

A Roadmap to Gender Equality in Organizations and Gender-Balanced Leadership Teams

About the *Insights...* series

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

A Call for Action

Research shows that gender diversity in leadership teams leads to more innovation and creativity, better decision making and problem solving, greater employee engagement and, ultimately, better business results. Yet the progress towards gender equality has been slow:

- According to the World Economic Forum, at our current rate of progress it will take *approximately 200 years* to close the economic gender gap globally.¹
- BoardAgender claims that the rate of female director appointments would need to *more than quadruple* in order to meet the (small) goal of 20% female directors on Singapore-listed company Boards by 2020.

What is Gender?

- "...the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex." - Merriam-Webster
- Until recently, the socialized definition of gender was rooted in biology and expressed binarily, i.e. male or female. More progressive views on gender, however, acknowledge the influence of societal expectations, fluidity in gender identity, and an evolution in gender expression.
- This article discusses gender equality mainly as the balance between male and female but can be applied more broadly.

There are many known barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace, most often cited to include individual self-limiting beliefs, the necessity to balance family and work, and traditional societal perceptions of gender-based "roles". While we appreciate that gender equality requires cross-institutional support to ensure true and sustained cultural change takes place, organizations have the power to create gender-inclusive cultures within their own organizational boundaries, which in turn will have a positive impact on the community in which they operate.

A Roadmap

Here are eight practical areas where we believe organizations should concentrate their efforts to achieve greater gender diversity, each with actionable steps.²

I. Building Awareness and Commitment around the Business Case

In order to create a strong business case specific to your organization, you need to have both external statistics and internal data on gender diversity. This will also help secure commitment from senior leadership.

Often organizations with either a dedicated D&I leader or D&I Council (a group of leaders clearly measured on D&I measures) are able to maintain execution focus against any agreed

85%
of CEOs reported that
their D&I strategies
have improved the
company bottom line

PWC, 18th Annual Global
CEO Survey, 2015

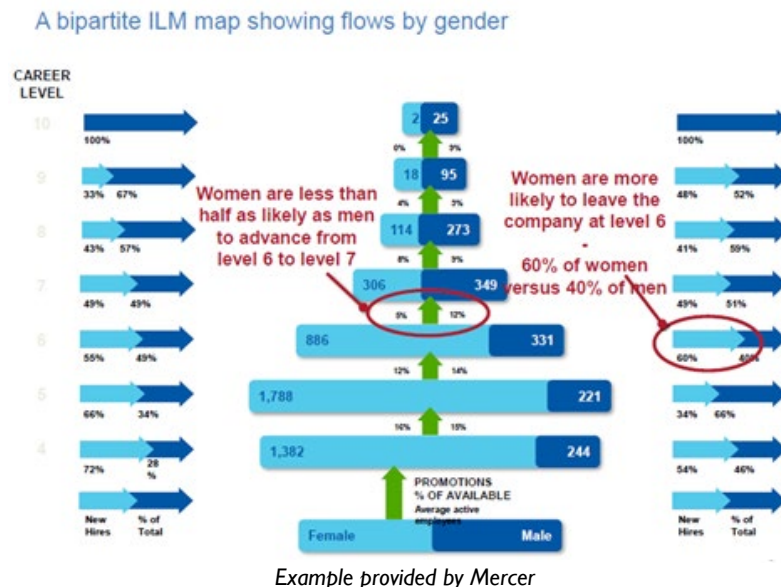
¹ World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report*, 2018.

² Excerpted from Developing Global Leaders Asia's forthcoming book *The Roadmap to Gender Equality in Organisations*, © Zsuzsanna Tungli, 2020

upon business case: by ensuring the business case remains relevant and is executed against, and an honest agenda is maintained.

Do you use data & analytics to understand your current labour market & flow of talent?

We find that organizations that measure career trajectory are more likely to keep the topic front and centre when make people-based decisions. Internal Labor Market (ILM) mapping, as in the image below, is one way for this to occur.



2. Managing Subconscious Bias

Typically, people are more ignorant than arrogant. Raise awareness through mandatory multi-step initiatives about the impact of subconscious biases. Many of our member organizations are focused on training to raise core awareness of D&I, and it is equally important to invest in managers of people, those who are likely to have (often indirect) KPIs linked to employee performance & turnover. Measurable goals and training on how to spot & alleviate bias at this level will help drive a more systemic approach to D&I across the organization.

3. De-biasing Organisational Policies and Practices

While it's important to support individual female talent's careers, it is essential to create a supportive, inclusive environment where these individuals can thrive. A big part of this is to create gender-neutral policies and practices.

Make practical changes in recruitment policies, promotions, leadership competencies, and training requirements; and provide a range of leave and support systems that benefit parents and non-parents alike.

4. Involving Men

We cannot reach equality without including both genders. Make the organizational environment inclusive of men in achieving equal opportunity. Include rather than exclude men from 'women networks' or dedicated employee resource groups.

