Business Case for Women's Leadership Development

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As leadership development consultants and coaches, we have participated in and noticed, increasing conversations focused on the continuing absence of women from leadership positions, particularly on boards and in senior management. Diversity of gender, race, nationality, age, experience and other attributes are all-important attributes of talent in today's inclusive workforce.

Some questions on our mind: So why aren't there more women in senior leadership? What difference would more women leaders make? What are the challenges for women leaders? What can women and men do to advance women's leadership in our organizations? What leadership topic areas support women's leadership? This document shares a few key points that build the business case for investing in women's leadership development, along with providing some up to date resources informing women's leadership development. We hope it helps you with conversations that support women's leadership development.

- The business case: Researchers consistently find a positive correlation between the representation of women in leadership positions and business performance measures, such as market share and return on investment.

  "Compelling evidence links inclusion, engagement, and gender diversity in leadership with superior retention, productivity, and profitability." .... "Women's needs and approaches are shared by Gen X and Millennials, therefore anything that increases the engagement and retention of women also does so for younger workers of both generations." (Turner, C., 2012)

- Benefits of diversity of leadership in organizations and communities: Diversity of gender, generational, and cultural taps a range of points of view, improves the quality of decision-making, and provides inspiration and role modeling in organizations and communities.

- Leverage strengths: The unique strengths typically attributed to women such as empathy, relating and connecting, are sought after in many organizations now. It is important to appreciate the value of both masculine and feminine approaches that are within both men and women and can be cultivated, ultimately creating an inclusive culture.

- Leadership topics that address women's leadership development needs: Popular literature and emerging research (see Resources) suggest there are gaps in women's leadership competencies such as leadership identity, voice, presence, and confidence; building support of mentors, coaches and sponsors; negotiating for self and others; financial and business acumen/savvy; leading adaptively and strategically; integration of career and life.

- Leadership Development Programs for women provide the opportunity for women to step away and have a conversation with other women: A program for women, designed and offered by women, and the creation of an environment where women can discuss their experiences and leadership needed now, contributes to quality of experience and development. This supports women in stepping up and out in ways that are congruent with their unique Leader Identity (vision, mission and values) resulting in authentic confidence, leadership capacity and personal wellbeing.

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