

Supporting Women in Leadership

Gender diversity at work

Why be concerned with gender diversity in your workplace?

Organizations that attract, retain, and advance women are:

- accessing talent from a larger pool
- earning higher rates of return over firms with lower percentages of women board directors
- projecting a more positive public image to today's socially conscious clientele

Not only is diversity in the workplace important, but diversity in the most senior positions within an organization is crucial. Studies show that women increase effectiveness and enhance results.

Women are needed in leadership

Despite women's capability and desire to lead, their transcendence to leadership has not occurred. Inequality remains in terms of pay, career advancement, and career satisfaction.

Research not only quantifies the positive impact women have on a company's bottom line, but also points to women's effective approach in business today.

Today's difficult economic times requires improved risk-taking, long-term visioning, and less hyper-competitiveness. Women's leadership style is transformational as they tend to place higher value on collaboration including working together effectively, sharing ideas and information, and integrating the best ideas possible.



The research is clear and dramatic: Women can improve a company's bottom line.

Studies by Catalyst (The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards, 2004-2008, March 2011) determined companies that achieve gender diversity and manage it well attain better financial results.

Companies with the highest percentages of women board directors saw a 16% higher return on sales and a 26% higher return on invested capital than companies with the lowest representation.

This becomes more evident when companies sustain high representation (3 or more women board directors over 4-5 years) as they significantly outperform those with low representation by:

- 84% on return on sales;
- 60% on return on invested capital; and
- 46% on return on equity.

YET...

In 2010 women held only:

- 15% of board seats;
- 17.7% of senior officer positions;
- 6.2% of top earner positions; and

More than 30% of companies had no women senior officers. (Catalyst, 2010, FP500 Women Senior Officers and Top Earners)

Women are just 6.4% of CEOs and Heads of Financial Post 500 companies (Catalyst, March 2011).

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Economic impact

Women play a crucial role in keeping the economy afloat. Women are amongst the most highly educated and have natural abilities to lead, account for 52 percent of the population, nearly 50 percent of the workforce, and 83 percent of all consumer purchasing decisions.

New Brunswick's looming labour and skills shortages can be addressed by better employing women who are a largely under-utilized resource. An increase in skilled workers is critical to sustain our economy. Women are a key element; as many are not employed to their full potential.

Productivity

Women not employed to their full potential represent productivity gaps. Addressing this issue can help businesses to increase their productivity and competitive advantage by better utilizing resources.

Brain Drain

The basic definition of Brain Drain: educated women who struggle to find jobs that match their abilities. This phenomenon is often associated with women re-entering the workforce after bearing children and having to rebuild their career - a reality many women face despite their educational attainment.

In 2009, women led in worldwide university enrolment and graduation rates. In 2008, Stats Canada reported a dramatic gender reversal on campuses. The 1971 Census reported 68% of 25 to 29 year-old university graduates were male; yet by 2006 women accounted for 60% of grads in the same age range.

The result of brain drain = everyone loses.

Employers lose out on skills and experience; women end up with lower paying positions and less satisfaction; not to mention the ensuing impact to our economy.

CONSIDER THIS...

More than one third of New Brunswick working females are clustered in just ten occupations. These jobs typically employ skills women have used in nurturing and managing their families and homes for centuries, and offer limited opportunities.

Policy development

While the overall number of women in politics is low, it isn't just a numbers game. Policy decisions and laws are to be made to benefit all members of society. When groups within a society are not well represented it is difficult to make decisions, which take into account their unique perspectives and needs.

“Women make up half of the human resources available to any country. If that half is not being channeled into the economy and not being made part of decision-making processes, then that country's economic potential is bound to suffer. As business leaders and policy-makers seek to navigate their way through the current crisis, they need the talents of both women and men more than ever to come up with the best solutions.”

~ Saadia Zahidi, Head, Women Leaders' Programme, World Economic Forum (Excerpt from Ernst & Young report, Groundbreakers: Using the strength of women to rebuild the world economy, 2009)



Take Action

Leadership barriers for women can be wide ranging based on personal circumstance. Below are areas to consider and ways to be a progressive employer.

Barrier	Solution
Stereotypes and preconceptions of female roles and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate stereotypes by reviewing policies and organizational language and behaviors to ensure gender equality is supported, as well as ensuring management walks the talk• Recognize women's contributions and abilities and demonstrate the organization's commitment to supporting their success• Engage everyone in the equality process and encourage open dialogue on the topic
Lack of significant management experience (may stem from a lack of opportunity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create opportunities to support women through empowerment, mentorship and networking• Develop and implement an integrated, systemic approach to advance women within your organization• Support women's development by providing:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- access to programs / education related to career development- time for development including hands-on opportunities (i.e. boards)• Provide consistent feedback
Lack of senior, visibly successful female role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the profile of successful women• Establish gender equality standards
Lack of mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create opportunities to support women through empowerment, mentorship and networking including company sponsored programs
<p>Work-life balance challenges - women continue to juggle multiple roles. In addition to being active workforce participants, many play important household roles including primary caregivers to children and other family members. The struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance can lead to feeling forced to choose between career or family including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• taking jobs that do not compete with family time• working fewer hours than men often impacting pay• having challenges committing to overtime hours, travel or relocation often required for career growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer options that work for women's whole lives to ensure retention of talent :<ul style="list-style-type: none">- creating organizational shifts to support family responsibilities- recognizing individual needs and supporting work-life balance by offering family oriented benefits

Change Workplace Culture

With any strategic initiative employee communication is key. It is important that all employees at all levels within your organization understand any equality efforts you are undertaking or goals you set.

