Insight Xchange
Women in Project Management

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PMI Chapter Xchange's fourth "Insight Xchange" nugget is here. This time we are exploring the Women in Project Management domain.
4 global experts across continents shared their views on May 21, 2021
Here is what they had to say !

Diana Balboa
Lima,Peru, Latin America

What structure, policies, and metrics could help more women move into and succeed in leadership roles?

I consider that the principal barrier to remove is the self-efficacy perception which is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation and since a great deal of learning takes place much more subtly and relies on watching the people around us and modeling their actions; for that reason, a key success factor in structure is to incorporate mentoring programs in companies and universities as well as women's networks like communities that join women that have already succeed in leadership roles with the ones who are developing their careers.

Regarding policies, since one critical factor in moving into a leadership role is the network, so to place women into stretch assignments like cross functional projects would have a significant impact; moreover, to review hiring processes to avoid gender bias, increase the pool of female candidates and increase their chances of being selected.

Across the world, the average gender pay gap is still notable, so a critical metric is to ensure parity in pay structure of the organizations as well as showing that the percentage of women workforce in managerial and presidential positions are increasing.

As leaders (men +woman) what should we do better to ensure that there is adequate diversity of thoughts in leadership teams?

First, I should keep in mind the importance of adequate diversity, most of the time because of work overload, the responsibilities are assigned to the ones who usually are assigned but there is not a conscious previous analysis about the career development of the new ones that could learn, gain experience and apply for leading roles in the future.

Moreover, the hiring process is fundamental, for that reason, I should encourage that anyone who will recruit must be trained and prepared to avoid biased evaluation of candidates' qualifications. I consider that assigning a "bias" champion that remind and question us about our conclusions to keep bias from unconsciously sneaking into the evaluation process will be helpful.

Finally, I should work closer with more young women, helping them to develop skills and competencies, act as a sounding board, and give general feedback and career advice.

Jeane W Mathenge
Kenya, Africa

What structure, policies, and metrics could help more women move into and succeed in leadership roles?

The development of leadership talent is a competitive advantage that contributes to organization success in environments that are experiencing rapid transition. The organizational context within which this this competitive advantage can be achieved specifically for women is varied and even complex. Women and men have different value orientations, thereby requiring different approaches to leadership development. Organizationally, even the most progressive modern entities are highly geared towards, and for men, with systems, policies, norms, and structures that tend to favor the male.

As such, efforts to systematically develop women's leadership must be cognizant of these elements, and address the individual and the contextual structural challenges of leadership development for women In other words, make the 'men world' more inclusive. .
A few strategies are:

1. Appropriately tailor affirmative based recruitment policies, and learning and growth forums appropriate to the challenges of the work environment.
2. Develop effective metrics for the appraisal of women leadership development programs geared to measuring learning and performance at an individual level and impact at an organizational level.
3. Purposefully seek to raise the profile of women in leadership through increased publication and coverage on topic of women's leadership development.

As leaders (men +woman) what should we do better to ensure that there is adequate diversity of thoughts in leadership teams?

It is acknowledged that leadership teams often comprise of talented and competent people, established speakers and accomplished thinkers, leaders and influencers who have the ability to energize productivity, creativity, innovation, and competition. It is not all the time that organizational or individual based gender and race diversity is included in these leadership think tanks, a situation that can be improved through basic simple actions.

1. Select leadership teams wisely and broadly- embracing diversity in gender, race and education among other criteria.
2. Team leaders and organizations in general, should be deliberate about inclusion, diversity and change in the work place- whether by policy, or leading by example.
3. As a team leader, optimize the broad range of synergies from the different leaders and allow disruption, healthy and constructive conflict

Liz Hector
Netherlands, Europe

What structure, policies, and metrics could help more women move into and succeed in leadership roles?

Track the data - many think things are more equal than they actually are.

Flexibility - A culture that values flexibility is better for all staff, including working mothers.

Merit based advancement - Women are 54%+ of Master Grads and score higher overall on business results, but the European pay gap is still 14% today.

As leaders (men +woman) what should we do better to ensure that there is adequate diversity of thoughts in leadership teams?

Take a Stand for Diversity - 50% of Women and 40% of men take a stand for equality today.

Mentorship - Link Executive Level to mid-level women to increase insight and visibility

Challenge the Status Quo - Change is not happening fast enough, the pay gap has been static for 10 years in Europe. Leaders have to be bolder and act decisively.

Liz Hector
Netherlands, Europe

Lee Lambert
USA, North America

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Free flowing structures that encourage vertical and horizontal interaction and communication between the respective functional groups.

Policies should not restrict "out of the box" thinking. As soon as policies and procedures create a bureaucracy that inhibits workers progress a counter productive environment has been developed. Progress will be slowed and in some cases stopped.

The metric that is most important for women leaders is their demonstrated comprehension of the intricacies of an opportunity and the ability to create innovative solutions to challenges, while empowering individual contributors (men or women) to collaborate with others to achieve success.

As leaders (men +woman) what should we do better to ensure that there is adequate diversity of thoughts in leadership teams?

Create and nurture an "open forum" for the exchange of independent thinking. The diversity of thought eliminates the "echo chamber" phenomena.

We risk creating the organizational "silo" where everyone is encouraged to think in the same way if we don't provide a means and an opportunity, people will be reluctant to offer their views. Avoid saying there are no bad idea and then criticize the offering of individuals willing to take the risk.

This insight Xchange nugget is powered by:

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Have a suggestion? Feel free to drop a note to the PMI Chapter Xchange team here pmichapterxchange@gmail.com

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