

FROM INTENTION TO IMPACT

BRIDGING THE DIVERSITY GAP IN THE WORKPLACE



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BRIDGING THE DIVERSITY GAP IN THE WORKPLACE

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AT A GLANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WOMEN IN INDIA INC. begin trailing their men counterparts early and continue to lose ground with every step. BCG India's latest report 'From Intention to Impact: Bridging the Diversity Gap in the Workplace' examines the reasons for this trend and suggests how these issues can be addressed.

Indian companies recognize the need for a more diverse workforce and have initiated programs to drive inclusion. While there have been some success stories, progress remains slow overall. Companies have launched a number of diversity initiatives and feel they are 'doing the right things', yet they have not made substantial progress. This leads to a situation where leaders feel that interventions do not work while women grow frustrated, morale decreases, and company performance suffers. To avoid this, companies need to understand which initiatives are worth pursuing. With that objective in mind, we surveyed 20 companies across various sectors, seeking their perspective on five categories of interventions—recruitment, retention, advancement, leadership, and culture—and on 39 specific diversity initiatives (See the sidebar 'Key Findings'). For a detailed description of our methodology, see the Appendix included in this document. This report discusses our findings, which point to the following clear imperatives:

- **Diagnose the underlying problem.** Where is the real problem—in recruit-

ment, advancement, or retention? Is there an unconscious bias in evaluation or promotion decisions? Do men really champion the cause or merely pay lip service? It is important to recognize the real problem and its root causes. In doing so, we must seek to understand the perspectives of not just the senior leadership, who are predominantly men, but also that of women employees themselves who may have very different views.

- **Understand which measures are most effective to address the underlying obstacles.** Our findings show that one-off measures such as training programs, networking events, and surveys, while extremely common, are less effective in addressing the core issues. On the other hand, interventions such as part-time work models and focusing on 'moments of truth', which are rarely implemented by companies, are perceived as extremely effective by women.
- **Engage men in the diversity programs and make them champions of gender diversity.** It is important to make policies as gender neutral as possible so that women do not feel singled out.
- **Approach diversity as any other major business priority.** Companies should define a well thought-out diversity

KEY FINDINGS

- Gender diversity is slowly making its way onto the leadership agenda of India Inc. and companies are beginning to invest time, money, and effort to improve gender balance. However, practical gains remain low. While nearly 60% of our women respondents claim that their company is focused on gender diversity, only 29% say they have actually benefited from such programs.
- There exist significant differences between the perceptions of men and women on the issues underlying gender diversity. Not only are men more optimistic about their company's commitment to the gender diversity program (81% of men feel their company is committed to gender diversity as compared to 56% of women), they also underestimate the obstacles to gender diversity (only 8% of men feel that advancement is a challenge, versus 36% of women).
- It is not practical to expect that all interventions can be launched at the same time, nor is it desirable. Interventions differ significantly in their effectiveness. It is important to prioritize and launch the initiatives that will have the most impact given the starting point and specific issues that women face in the organization.
- Some interventions are proven measures—these are effective in most cases. Examples of these are extended parental leave, child care support, and creating flexibility in working hours and locations.
- Some interventions are not as common, but can have disproportionate impact in retaining and advancing women. We call these *hidden gems*. Not many companies have implemented these initiatives, but women find them extremely effective. These include part-time work models, measures that target key 'moments of truth' in a woman's career (such as returning from maternity leave or moving to a new location), and explicit commitment of the leadership to gender diversity.
- Implementation is crucial. Well intentioned interventions fail due to poor implementation. Nearly 50% of interventions are ineffective, not because they are poorly designed, but because they are poorly executed. Companies cannot expect progress by simply putting down policies on paper. Instead, they need to focus on practical challenges faced on the ground to make the interventions truly impactful.

strategy for both the short term and the long term, followed by the creation of a rigorous implementation plan. It is important to keep measuring the outcomes against the desired targets and modifying the plan as required, while maintaining the energy and commitment to implementation.

Step change in gender diversity is the need of the hour for India Inc. Now is not the time for complacency—now is the time to make an impact and take accountability to move the needle—by understanding what issues matter and what interventions work on the issues that matter.

A LONG WAY TO GO

GENDER DIVERSITY IN INDIAN CORPORATIONS

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR gender diversity has been established globally and companies are making visible efforts to enhance the women-to-men ratio among their employees. Indian companies are following suit and gender diversity is now making its way onto the leadership's agenda at most domestic corporations. Companies are investing time, energy, and money in diversity initiatives, but progress is slow and results woefully short of expectations.

Our recent interviews suggest that while gender diversity does feature as one of the HR priorities, it is not the foremost priority. Most companies have some policies in place to improve their gender ratio. On average, our respondents were aware of 12 out of 39 diversity-related initiatives in their companies. However, most organizations do not undertake a rigorous or structured approach to diversity. The situation is worse in small and mid-sized firms, in which gender diversity does not find mention on any list, priority or otherwise.

Given this scenario, it is not surprising to see that progress toward more women being represented in leadership teams remains slow. Women's representation in Indian firms stands at around 27% of the country's total workforce—globally, this number is 38% (see Exhibit 1.1). Women account for just 17% of senior management positions, compared to 26% in emerging Asia Pacific countries. In

Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 500 companies, only 3% of the CEOs are women.

Women are equally ambitious as men; however, they account for only 17% of senior management positions

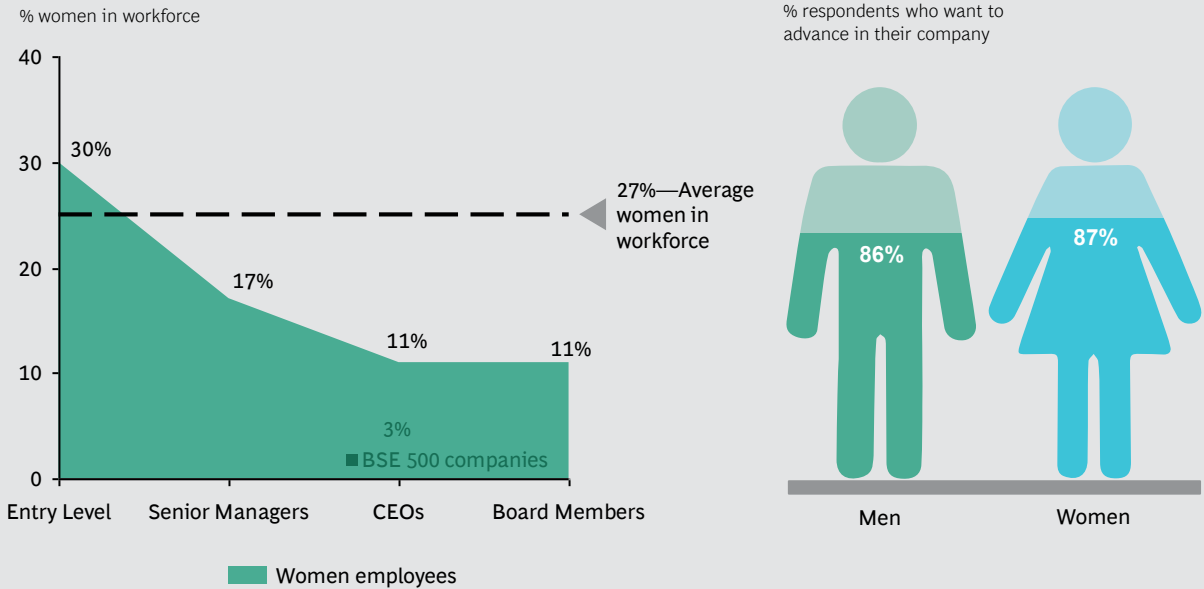
A commonly held view is that this phenomenon is ultimately a result of the low ambition that women show as they begin to hit the mid-levels of management. Our research comprehensively rejects this myth, showing that women are equally ambitious as men to advance in their careers. 87% of women and 86% of men surveyed are seeking advancement in their careers (see Exhibit 1.1).

