

Chapter 1

YOUR WAKE-UP CALL

Let's put it on the table right at the onset. We believe—and what's more, we believe we can prove—that if you want your business to perform at its peak, you must hire and promote women alongside men into management and elect them to your board of directors.

How we can possibly be doing the best for our businesses if we hire and promote from only one-half of the population? This question has been out there forever, including back when women were not even considered full citizens. Asking this question has not led to the experience that most women and many men want, which is a full place for women alongside men in management and on boards. Other authors have tried to argue that women have superior skills (at least in certain areas) and this is the reason they should succeed in business. How is that argument working for change? Not so well.

We need to make a case that is provable based on evidence from an overwhelming number of experts in the field—a case that matters to those in positions of power. Who are they? Why—men, of course. This is the challenge that many who have tried to create change have been unable to resolve.

DIVERSITY AT THE TOP: CORRELATES WITH BETTER PERFORMANCE

For over twenty years, a growing body of research has demonstrated that companies that embrace diversity in general—and gender diversity at the highest company levels in particular—enjoy superior corporate performance. The evidence is globally relevant. It applies as much to China as to the United States and as much to Canada as to the United Kingdom or any other country.

Acting to achieve optimal corporate performance, or as some statutes require, “acting in the best interests of the corporation,” requires boards and management to adjust the balance in their firm to achieve the right mix of men and women in leadership roles.

However, some believe progress by corporations in this area has stalled of late. Despite the acclaim given to a few high-profile female CEOs, progress in promoting women to senior management roles has slowed in mature economies. Writing recently in *The New York Times*, Philip N. Cohen noted that, “The movement toward equality stopped [in 1994] and it hasn’t changed much since.”¹

Men still dominate senior management and boards, with women representing a little more than a token presence. There is no question that women feel “left out” and frustrated, as is suggested by the title of a *Harvard Business Review* article, “Women in Management: Delusion of Progress.”²

However, if you consider that the aim is a fundamental change in the way men and women interact with each other at work, we can see progress continuing globally with distinct regional dynamics.

That’s the bottom line of our book. And unlike other books written today on the topic of advancing women, this is not another “your journey to diversity” book. We’re offering more than that. We know what works and we’re going to show you how to do it. We’re going to share breakthrough insights, pinpoint the specific areas where you need to focus your attention, and give you the tools to make things happen.

This book is unique in another way as well. There are few if any books on gender diversity targeted *specifically* to men and what men can and should do to support and champion the advancement of women. For decades, the burden for achieving parity in leadership, whether in business, education, or government, has been placed squarely, and wrongly, on the shoulders of women alone.

That’s changing. We see a growing realization on the part of male leaders all over the globe that women in balanced leadership with men leads to a bigger bottom line. These leaders are personally getting involved and seeing that their managers at all levels are walking the talk as well.

Men in positions of power want to see more women on their executive teams and on their boards. Many confess, though, that they don’t know what to do to make that happen. Many admit that they didn’t know that they *personally* needed to be involved. They also admitted that they are seldom if ever invited to participate in gender diversity programs. But when we share with them the contents of this book, they’re totally receptive, supportive, and enthusiastic about getting involved.

Men, you are the last piece of the puzzle in this quest for the advancement of women, and this is your one-of-a-kind guidebook in how to get personally involved and what specifically you can do.

Women, you will find *Results at the Top* of huge value as well for its refreshingly different insights into why men on executive teams and boards—well, men in

general—think and act as they do. You’re going to learn a lot about yourselves as well in the chapters that follow.

Most important, it will help women leaders in Human Resources and Diversity & Inclusion to know where and how we’re suggesting men get involved. You may not be aware of the critical mass of men who want to be partners in this. So, we’re inviting you to invite them!

“Speaking of being partners in this, Richard, we’ve both been at this for quite a few years now. Let’s tell our readers what first brought us together.”

“I remember it well, Barbara. I was working inside, in banking, trying to effect change, while you were working outside, bringing Gender Intelligence to all kinds of industries everywhere.”

