change in his/her organization to increase the representation of women in leadership and across the organization.• Male Champion HERo: A male leader who has taken significant and visible steps to advance women in leadership in the workplace.
<p><i>Organizational</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SME HERoes: Progress and contributions toward building a more gender diverse and equitable working space in Singapore.• MNC HERoes: Leadership efforts and contributions toward building a more gender inclusive environment across the company in Singapore and/or regionally.

Examples include allowing flexi-work and generous parental leave, along with standardized paid maternity leave throughout all APAC countries, programs to assist transition back to work from maternity leave, and dedicated breast-feeding rooms. More advanced organizations also provided a range of leave and support systems that benefitted both parents and non-parents.

3. Managing Unconscious Bias

The judging panel was impressed by the number of organizations that were actively addressing long-held biased beliefs and behaviors, raising awareness through multi-step initiatives such as offering diversity training to better spot & alleviate bias and increase cross-culture consciousness; implementing progressive recruitment practices; and creating cultures that encourage employees to openly but politely call out unconscious bias when it occurs, irrespective of hierarchy. Organizations with metrics or goals associated with this stood out especially.

4. Mentoring Programs

Innovation in approaches to mentoring were also noted. For example, one organization's model matched the top 100 women with members of the senior leadership team to guide them in their careers. Data confirmed that this program gave the selected participants important recognition internally, and positively impacted retention for women at all levels of the organization. Leaders who took on active mentorship roles across their organization were looked upon favourably by the judging panel for the individual HERo awards.

5. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Several of the submissions showcased ERGs that empowered women to grow as leaders by offering programs that inspire and enable skills. Some examples included Lean-In circles for women to share opportunities and challenges, and support each other on any common shared interest; networking groups for women; social responsibility programs focused on women issues and development; and active engagement of male colleagues. ERGs that worked externally as well as internally indicated a more progressive approach from leaders and organizations.

6. Commitment at the Top

Winning submissions not only engaged leaders to participate in D&I activities, but also integrated measurement and evaluation of the leaders' D&I contributions into the performance management process. These leaders were required to demonstrate leadership behaviours that showed commitment to advancing D&I and/or to sponsor D&I groups (e.g., ERGs, D&I councils or committees). Some CEOs had also signed the Action for D&I pledge.

7. Other Accolades

Several of the nominees had previous accolades. Competing for benchmark diversity awards are a good way for organizations to assess and compare themselves to other organizations in the marketplace. Some of the awards mentioned within the applications were:

- Best Employer for Women
- "2018 Working Mother & AVTAR's Best Organizations for Women" in India

- UNICEF campaign of “Say Yes to Breastfeeding” certified by UNICEF as Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace in Hong Kong
- Bloomberg Gender Equity Index Recognition
- Top Company for LGBT DiversityInc
- Top Company for Diversity DiversityInc
- Leading Disability Employer National Organization on Disability
- Top Company for Diversity Councils DiversityInc
- 100 Corporate Equality Index Human Rights Campaign
- 100 Disability Equality Index (DEI) Best Places to Work

Do you have what it takes to be a HERo?

Does your organization have what it takes to create gender equality and gender-balance?

Showcase your organization’s efforts and programs and/or nominate someone who is worthy of being called an AmCham HERo.

Not only is this a terrific opportunity to showcase your initiatives, it is also a superb platform from which to encourage other members to keep progressing D&I.

AmCham Women hopes that this paper has given our member organizations some insights into best practices and provided inspiration to embrace them (and potentially exceed them).

AmCham Women looks forward to receiving robust submissions for the 2020 HERo Awards season (see our [Web page](#) for more details).

2019 HERo Award Recipients			
<i>Individual</i>		<i>Organizational</i>	
Lifetime Achievement	Stephanie Keen, <i>Hogan Lovells Lee & Lee</i>	SME HERo	<i>Healint</i>
Trailblazer	Seina Lee, <i>Johnson & Johnson</i>	MNC HERoes	Gold: <i>Wells Fargo Bank</i> Silver: <i>P&G</i> Bronze: <i>ADP</i>
Male Champion	Magesvaran Suranjan, <i>Proctor & Gamble</i>		

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