

# SUPPLY CHAIN TRIBE

by CELERITY

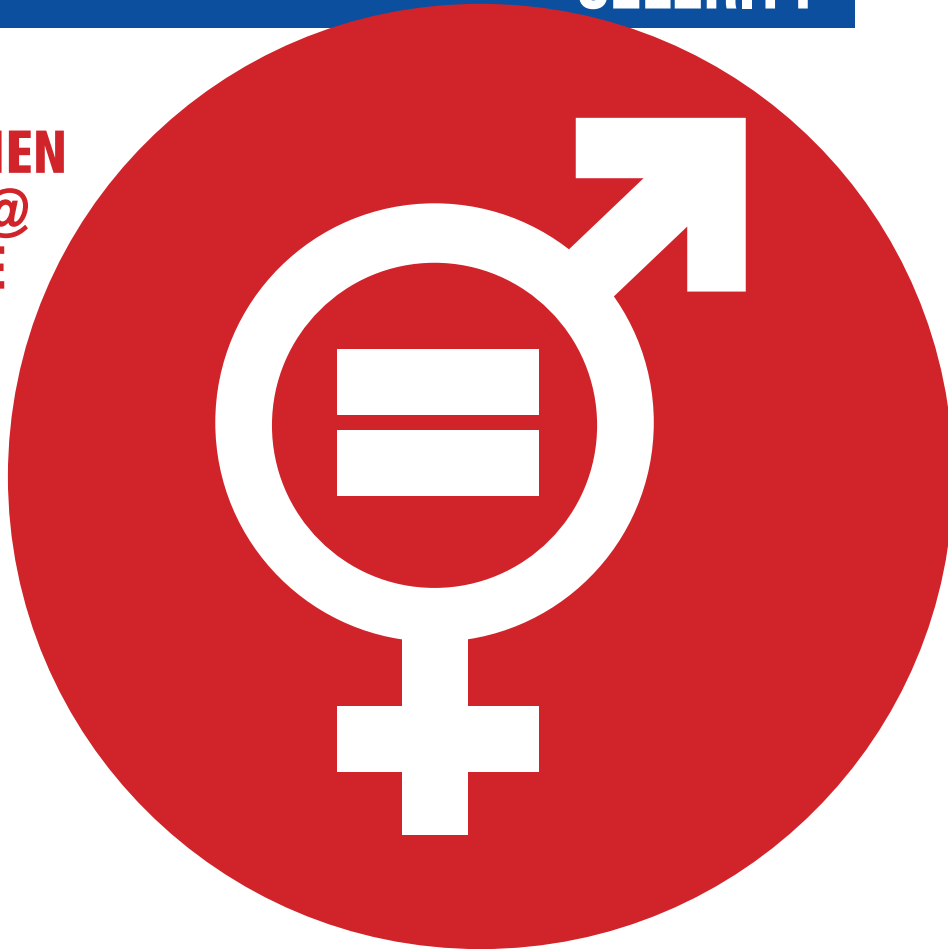
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## WHAT WOMEN WANT @ WORKPLACE

Nurturing a culture  
in which women  
have equal  
opportunities  
to achieve their  
potential over the  
long term



## THE FOUR PILLARS OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Astute thoughts on the HOW,  
WHAT & WHY of Digital  
Transformation

# WHAT WOMEN WANT

at the

# Workplace

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Celerity Supply Chain Tribe has been hosting webinars on topical subjects. We took up Gender Diversity even though it does not fall under a classical supply chain topic, but it is our endeavor to see more women in science, technology, operations, and engineering, what have been traditionally male dominated. While commitment to gender diversity has increased significantly, progress remains slow. The pandemic too has intensified challenges that women already faced. If companies make significant investments in building a more flexible and empathetic workplace, they can nurture a culture in which women have equal opportunity to achieve their potential over the long term. This Cover Story not only leaves an inspirational footprint for women professionals at work but also talks to their male counterparts...





