



BPW International
International Federation of Business



Stern Women Speak

An Undergraduate Businesswomen's Position Paper

Developed by undergraduate business students at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business in response to a question from BPW International – NY and in collaboration with members of Phi Chi Theta Fraternity. Presented on May 25, 2014 at:



More details and commentary with video at: <http://www.sternwomenspeak.com/>



The past three decades have been a time of unprecedented change in the world economy as countries once labeled “Third World” have emerged as the drivers of global growth. The rise of developing countries has not come at the expense of advanced nations. To the contrary, the rapid growth of emerging markets in the aftermath of the global financial crisis has provided a much needed boost to the ailing economies of rich countries. A parallel process of turnaround is underway in the realm of gender equity.

The empowerment of women in our schools, communities and corporations is not a zero-sum game. As we establish methods to provide equal treatment for women, all will benefit from the contributions of a currently underutilized resource.

The work which follows provides a look at how the rising generation of women views gender dynamics in 2014. Gender equality has not yet been achieved, and the authors view business leaders as drivers of change—forces for doing well and good—rather than passive (or worse, grudging) followers of incremental social progress.

The work also reflects the vision we have for the student experience at NYU Stern: *An Education in Possible*. Our students consider their life experiences and the world they know, and ask how it can be improved. This whitepaper demonstrates a belief that business must be a force for good and, most importantly, that we all do better when the voices of men and women are equally valued.

Peter Blair Henry
 Dean, Leonard N. Stern School of Business
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“We wish to thank Dean Henry for his vision, Dean Geeta Menon and Assistant Dean Scott Stimpfel for their continued support and sensitivity to the many issues that arise on a daily basis in our Stern community. They are leaders who *listen* to all of us. community. Their sponsorship is bringing our voices to BPW International’s annual Congress in JeJu, S. Korea and Singapore’ Management University’s Wee Kim Wee Center where we will present our paper and have our voices heard.”



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Background

The idea for this paper started over a luncheon in the Fall of 2013 at The Torch Club, NYU's faculty restaurant. Professors Stehlik and Wolff were asked by Angela McLeod from BPW International, to meet with the NY Chapter President, Francesca Burack. BPW's organization was puzzled by the low response of Western businesses to sign on to the UN's Women's Empowerment Principles, which their organization was promoting.

As the three of us brainstormed, we hit on our greatest asset and voice in the conversation: Stern women. Stern enrolls significant numbers of women in both the undergraduate and graduate programs, most of whom will be in leadership positions at global corporations and institutions. Some will even go on to be doctors, lawyers and creative innovators in social and traditional entrepreneurship. In short you'll see our students throughout the world making a difference. In describing the many talented women students at Stern, we committed to ask what Stern women think about women's empowerment.

Over the next few months, students met in large and small forums to wrestle with the issues women face throughout the world and put their opinions to pen in this position paper. It is a privilege to have seen the enthusiasm of our students embarking on this effort, and it is our sincere hope that other students throughout the world will write their position papers and let leaders know what are the priorities for women in their markets. As communication professors, it's been a privilege to promote these women and listen to their voices.

Executive Summary | A Collaboration of Young Business Women

When asked to translate the meaning of women’s empowerment in our business fraternity’s weekly meeting, virtually everyone had a strong opinion about the issues. As we expanded the dialogue, we immediately focused on 3 key questions:

- What’s going on?
- What are the problems?
- What needs to be done?

Moving forward we realized that this focus needed to include more than just our voices, which is why we organized a Stern event entitled “Stern Women Speak.” This position paper compiles the varied thoughts and opinions of our classmates and has as its base intent a challenge for future colleagues and businesses to rethink what women’s empowerment means in their communities and workplaces. At the university level, we want to encourage conscious thinking about these issues and promote awareness of an increasingly important topic in the workplace. And, most importantly, we address concrete action steps for implementing the Women’s Empowerment Principles. Here is a summary of our process.

