

Visionary CEO Leads the Way To Advance Women in Leadership



Women represent 45 percent of the labor force and 37 percent of first- and mid-level officials and managers among S&P 500 companies, according to “Sustainable Investing: Investing With a Gender Lens,” a recent report from banking firm UBS. Yet, their findings reveal women represent only 25 percent of executive and senior-level officials and managers, 19 percent of board seats, and only 4 percent of CEOs.

Giselle Cheminand understands the impact of these numbers. She has seen them up close from an insider’s perspective. As President & CEO of GCI Worldwide Corporation, a leader in executive coaching, corporate training, and leadership development, Cheminand has counseled Fortune 100 and 500 C-Suite members and Executives on all aspects of leading change and transforming culture. She has helped corporations on developing their next generation of

leaders. Because of that, she advises corporations to focus on driving gender inclusion policies at the highest levels so organizations can achieve their greatest returns on investment and achieve consistent results and growth.

With the dearth of women at the top tier of so many companies, Cheminand has spearheaded a movement to lead change society needs to overcome biases or practices – whether discriminatory, cultural, or simply habit – so organizations can perform at their highest economic, cultural, and social levels.

Since its debut in 2013, Cheminand’s Extraordinary Women Leading Change has become a leading-edge movement focused on developing women leaders and supporting them to advance their participation in higher-level leadership roles. Now in its fourth year, the conference showcases and inspires those organizations and

women leaders who have made the commitment to drive gender diversity and inclusion from within.

From the beginning, Cheminand has been a catalyst for change and an advocate for the advancement of leadership especially among women in the corporate environment, as well as women leading their own enterprises. For that to take place, companies need to overcome the lack of gender diversity, create greater awareness of what policies of inclusion can deliver, and become more focused in preparing women leaders for higher level roles.

Movement in Motion

To accelerate the path, Cheminand assembled the finest leaders in the community as champions of change to help lead the way. That’s how the Extraordinary Women Leading Change leadership conference was born.

Joining Cheminand as panelists at the Extraordinary Women Leading Change conference this year will be Fabiola Brumley, Palm Beach County President and Southeast Region (seven state area) Executive for Bank of America Merrill Lynch; Karen O’Byrne, CFO and COO of Modernizing Medicine; Susan Amat, Ph.D, CEO & Founder, Venture Hive; and Rachel Zietz, Founder and CEO of Gladiator Lacrosse.

Hundreds of executives and corporate leaders attend the conference every year, including companies such as Walgreens, Wells Fargo, AMEX, IBM, Accenture, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., Lockheed Martin, VITAS, Tenet Healthcare Corporation, Mass Mutual, Starbucks, FPL, JLL, UBS Financial, JM Family Enterprises, Celebrity Cruises, AutoNation, Bank of America, Western Union, Wal-Mart, Merck, Ryder, among many others.

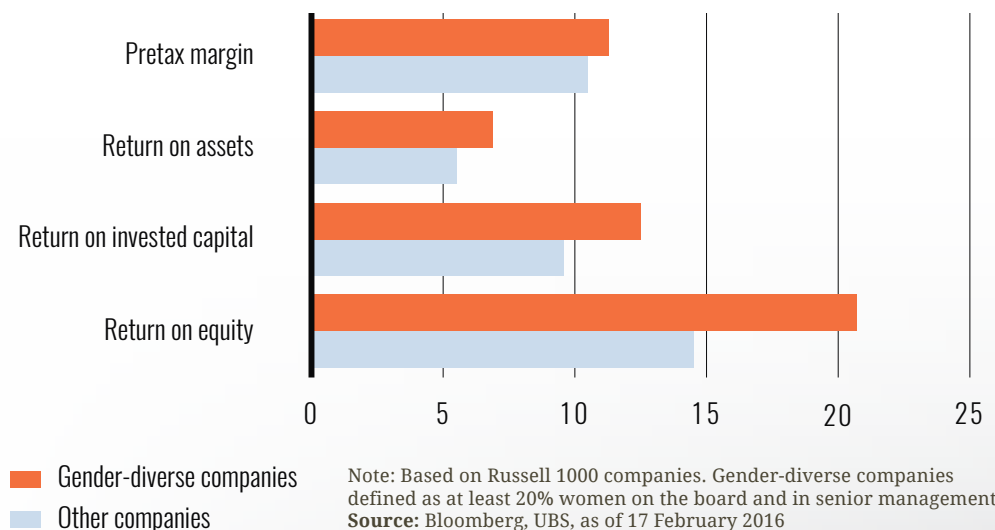
GENDER-DIVERSE COMPANIES EXHIBIT HIGHER PROFITABILITY

From the March 2016 UBS study
“Investing with a gender lens”

“A 2011 Catalyst study found that US companies with three or more women on their boards delivered a higher return on sales, return on invested capital, and return on equity compared to those companies with zero women on their boards. Our own research yielded a similar result: We found that, in the US, Russell 1000 companies with women making up at least 20% of the board and senior management had higher profitability across various metrics relative to their less gender-diverse peers.”