Why is progress so slow and the results so disheartening? While nearly 60% of women respondents in the BCG survey agree that their company is focused on promoting diversity, only 29% believe that they actually benefited from the program. According to our results, gender diversity initiatives have helped more women employees in MNCs operating in India (33%) than their counterparts employed by Indian companies (27%). Further analysis

EXHIBIT 1.1 | Gender Gap in Indian Workforce Widens with Seniority, In spite of Men and Women Being Equally Ambitious

LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN WORKFORCE ESPECIALLY AT SENIOR LEVELS...

...INSPITE OF SIMILAR AMBITION LEVELS



Sources: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017, Catalyst.org; ILO, Community Business, EMA Partners, Grant Thornton, BCG analysis.

of job roles reveals that women in sales and operations have benefited less compared to those in R&D and corporate functions.

While 60% of women respondents agree that the company is doing a lot to improve gender diversity, only 29% of women have actually benefited

There is little doubt that leadership teams at Indian corporations have the right intentions and have initiated programs for greater inclusion. However, these initiatives have yet to

show significant impact on the ground. Corporate India is at a critical juncture, where the reality that underpins gender diversity programs needs to be assessed critically so that real progress can be made.

DIVERSITY IMPEDED BY DIVERSE PERCEPTIONS

Men are More Optimistic Than Women About the Commitment to Gender Diversity. Most companies are making efforts to improve gender balance at the workplace. However, men and women perceive the priority accorded to these programs differently, with men much more optimistic about the company's commitment toward gender diversity than women. While 81% of men at the workplace believe that the entire management team is committed to gender diversity, the same view is shared by only 56% of women (see Exhibit 2.1). Similarly, 73% of men believe that their company is focused on improving gender diversity while only 60% of women agreed.

81% of men, but only 56% of women, feel the entire management team is committed to gender diversity

Another key area in which men's and women's responses differed significantly was in their perception of men's involvement in championing gender diversity. While 61% of men think that men are change agents for gender diversity in their company, only 38% of women agree with this view.

Men and Women Perceive the Current Obstacles to Gender Diversity Differently. For company leaders, 90% of whom are men, the first step in enhancing gender diversity involves an accurate understanding of the current challenges and the scope of the problem. However, our survey results suggest that not only do men have different ideas about where things go wrong, but they also have strikingly different opinions about the degree to which they go wrong.

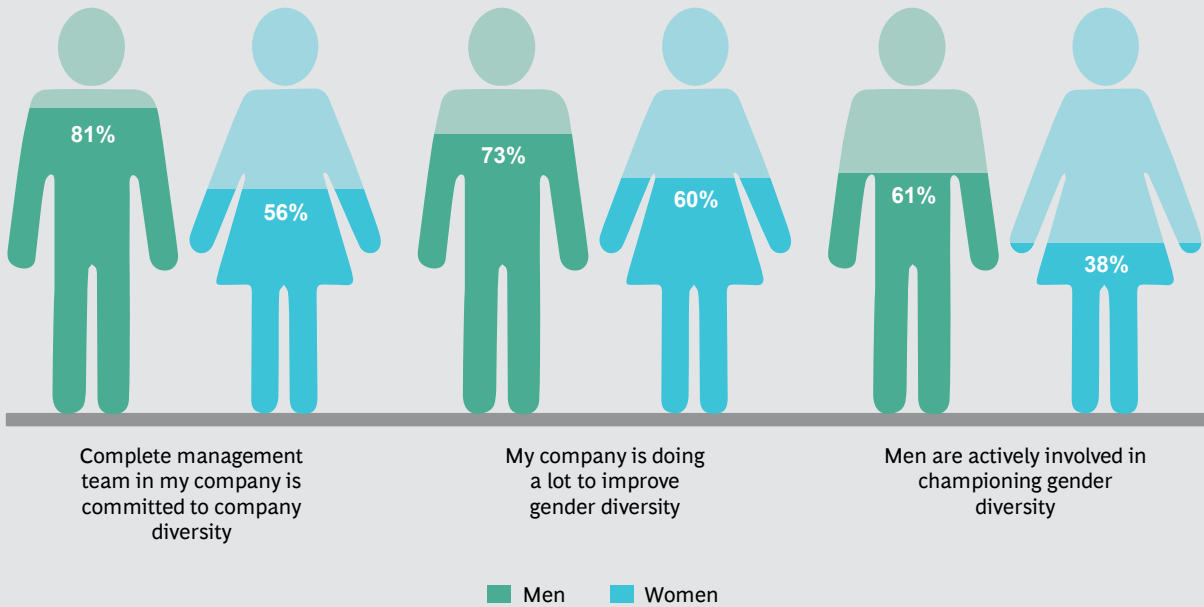
The starkest difference is in advancement, which women perceive as the biggest obstacle. Thirty six percent of women think that advancement is a critical obstacle while only 8% of men agree. Men, on the other hand, feel that recruitment is the biggest challenge to gender diversity (see Exhibit 2.2).

Women perceive advancement as the biggest obstacle to gender diversity

These misperceptions matter, because they shape companies' investments in diversity initiatives. Our survey and interviews suggest that approximately 95% of companies have some form of intervention around culture.

EXHIBIT 2.1 | Men Are More Optimistic About Commitment to Gender Diversity Than Women

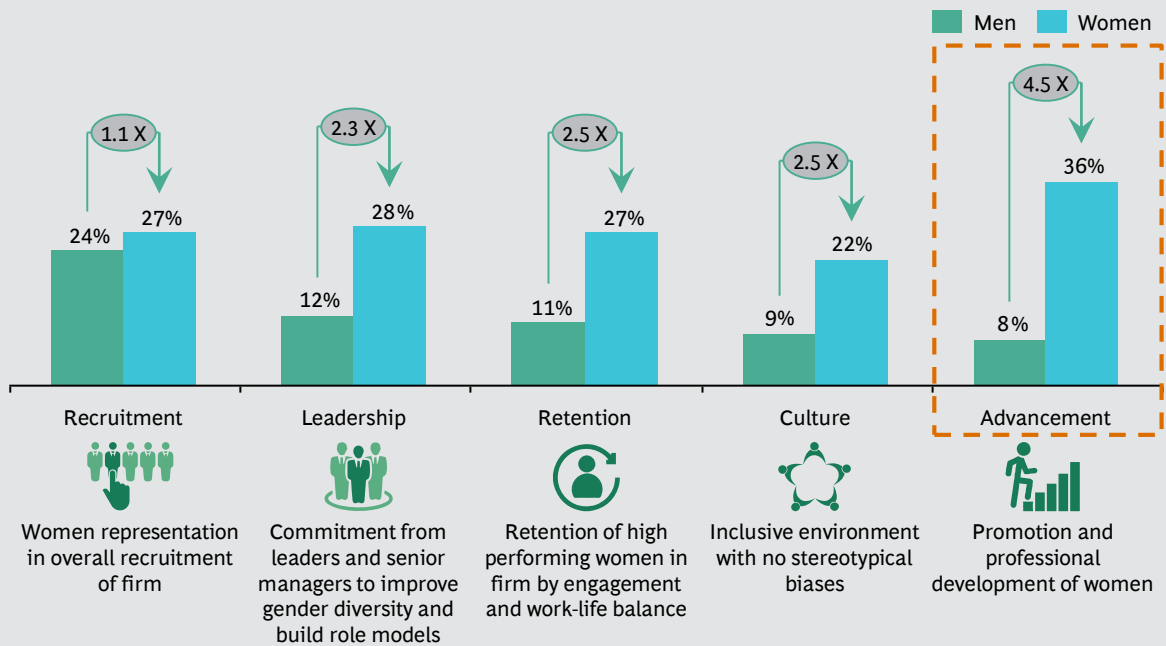
% RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE WITH STATEMENT



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

EXHIBIT 2.2 | Men and Women Rank Obstacles to Gender Diversity Differently

% RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE THERE ARE OBSTACLES RELATED TO CATEGORY



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

When it comes to intervention around advancement—the area that women perceive as the biggest problem—that number drops to 40% (see Exhibit 2.3). Advancement initiatives also do not appear to be a focus of future consideration, with only 14% of senior leaders considering it a top priority for future interventions.