Adopting positive organizational attitudes and cultural norms about diversity is everyone's concern and is an important part of being a progressive employer.

Consider the following steps to change workplace culture

STEP 1

Take the [Gender Equality Audit](#) to assess where your workplace stands today. Seek also to understand organizational barriers and challenges through surveys, focus groups, etc.

STEP 2

Create a gender equality plan assessing your workplace environment, where you want to be, how you'll get there and how you'll know when you've arrived. Don't forget to measure progress along the way.

STEP 3

Communicate organizational values, goals, and expectations related to gender equality. Visible commitment from the top as well as management support and cooperation is crucial to success.

STEP 4

Appoint a person or team to develop, implement, monitor, and review equality efforts. This champion must be respected; demonstrate commitment to equality values consistently; and have authority to lead and act on recommendations.

STEP 5

Celebrate successes and milestones! Publicly acknowledge when progress is made!

Gender-Equality Audit

Promoting a culture of gender equality will help establish your organization as a progressive, dynamic, and welcoming place to work. You'll be better able to attract and retain the best of the best, enhancing your competitiveness and bottom line. Honest self-assessment is key in completing a gender audit. The below questions are a sample of areas that you may want to review to gather a clear picture of where you stand related to gender equality.

Does your organization...?	YES/NO	Has your organization...?	YES/NO
have recruitment processes that deliver a diverse range of successful job candidates representative of both genders?		identified which positions are traditionally under-represented by gender?	
have concrete actions to recruit candidates from underrepresented groups?		ensured both female and male employees participate in training and development opportunities at similar rates?	
have recruitment and promotion processes that are transparent and accessible for all candidates?		ensured all employees have individual training & development plans?	
provide ongoing coaching opportunities to both female and male employees?		ensured both female and male employees are gaining functional and line experience early in their careers?	
fully understand the importance and value of a healthy work-life balance in order to have a positive and productive workplace environment?		ensured female and male employees are promoted at a similar rate AND to the highest job classes?	
offer supports for working parents with young families (child care subsidies, child care facilities, etc?)		ensured female and male employees can access career paths, increased responsibilities or development opportunities (high profile projects, etc.)?	
encourage open communication and conduct ongoing assessments with employees to identify family-friendly needs?		identified high potential female and male employees interested in promotion opportunities?	
monitor requests, usage and denials of requests for accommodation related to family responsibilities? (e.g. parental leave, request for flex-hours, time for medical appointments, compassionate care leave options, etc.)?		developed inclusive job titles, descriptions and ads using gender neutral language(journey person vs. journeyman, etc.)?	
offer progressive leave benefits for: emergencies, bereavement, birth, adoption, family, funeral leave, medical appointments, maternity/paternity, etc.?		established a performance review policy in place that is gender neutral?	
have a written policy in place to prevent and respond to all forms of harassment with a clear code of conduct and consequences?		verified if female and male employees are leaving at the same rate? Are there any "leave" trends based on gender?	
provide mandatory harassment training to all employees at all levels?		invested in an employee and family assistance program? (marital/family counseling, etc.)	
encourage a respectful workplace via organizational: vision, mission and value statements, guiding principles, key result areas, etc.?		established a Work-life Balance or Wellness Committee?	

Scoring

- **“No’s”** reflect areas of opportunity related to gender equality in your workplace, and areas to target in an effort to be a more progressive employer. Developing a plan to address these areas of opportunity will greatly improve the likelihood of achieving sustainable change coupled with ongoing monitoring of progress and performance.
- Each **“Yes”** answer provided takes you one step closer to having gender equality in your workplace. Keep up the momentum! Monitor your performance regularly including asking employees for feedback.

“It’s in everyone’s best interest to bring qualified women into leadership positions, especially now when fresh perspectives are needed. We can no longer afford to set gender boundaries around leadership. The power is in the purse strings: until women are equitably represented in leadership in the private, economic sector, they will be marginalized in every other arena. What’s good for women is good for men, business and the global economy.”

~ Ilene H. Lang, President and CEO, Catalyst

“When people of different talents, perspectives, and backgrounds are able to thrive in the workplace, when they have equal opportunity to succeed, it’s not only individual employees who benefit. Customers benefit, shareholders benefit, and that means businesses benefit.”

~ Ken Chenault, Chairman and CEO, American Express

Tips to support gender equality

- Link commitment to gender equality to the organizational business plan
- Monitor progress on equality goals and provide updates regularly
- Provide ongoing respectful workplace and diversity training to help employees value differences
- Review policies and practices annually for areas to further enhance organizational commitment
- Ensure your work environment is safe and respectful for all individuals regardless of gender
- Create dialogue opportunities related to the value of diversity, perceptions, and challenges that arise
- Change is a choice; have employees develop a personal growth plan tying in expected behaviors
- Change can be difficult and scary; coach others to practice new behaviors and learn from mistakes

Gender equality is good business

- Employees win from positive workplace changes
- Employers win by:
 - meeting HR challenges and attracting the best employees
 - seeing higher employee ROI through lower turnover costs
 - having less absenteeism and better results for training and incentive dollars
 - Improved decision-making with more diverse opinions around the table
- Society wins by creating attitudes to support a progressive society!

For more information on gender equality in your workplace

Visit our website at: www.gnb.ca/wagegap

Or contact us by calling: 1-877-253-0266 or email us at nbwagegap@gnb.ca