Getting male leaders with decision making power involved as executive sponsors of such networks, running opposite gender-matching mentoring programs, and creating 'male champions of change' initiatives, can all help bring men into the conversation whilst remaining focused on business performance.

5. **Creating Flexible Working Arrangements**

While most organizations reference some policy towards flexible work, normally at the managers' discretion, they often remain under-utilized, either from a lack of awareness about the various options, or the perception that some roles simply 'can't flex'.

It's important to consistently review your flexible working policies and support systems, and leaders need to lead from the front by role modelling flexible working themselves. Organizations should also provide training and guidelines for people managers: leading a team with virtual members will require new norms and expectations.

Advances in technology now make flexible working far easier to manage, and changing demographics now make it far more acceptable to re-envision.

6. **Supporting Women's Career (and Confidence)**

Because of the lack of role models and challenges with sustaining a healthy female leadership pipeline, women may need an extra push to advance to leadership positions. As the world shifts away from 'tap on the shoulder' career advancement, it is important to encourage sponsoring and mentoring in your organization as well as targeted leadership programs.

(Unbiased) potential assessments, informal career appraisal discussions, and automated rotation programs or project allocation mechanisms can help increase exposure of different talent to new leaders making career decisions.

7. **Supporting Families**

Provide family support for all employees who are caregivers—regardless of their relationship or parental status.

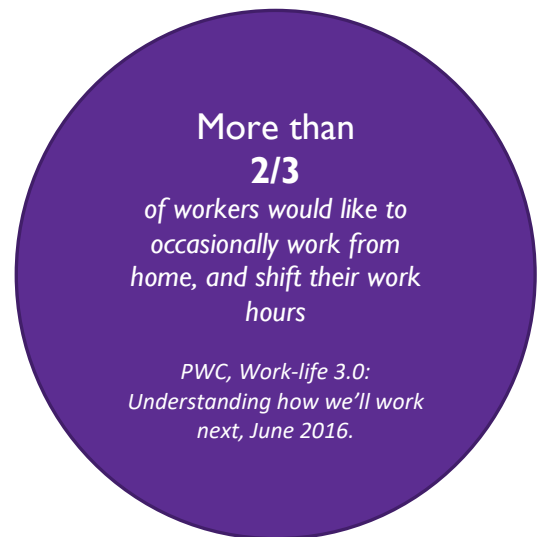
As managers, we want our employees to be engaged and performing optimally. That means acknowledging their personhood and demonstrating care when roadblocks—inside or outside of work—appear. It's important we think through potential consequences and provide our employees with the right level of support.

Many organizations have good employee assistance programs, but there can be a stigma attached to using these. We recommend developing empathy as a leadership competency within people managers, and making sure they are familiar with relevant organizational policies and benefits as well.

8. **Closing the Pay Gap**

There is often a double-digit pay gap between men and women performing the same job. Analyze your data, create job levelling, remove appraisal biases, and offer equal benefits. A robust pay equity process is the first place to start. Without analyzing data, we often find that companies make broad assumptions that fixed-grade pay or salary bands ensure equity. However, many small changes to total compensation can quickly reduce the effect of such policies.

Does your organization have what it takes to create gender equality, and gender-balanced leadership teams? Complete the below sample questionnaire to self-assess areas of strength and opportunity.



Sample Audit

Questions for creating gender equality in organizations and gender-balanced leadership teams³

	Yes	No
1. Building awareness around the business case and commitment to actions		
Does your organization have a fully transparent gender equality strategy where all employees are aware of its objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the senior leadership team recognize the need for action to create gender-balanced leadership teams?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you currently track and analyze gender metrics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Managing individuals' subconscious biases		
Is subconscious bias training mandatory for all employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees encouraged to call out bias when they spot it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have some kind of mechanism to remind employees of biases (e.g. posters around the office, diversity/ bias moments at the beginning of meetings)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Debiasing policies and practices		
Have you revised your leadership competencies to ensure that they are gender-neutral?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use a panel which includes both men and women for recruitment decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use a mixed gender panel for promotion decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Involving men		
Are male executives actively participating in mentoring and sponsoring female employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have employee networks that welcome both men and women to talk about key gender equality areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the men in your organization know how to support gender equality in practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs)		
Does your organization have company-wide flexible work arrangement policies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are managers trained on how to manage teams using flexible work schedules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do your leaders role model flexible work arrangements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Supporting women's career and confidence		
Does your organization have concrete plans to strengthen the female pipeline for leadership roles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you offer a structured mentoring program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an internal women leadership program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Supporting families		
Does your organization have Return to Work plans in place for any employee on extended leave of absence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you provide both maternal and paternal leave, or simply parental leave?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do employees have flexible working arrangement to take care of their children, aging parents, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Closing the gender pay gap		
Does your organization regularly examine pay practices to ensure they are equitable and make adjustments as appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the pay data available to employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you raise female employees' salaries while they are on maternity leave?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

³ Excerpted from Developing Global Leaders Asia's forthcoming book *The Roadmap to Gender Equality in Organisations*, © Zsuzsanna Tungli, 2020

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