Women who participated in our study feel that bias in promotions and evaluation are key obstacles to advancement

“Men get handpicked for future roles.”

“Promotions are considered vital for men, as they are the ‘bread earners’ of their families.”

Women and Men have Different Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Initiatives. Because not all interventions are equally effective, it is important to focus not just on the critical obstacles, but also to make sure that the correct intervention is put in place to deal with it effectively. There is a significant difference in agreement on which interven-

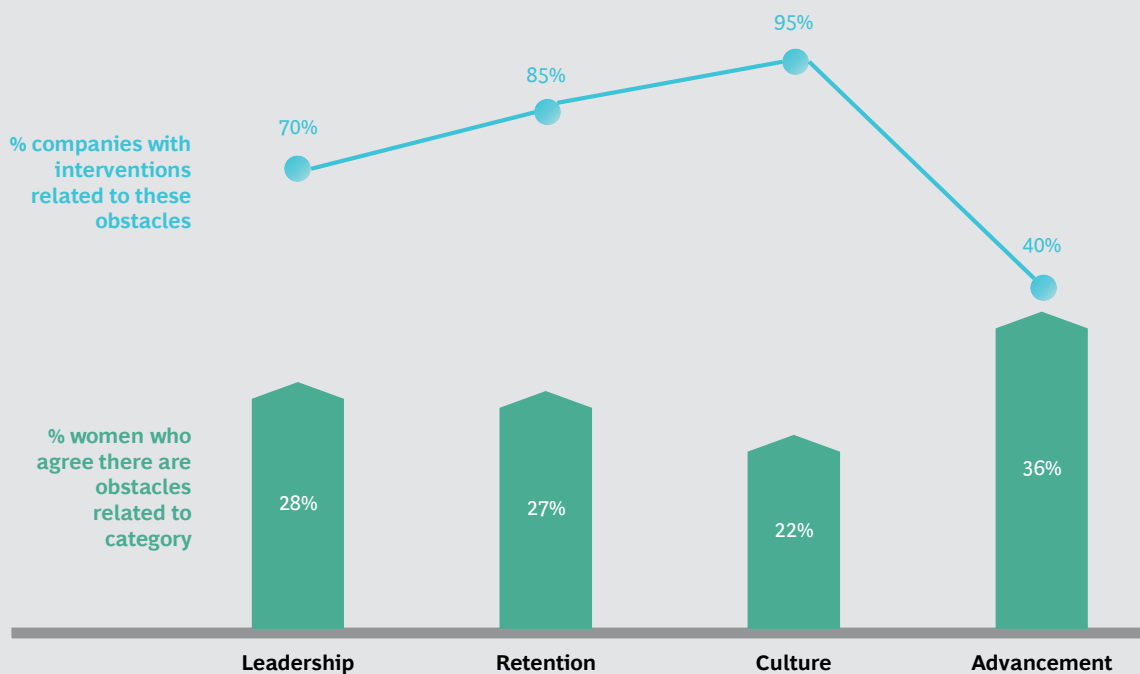
tions are most effective between senior men, who design the interventions, and the women for whom they are designed. Men leaders tend to considerably underrate interventions like part-time working models and significantly overrate interventions such as employee surveys and hard quotas (see Exhibit 2.4).

These differences result in organizations pursuing initiatives that turn out to be ineffective instead of those that are impactful.

Initiatives Do Not Fail Because They are Flawed but Because They are not Rigorously Implemented. For any large-scale transformation strategy to succeed, it is critical to have a clear vision of the end-state, to create a detailed game plan, and to ensure flawless implementation. When it comes to gender diversity initiatives, few companies have succeeded in this.

Most of the companies that we interviewed have a reactive approach toward gender diversity initiatives, with a short-term vision of about six months to a year and a focus on the immediate concerns of the employees.

EXHIBIT 2.3 | Advancement Perceived as Largest Obstacle, But Only 40% of Firms have Interventions on Advancement



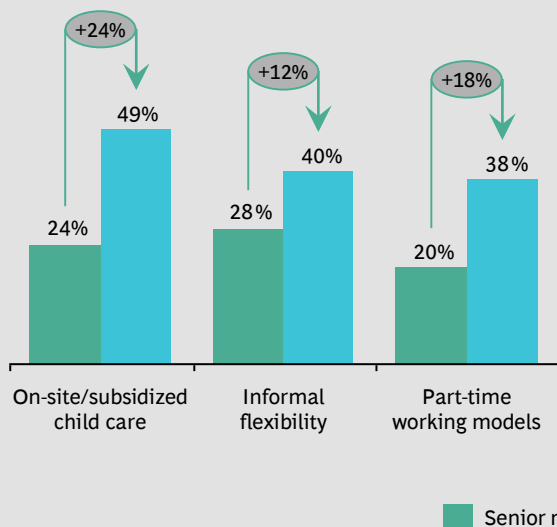
Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

Note: Company is considered to have intervention for an obstacle if > 50% women are aware of at least one intervention for the same.

EXHIBIT 2.4 | There are Disparities of Viewpoint Between Men and Women Around Which Interventions Matter

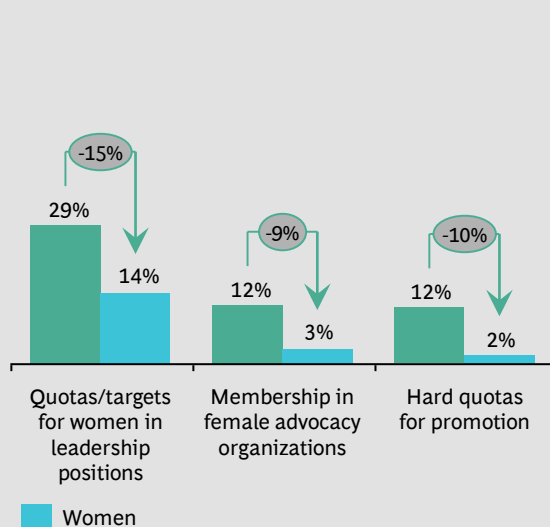
MEN UNDERESTIMATE SOME CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN RATE MOST EFFECTIVE...

% respondents who ranked the intervention in five most effective



... AND OVERRATE SOME CHALLENGES THAT THEY CONSIDER LEAST EFFECTIVE

% respondents who ranked the intervention in five most effective



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

Note: 10 most effective interventions and 10 least effective interventions as perceived by women considered in the two graphs.

¹Senior considered as CEO, direct report to CEO and 2 levels from CEO in a management position.