Gender Diversity: An indicator of future returns

Five-year average, in %



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Inclusion Leads to Sustainability

When it comes to inclusion, the numbers speak volumes. As women in the workforce have grown from 38 percent in 1970 to 47 percent today, they're bringing "breadth of knowledge and skills" that have been lacking, UBS notes. Last year, among 25- to 34-year-olds, 20 percent more women than men had at least a bachelor's degree, the report found. Tomorrow also bodes well. Women now account for almost half of all students in JD, MBA, and MD programs, up from less than 10% in the 1960s, UBS reported.

Yet, for organizations and a society that have much to gain from gender inclusion, women's absence at the highest levels create an executive, thought-leadership, and practical void that is unsustainable.

While qualified women certainly exist within these organizations, few companies take or encourage their existing leadership – men or women – to take an active role in developing the next wave of leaders from among their female ranks.

The women who serve on the Extraordinary Women Leading Change advisory board or as panelists reflect those executives and organizations that have made the commitment to driving inclusion. They present the local perspective of Cheminand's growing, global movement to ensure women get their deserved seats at the highest levels of organizations.

Moreover, companies that embrace inclusion stand to gain a broader, more diverse pool of input to guide problem solving and decision making. Research has proven this helps overcome "groupthink," common to homogeneous groups. Gender inclusion also promotes "informational diversity," or the addition of educational, experiential, and expertise perspectives not seen in less diverse groups.

At higher levels, infusing the C-suite and boardrooms with experienced and proven female executives can fill the knowledge and "skills gaps," notes research in American Economic Review. "[Of] the 594 directors appointed to S&P 600 Small Cap boards between 2010 and 2013, the addition of new skills was larger for female than male appointments," UBS notes from the research.

It's no secret that women also possess different leadership skills and styles than their male counterparts.

Throughout this package, female and male leaders from various industries extoll the benefits of women's organizational skills and performance, participative decision making, and different life experiences, which often lead to an empathetic ethos. Given that research reveals that women make some 70 percent of all consumer purchase decisions, their input is undeniably invaluable.

But their place at the table doesn't yet reflect that realization among top corporations. That is why the Extraordinary Women Leading Change movement is so important. Cheminand understands the gap must be closed and she is on a mission to get the job done.

The Power of Balanced Executive Boards

To be sure, awareness is growing and a movement is afoot. Notes UBS, "the changing demographics of the talent pool, along with the growing acknowledgment of the need for greater gender parity in the workplace, is starting to shift the balance.

"Companies that rise to the challenge of adapting to a changing workforce not only will contribute to reducing inequality but also will best utilize female talent," it continued.

Simply put, inclusion eliminates "them versus us" or a belief in an outsider's point of view. One study revealed that those boards that have three or more women directors no longer see input from a gender lens – or a "woman's point of view" – but a gender-neutral perspective of governance, notes UBS, citing research from the Wellesley Centers for Women.

The bottom line results are undeniable. "Companies with three or more women on their boards delivered a higher return on sales, return on invested capital, and return on equity compared to those companies with zero women on their boards," noted UBS, citing a 2011 Catalyst study. Russell 1000 companies with 20 percent of boards and senior management comprised of women realized higher profitability across various metrics relative to their less gender-diverse peers.

Cheminand is confident the Extraordinary Women Leading Change movement will reveal the undeniable and tangible returns such policies of inclusion can deliver. Beyond positioning companies as "employers of choice" or leaders in their communities, they can enjoy solid returns on investment and strong positioning for future strength.

"As companies pursue policies of



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gender diversity, advancement of women leaders from within their ranks, and commit to this movement to lead change over the long term, they will realize extraordinary benefits in performance, returns on investment, and higher profitability as a result of the spirit of inclusion," she says. "Ultimately, achieving higher level re-

sults is what every company pursues. To make this possible, corporations, government and other organizations, need to allow women to have an equal participation in high-level leadership roles. Only then can they maximize the profitability they so much long for their organizations."