HOW WE CAME TOGETHER

I first met Barbara in 1990 when she was asked by John Hunkin, then Chairman and CEO of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), to come in and improve the working culture of CIBC and Wood Gundy, the retail brokerage division of CIBC Wealth Management.

At that time, I was the senior manager in fixed income; I then moved to the equity division. It was that position in equity that opened my eyes to the company’s maternity policy, something I initially tried to ignore. I’ll explain that a little later on in this chapter.

Richard Venn was one of the first men I ever knew who championed women in leadership. At the time, he was president of CIBC/Wood Gundy. Richard was directly involved in bringing Barbara and her Gender Intelligence workshops into the organization. I attended a number of sessions and remember them well. The business case and brain science opened my eyes to the value of difference thinking. Since then, Barbara and I have stayed in touch and tracked each other’s work for twenty years.

I remember Barbara facilitating the Gender Intelligence workshops with Wood Gundy. That firm was way ahead of the curve when it came to recognizing the value and need to have women in retail brokerage and in leadership. Wood Gundy was one of the first banks to tackle this issue and transform the trading floor culture.

More companies today are discovering that in order to achieve superior performance, they’ll need the critical thinking skills of both men and women on the board level, on the executive committee, and on every management team right down through to the market-facing consultants, advisers, and sales teams.

“You know, Richard, your recollection of when we first met takes me a little further back in my career and how I came to realize the necessity of engaging men in the advancement of women.”

BARBARA'S WAKE-UP CALL

The time was the early 1980s and the place was the multinational firm Sony. I was climbing the corporate ladder, well on my way to becoming Sony's first female sales manager. It had been a tough journey, but I made it to the top and raised three children at the same time. I felt like I had scored a great victory for women. I was sure my story would inspire working women everywhere. And I was sure I knew the formula for success: you had to behave like a man.

Life at Sony was hectic, tough, and competitive. To tackle all the obstacles in my way, I attended—literally—a hundred coaching sessions on topics ranging from *Assertiveness Training* to *Guerrilla War Tactics for Women*. The sessions were more like military training camps than anything, but I kept going to them. Why? They worked! I won more outstanding performance awards than any of my colleagues did. I became such a tough manager that some of my colleagues nicknamed me “The Sherman Tank.”

Like many working women at the time, I believed that to be *equal* to men women had to be *the same* as men. Actually, back in the 1970s and 1980s, many feminists believed women had to be the same but better—women had to study more, work harder, and perform better than men to succeed. Basically, everyone thought the only model for success was the male model.

Nobody thought much about gender differences back then. Like everyone else, I thought “inferior to men” meant “less than men.” I bought into that thinking. I was a split personality: a man in the office, and a woman in my personal relationships and with my clients. I actually bought into the *same is equal* thinking so much that I decided to help other women learn to act more like men too. After all, it was the way to success.

When I looked around, I saw a lot of women struggling to make it in the corporate world, but not that many actually running companies or sitting in boardrooms. I was sure it was because women weren't trying hard enough. I believed women were self-defeating and took things too personally, or just failed to make themselves heard. I told women to get off it and stop being drama queens. That's what the men said—and I bought into it. I told women they had to become powerful, authoritative, and assertive, and suppress their emotions and talk like a boss. It worked for me!

I stuck to this crusade for several years until one fateful incident at a workshop I was giving for women at the pharmaceutical company SmithKline Beecham. When I look back now, I can see how that workshop turned my whole world-view upside down and led me to do the work I do today.

The workshop had started the usual way, with me preaching on about how women had to take control of their lives. When I got to the part about how to gain respect from your boss, one woman in the group stopped me.

“Why are you saying that it's women who have to change?” she asked. “What about men?”

In my mind, different meant less. There was a hierarchy, and women were lower on the ladder. I told the woman, "If you're here, it's because you're missing something."

She didn't buy it. "We're not here because we think something's wrong with us. The problem is in the work environment. It is devaluing. That's all."

I stuck to my line. "If you feel devalued, maybe there's something wrong with the way you put yourself across."