In approximately 50% of cases in which the initiative has not been effective, the primary cause is poor implementation, rather than an unsound idea. This is true across all categories of interventions (see Exhibit 2.5). This is borne out by the finding that for the five least effective interventions, 50% to 70% of Indian respondents think that the interventions did not work due to poor implementation (compared to approximately 45% globally).

Poor implementation is the primary reason that 50% of initiatives have not been effective

In implementing policies, often the details and implications are not considered carefully. For example, some companies have implemented hard quotas for recruitment and promotions. While the intent is to increase the representation of women, this may cause un-

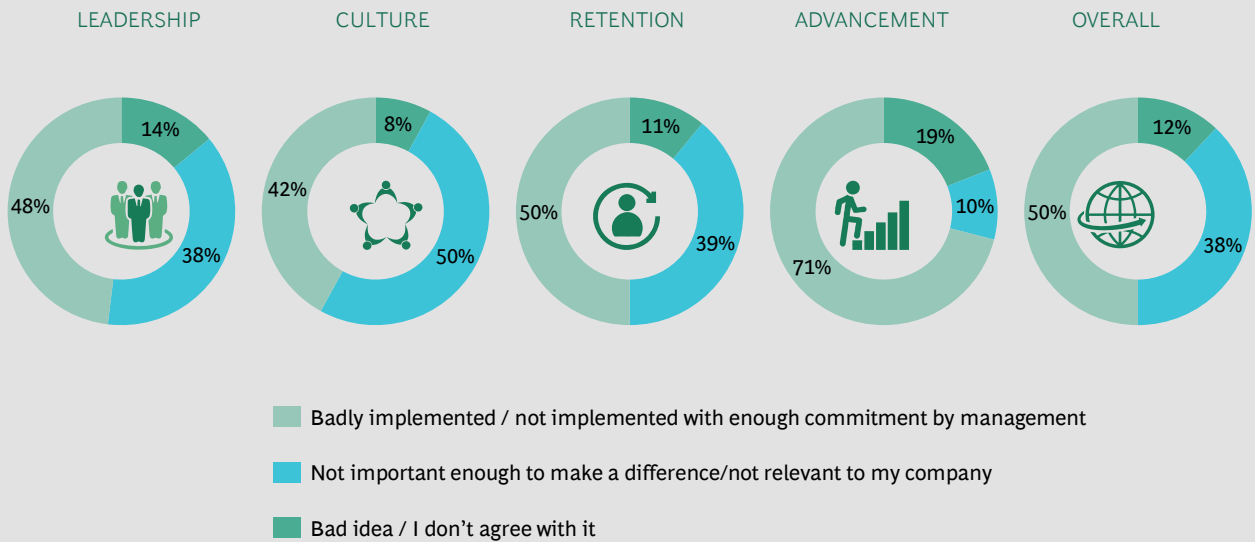
intended consequences and create the perception of diluting meritocracy. A quota-driven mindset often backfires and is not viewed positively by women or men. Quotas and targets usually work only for those companies that face large diversity challenges and need to generate momentum quickly.

The part-time working model, one of the most valued interventions by women, has faced challenges in most companies due to poor implementation. Women greatly value the flexibility it offers, but the program must be designed pragmatically. Often the implementation is left solely to the line manager's discretion. In companies that have implemented the model successfully, the program enjoys full institutional support. Employees interested in the part-time model may have concerns, such as being seen as less ambitious. These concerns should be addressed upfront and the success of the model monitored closely.

Hence, while the intention is good, the workplace is riddled with complexities arising from differing viewpoints and deep-rooted

EXHIBIT 2.5 | Poor Implementation Key Reason for Ineffectiveness of Interventions

% RESPONDENTS ON REASONS FOR INTERVENTION INEFFECTIVENESS



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

misperceptions. These factors, coupled with poor program implementation, are an obstacle to achieving gender diversity. They need

to be addressed systematically in order to bring about gender balance in the workforce.

WHAT WORKS

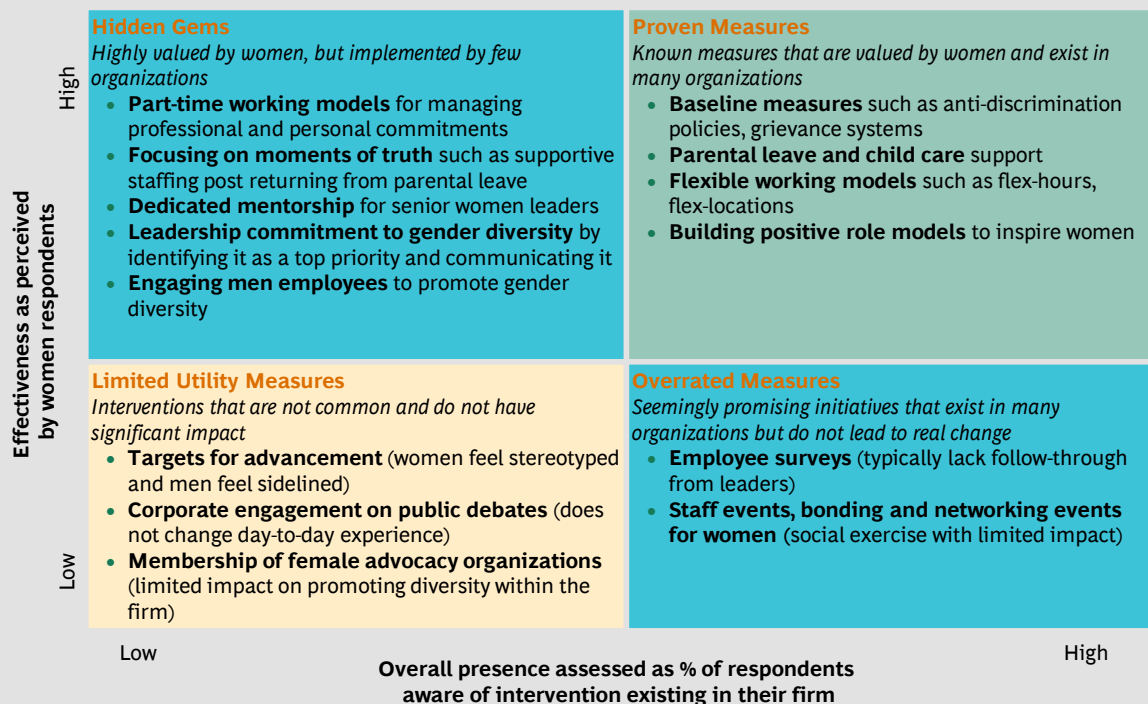
GIVEN THE CURRENT STATUS of various gender diversity programs and the misperceptions that come in the way of their success, companies must spend their time and effort on initiatives that can actually move the needle quickly. Our analysis indicates that gender diversity initiatives fall

into four main clusters (see Exhibit 3.1).

Proven Measures

There are some measures which have been time-tested and found effective in most organizations—we call these proven measures.

EXHIBIT 3.1 | Gender Diversity Interventions Fall into Four Clusters



Sources: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017; Interviews with participating companies; BCG analysis.

These include baseline measures like anti-discrimination policies and regulatory requirements that are present across most companies. Other initiatives target the key pain points in a woman's career (e.g., parental leave policy and support). These have delivered results across sectors and functions. Companies that are about to initiate gender diversity should implement these proven measures first when embarking on their journey.

Baseline measures. These are necessary measures and have been implemented by most companies studied in our research. They include initiatives such as anti-discrimination policies, grievance redressal systems, etc. Such measures may only be used occasionally, but women rated them among the top five most effective measures. We may consider these 'hygiene measures', and they must be implemented with zero tolerance for non-compliance.