Step one | Focus on the Challenge Questions and Task

At the onset of this study we were asked to focus on the 7 principles and try to interpret and prioritize them. In this position paper we are sharing the opinions of current undergraduate women at Stern. We also set as a goal to develop recommendations for implementing them. Secondly, we wanted to see how to increase involvement among corporations for women’s empowerment and to encourage companies to sign off on the 7 Women’s Empowerment Principles. If these principles were created by the United Nations to empower, advance, and invest in women worldwide, why have only 751 companies signed on to the commitment, with few from the US? (See list at <http://www.weprinciples.org/>) This seemed curious. We heard that some of the key factors that contribute to companies’ reluctance to signing on to the commitments include: company complaints about legal liability, and a lack of understanding about how to implement solutions for each of the principles.



Women’s Empowerment Principles “Equality Means Business”

Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.

Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.

Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women.

Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.

Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy/

Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

<http://www.WEPrinciples.org>

Step two | Listen to Stern Women Speaking

The Phi Chi Theta Beta Chapter at NYU Stern School of Business, in collaboration with the Business and Professional Women International New York Chapter (BPWI), hosted the Stern Women Speak event on October 24th, 2013. Through small facilitated discussions, this event documented a wide array of opinions. We broke out into smaller group subsets to assess the current situation as we see it in the workplace, and we brainstormed possible remedies for each issue. Additionally, we outlined reasons for prioritizing each principle and what implementable action steps or initiatives companies can take to commit to any one and all of the principles. Students presented their findings at the end of the discussion, and we extensively documented these presentations. The opinions recorded in this paper were voiced by the undergraduate Stern women to address key issues and concerns of women's empowerment in the workplace.

Step three | Reflect on the findings

Many of the principles overlap but the overarching theme that recurred was the concept of “fairness.” Our groups had trouble reconciling the concept of pure, “merit-based” fairness. In the process of gathering the opinions of our participants, we found that many of our colleagues believed companies could improve their internal processes and transition to a more inclusive and transparent corporate culture and environment.

Step four | Acknowledge Lack of Support for Working Women

The discussions demonstrated our belief that a gap exists between how women need to be further supported to advance in the workplace and how they are currently being supported. Most women recognize this inherent difference, the slight nuances that make it different for them to be a woman rather than a man in the workplace. However, they feel that they will only truly be respected when they have earned their accomplishments in a merit-based manner. By introducing further transparency into company disclosures, companies can instill a more open company culture and level the playing field for all their employees. Corporations should actively produce reports around key metrics based on diversity inclusion, especially openly publishing men's and women's salaries, promotions, c-suite positions, etc.

Step five | Action: Push for Corporate Transparency

The women participating in our initiative believed that the following are essential for women's empowerment in the workplace:

- Increased visibility of female leaders by having women leaders in the workplace (Principle 1)
- Improved corporate marketing materials to change the public perception of women in the workplace (Principle 5)
- Focused resources on women's professional development, not just educational (Principle 4)

Our recommendations encourage women's empowerment initiatives and support women working on these initiatives.

The more women are aware of and understand the factors, internal or external, that hold them back, the more they can be empowered to take steps towards their advancement in the workplace. Education has equipped women with the knowledge to perform their roles and to succeed in school. But we still see differences in attitudes between men and women towards their roles in the corporate world. Our recommendations aim to help corporations bring out the best in their workforce and encourage them to recognize the value that women add to their companies.

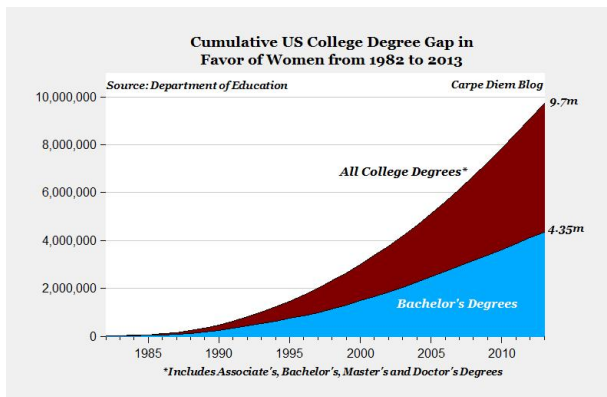
Side Note | Scope of Participants with a business focus

The women involved in the discussions leading to this paper attempted to consolidate the thoughts and opinions of a specific group of Stern undergraduate women, many of whom would be going into business. Thus the focus here will be slanted to the world of work as we anticipate entering. Our paper is not a Stern-wide consensus on the topic; but we did invite many engaged Stern undergraduate women to participate. While there was the opinion that men should be invited to the discussion, a decision was made to exclude them in honor of prioritizing our own voices. Round two can include the men.

Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

Observations

The conversation about why there is a lack of female presence in the leadership of most companies is an important one, albeit a familiar one. What is particularly unsettling is that the number of women in the C-suite is staggeringly low while women are becoming more educated, equipped, and ambitious: there are more women in entry-level positions than ever before and the rates of graduation have surpassed those of men.



Mark J. Perry reported on the gap between men and women graduating college with the following post:
"According to data from the Department of Education on college degrees by gender, the US college degree gap favoring women started back in 1978, when for the first time ever, more women than men earned Associate's degrees. Five years later in 1982, women earned more bachelor's degrees than men for the first time, and women have increased their share of bachelor's degrees in every year since then. In another five years by 1987, women earned the majority of master's degrees for the first time. Finally, within another decade, more women than men earned doctor's degrees by 2006, and female domination of college degrees at every level was complete." May 13, 2013
<http://www.aei-ideas.org/2013/05/stunning-college-degree-gap-women-have-earned-almost-10-million-more-college-degrees-than-men-since-1982/>

We concluded the reasons why advancement is lacking for women typically fall into one of two perspectives:

- 1) Corporations hinder women from advancement and create a "glass ceiling" for women, or
- 2) Society has conditioned women to hold themselves back from taking the steps that a man typically would take to advance to the executive level.

Specific factors that hold women back include:

- difficult work-life balance decisions
- lack of professional support which makes it more difficult for women to ask for promotions
- gender stereotyping which has led many women to doubt their ability as leaders.

We believe that these social and cultural factors play an integral role affecting a woman's overall outlook, and they cannot be ignored in addressing any strategic implementation of the Principles.

Women holding higher managerial positions are often stereotyped as “aggressive,” without support for their roles. We need more established women's networks to support these future leaders. One student leader (Nisha) remarked that the stereotyping begins at the university level - her experiences as a leader and president in student organizations has given her a reputation of being “aggressive.” Male students in similar positions are noted for their impressive leadership qualities and compassion.

Recommendations:

Sponsorships and Relationships will trump typical networking

What sets a C-suite level executive apart from the rest of the workforce is the ability to establish leadership cross functionally within an organization and demonstrate strategic thinking. Advancing into the C-suite usually requires recognition by hiring managers, either through networking or through references. As the hiring process becomes more subjective at higher levels, sponsorships become an increasingly important differential as well.

As the role of sponsors become more important, companies need to recognize the impact of additional internal support networks for women on their way to leadership positions and in leadership. Although affirmative action policies may have the potential to raise resentment within a firm, we noted that women-only conferences, meetings, and programs to help build women's networks within a firm are both “unfortunate” and “necessary”. As one student said, “...building relationships rather than networking is a goal to be emphasized for women.” Internal support networks can help women gain visibility in the workplace for all the value they create, provide recognition for their accomplishments, and support them for promotions.

One student noted that to empower women across a firm, we need more women leaders at the top to set an example that other women can look up to. Future generations should have female figures in business to aspire to be like. Women leaders at the top can also play a mentoring role and act as advocates or sponsors for other women. Companies should highlight top female leaders/executives and host speaker series so other executive women can inspire other businesswomen through open engagement forums.

Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

Observations

Participants viewed this principle as being one of the most important for the empowerment of women in the workplace. The key words that stood out to the group were “respect” and “support”. “Respect” was seen as “having an understanding for another person and treating them appropriately.” One of the components viewed as missing from companies is open communication.

Some students spoke about the pay gap between men and women; it was felt the gap is attributed to the fact that men are more aggressive when negotiating for their salaries, whereas women on the whole do not ask for the same salaries.