But the woman didn't buy that either, and neither did any of her colleagues at the workshop. Exasperated, I ended the workshop and sent them home. I also went home—to think. And that's when I began to see that I had been getting it all wrong, all along. I understood that there was no point trying to make women act like men. Women were different from men!

At the time, I was also giving workshops to men on how to relate to women. The men actually acted very differently in workshops than women did. The men didn't nod while I was speaking, like the women. They didn't collaborate or brainstorm the same way as women. They didn't draw up lists the same way or discuss things the same way either. When I thought about my work at Sony, I realized that men and women worked differently there, too. I had always chalked these differences up to personality differences, but I started wondering if there wasn't more to it.

Well, there was! I decided to see what scientists and researchers were saying about gender differences and they had a lot to say! By the mid-1980s, the facts were there. Men and women really were different. They think differently. They process information differently. They communicate differently.

What a huge mistake it has been, and continues to be, to try to turn women into men! Ever since that fateful workshop at the pharmaceutical company, my life has been dedicated to showing men and women how they are different, and helping them overcome the challenges caused by their differences. And we can see change happening today.

"That's a great story, Barbara. You found a way to succeed at Sony by accepting the environment and changing your nature to fit in. You just assumed, as many women and men do today, that the business environment is what it is and that you either learn to swim or drown. Men across the globe are now realizing that it's the environment that needs to change, not the women in it."

"You have your own story, Richard. You saw through that blind spot years ago, around the time when we first met at CIBC Wood Gundy."

"That's right, Barbara. Over the run of my career, I've learned that including women and men in my management teams led to superior results compared to men alone (or women alone, although that rarely happened). I didn't come to this conclusion until I had substantial experience in management."

WHEN I BECAME A REAL MANAGER OF PEOPLE

The truth is, I didn't care much about the issue of advancing women in management and leadership for the first half of my working life. What I really cared about was my own advancement. But as I took on larger, more complex tasks, I had to seek greater diversity in the creation of the teams. Inevitably I became convinced that diversity led to better results than if I had limited myself to the narrower universe of men. I didn't really know why this happened, but just accepted it as fact.

I became an advocate for this approach in the firms that I joined. My views often met with mixed reactions, but I didn't care. It worked for me, and I intended to keep doing it. As I became more senior, I was able to effect systemic change in the firms I served. We would hire more women graduates at the introductory level, we would have programs to hang on to these women through the critical first seven to ten years of their career, and we would move women into more senior levels to be visible role models not only to other women but also to men.

In order to build support for this approach I had to get the men I worked with on my side. Remember: today, it is men who lead most companies—which is why this book speaks to men about how it is in their interest to change their preconceptions and behavior.

The first task is to drop as much gender bias as possible from what I call the “plumbing” of the company, a concept Barbara and I will explore more closely in a later chapter.

This meant recruitment committees had to be balanced. Promotion committees had to be balanced, not just in terms of numbers but also in terms of power. Getting the plumbing right meant changing our hiring practices and setting targets that would help us achieve our goals. It also meant changing benefit policies to accept that good maternity leave policies see more women returning from maternity leave. It meant ensuring that we were considering women as well as men in everything we did, from interviews to succession planning and board appointments.

My employer's maternity leave policies were probably the last thing on my mind in my first five years as an employee without management responsibilities. As a male employee, what possible interest could I have in these policies? Surely people wiser and more experienced than I had adopted policies at some time in the past that were fair and reasonable to both the employee and the firm.

Once I moved into management, I remember a friend outside the equity division telling me that some people were unhappy with my leadership. I couldn't understand why, given that our financial results had dramatically improved under my leadership. What more could I do for the company and for the employees? My friend told me some employees felt that I was insensitive to their needs and were, at the least, calling my leadership into question. It seemed to center around the maternity issue.

About the same time, Richard Venn, president of Wood Gundy, asked me to come see him. I assumed that I was going to be commended for the equities division's financial performance. To my surprise, it was to discuss my role with regard to the division's maternity policies.

