



# #DisruptTheNorm

boyden

We all must be accelerators of the solution.

## An outlier today, but tomorrow she is 'the norm'

Sarah's face shone with pride as she waited for the applause to die down. She had just been voted 'Best Tech Leader of the Year.'

For some in the audience, Sarah's achievement was evidence of how much things had changed. For others, Sarah was lucky. An outlier. Why, because Sarah is among only five percent of female CEOs worldwide, despite women representing 40 percent of the workforce<sup>1</sup>.

Sarah should not be viewed as *lucky* – she should be *'the norm'*.

Boyden is in the business of finding the **right** leaders for organisations, and we interact with incredibly talented female leaders across the globe. Diverse leaders, who bring diverse experiences that have a positive impact on an organisation's success. Yet barriers still exist as a result of societal norms and perceptions. We embrace our responsibility to work with our clients to disrupt the dated notions of leadership. To find the right leaders, diverse leaders, that will enhance our clients' success in the future.

## Career barriers and enablers

We recently fielded research on women in leadership, where we asked respondents what the barriers are and how they can be overcome. Answers revealed issues such as old school management style, a male dominated environment, male dominated networks and conscious discrimination.

The lack of female leaders is often brushed under the carpet or put in the 'too difficult' box. Let's change that by elevating this topic on the agenda at every opportunity. We need diversity and inclusion to be an intrinsic element of corporate life, an on-going conversation, away from government quotas, special initiatives and diversity committees. **We all must be accelerators of the solution.**

The female executives and leaders in our research are clear about career enablers. It's much more about the who, than the how.

- First, it's about the self. "I realized there was no 'magic something' that other people had that I did not".
- Secondly, it's about their boss, the people around them, mentors and networks. "I am where I am because I have had good network connections and I have had some really good managers who have supported me, my learning, my development, providing me with global or regional opportunities. I wouldn't be where I am today without that".
- Finally, the culture piece. "I have always been in a male environment. To be able to find your way in these conditions can be challenging."

As our global [CEO Trina Gordon](#) explains, *"There are great examples of organisations actively promoting diversity and inclusion or seeking the breadth and depth of capabilities that will help them achieve their business goals. That being said, talented female executives continue to get overlooked for leadership positions. It is unfortunate as many organizations are missing opportunities to tap into incredible leaders. At Boyden, we are committed to ensuring our clients are exposed to the leadership that can be critical to their success."*

## We're in this together

We need our clients, candidates and networks to join us in addressing narrow paths to leadership. We can only make a difference if you do too. The following are two of the numerous financial and non-financial metrics that link diversity and organizational performance.

- A 10-year analysis of 300 US start-up investments found that companies with a female founder performed 63 percent better than those with all-male founding teams<sup>2</sup>.
- Over 85 percent of CEOs whose companies have a formal diversity and inclusion strategy say it improved their bottom line, while enhancing innovation, collaboration, customer satisfaction and talent attraction<sup>3</sup>.

Day-to-day, our research participants had very clear and proven ideas on encouraging female leadership: unconscious bias training, formal mentors, 'unisex language,' workplace flexibility, and an overt commitment that includes publishing diversity and inclusion figures.

We want the conversation to spread across the spectrum of diversity, to support new customer segments, talent pools and collaboration such as 'coopetition'<sup>4</sup>. As Boyden's US Board Director, [Alicia Hasell](#) notes, *"new paths to growth could result from this broader dialogue and perspective on the global future of business."*

## Our Commitment in Action

Led by our CEO, we are committed to pursuing the advice of our research participants on what we can do to promote female leadership. We are responsible to drive change: enable networking, work harder to identify diverse candidates, challenge clients, seek recommendations from women as well as men, link high potentials with mentors, profile leaders and champions of change and, above all, maintain the dialogue so the norm perception shifts.

<sup>2</sup>Venture Capitalists First Round Capital. <https://www.inc.com/lisa-calhoun/new-vc-research-says-female-founders-outperform-peers-63.html>

<sup>3</sup>PwC's 18th Annual Global CEO Survey

<sup>4</sup>The CDO of VW calls collaborating with his competitors 'coopetition'. See <https://www.boyden.com/jutta-menzenbach/blog/index.html#subnav>

*“Our job is to be bold – to provoke discussion with clients by bringing superior female leaders to the table,” states Boyden Canada Board Director, [Lisa Kershaw](#). “We make a point of introducing outstanding female leaders, and work with clients during interviews to address unconscious biases, challenge the need for historical industry requirements, and shift the focus towards talent.”*

There is much more that we can do. As a firm and as individuals, we define ourselves by our own values — astute, collaborative, enterprising and worldly. As we strive to live up to these values, we must accept our responsibility to address this issue. We will continue this dialogue on paper, in person, online, via blogs and other media, with shareholders, candidates and clients, with analysts, investors and other important constituencies.

Our world needs to change so that Sarah is not an outlier, she is the norm where the CEO and its image is not defined by gender, background or ethnicity, but by success. It starts now.

## **#DisruptTheNorm**

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### **About #DisruptTheNorm**

#DisruptTheNorm is a Boyden-driven campaign to accelerate diversity in leadership. We envision a world where the CEO and its image is not defined by gender, background or ethnicity, but by success. It is a call to action and acknowledgment that we all are contributors to the solution.

### **About Boyden**

Boyden is a premier leadership and talent advisory firm with more than 65 offices in over 40 countries. Our global reach enables us to serve client needs anywhere they conduct business. We connect great companies with great leaders through executive search, interim management and leadership consulting solutions. For further information, please visit [www.boyden.com](http://www.boyden.com).