The group also discussed the concept of fairness in the context of recruiting and hiring women. Some practices seen in the workforce were viewed as discriminatory. For example, women are seen as a liability if they take maternity leave. Factors like that are still considered by companies during the hiring process.

Secondly, the group viewed “proactively recruiting and appointing women” for positions as also a discriminatory practice. The general consensus was that positions earned by merit were crucial to ensuring the fairness of this principle.

Recommendations:

Transparency will promote Fairness

Various studies show how biases are inherent, whether we know they exist or whether we want them to exist. A Harvard Business Review study “How (Un)ethical Are You?” reveals that the implicit biases we have towards certain groups of people will guide our decisions, despite how fair minded and objective we intend to be. Recognizing these biases in the workplace is a good first step towards combating them. We believe a forward-looking company will adopt a progressive mindset and exhibit more transparency by implementing the practices described below:

- Publishing internal reports on diversity and inclusion to assess the fairness of the environment in their offices. These reports can provide a public view of company practices which will in turn stimulate the kinds of discussions that allow companies to get a better sense of where they stand with their employees and other stakeholders. Diversity reporting and the subsequent conversations will help companies discern what discriminatory practices exist in their workplace and more importantly lead to discussions on how to improve processes and procedures. This kind of evaluation will produce a clearer picture and roadmap for company action.
- Developing workshops and training sessions to educate the workplace on “fairness” and “transparency” in the context of its particular business environment. Unless employees understand a company’s interpretation of fairness, it is unfair to expect anyone to be fair.
- Women, more than men, carry the emotional and physical burden of child rearing. Maternity leave is provided for mothers to look after the baby in the early stages. We view paternity leave as an equally valid option for the family; the ability of a company to give both the parents this option will instill a better sense of fairness. By providing employees with both of these options, companies will no longer assume that the liability from parental leave rests solely on their female employees. Hiring managers will be able to refocus their efforts on finding and attracting the best talent, regardless of whether employees take a leave of absence for child care.

¹Mahzarin R. Banaji, Max H. Bazerman, and Dolly Chugh, “How (Un)ethical Are You?” Harvard Business Review, Dec 2012, <http://hbr.org/2003/12/how-unethical-are-you/ar/1>

Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers*

Observations

In order to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of its employees, companies should establish high standards for the physical and emotional aspects of an employee's experience. Not only do female and male employees have the basic human right to be healthy, safe and well, but also their work will be performed more effectively and efficiently as a result of having these basic conditions met. Nevertheless, women and men still face hindrances to their health, safety, and well-being. Unsafe conditions can take the form of physical or mental abuse, and companies must make it a priority to ensure to the best of their ability that all the employees are safe from harm.

In the context of business, it is important to prioritize the health, safety and wellbeing for both women and men. Not promoting the same for both genders will result in discrimination, although it can be noted that standards for health, safety, and well-being may carry different meanings for each of the genders, each of which may encounter varied problems. For example, while issues related to pregnancy can primarily affect women, sexual harassment, a violation of safety, can affect both women and men. And, indeed, most issues that affect one partner in a relationship do and will affect the other partner, regardless of gender.

Violence in the workplace is not always properly addressed. Many cases of harassment go unreported because of a host of reasons, most concerning the implications for the victim in the company going forward. In addition, companies do not necessarily take care of victims of sexual harassment with treatment and follow-up care. Both women and men need to be aware of what exactly sexual harassment entails so they can recognize it if it happens to them. The stigma around men facing sexual harassment needs to be addressed because men are much less likely to report an incident that happens to them.

While these are just a few examples of the health and safety issues facing workers, they all carry a similar challenge: identifying, reporting and company responsibility to resolve.

Recommendations:

Company transparency & accountability for all affected

Companies can take measures to ensure that the environment they create in their offices facilitates healthy practices. Health and wellness promotion programs should not only aim to address disease and lifestyle management, they need to acknowledge the pressing psychological issues that employees may face as well.