**Sanjay Desai**, Co-founder and Regional Director, Humana International, Singapore

**“Companies with top 25% (gender diversity) on their executive team were 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability than companies in the bottom 25%.”**

### **What is Gender Diversity and why it is important to an organization?**

Gender Diversity refers to an equal ratio of men and women working in an enterprise / function or an industry type. Whilst most of us agree that to have a fair and productive working environment, an equal balance of men and women is required, more commonly than not, this is not the case despite the modern age that we live in. Gender diversity at workplace means men and women are

hired at a similar and consistent rate, are paid equally, and are given the same working environment, opportunities and level playing field.

**Why it is important?** Diverse workforces have been proven to outperform ones that are not. It can increase profitability as a company and decrease staff turnover. Companies with top 25% (gender diversity) on their executive team were 21% more likely to

experience above-average profitability than companies in the bottom 25%. During March 2021, Bank of America (BoFA) published a report that full gender equality could increase World GDP up to \$28 Trillion by 2025. The study shows a chart which is very shocking.

What this chart says is, at today's rate, it will take 257 years until men and women get paid the same rate for the same work universally. We all know that sometimes statistics can look unreal. However, it does tell a tale.

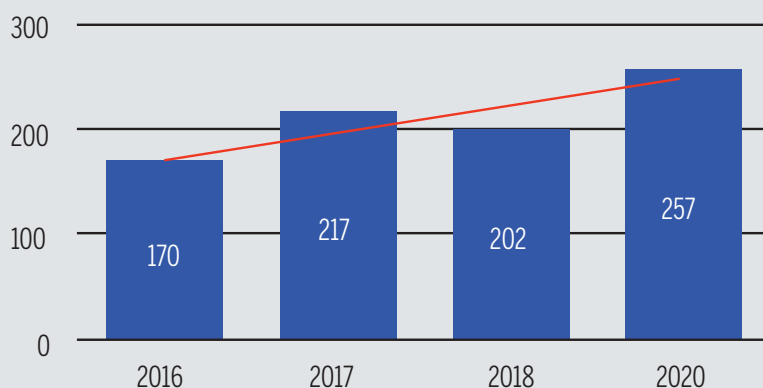
Organizations who work to increase the gender balance in their organizations / leadership structure will surely expect to benefit from these:

- Improved financial performance
- Reduced risk
- More challenging and robust decision making
- Increase in the attraction to a wider talent pool
- A general feeling of collaboration and trust within the organization.

**Is there a syndrome called “Occupational Segregation” and as a reason, we do not have enough pipeline of female leaders to progress to the top?**

**Chart 1: No. of years to close the economic gender gap**

As of 2020, it will take 257 years



Source: WEF

BoFA GLOBAL RESEARCH



Yes, we can say that although it is not so simple & easy to put a % value as an outcome, it is true that female professionals are relatively less attracted at entry level jobs in some sectors like Industrial & engineering manufacturing, warehousing & transportation, military & defence. It naturally leads to an empty pipeline of female leaders, and as a result, there is less female participation at the top. There is also a growing notion that Staff, and Line Roles progression may impede the path to senior leadership.

It is generally felt that female leaders do not take the roles that lead to the C-level positions. However, most male hold line roles, which eventually lead to the C-level positions. The line roles that male hold are closer to the core operations of the company, which indirectly prepares them for the top positions. There is another theory, which subtly supports this view (about occupational segregation) and that is... men view leadership as an outcome of transactions, hence are more autocratic and direct, hence prone to take decisions quicker whereas women tend to be democratic and participative in their management style, which may sometimes delay the decisions. Despite all what we say, there are exceptions to these, and we have exceptional female representation at the senior leadership levels in many organizations globally.

**Making gender diversity a business priority can lead to financial benefits and help company realize its full potential. What are the actual benefits that an organization can reap by increasing Gender Diversity at workplace?**

Any organization that wants to improve its productivity levels should consider appointing an equal number of men and women at their workplaces. It involves having the right mix or equal distribution of gender that can help obtain optimal results. However, an organization should consider certain important factors like safety, an equal balance of power, and anti-bullying policies that can bring major wonders. Let's just look at 4 major benefits:

**Women Attract More Women:** Women at leadership positions can drive the

organization to recruit, nurture, grow a pipeline of more women within the organizational ecosystem.