Richard Venn listened to me as I explained that I assumed that the company had good policies and the whole matter was someone else's responsibility. Richard said that was not good enough, that I was their leader, and they expected me to act for them. He clearly wanted me to do something and that was fine by me. I knew I would have his support.

After reflecting on it that evening I decided to go to the source and sit down with some of the employees who were being affected and find out what was bothering them. It didn't take long for these discussions to get right to the point. The point was that our maternity policies were unfair and uncompetitive and what was I going to do about it? They saw me as their boss and their only hope to effect change.

My next step was to find out why our policies were unfair and uncompetitive. Of course this was not the prevailing view of the HR department, and so, with that department's help, I began an analysis of maternity policies at other leading firms. It became clear to me that we were on the lower end of the quality spectrum.

This was not good enough. Given that we were a leading firm, this didn't seem to fit with our position in the industry. I decided that we should have the best maternity policies in the industry, commensurate with our position as a market leader. I would institute these new maternity policies for the women who worked for me in capital markets. Then the rest of the firm would follow, and they did!

"I credit you, Barbara, for my education back then. In my experience, there are diversity programs that work, but many simply don't work. Yet, companies roll them out year after year with the standard assigned quotas and metrics. Everyone wants to do the right thing, but those decades-old initiatives just haven't moved the needle."

"That is so true, Richard. And what we've discovered over the years is that, in virtually every instance, the differentiating factor between failure and success is whether male leaders are all in and involved. Let me explain what I mean."

THE DIVERSITY MONEY PIT

We recently conducted a study to assess the diversity programs that created a sustainable impact in advancing women into senior management. We gathered data from three technology companies, four financial services firms, and two accounting firms.³ We'll first outline the perennial diversity programs that have shown minimal success and explain why. We'll then highlight the programs that are working well and helping to move women into leadership positions.

We all know what a money pit is—an ongoing drain on financial resources. With all the best of intentions, and implemented by great people dedicated to

effecting change, here are the top diversity programs that the companies in the study admit have not produced the desired results. Richard and I will explain these in more detail in later chapters.

Women's Networks

Women's networks, councils, and chapters that lacked strategy and linkage to the financial objectives of the company ended up becoming no more than social networks. Meetings often became a venue for voicing complaints, but not linked to any initiatives in order to drive positive change. Many women said that the networks increased their sense of separateness from the rest of the organization.

It's still happening today. Whenever women's councils or networks invite us to give a keynote or seminar on how women can advance in their leadership and careers, we ask what percentage of the audience will be male.

It's almost as if we're speaking a different language. It either doesn't dawn on these groups that male leaders and influencers need to be involved or that they would even be interested in women's career issues. Some confess that they really don't know how to go about getting men to participate.

Training for Women

Training for women tended to place the onus on "fixing" women. Many of the companies' management and leadership development programs were initially designed for their male leaders and were now being used to define women's leadership and essentially help them fit into a sameness model—instead of mining for their own unique leadership styles.

Focus on the Numbers

Many companies assumed that critical mass through quotas was the answer—that it was just a matter of stepping up their annual recruitment efforts. The problems they were having with the retention of women hires were assumed to be bad fits or women leaving for work-life reasons.

Millions are spent each year on recruiting more women into companies at the entry level and on hiring them directly into senior management roles. The reality is that over the past forty years, women have done no better than to represent 22 percent of senior management, which has changed very little in the past ten years, and less than 5 percent of CEO positions.⁴

Work-Life Flexibility Policies

These programs are a great value to many women, especially at the entry and mid-management level. The companies in the study used work-life flexibility programs as an engagement strategy to bring young women into a company, but they had little to no impact on advancing women to senior positions.

You'll discover that even in countries that legislate that companies must comply with work-life flexibility policies, women's representation in senior management is no better than the global average.

Women's Mentors

There were a few flaws that surfaced in mentoring programs. Companies found that their mentors, both women and men, were not trained on the differences that often arise when mentoring women and men.

Moreover, women mentees were matched with women mentors instead of being matched with men. Aside from there not being enough women in leadership to mentor the number of women mentees, in many instances, women-to-women matches didn't have the right chemistry and failed.