Practical solutions for the mentioned issues include surveys and studies to get to a company and employees' opinions about what aspects of their health, safety, and well-being are most important and relevant to them. Companies can also differentiate between the needs of women and men. For example, they may allocate resources for helping victims transition safely back to work.

Over the longer term if governments as well as companies and communities begin to recognize that support for working mothers beyond a maternity leave policy is important, the potential subsidies for these programs could be a reality. Why? A sustainable economy requires children and all stakeholders should be accountable for supporting

*Note: we specifically did not discuss the global environmental issues and problems faced by industrial waste, pollution or

the family. Government subsidies are particularly needed to encourage and support the community programs that will create a healthy and safe environment.

Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

Observations

During this discussion, the participants considered the positive correlation of resources and opportunity for men and women working in corporations. Resources included everything from formal training programs to the intangible value added from peer support.

When discussing the implications of this principle, we thought about fields related to math and engineering where men dominate. In fields where women are not prevalent, it is unclear whether this is due to lack of interest or lack of opportunity. Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo! spoke about the lack of female presence in her computer science classes in college. She believes that the increased female participation and interest in technology fields at the university level will translate to increased female presence in a field now typically dominated by men.

Universities are responsible for educating women and businesses are more responsible for training. Cooperation from both schools and corporations is integral for women to advance in the workplace.

Principle 4 is the key starting point to granting equal access for women. It is important to track how difficult it is for women to enter non-traditional jobs versus men. There also needs to be a way to track progress for this principle. Education begins when we are children, but the in-depth and focused learning that happens in higher education is crucial. The most disparity in educational development is seen in the workplace, making it the place that needs the most improvement.

Recommendations:

Build support structures for inclusive and collaborative teams

Multiple cultural factors produce an uneven playing field in the professional world. As business students, we focus on securing a job post graduation is typically highly emphasized. All business school students often have the same technical knowledge and general industry knowledge; but numerous studies show that women often have higher overall grade point averages than their male counterparts. One point of contention is why these statistics don't lead women to excel at the same rate as men do in the workplace. We noted that professional development should aim to emphasize areas where women may be lacking experience, for example, effective negotiation practices.

We have seen many examples of how men are seen to take initiative to develop their network outside of work. One student (Priyanka) described how there was a stereotypical boys club in her own finance internship over the summer. Another student (Gloria) realized that the males in her internship also took the initiative and began going out by themselves and connecting outside of work. The bonding aspect of learning is imperative to professional development, as building relationships is such an important part of gaining referrals in the workplace.

Men in the workplace are typically seen recommending and promoting each other. Women need to make sure they take the time to acknowledge and promote other hardworking women around them. Building relationships with women in their industry will help them learn from each other, to gather best practices, and make for a more social work experience. This in turn helps them develop professionally.

Both of these situations fall under the area of effective communication, which can start at all levels of a person's academic experience and carry through to specific workplace programs. Effective Communication Strategy, Negotiation, and Team Building are all emphasized at Stern in the core social impact program where conflicts can surface and help students understand how to negotiate the gender dynamics. The curriculum supports and incents students to learn from these experiences. More could be done to build on these academic modules in the corporate environment. Again, it is a collaboration of corporate and academic learning that can be promoted more.

A major concern is the lack of resources for women who are rising the corporate ladder, since they have less time for family and childbearing. If women delay getting married and having children, they will have more time to develop skills and gather relevant experiences for a higher level position. However, having a family should not be a barrier to success in the workplace. Similar to the issues in Principle 3, everyone benefits from building support structures that don't force women to choose between family and career. It is the wrong conversation to have in a global work environment that needs to leverage all the talent it has to solve the critical issues facing our generation.

Principle 5: Implement Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices That Empower Women

Observations

We felt that this principle had the most social impact on a company's public image because of all the direct access through a marketing campaign. During our discussion, participants pointed out that most marketing materials display men's pictures. In advertising, clear gender roles are assigned to both genders. If an authoritative role is pictured, a man is usually the default authority figure. Without even realizing it, many firms are already biased in their marketing campaign. Without female figures to emulate, women rely on the image of male figures to guide how they operate in the business world, reinforcing the notion that the business world is a "man's world."