**Natural Mediators:** Women are good listeners, excellent communicators, and collaborative in nature. This means that whenever there are conflicting situations at the workplace — whether it is between two employees or a group — female workers are good at seeing both sides of the arguments and navigate to a palatable / midway solution.

**Team Players:** Women are natural team players – they can take people together in their decisions and drive consensus. This is important, especially in growing organizations where having inclusivity is a critical element.

**Better Service oriented:** Women are naturally inclined to provide excellent service, which allows them to deal with customers with ease and carry flawless execution as compared to their male counterparts. In fact, it gives ways to communicating customers properly that give ways to make a purchase decision faster (for customers).

**Managing Resources:** It is a known fact that women are far superior when it comes to managing resources at home/ office / social intersections. Women are way more frugal and stay more “balanced” in their thinking and approach.

**Is there a role for Technology in this space? How will technology change the workplace dynamics in near future?**

The recent pandemic has provided organizations with solutions and ability to decipher how technology can help them respond to such events and how it can improve gender diversity at work. Fortunately, the widespread adoption of technology made it possible for a large section of employees to work remotely with few hiccups. Technology also made it possible for professionals to balance work and personal life. Lack of regular childcare options, education institutes or schools, forced working parents to share their responsibilities and adopt to new work practices. This development has a massive potential to improve gender

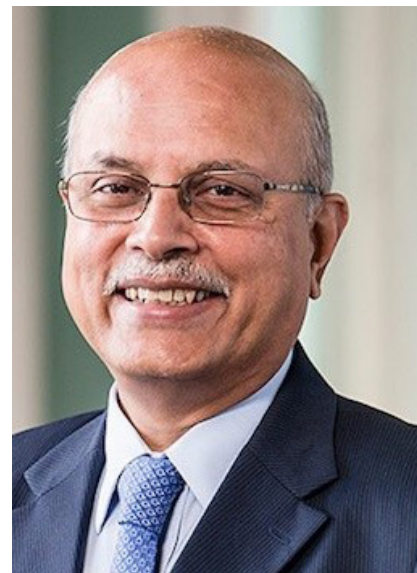
equity/ diversity at the workplace as several organizations are headed toward normalizing flexible working. Of course, the underlying societal attitude and “stereotype” behaviours play a significant role in bridging the gender diversity gap. While technology does not necessarily directly impact gender equity at the workplace, organizations can take it as an opportunity to address this challenge. By taking the necessary steps, organizations must ensure that technology contributes to equity and not against.

**Diversity and Inclusion are often used interchangeably. Is Diversity same as Inclusion? Can an organization achieve diversity without being inclusive? And other way round?**

That is a very good question. Yes, you are correct, Diversity is often mistaken for inclusiveness, but the two terms are not synonymous. There is no diversity without inclusion. Inclusion makes diversity more meaningful, hence it will make diversity stick more naturally within an organization. You may have diversity but not be inclusive, it is still a problem. If the organization is not doing its best to create a sense of belonging for all employees, it cannot call itself a diverse and inclusive organization. While diversity might get talent through the front door, it is inclusion that helps to retain the top talent so that the company benefits from their ideas, skills, and engagement – and ultimately achieves better success metrics. Inclusion is the missing link between employees' motivation to work, be engaged 100% and take pride in their job & organization. Sustained commitment from every organization and individual that place gender diversity among the important priorities on their agenda is a key to the success of this journey.

As they say, ‘Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus’, people from different planets can bring in different perspectives, and we have increasingly realized that this diversity of thought is positive for business. It promotes not only inclusivity and diversity, but also fosters creativity and empathy, which are key skills required to compete and succeed in an environment where tech is dominating mankind.