Providing parental leave and child care. A recent landmark regulation in India mandates minimum paid maternity leave and child care on-site or within a 500 meter radius for organizations employing more than 50 staff or 30 women. This is an important step toward making the workplace friendlier for women. Companies must implement this policy not just in letter but also in spirit, and careful consideration must go into making this initiative effective. For example, the amenities provided for child care must include clean accommodation, adequate ventilation, and suitable sanitary facilities. Any health emergency for a child is a critical moment for a parent—companies could provide emergency support through partnerships with health clinics, household help agencies, etc. to take care of these situations. This type of support would really help mothers with young children, but such facilities should be available to both women and men to have a genuine impact.

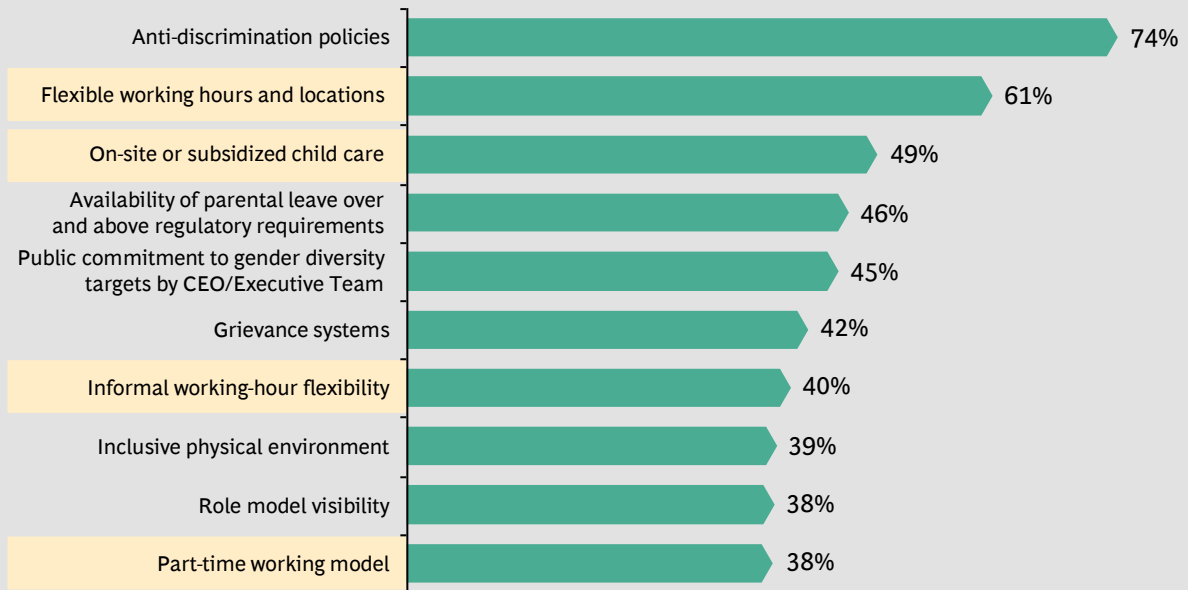
Offering flexible working models. Companies worldwide recognize flexible working models as an effective way to improve gender diversity. A flexibility policy provides companies with a more committed workforce, as employees can choose to work during hours that are most productive for them.

Across most of the companies that we surveyed, flexible working models were present in varying degrees of maturity and have been found to be a very effective intervention. Nearly 60% of women surveyed ranked this as one of the top five most effective measures (see Exhibit 3.2). Out of the top 10 initiatives ranked by women, four are related to flexibility. Companies provide flexibility in different ways and forms. While some provide flexible work hours, others offer the flexibility to work from home or a different location. However, implementing this initiative is not always straightforward. Women often fear that adopting such a model will limit their career progression or stereotype them as 'less ambitious'. Making these models gender neutral or available to both men and women may help assuage this concern. Companies should also consider the practical challenges of such a policy so that employee productivity is not diminished—e.g., companies could provide reimbursement for high-speed Internet connectivity at home. Additionally, by leveraging technology such as video chat tools, employees can still feel connected with their team and participate in important meetings even when working remotely. Successful implementation of this policy requires a mindset shift toward newer ways of working, clear alignment on expectations and working norms, monitoring and improving the flexibility model, and encouraging employees to opt for it.

Building positive role models. At every stage in life, humans draw inspiration from the lives of other accomplished people. Thus, celebrating women and men who have followed unconventional paths to reach the top echelons of the corporate world will inspire younger women (and men) to chart a similar course. This measure does not require large amounts of investment by companies—the hard work is already done. All that is required is some effort to identify role models, share their stories, and celebrate their success. Some companies may not have enough senior women in the organization to act as role models. In such a situation, companies may choose to profile senior men in the organization who have followed a different path to success, or rely on external networks (distributors, customers, clients) to

EXHIBIT 3.2 | Four of the Ten Most Effective Interventions Relate to Flexibility

% WOMEN RESPONDENTS RATING THE INTERVENTION AMONG 'FIVE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS'



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

identify external role models and invite them to share their stories.

Hidden Gems

These initiatives are highly effective, yet many companies do not pursue them actively. They are underrated, but can create disproportionate impact. Companies that have made significant progress on proven measures should invest in these initiatives.

Part-time working models. While we discussed flexible work models as a proven measure, there are stages in many women's lives in which personal commitments (e.g., child or elderly care) take priority over work commitments. These are the times when many women exit the workforce for lack of options in the traditional nine-to-five working model in corporate India. It is time to think differently if we want to plug the 'leaky pipeline' of women managers. Corporations can offer part-time working options to women (and men) at the stages of their lives when they need it. Companies have experimented with different models—reduced hours per day or reduced days

per week with proportional tenure and compensation. A case in point is BCG (see BCG Case Study), where many women in India and around the world have worked 60% to 80% of full-time hours during different stages in their career. They are given similar assignments as full-time employees but the scope of the assignment is redefined to suit the amount of time that the employee is putting in.

While women feel that the part-time option is extremely helpful, they usually refrain from using it, driven by many obstacles, real or perceived.

"It may have negative impact on my appraisals and career advancement."

"There is an unsaid expectation that while the pay will be reduced to half, work expectations will be as good as full-time."

"Success of part-time models rests completely on the discretion of my reporting manager and he does not support me."

BCG MAKES PART-TIME WORK MODELS FULLY CUSTOMIZABLE

Talent is top priority at BCG. Given 27% of the consulting staff globally are women, retaining these talented employees is among the CEO's top three priorities. BCG realized that while many women employees consider consulting to be an extremely fulfilling and stimulating job, some are reluctant to pursue it because of the pace, especially after becoming a parent. To address this, BCG has very successfully implemented Flex-time, which offers flexible and part-time working models for all of its employees globally.

The Flex-time model is open for all employees, men and women, who have completed one year with the firm. There are standard guidelines around which the part-time policy is designed, but the model is fully customizable to each individual's requirements. The employee can choose to work at 60% to 80% capacity. Women and men working part-time are part of regular project team structures, but staffing of the team is aligned to make it possible for reduced capacity roles to be practical. In fact, a project environment is uniquely suited to custom create roles for individuals, as each project is different and there is no requirement for typical full-time line roles. The employee is offered compensation commensurate to reduced capacity

and tenure credit higher than reduced capacity with the recognition that unforeseen client commitments may impinge on more time than initially envisaged. However, what really makes this program work is not just the policy but institutional hard-wired support including alignment of HR, staffing and career development processes to make sure there is no bias in opportunities, evaluation and promotion. While working part-time may be a necessary choice a talented woman makes at some point in her career, ultimately, she is seeking a rewarding career path. Her career mentor is carefully selected to ensure her performance while working part-time is fairly represented in advancement decisions. There is nothing like seeing women working part-time succeed and progress at par with their men colleagues, to inspire younger women.