Similar to Principle 2, the issues of supply chain bias and enterprise development favor men. Venture capitalists are more likely to fund men over women. In a recent article in the Boston Globe, *Playing by the Rules, How female entrepreneurs can get in the venture-capital game*, writer, Fiona Murray wrote about a study she conducted.

With colleagues at Harvard Business School and The Wharton School, I recently conducted a study that involved video pitches for new companies that used slides, an identical script, and a voice-over from either a male or female "founder." It turned out that companies pitched by men were about 40 percent more likely to receive funding than those led by women. In a follow-up experiment, we found that evaluators particularly favor pitches from attractive men, and that attractive women do worse than unattractive men and women.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2013/11/02/how-female-entrepreneurs-can-get-venture-capital-game/Ahn0XfhG3WABm8Q4uoAq6O/story.html>

And, in another article

Almost all VC funding goes to men. And that isn't an exaggeration. Stanford's Clayman Institute for Gender Research reports that women-led businesses only get 4.2% of venture capitalist funding. Other reports claim that female entrepreneurs receive a whopping 7% of the funding.

Read more at <http://women2.com/new-research-female-founders-40-less-likely-funded-vcs/#fJJ4FB8USuSgllZz.99>

Not all women are going to be entrepreneurs, but our estimate is that this same bias exists in business contracts along the supply chain. We were right. At a recent SCM event in Miami, Participants devoted an entire day to discuss supply chain bias. They reported that, “The idea was open, honest discussion of why women – despite making up 30-40% of entry-level supply chain positions – end up holding no more than 5% of top-level jobs. The aim was to identify what can be done.” While we didn’t have a recommendation for this issue, we will endorse their recommendations, which follow along the lines of our recommendations in Principle 2 and support more transparency.

Recommendations:

Transparency, Imagery and Advocacy

Women are consistently exposed to marketing and advertising that encourage them to fit a certain mold. The same way that media encourage women to be “beautiful,” media can also uplift women and show them the opportunities for success. Our goal is to break the barriers of fitting either gender into a set of preconceived characteristics and

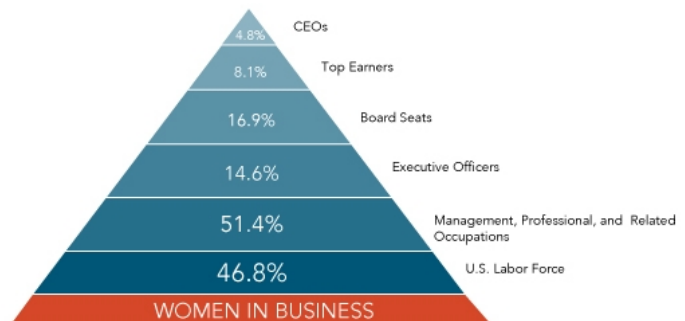
demonstrate how both genders can achieve the same company objectives. This sends the message that in business, “success” can look like many things - companies do not need to be confined to using one image to represent success.

Companies’ marketing practices should strive to be gender unbiased. To empower women marketing could place more women’s faces on their materials, show more women in strong financial decision-making roles, start women networks, take on more women clients, invest in more women run businesses, have women speakers, etc. All these suggestions are aimed at achieving gender equality, with no intention to put men in a disadvantaged situation.

In the supply chain bias and venture capital funding it is similar to recommendations in the other principles. There needs to be more transparency in following the numbers on who and how many women get contracts and move up the ladder. The SCM group also recommended promoting advocacy with action programs that encouraged more hiring from other sources with transferable skills, like the military. Since most of us are not in that work environment it is hard to have an opinion, but the numbers don’t lie. When the same bias exists in this environment as we see in business as a whole something has to change. You can read more about SCM’s discussion here: <http://www.scmworld.com/Blog/Beyond-Supply-Chain/Women-in-supply-chain--a-bias-for-action/>