**Shailesh Haribhakti**, Board Chairman, Board Director, Chartered and Cost Accountant, an Internal Auditor, and a Certified Financial Planner & Fraud Examiner



**"We need to celebrate Collaboration and Diversity."**

***Is there something called Glass Ceiling? Does it hold any truth?***

There is no glass ceiling as far as I can see. If anything within 4 years, we will have a webinar like this where there will be a majority of males and a minority of women who are going to talk about gender diversity in the opposite direction. I can say it with so much conviction because I have seen the value of true diversity. In the year 2014-15 when I took the responsibility to head my Rotary Club, we created a board which was 50% men and 50% women. Every one of the female members of my board have subsequently become the presidents of the Rotary Club. This is just an incredible example of what the No Glass Ceiling concept talks about. I think what we need to aspire towards now is complete naturalness. There should be no conversation at all on gender diversity. We need to celebrate collaboration and diversity. It is because diversity brings incredible value to boards, not-for-profits, to almost every entity that one can serve. Ultimately my feeling is there are going to be certain areas in human effort which naturally will gravitate towards a particular gender. What has happened till date is that tough work that men used to do and became the preserver is now over. Today anyone can do any work and is today a given fact. There is no restriction on

education, no restriction on voting, no restriction on anything that embedded the thought of discrimination into the minds of inferiority or superiority. I think all of that has been broken. We have lived through the advantage of it. In a natural way, we have gravitated to everything moving and being propelled by competence and by delivery of actual outcome. Therefore, I say it with great conviction that there is no limit to anybody exploiting their full potential.

***Does bringing women on board would help ease the situation or amplify the problem?***

I think it works beautifully. Every public limited company board that I am associated with has at least two women on the board. Let me point to a new emerging trend... there is an exchange of role that is happening. I am seeing males wanting to take on roles that were traditionally assigned to females. Gender transitioning signs are extremely positive steps. For instance, when Ameera Shah became the chairperson of one of the committees, to work under her was immense pleasure. When I recollect the competent way which Nishi Vasudeva who is the ex-MD of Hindustan Petroleum, when she took charge of the committee that I sit on, it was such a pleasure to see the new way in which that leadership

equation and that ability to bring things to the fore started working. In one area I would point out that perhaps the world will be well advised to hand it over to the females and that is sustainability. I think the aptitude & attitude of saving planet and getting to net-zero is possible so much more when females take over. That is going to be the gamechanger in the real sense. Roles need to be based on competency and the way one can deliver rather than gender stereotyping.

***Is there a role model leadership here?***

There is a new expression that is doing the rounds... Low Code, No Code. There should be no reason of gender biasedness. It is all going to be driven by who can ask the right question. We must stop our gender bias altogether. We need to define leadership in terms of quality, attributes, accomplishments, motivations that are generated and actions that are implemented. We need to go to the basics. Leadership and outcome are what we are looking at. We want growth. I find that the singularity will emerge at the cusp of our consciousness being keenly focused on sustainability, the adoption of technology and spirituality. If we do not bring these three forces together, we will keep thinking in a divided way. We need to think holistically. Unless the holistic

thinking is developed, we will get lost and therefore we need to move to brass-tacks of how we gain for everybody and not just for ourselves.

**Would sustainability be an area that will bring more women leaders into the board membership?**

As I said, I am in a favor of handing over the leadership baton to women because it is the instinct of the mother, it's the real softness which connects them to what needs to be long lasting, regenerative, productive and sustained. There is a mindset which says that you cannot have women in a mine. I argue that should not be the case. There are women who want to take up that challenge. If they are sufficiently protected, there is sufficient care taken to make sure that the workplace is safe, there is no reason why women should not be allowed in mines. Today it is not about the gender, it is about the organization's thought process on what needs to be done to ensure safety. Some organizations take it to a greater extreme. Depending on how you think as an organization, things will change and therefore, I believe in



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sustainability, who better to argue for clean power; for making sure that carbon is captured and sequestered; argue for e-vehicles or driverless cars; and the

answer is so obvious – WOMEN.



**Aparna Sharma**, Sr. HR Professional - HR Advisor, Board Member, Coach, Counsellor, Trainer, Best Selling Author, Motivational Speaker

“True change will come only when Diversity becomes part of the business ethos and not a mandate.”