Diversity Workshops

Diversity and compliance training for men generally created a reverse effect. Men were trained to ignore gender differences and treat everyone the same. They became overly sensitive, politically correct, and afraid to acknowledge any gender differences.

Male executives often confide in us that out of fear of unconsciously saying or doing something wrong or insensitive, they will become cautious and brief in their discussions with women; many have difficulty giving critical feedback to women on their teams; and some even admit that they avoid interactions with women, especially in informal settings.

In Chapter 2, you're going to see some interesting statistics on the number of sex-discrimination charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the United States over the past eighteen years. It seems that diversity-training programs, including unconscious bias training, which began around twenty years ago, are not having the desired effect. We answer the question: "Why?"

WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

We expect that our observations and recommendations will challenge some men and women. We know the reaction in some cases will be, "You cannot say that," or "You cannot make that generalization." But the topics we are going to discuss are things we have observed time and time again that explain why men still dominate today's corporations despite forty years of diversity efforts in trying to affect otherwise.

We reveal why many gender diversity programs, with all the best of intentions, are doing little to nothing to change company cultures to be more inclusive and improve the gender equation. Some companies we know spend tens of millions of dollars a year on women's initiatives, with negligible change in women's representation in the senior ranks.

“I believe, Barbara, that our describing the Diversity Money Pit programs will for sure challenge some readers. Those who develop and manage those diversity programs annually have the best of intentions; but with so little success to show year after year, I sometimes wonder, who are the beneficiaries of those best intentions? Let me explain what I mean.”

BRUSHING YOUR HORSE

I have always enjoyed working with horses. Since I was a child I spent summers at my grandparents' farm and I have always been around horses. Horses are large animals and you need to give them respect when you are near them. They have many ways to (sometimes intentionally but mostly unintentionally) deliver you a bruise that you will remember for a long time. So what has this got to do with improving corporate performance?

I remember one day we were putting my horse away after having been out for a ride. You normally hang up the tack, inspect and clean the horse's feet, and make sure that the horse is in a good condition. I remember saying to my uncle who was watching me and who taught me most of the things I knew about caring for my pony, “Do you think my horse might like it if I brushed him?” My uncle replied, “I don't know whether the horse really cares but you would probably enjoy it.”

At the time I did not think much about his comment, as I was eight years old. So I brushed my horse and felt really good that he looked well groomed. Of course, the moment we let the horse go into the paddock field he found a nice dusty spot and proceeded to roll around in it, undoing all of my fancy brushing work.

This comment stayed with me for the rest of my life. Why did my uncle say that? Perhaps he meant that I should go ahead and spend my time and effort on something that felt good to me. The fact that no one else (including my horse!) seemed to care does not matter. I received satisfaction from doing it. But he also meant that I should not think just because I liked it and felt good that anyone else really cared. Be careful not to transfer your feelings into the head of another, even a horse. Wow! Profound! Standing in a stable it was just as if Aristotle himself had delivered the lesson for the day.

So humans do things that make them feel better. No surprise. But this is not (always) for selfish reasons; they often project their satisfaction on to others without even realizing they are doing that. Despite the good intentions of many, this can happen even when others are in no way sharing in that satisfaction. Could it be that management programs are put in place that are more about the satisfaction of their authors than they are about satisfying their goal?

What if programs designed for the promotion of diversity and the advancement of women into management positions were really designed to make the incumbents feel better about themselves because they doing something? What's our evidence? Our evidence is that despite program after program and speech after speech, there has been slow progress in the advancement of women in many corporations over the last twenty years.

If the programs have been so ineffective that more than 80 to 90 percent of senior management remain men, then what were these programs designed to do? Why do we continue to maintain these kinds of programs that do not even come close to achieving their stated goals?

The answer might be that corporate management felt better because they were taking action and were seen to be taking action. They felt good about that. But what if the program was, in some cases, never designed to achieve stated goals but only to give a good feeling of having done something?