U.S. Women in Business

**Principle 6:
Promote equality
through
community
initiatives and
advocacy**



Sources
 Catalyst, Women CEOs of the Fortune 1000 (January 15, 2014) and additional Catalyst research and analysis.
 Rachel Soares, Mark J. Bartkiewicz, Liz Mulligan-Ferry, Emily Fendler, and Elijah Wai Chun Kun, 2013 Catalyst Census: Fortune 500 Women Executive Officers and Top Earners (Catalyst, 2013).
 Rachel Soares, Mark J. Bartkiewicz, Liz Mulligan-Ferry, Emily Fendler, and Elijah Wai Chun Kun, 2013 Catalyst Census: Fortune 500 Women Board Directors (Catalyst, 2013).
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey Table 11: Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, 2013 (2014).
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey Table 3: Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population by Age, Sex, and Race, 2013 (2014).

Observations

One area that we see as an opportunity is in the relationship between schools and corporations. Numerous opportunities can be initiated by a school and supported by a company to demonstrate the need for community wide understanding of the need for equality.

For example, engineering schools are increasingly trying to attract female applicants. Collaborating with local employers to introduce the field of engineering at an early point in a girl's education can encourage a reversal in culture bias.

Spreading awareness of gender inequality and educating children at an early age about the importance of equality is critical at the local community level. We see bullying is an issue that is becoming a huge threat in many schools. Perceived corporate community leaders who represent power in a community can take the lead in discussing how there is no place for that in successful career and appear as role models for power with words.

In order to engender greater societal support, women need to have the self-confidence to advocate for their own interests. Participating in leadership positions at the local community level could be the start of building the self-confidence that translates to the world of work.

We recognize that achieving women's empowerment and equality is not easy; In fact, advocating for this change could be frustrating. To combat our frustration, which could potentially sabotage our efforts and turn into anger, we could take a different perspective. We visualize our capacity to change the current culture as a launching pad for the evolution of everyone's consciousness.

Recommendations: Company CSR as a catalyst for change

Community initiatives are becoming a big part of a company's Corporate Social Responsibility efforts. We believe that companies can use CSR to advocate for gender equality. One of the ways in which they can empower the community is by lending their expertise to community problems as well as educational programs.

Here are just a few examples:

- Technology companies can partner with schools to stimulate the learning of science and encourage students to take part. These types of workshops and initiatives foster learning, and encourage students to ask questions about different fields. It prepares them for the "real world" and will allow them to develop new options and interests.
- Companies can develop women-student mentorship programs, where professional women come into schools and talk about their wide array of experiences, providing exposure and awareness to younger women.

Initiatives like these are valuable for the long-term, where the companies will invest in children, who are the future.

Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Observations

Our group started by outlining guidelines for “measurement” in the context of this principle. We concluded that for measurements to play an effective role in promoting gender equality, it would yield qualitative data would be needed for marketing purposes, and be reported in quantitative form for results. These reports will increase transparency, as mentioned in many of the previous principles.

Our impressions of this principle were that it was incredibly important but it lacked a standard of measurement and compelling incentives. However, it offers stakeholders a chance to engage with the companies, which is extremely important for generating and maintaining interest in women’s empowerment. Creating visibility is equally important if we want to build momentum and celebrate the successes in the strides we’re making toward equality and fairness in the workplace.

Recommendations

Companies should outsource their progress reports to third party consultants who may paint a more objective picture of the progress on their gender equality initiatives. The US companies that have signed onto the WEPs commitment can be interviewed about their progress, commitment, and rationale for signing; these disclosures can be used as a benchmark to encourage other companies to do the same.

All women applicants entering the workforce should be encouraged to ask about these public reports, to get an idea of their projected or expected career path in a company before moving forward and accepting an offer. Women should be asking about what strides the company is making towards ensuring women have the voice they deserve at the company.

Universities can develop workshops and seminars to inform women on what questions to ask and what policies are on the books to better prepare them to interview a future employer. These conversations will tilt the power balance. With more transparency, we can expect more fairness as was mentioned before.

For copies of this paper and the graduate women’s paper along with video of the Stern events surrounding this project, visit our website at: <http://www.sternwomenspeak.com/>

We’d love to hear from you!

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