**Is gender diversity being practiced in the corporates today or is it remaining on paper as lip service?**

To my mind, the importance of gender diversity at the workplace is a well-accepted fact. I am glad that corporates

today have moved beyond asking about the business case for gender diversity. I am happy that we have moved the needle

in bringing the value of gender diversity to the boardroom too. While more and more companies are addressing the need to bridge the gap in their respective businesses, there are instances I must admit where it is seen as a “buzzword”. There are organizations that fall in both categories. In India Inc., there are certain functions and levels that remain less accepting of women at the workplace. Let us acknowledge the fact that we would like it to be a level playing field, but for certain functions and levels, it’s still not. However, positive seminal progress has surely been made. We have covered a lot of ground.

If we were to look at India based MNCs, they are adopting their global entity’s gender diversity norms. If we look at a few leading Technology firms & Consultancies, they seem to be the flagbearers in ensuring gender diversity. However, Indian companies, particularly, Technology firms are also working hard to catch up with the global peers. They are looking at ways to pay higher incentives for referring women candidates or hiring women who are on a break to get back to work or offering special benefits for better work life balance such as childcare. I am excited to say that Indian firms are leaving no stone unturned as far as efforts are concerned. However, to my mind, true change will come only when diversity becomes part of the business ethos and not a mandate.

We clearly do not have a problem with lack of talent. A lot of companies such as TCS, Infosys, Accenture, RBS, Genpact, etc. have a Second career program for women who want to return to work post break. Companies are making efforts to integrate and embrace women into the corporate fabric. On the other side, if you look at having women Independent Director on Corporate Boards, the practice started as a mandate. To take the first steps, it’s probably important that some of these changes get mandated. Only once when people have experienced, do they actually look at the tangible gains or value of having women on the Board. Till then, you have to keep proving the business case. There is a lot of good intent, but a lot of things get lost in execution.

## **People often say, “men are independent while women are co-dependent.” What’s your thought on that?**

Stereotyping is a real phenomenon not only at workplaces but at our homes too. Women’s share in the engineering space has gone up to around 40% at the educational level. This suggests that more and more women are getting into engineering which otherwise was always seen as male territory. However, this does not reflect in the actual employment numbers in terms of how many women are employed in organizations. In fact, women in the technical field especially conventional engineering are still in abysmal numbers. If we look at the field of technology, the percentage of female employees in Software Testing is higher than in Core Programming as if relegating female employees to “less critical, lower complexity” jobs.

There are certain qualities which can be attributed to male gender and certain characteristics to female gender. However, if you look at a corporate leader of any organization, any leader has to focus on things which are gender agnostic. They have to be more empathetic at certain times, very assertive and aggressive at other times. In order to succeed, women try to ape men, but the beauty lies in collaborating and co-existing in the ecosystem by complementing each other and not giving into stereotypes that the society has put in. I do not think females need to become alpha-males or vice versa. Each gender has their own strengths and that is what everyone needs to bring to the organization. In short, stereotyping exists because of societal conditioning.

## **What do you have to say on women bearing the dual responsibility of a home maker and a thorough corporate professional?**

It is real and it is true. However, we are witnessing equal participation from males at home helping with household chores. We have real bright spots and sparks and I hope the tribe grows. The reality is that we can talk about the division of labor. I think there is a primary responsibility that the lady has who may be a CEO but once you are back home, you must don the hat of a superwoman of being a

mother, a daughter, a wife, and a home maker to say the least.

This Pandemic has altered a lot of attitudes towards Work from Home, and it has probably changed forever the way we work. It is tempting to think that flexible work options will become a great equalizer for women. But there are other stories as well where women had to leave work to take on the household responsibilities during the pandemic since last year. Women need to prioritize and balance on all fronts. Also, women need to have a strong network of support. It is critical. Else, there will be a situation of conflict between the family goals and the work goals. That is one stress that can be minimized if all of these can be put in place. Mindset change or social conditioning take time to change but the wheels seem to be turning in the right direction.

## **What is your perspective on Diversity & Inclusion?**

There is a lot of talk about Diversity & Inclusion in corporate India these days – rightly so. Apart from promoting equity, greater gender and generational diversity in the workplace has repeatedly shown bottom-line benefits to businesses. But all this talk, what one could call the “diversity discourse,” is not necessarily translating into action or sustained gains for all employees, leaders, or organizations.