The program has seen a high uptake across levels. For example, 65% of the women principals and partners in BCG India have worked part-time at least once in their careers. This ensures that they can work on stimulating projects, but work at a pace that they find sustainable. Women represent approximately 25% of the consulting staff and approximately 10% of the partners at BCG India.

Implementing this across all roles could be a challenge but it can work in many situations. For example, if a woman in an insurance sales role wants to work only 50% of her time, her targets and the geography she covers for the distribution can be aligned to meet this criterion. It is also important for companies to think about how women working part-time will be treated during performance evaluations to ensure that there is fair representation of performance and no negative bias in evaluation and advancement.

Focusing on moments of truth. Girls regularly score higher than boys in high school and

college examinations and we know that women are as ambitious as their men counterparts at work. However, as they progress through their career from entry level to middle management and senior roles, we lose many such talented women. Empirically, the attrition points are linked to critical junctures in a woman's life (e.g., maternity) or career graph (e.g., mobility across locations). Companies can take thoughtful steps at these critical junctures, which can have a disproportionate impact on that individual's morale and career trajectory.

For example, when a woman goes on maternity leave, the company can maintain con-

stant contact with her by checking on her well-being and providing any support she needs. Such gestures go a long way in retaining her. Similarly, each woman has a different need or requirement when she returns from maternity leave. It is usually assumed that such women will desire less demanding roles and hence they are given ‘mommy-tracked’ roles. This is a moment of truth in the woman’s career journey. If the organization can customize the role to her requirement and ambition, she will be engaged and motivated to advance in her career (see Axis Bank Case Study). (Also see *Dispelling the Myths of the Gender “Ambition Gap”*, BCG Report, April 2017.)

Dedicated mentorship for senior women leaders. Mentoring is a less formal way of providing career and personal advice. This hinges on trust and commitment between the mentor and mentee, which is difficult to hard-wire and thus implement consistently. Many times, mentorship is ineffective because of poor implementation. Our research also shows that junior women may not find mentorship effective due to its informal structure and potential lack of commitment from the mentor. Senior women, on the other hand, find mentorship effective. It provides them with a sounding board for guidance on navigating their career and balancing personal commitments. If implemented well, a

‘MOMENTS OF TRUTH’ AT AXIS BANK

Axis Bank has a very successful and famous woman CEO. It also has many other senior women in its senior and mid-level leadership.

Axis Bank was grappling with high attrition of women employees at mid-management levels. On digging deeper, senior leaders had a counter-intuitive insight that has shaped their thinking over the last few years. They realized that attrition was driven by ‘easier’ roles given to women returning from their maternity break.

A senior HR manager at Axis says, “There exist two kinds of mommies in every organization—those who wish to, or need to spend more time at home than before to look after their young babies or toddlers. There are also others who want to continue pursuing a challenging career trajectory after returning from maternity break. Usually organizations stereotype all women in the first category and offer only ‘mommy-tracked’ roles to returning moms, which is unfair to those who wish to come back to mainstream roles.”

Today Axis Bank customizes roles to needs and preferences of returning mothers. “We treat each one differently,” says the HR team at Axis Bank.

For well-performing women who have a good support system in place and who wish to return to mainstream, challenging roles, they make the best attempt to offer them such roles. At the same time, they offer informal support to take care of emergency or sudden needs. For those women who may have some initial hiccups in their child care and support system, they offer an option that offers them flexibility in terms of hours and work location. “We think it is important that the flexibility is for a finite period of time, so there is no impact on career progression and the woman employee does not think that she is less useful than those working at full capacity.” There are still other women who need flexibility and reduced-capacity work for extended periods of time due to lack of child care options. “We do not want to lose these talented employees. We are able to, in most cases, create customized lighter roles for them which suit their requirements.”

Understanding each woman’s needs is critical. “We have an honest conversation about her priorities and needs before, during and after the maternity break.” This is usually done by mid- and senior-level women so that they can help her by designing the role and its flexibility as needed.

mentorship program is a very good mechanism for creating affiliation with senior women employees and ensuring they stay, and succeed. BCG runs a program globally called the ‘Segment of One’. For each senior woman, a mentor is chosen carefully and thoughtfully—usually the mentor already has a personal connection with the individual. The role of the mentor is to support the individual through her career trajectory by being a friend and guide.

Leadership’s commitment to gender diversity. To drive real change, the CEO and leadership team must explicitly identify diversity as a critical priority on their agenda; only then will it be taken seriously by the organization. The vision and strategy for diversity should be included in all interactions with the middle and junior management. All initiatives and policies must be transparent and their success or failure should be discussed with the employees so that the entire team assumes collective responsibility.

Engaging men employees to promote gender diversity. A strong correlation exists between

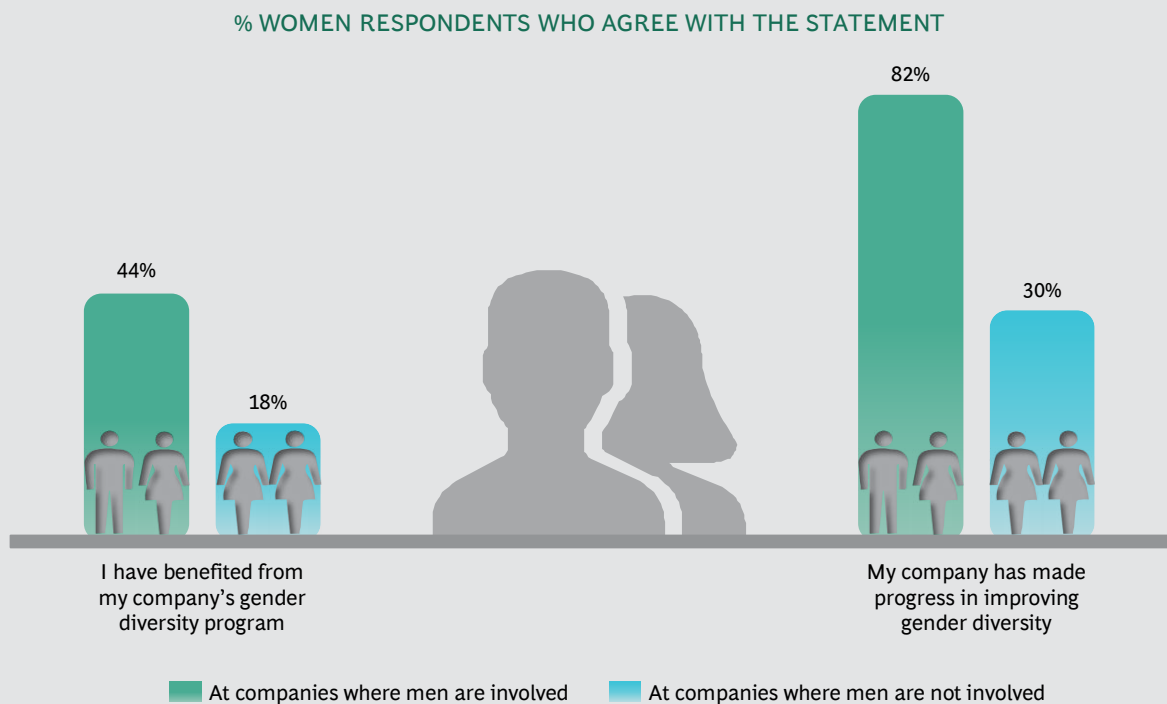
men’s support for gender diversity and reported progress on the same (see Exhibit 3.3). Unless men are champions of and equal stakeholders in this agenda, it will always remain a special interest ‘women’s support program’. When men act as change agents, the program becomes free from any previous stigma and policies are viewed as fair and neutral. Men can be involved as mentors for women or as core members of the design and implementation team of the program.