For some of these programs, the goal was really the appearance of caring about increasing diversity. Senior management would never continue to expend resources in any other aspect of their operations that did not deliver the desired results. They would change their approach over and over again until they got it right. Increasing diversity and the advancement of women in management seems to be an area where some corporations have accepted failure but then on doing the same thing over again each year.

LACK OF “GENDER SUCCESS” IS COSTLY

Today we see that women students occupy more places at our universities than do men, and this trend is growing. What will these women do if they are not hired into good jobs in our businesses? Will they all go into government and the not-for-profit sector? We do not think this is practical or even wise. We expect that the best solution in these industries is a combination of men and women leaders, just as it is in business.

In some university disciplines, the percentage of women taking courses compared with men is almost overwhelming. Do we really think that women will take 60 percent of the degrees in medicine, but be content to let men run health services?

Why would that be a good idea? (We checked, and this is not what’s happening. Women play a significant role in health care management.) We should not be surprised to see the same thing happen with respect to law and business. We should expect that the pressure would only accelerate.

But why only react to pressure? Why not instead, seek out the opportunity to act? The failure to act will leave men in 80 to 90 percent of senior roles and will lead to suboptimal corporate performance. The drag on the economy will be substantial.

Countries and competitors that get this right will outperform those that don’t. In a world of global competition, it is unwise to forego the advantages that come from adding women to management and boards to work alongside their male counterparts.

THIS IS YOUR TOOLKIT

As you read through the following chapters, you will discover how successful leaders and their companies are moving beyond the limiting perspectives of gender sameness and diversity by numbers.

You'll have the underlying business case for the advancement of women in leadership including the latest financial studies by McKinsey, Credit Suisse, Catalyst, and others that show conclusively that women on boards and on executive teams improve an organization's innovativeness, decision making, productivity, and financial performance.

We're also going to speak to the ascent of women—in science, medicine, education, business, and leadership. We present remarkable statistics on what women have achieved in advanced education and business start-ups. Men are often unaware of these facts; part of the intent of this book is to raise men's awareness of the achievements of women in education and business.

You will be introduced to the neuroscience of gender differences and how those differences play out in the workplace. There's a tidal wave of knowledge coming at us at an increasing rate as technology enables us to peer deeper into the human brain. You'll gain an understanding of the unique ways in which our nature influences men and women's critical thinking skills and their approach to leadership. You'll discover how complementary those differences actually are.

We will share with you the role of the board of directors in effecting change, and we'll examine the correlation between the presence of women on boards and its influence on the presence of women of their company's top management teams.

And we'll bring it all together with solutions to help you rid your company's "plumbing" of bias. We'll show you where and how to address the systemic changes that need to take place within an organization in order to sustain its gender diversity efforts and improve the intake, evaluation, promotion, and ultimate retention of its best talent.

"Barbara, this isn't just a book about increasing gender diversity in the workplace—this book is about fundamental change. It's for male leaders who are unsatisfied with the status quo, are ready to break out of old patterns of behavior, and awaken their organizations to what is possible. It is for leaders who want to achieve what we call 'Gender Success' by deploying women and men together in leadership. This will produce the optimal results."

"It's also for women, Richard, who want to know where and how to invite men in as partners. This is the guidebook that cracks the code on the advancement of women. Give it to every male employee in your firm as their toolkit for understanding the opportunity that exists for them and will help them win."

There's a future coming down like a freight train and companies are positioning themselves for that future. Make sure that you are ready to accept the diverse talent that's knocking at your door.

ENDNOTES

1. Philip Cohen, "How Can We Jump-Start the Struggle for Gender Equality?" *New York Times*, November 23, 2013, <https://familyinequality.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/fact-checking-final.pdf>.

2. Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva, “Women in Management: Delusion of Progress,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 2010, <https://hbr.org/2010/03/women-in-management-delusions-of-progress>.
3. Gender Intelligence Group study, “Best Practices in Gender Diversity,” 2011.
4. Francesca Lagerberg, “Women in Business: The Path to Leadership,” Grant Thornton International Business Report, March 5, 2015, <http://www.grantthornton.be/Resources/IBR-2015-Women-in-Business.pdf>.