Progress is slow, partly because change never comes easily, and diversifying its executive ranks is one of the biggest socio-economic and cultural challenges in corporate India. But the importance and benefits that come with moving towards diversity and inclusion in executive teams can’t be overstated.

In my conversations about increasing diversity and inclusion, I tend to emphasize that:

- Companies that increase diversity create a significant competitive advantage for themselves and their shareholders.
- The ability to recruit and lead a diverse workforce is now a critical business competency within talent management. Companies that do not invest in mastering this competency, risk falling behind in the war for talent.





Verna Myers has famously quoted, ‘Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.’ Diversity is a critical competitive success factor in today’s business world. Organizations with culturally sensitive leaders will be better positioned to attract the best candidates to their organizations. Recognizing the competitive advantage of a diverse workforce in an increasingly diverse marketplace, companies are trying to include Diversity and Inclusion elements in their leadership development programs. I believe there is a lot changing in favor of women at the workplace, but there’s a lot more to be done to see women at the top.

- Companies and managers that do not hold leadership accountable for improving diversity and inclusion hurt their bottom lines.

The argument that increasing diversity brings financial benefits to companies is not vague or idealistic, it is empirical. McKinsey research indicates that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams are 21% more likely to see above-average profitability than companies in the bottom quartile.

Why does diversity have such net positive impact on a company’s bottom line? I think it is partly because managers who value integrating diversity into an organization’s norms are strong leaders. They naturally seek to partner with other leaders who have successfully operationalized their diversity and inclusion aspirations. This, in turn, inspires other business leaders to seek opportunities for collaboration with like-minded leaders and organizations. Organizations whose cultural makeup mirrors societal and demographic changes will be better positioned to respond to the expectations of consumers, partners, and stakeholders.

Several roadblocks — such as no time set aside for development, lack of structured training and programs, and lack of support from top management or middle management, prevent organizations from attaining the required D&I maturity.

Suggestions for overcoming these roadblocks, thus increasing leadership diversity competencies in your organization include:

- Including leadership diversity competencies in all leadership development programs & initiatives
- Increasing awareness through individual and group training and mentoring
- Linking D&I goals to the company’s business framework
- Suggestions for overcoming the roadblocks to the creation of a culture of inclusion include Creating a Diversity Council.

### ***So how do leaders begin to master this competency?***

First, they need to be intentional about it. If they are, they will be thought of as essential to the company’s high-value talent pool. Second, they need to understand how and where to learn this skill. For instance, working in companies that have diversity-specific goals can lead to real learning. Numerous groups are also ready and willing to help leaders become better diversity allies within their organizations and beyond. Third, leaders need to inspect and respect the evidence before them. Like it or not, and ready or not, our world is changing. Those organizations unable to change will get left behind. Importantly, the decision leaders must make is whether they will be on the right side of history.

Commitment is the key to real and transformational action. Changing structural and cultural norms takes time. It requires talking openly about diversity as a first step and holding our leaders accountable.

A strategic approach gives people confidence in the organizational

direction, and it moves the organization forward by harnessing the energy of people passionate about co-creating the world they envision. None of this is easy, but our successes to date show we can give people the tools to resist the temptation to revert to what’s easy when things get tough.

The top-ranked organizations in Human Capital Media’s Diversity Value Index offer additional guidelines to emulate, including the following:

- Align D&I practices to organizational goals
- Have a workforce that reflects the diversity of their customer base
- Provide unconscious bias training
- Sponsor diversity events in the community, thus creating interest in their organization among diverse members of the population.

My sense of hope is matched by my competitive urgency. I am convinced that the organizations that tackle Diversity and Inclusion will be better off today and better prepared for tomorrow. We must commit to changing our leadership paradigm to prepare for the future in a changing environment where – of all the skills needed for success – effectively leading in diversity and inclusion is chief among them. Proving the ROI of diversity initiatives & encouraging and enabling multiculturalism training are among other efforts.



**Sharada Sunder**, Success Coach, Leadership facilitator, Advisory Board member, Consultant, Founder, Saralife Consulting

“Make Smart Choices.”

### **How should women leaders build resilience to break the glass ceiling?**

The glass ceiling, in my view, still exists in varying degrees across organizations, geographies, in mindsets, in our social systems too. To the women I would suggest DON'T GIVE UP. It is a journey to the top and it needs to be sustained...