Overrated Measures

On paper, these measures seem to be promising and have been implemented by several companies. Unfortunately, in many instances, they do not have any real impact and women do not find them effective. Companies may therefore choose to prioritize their investments in areas outside of these measures or use some of these measures selectively.

Employee surveys. While surveys are easy to launch and have been tried in many places, women have ranked surveys as one of the least effective measures. Surveys to under-

EXHIBIT 3.3 | Involvement of Men Correlates Strongly with Progress Towards Gender Diversity



Source: BCG India Gender Diversity Survey 2017.

stand the employees' morale and identify initiatives that do or do not work often do not capture the true essence of the issue, and thus do not translate into action.

Staff events, bonding, and networking events. Indian society, unlike the West, is more reserved and women are less likely to open up to people they do not know well. Indian women usually rely on their network of friends and family for support. While women globally rated this as a very effective measure, bonding and networking events were not perceived as very effective by Indian women.

Further, one-time expensive staff events (like a Gender Diversity Day) are not enough to change deeply rooted behaviors. In isolation, they do not do much to solve real issues faced by women in the workplace.

Women consider these events as *'merely a social exercise.'*

"In today's digitally networked world, bonding and networking happen on its own."

Women also felt that networking needs to be gender neutral: *"Women do not need mingling into an all-women's group. They need to be more active in their professional group instead."*

Limited Utility Measures

In the fourth cluster are measures that do not make a meaningful difference in a woman's life and are not present in many companies. Implemented in isolation, these measures usually do not result in high impact and companies may want to avoid spending either time or resources on them.

Targets for advancement of women. In our research we found that many women shared an unfavorable opinion of quotas on advancement or promotion—"The numbers game does not work." For several centuries now, our society has become accustomed to implementing quotas as a solution to many issues. Our findings, however, suggest that women in corporate India are looking for

merit-based advancement and not quotas. Women do not want specific targets for recruitment or promotion. Targets can only help companies, with a low starting position on diversity, increasing their numbers rapidly as a short-term measure. However, these targets dilute meritocracy and do not create impact in the long term.

What may be more effective is addressing unconscious bias in decisions on advancement and promotion. Some organizations conduct bias-reduction trainings. However, our survey data suggests that one-off mandatory training programs may not be effective in altering deeply ingrained behaviors. Hence, steps need to be taken at two levels. First are 'quick wins' such as redesigning performance evaluation forms to make them gender neutral or seeking a diverse shortlist of candidates for open positions. Following these are longer-term solutions that can alter deeply rooted gender bias mindset. Such interventions can include training, reinforcement of messages on a day-to-day basis, highlighting examples of women in the company who have delivered outstanding results, etc.

Corporate engagement on public debates and membership of female advocacy organizations. Gender diversity is the trending topic for corporate discussions and debates, with multiple firms participating in public forums to discuss the importance of having women in leadership roles. Several female advocacy organizations have also taken root in India. These interventions typically have limited impact on gender diversity. Companies that have already made significant progress in other measures can leverage these forums as a differentiator in trying to attract women talent.

ULTIMATELY, what measures a company chooses to introduce will depend on its values and ethos. Each organization is at a different stage in the maturity of its gender diversity initiatives. There can be no 'one size fits all' solution. Organizations that are serious about bridging the gender gap must review where they stand and decide which measures they wish to undertake. Companies that are at a nascent stage of evolution have

a variety of proven measures to choose from. Those at an advanced stage of gender diversity may continue to build on the initiatives that are known to be successful and addition-

ally invest in the 'hidden gems'. But that is not all. Once a company decides on the trajectory it wishes to embark on, it must focus on implementing the agreed agenda.

CRUCIAL ROLE OF DETAILING AND IMPLEMENTATION

IDENTIFYING THE INTERVENTIONS THAT address issues pertinent to women in a company is only the first part of a gender diversity program. Mere effort—however well-intentioned it may be—will not lead to progress. In order to succeed, programs require rigorous focus on implementation and perseverance to deliver impact, just as would be necessary in any other large-scale change in a corporation.

Achieving success in gender diversity programs requires a change in behavior and working in unfamiliar ways across all levels of the organization. The following five key principles are critical.

Establish a Business Case for Gender Diversity At All Levels. The argument in favor of gender diversity should be unequivocal and not undertaken with the attitude that it is merely something required by regulation or policy. A clear business case must be made to highlight why gender diversity is critical to success. This will ensure that everyone does their part—large or small—for the same cause, especially in companies that currently have very low representation of women.

Diagnose the Underlying Obstacles and Design a Prioritized Intervention Program. It is important to identify the critical obstacles and where the ‘shoe is pinching’,

whether it is recruitment, retention, advancement, leadership, or culture. Once the obstacles have been identified, a longer-term vision for diversity needs to be created and should be supported with short-term goals and milestones (see DRL and Pepsico case studies).

Interventions are a means to achieve the diversity vision, not an end in themselves

Interventions should act as a means to achieve that vision, and not as an end in themselves. Thinking through the detailed implementation plan of interventions to make sure they truly benefit women employees is equally important. Employees always perceive a gap between the formal policy and the way it works (or does not work). A case in point is the flexible working model. Creating a policy on flexible work models is easy—implementing it effectively is fraught with many practical challenges. If a woman wants to work from home one day a week, how will her attendance get marked? Will the team agree to not set up important meetings that day when she is not around? How will she explain her schedule to clients and customers? These are practical challenges

COMPLETE SUITE OF MATERNITY BENEFITS BY DRL

When Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) embarked on its Gender Diversity journey, the company set a target of 12% women representation by 2017. At present, it has achieved 11%, within striking distance of its target. A senior manager at DRL explains, "We could come so close to our target by evaluating when and why the maximum attrition happens. We found that attrition is high at the two-to-three years mark in a woman's career, around the time that they begin planning for maternity. So we decided to focus on this issue and create a complete suite of offerings that cater holistically to a woman's needs at this life stage."

DRL set in place a six-month parental leave policy with an option to extend the leave by three months. It also set up a free on-site day care center for young children.

Recognizing that this is a crucial time for a woman, when she may be managing multiple priorities, DRL launched maternity counseling for mothers-to-be. Counseling is done both by an external counselor and by a dedicated 'buddy mother'. The latter is a senior employee with whom the mother-to-be feels comfortable. While the counselor helps her with the emotional and anxiety-related issues that she is likely to face during the pregnancy, the buddy

mother guides her through work-related issues. She is given suggestions about how to inform her managers about her pregnancy, at what stage to take maternity leave, when to resume work after leave, and how to deal with the challenges of managing her job effectively while coping with the demands of the baby.

When the mother-to-be is about to take maternity leave, she is given a baby shower, where she is showered with gifts by the other women managers. This practice has been institutionalized by the organization and is followed in every plant.

When the woman returns to work, she is given the option of reduced work hours. She may opt to work fewer hours in a day for up to one year with no reduction in salary. To remove the stigma that may stereotype women as being less productive due to this benefit, the organization offers the same benefit to men employees for a period of six months after their paternity break. In addition, both men and women may also select 'flex-time' once they return from the parental break.