Three practical suggestion I would like to share with you:

**First:** Have an intentional career growth. If equal opportunities are a challenge, then communicate to your seniors about your confidence and interest in taking up higher roles. This will bring awareness about your candidature and pave the way for equal opportunities, even going forward. And have the self-belief that you can do it. Because you can... despite how much ever others around you say that it is difficult for a woman to lead.

**Second:** Women at the workplace must drop the gender tag because You are a professional at work. That is it. it is incidental that you are a woman too. This attitude at workplace will encourage others to drop the gender reference as well and more importantly drop the bias that come along-with the tag.

**Third:** You must delegate tasks that you can and must delegate. This is on the personal front. Women, who are career oriented and have responsibilities as a

home maker are practically doing two jobs, and if you are one such woman, congratulations, you are a Super Woman. But now I want to tell you that you may reach burn out quickly if you do not learn to delegate smartly... to avoid this, become a smart super woman. And how is that?

Choose things that you wish to do yourself and those which you can delegate or outsource. Because there is only one you and there is only 24 hours in a day. For example, if you love cooking for your family and do not wish to outsource this, that is fine. But you may choose to outsource other tasks to manage your time. Make these smart choices everyday with your time. This will help you be resilient, persevere and succeed at both fronts of career and home.

And one important thing I would recommend to all women is to pay attention to themselves as well. While you beautifully balance work and home, manage your career goals and achieve success, remember to take care of yourself. Always! I say this because women often forget to take care of themselves. So, take care of your physical health, your mental wellness, and your money.

### **What organizations can do to drive the diversity and inclusion agenda?**

I think having a strategy or a policy on gender diversity is a great starting point

for organizations. When this strategy is converted into cascading goals and linked to increments and growth only then it gains focus and momentum. Not otherwise. Up to here, I am sure many organizations who have this goal, find it easy.

The weak link however could be the lack of rigor in reviewing this Key result area. If this goal can be reviewed with equal interest, asking the right questions, like you would review sales numbers, we will make better progress in gender diversity. Getting to the real reason for the gaps, if any, and then fixing it will ensure results on diversity. The other thing that comes to my mind is how organizations celebrate women's day. It is time to reflect and see is it just tokenism, a PR exercise or have we really improved on this account? Perhaps it is now time to reflect on what are we celebrating? Instead of celebrating women in the workforce, can we look at celebrating equal growth opportunities for men and women in the workforce? This shift will help organizations to climb the next step on gender diversity.

**Companies with high female leadership, outperform their less diverse peers. Are we not hiring leaders at the top to reap the benefits? Is there an issue at the strategy level or at the execution level?**



Role model is an ever-inspiring concept, and our role models constantly evolve. I believe that it is not necessary for a woman to be inspired only by other women leaders. I have been inspired by many wonderful business leaders, both men and women. It is the quality of leadership that is appealing and inspiring, irrespective of gender. There is no dearth of talented women who can lead, and there is no dearth of role models. You just need to look at people who lead successfully be it within your organization, industry, nation or world, roles models are waiting for you to learn from their success.

My experience is that both men and women bring richly complementing and varied skills to the leadership team and hence such companies always gain an edge and a multiplier effect on productivity and profits.

**Despite this seemingly clear**

**benefit to companies, why is the ratio not getting better?**

Well, it could be different reasons for different companies. For some it could be that gender diversity is not given a strategic importance, for others it could be that seeing the strategy through to the finish is an issue. Largely, intent drives

the diversity strategy at the top and unbiased mindsets of its function heads, drives its successful execution. So I do know that if the strategic intent is clear and the managerial review is outcome driven, then execution will have to fall in place. Excuses will die.

**Shital Kakkar Mehra**, Executive Presence,  
CEO Coach, Board Advisor, Social Entrepreneur



“Simply raising the number of women at the workplace does not lead to inclusion. Changing the mindset and changing the corporate policy is important.”

**What is your view on Diversity and Inclusion?**

Diversity and Inclusion are not the same. It is important to distinguish quickly between the two. A simple example is if you are hiring employees from any under-represented group be it LGBTQ, ethnic minorities, women, people with

disabilities, etc., the employer is doing a great job on diversity. However, that is inadequate. After being hired, ask the under-represented group: first, are you bringing your most authentic self at work? Secondly, do you resist sharing your opinion at work?

That is where inclusion comes in

because inclusion is about equality. Simply raising the number of women at the workplace does not lead to inclusion. Changing the mindset and changing the corporate policy is important. Inclusion means you have a compassionate mindset and mutual respect. Interestingly diversity is tangible and can be measured



Equality is equal opportunity and equity is everything needed to get there, which sometimes could get a bit skewed. Under-represented group may require a lot of support to create an equal opportunity situation. The future does look bright, and equity & equality are the ways forward.

whereas inclusion is less tangible. This explains why diversity is meaningless unless it is backed by inclusion. There will be no results in the long-term if you make a quick fix like increasing gender pay gap or putting in place anti-harassment policies or getting a woman director on the board – these are some examples of diversity. On the other hand, inclusion including measures to stop sexist behavior at work, existence of an old-boys club or how much does your firm truly supporting women at mid-career?

Simple way to juggle this is to check if the under-represented groups in your organization report or speak up against inequality. If they are, you have genuinely got inclusion or are on the path and if they are not, you need to go back to the drawing board and figure out what is inclusion for your organization and how to implement it in your organization.

### **Is leadership style a barrier?**

There is lot of unconscious bias, which still exists and is all around us. We have all heard things such as men are more aggressive than women, so they get promoted; or after a certain age, women will struggle with work life balance and will be unable to perform leadership duties; or women are more sensitive, maybe they are unable to handle pressure of leadership; men are the primary bread-earners and women of course have an add-on income. On the other hand, male leaders are seen as more constant and powerful. In fact, they are even allowed to become aggressive if situations demand. But our expectations from women leaders are quite different. If they act too aggressive, it gets too much for us to manage. If they do not, we term them weak. But honestly, this is far away from the truth. The pandemic has clearly shown us that all nations which had women at the top performed so much better than those that had men at the helm. Women leaders do bring a

lot to the table. They are more inclusive, more community driven. They like to lead by consensus rather than dictating things. They are very collaborative. Research has categorically stated that people take more ownership when there is more collaboration. Companies which are more diverse and have more women at the top, they perform so much better than less diverse organizations in every parameter – profit, employee engagement, employee retention; productivity; creativity; innovation, so on and so forth. Women leadership brings balance and is need of the hour.

### **What is your view on diversity quota? Does it add value for the organization?**

I am completely against any quota system as it merely works as a short-term fix. To create impact, one must really track their journey from the starts. Besides, quota also leads to people who are unsuitable, unenthusiastic, and not the best to join the workforce. In the Indian workplace, there are 17% women on board, it was mandated but there are only 11% women in leadership position. This shows that leadership positions require support for decades, unlike board positions. Companies must support their women leaders over 20 years, if they want to see a strong pipeline.

### **Is there a syndrome of leakage in the pipeline? How many female leaders are promoted to the next level as compared to men?**

If you hire 50% women at the entry level and only 11% at the leadership level, that means there is a leakage in the pipeline. Now the leakage clearly is for every organization to address and examine What, When and Where it happened. Mostly it happens at the mid-level. Research has shown that if you can support women at mid-level, then you can have adequate women representatives in the leadership position. Of course,

having better policies, maternity leave, paid & unpaid leaves, paternity leave, are always a great add-on. I believe senior leadership should lead by example and harp on the importance between work-life balance. If that happens, women also feel secured and are convinced that it is right to take the time out. Otherwise, many women feel that it can impact their career development or their future in the organization.

When I coach women at any level, I always tell them that you are the CEO of your own personal brand. Companies spend billions of dollars every year in promoting their brand, so nothing should stop women from promoting their achievements and their credentials. Firstly, brands need investments, so please invest in yourself and do it guilt-free. Secondly, brands need promotion, so do not be guilty promoting yourself. It is important to create a strong internal and external network because brands need visibility. Become the CEO of your own brand and take it UP!