These measures have proven to be enormously successful and are used by over 90% of eligible DRL employees.

and will need detailed execution plans and support from managers and senior leaders to be overcome.

Like any change program, the first interventions launched determine the momentum and success of the journey. Investing to make them successful is the key.

What Works Is 'Working Together': Creating Gender-Neutral Programs for Men and Women. The group responsible for change should not comprise only women as this can lead to women feeling stereotyped and men feeling neglected. Both these outcomes are

undesirable. When men become champions of diversity, companies have a higher chance of success. What is extremely promising is the fact that Indian men are as amenable as Indian women to changing their own behavior to support gender diversity initiatives. In fact, Indian men are more amenable than their global counterparts. Approximately 65% of men in India are open to changing their behavior to drive inclusion, versus 55% globally.

As much as possible, the programs designed should be need-based rather than gender-based. Not all women need flexible work

PEPSICO INCREASING GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE SALES FORCE

It is not unusual to find very few women employees opting to pursue a career in sales. Roles in this function often involve extensive travel that can be challenging for women employees given safety concerns. When PepsiCo embarked on its gender diversity journey, management realized that women face different issues in sales compared to other functions. They surveyed women who had quit sales jobs in order to understand the root-causes of issues that they had faced. They then designed customized solutions to address these concerns.

The first issue management addressed was safety. They mapped India into red, yellow, and green zones based on data from the Tata Safety Index and input from local HR personnel. Women are now only given sales jobs in the green zones. The Director of HR said, “We can do all it takes to make the office environment safe—safety trainings, support for late stays, etc. However, we have limited control on the overall safety of the area, and since sales role requires extensive travel, it is an important aspect to be looked at.”

Infrastructure was another key issue, with the availability of clean washrooms being a major pain point. PepsiCo constructed approximately 40 washrooms for women in distributor locations in the smaller cities in green zones. The company and the distributor together take the responsibility to ensure that they are clean and properly maintained.

The third focus area for PepsiCo was the creation of gender sensitization amidst employees. Hence, ‘Mindbugs’, a *nukkad-natak* that focuses on sensitizing men about women’s needs and the challenges they face, was introduced. A gender intelligence workshop was also launched to create better awareness amongst men and women of how each copes and handles situations differently – this helped strengthen collaboration and team spirit within the staff.

These programs have had huge success in increasing gender diversity in the sales function in PepsiCo. Women now feel safer and more empowered. The number of women in sales in PepsiCo India managerial levels has gone up from 8% in 2013 to 18% in 2017 as a result of these initiatives.

hours, just as not all men want the same office hours and work load. Most interventions around flexibility, senior mentorship, and exposure to role models are equally applicable to men, and policies should be framed keeping this fact in mind (see HUL case study).

65% of Indian men employees are amenable to changing their behavior to support diversity

Measure Outcomes, Not Just Initiatives. What gets measured gets done. The success of the program lies not in the number of

interventions launched, but in how they have benefited people. It is important to define the right metrics and relentlessly track the results and benefits to measure success. If the program is not successful, it is important to analyze the reasons, and refine the initiatives based on the learnings.

A Supportive Culture Is Imperative for Success. Across all of the companies we interviewed, one of the key hurdles we identified is the pervasiveness of some form of stereotypical biases against women which comes in the way of the willingness to recruit them in some positions, biases in promotion to senior critical roles etc. However sound the intervention and action plan may be, the program cannot succeed unless every employee is committed to improving gender

HUL CREATES GENDER NEUTRAL FLEXIBILITY POLICIES FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) prides itself on the flexibility policies it offers to men and women alike. The HR team at HUL says, “When we began, our core working hours were from 11 am to 4 pm. All employees were required to adhere to these hours. However, we have covered a long journey since then.”

At HUL, every attempt is made to accommodate requests for location flexibility through adjustments in work hours, location, and sabbaticals. For example, many employees have decided to move their work hours to beat traffic. Some employees also work from home one day per week. As long as the line managers are aligned and work gets done, employees can work from any location of their preference. This policy is gender neutral, which has resulted in high acceptance from all employees.

As the HR team says, “Our employees are extremely talented, and as long as they are willing to work for us, we do not want location constraints to come in the way.” A structured approach is usually followed to make this work. If the employee has to move to a different city for personal reasons, every attempt is made to accommodate the location choice. The employee

is enabled to work remotely and come into office at some frequency for meetings and other interactions. In instances where the work cannot be done remotely, the possibility of looking for alternative roles in the desired location is actively explored.

Another key initiative is the career break policy offered to employees who have completed two years with Unilever. An employee can take a break for up to two years for personal reasons such as maternity, elder care, or simply to pursue a passion. The employee may not be guaranteed the same role upon return, but is given the opportunity of first refusal for the next available role for the appropriate skill level. The process is structured, with a clear set of guidelines, on what can and cannot be done during the career break.

“One of our employees took the career break option to pursue his passion of acting. Post getting selected to play a lead character in a musical by a major production house, he took an year off to pursue his passion. He had a role waiting for him when he came back from his break,” says a senior manager from HR.

Both the initiatives are extremely popular with HUL employees, men and women alike.

diversity in the workplace, and considers men and women as equals. It is important to sensitize all men to the need for gender diversity, overcome any inhibitions to recruiting women, and work with women colleagues and bosses. The plan can only be as good as each employee’s commitment to making it happen.

Call to Action

Gender diversity is critical for a company’s success. Diversity is at the heart of the transition from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Age. This era calls for new patterns of

work and new business practices. Consequently, workers with new and different skills are required. Some companies understand this and have taken various initiatives toward improving diversity. For the diversity agenda to be sustainable, however, implementation must be monitored at a granular level and progress tracked on an ongoing basis. The time to move from INTENTION to IMPACT is now—by identifying and prioritizing a small number of measures that will actually benefit women, addressing the challenges head-on, and stepping out of the past, into the present.

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

In this study, we surveyed approximately 1,500 employees across 25 large Indian companies, and interviewed their Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) and senior leaders to understand their perspectives on gender diversity and the obstacles they face. The respondents identified which of the 39 discrete diversity interventions exist within their organizations and ranked them in order of their effectiveness. They also identified the key reasons why some interventions are not effective.

Participating organizations and employees spanned a broad section of industries, includ-

ing financial services, insurance, consumer goods, pharmaceutical, industrial goods, telecom, media, and the public sector. Of the respondents, 60% were men and 40% were women, with fair representation across levels, age groups, and years of experience in the company. This research was undertaken as part of a global BCG study surveying >18,000 respondents across 21 countries.

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- Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd.
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- Future Generali India Insurance Company Limited
- HDFC Ergo
- Hero MotoCorp
- Hindustan Unilever
- IDBI Federal Life Insurance
- Lupin
- Mondelez
- Mphasis
- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)
- PepsiCo
- Roche
- State Bank of India
- Star India
- TVS Tyres
- Whirlpool

Other participating companies chose not to be named.

FOR FURTHER READING

The Boston Consulting Group has published other articles and reports on the topic of gender diversity. Examples include those listed here.

Dispelling the Myths of the Gender “Ambition Gap”

An article by the Boston Consulting Group, April 2017

Getting the Most from Your Diversity Dollars

A report by the Boston Consulting Group, June 2017

What’s Working to Drive Gender Diversity in Leadership

A report by the Boston Consulting Group, May 2017

How UK companies can stretch their diversity spends

A report by the Boston Consulting Group, April 2017

The Rewards of an Engaged Female Workforce

A report by the Boston Consulting Group, October 2016

Digitally Driven Gender Diversity

An article by the Boston Consulting Group, August 2017

NOTE TO THE READER

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