USING TALENT MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT INCLUSION:
A How-To Guide For Organisations
Rapid expansion and job growth in India Inc. has made it extremely challenging for companies to recruit and retain the right talent. Hiring people with the relevant skills and training in a tight job market, and keeping them engaged and loyal, is particularly challenging as companies simultaneously tackle double-digit attrition levels. Leading-edge companies are increasingly invested in creating internal learning departments that train their workforce to be “manager-ready” on a fast-track. An estimated $1 billion or more is spent by India Inc. each year on various people-development interventions. Two critical questions remain:

1. How are organisations using their talent management practices to manage and develop employees?
2. In what ways do existing talent management systems reinforce or perpetuate biases that favor men over women?

Organised into three sections, this how-to guide can be used by human resources (HR) and diversity professionals and senior leaders to build awareness about talent management practices and gain insights into improving talent management systems to minimize workplace inequities and gender biases:

- **Getting Started: Gaining Insights Into the Talent Management Framework** provides context for talent management practices’ role in mitigating advancement barriers, increasing employee engagement, and improving gender diversity. Assessment questions will assist you in better understanding how concepts described in this section are institutionalized in your organisation.

Organisations in India Inc. find themselves thriving on growth and innovation but challenged by the crunch to find and keep top talent. Organisations are hiring aggressively, and employees are jumping ship even more aggressively, especially at the skilled/managerial level. Culturally, the importance of relationships cannot be emphasized enough. Who you know continues to prove critical in gaining a foothold, and more importantly, moving up the career ladder. Societal and familial expectations regarding women’s roles, inflexible organisations, and stereotypes about women’s abilities and aspirations pose tremendous challenges to women’s career goals. As a result, organisations are unable to leverage female talent for real, sustainable, and optimal growth. Talent management must be used effectively to support inclusion and organisational success. Creating workplaces where women feel welcomed, supported, and rewarded for their talent and able to juggle multiple stress points in their life-career cycle is imperative.

- **Applying Your Knowledge** offers a case study that calls for solution building and provides an opportunity to recommend action steps at the individual, managerial, and organisational levels.
- **Harnessing Your Knowledge for Your Organisation** provides a list of screening questions to better understand talent management, gender diversity, and gender-bias risks in your organisation’s talent management system.
GETTING STARTED:

Gaining Insights Into the Talent Management Framework

INSTRUCTIONS:
This section provides the opportunity to build awareness regarding key talent management practices and reflect upon and better understand talent management in your organisation.

1. Respond to the “Getting Started” questions to gain insights into your organisation’s current talent management framework.
2. Review the descriptions of talent management practices to build awareness regarding approaches to talent management.
3. Answer the assessment questions on specific talent management practices to better understand how talent management concepts are institutionalized in your organisation.

How is TALENT defined in the organisation?

Who does talent look like (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, educational institution, etc.)?

What are the key COMPONENTS of the talent management system?

How are different levels of employees held ACCOUNTABLE for effective talent management (e.g., performance rating, compensation, bonus, goals and evaluation criteria, etc.)?

How are they connected (e.g., goal-setting, key competencies, performance appraisal, feedback loop, etc.)?

What MESSAGES do senior leaders convey about leadership competencies and promotion opportunities (e.g., key leadership behaviors, written and oral communication regarding key competencies, etc.)?

NOTES:
### Table 1: Talent Management Dimensions, Definitions, and Assessment Questions

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| COMMITMENT TO TALENT DIVERSITY | Includes a company’s support for diversity programs and policies that attract, develop, and retain diverse talent. Organisations can demonstrate commitment through resource allocation, diversity practices, communication efforts (written and oral), and diversity metrics with the ultimate goal of creating an inclusive workplace where all talent can do their best. Catalyst research has identified this as a powerful practice for increasing employee engagement. | • Is your diversity and inclusion agenda clearly articulated and communicated to all employees?  
• Who are the key stakeholders in communicating messages: 1) CEO, 2) senior human resources executive, 3) senior business executives, 4) people managers, or 5) don’t know? |
| ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TALENT MANAGEMENT | Refers to the ways in which different levels of employees are held responsible for keeping talent development and management on track and maintaining momentum for change efforts. Organisations reinforce the importance of talent management efforts when they reward managers, executives, and/or business units for successes. Likewise, accountability requires that a lack of progress be acknowledged and penalties implemented. In general, talent is managed more effectively when managers and executives are invested in the professional development of their employees. Catalyst research has identified this as a powerful practice for mitigating advancement barriers and increasing employee engagement. | • Who is held responsible for talent management: 1) CEO, 2) senior executives, 3) people managers, 4) employees, or 5) don’t know?  
• What indicators are used to measure whether individuals have met talent management objectives?  
• Are managers equipped to identify and develop diverse talent, especially women? |
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<td>FAIR AND JUST DECISION MAKING</td>
<td>Includes employee perceptions about how fairly decisions are made. It also includes employees actually knowing how decisions are made. Transparency and communication are critical components of this practice. This process is also known as procedural fairness. Such perceptions are important because they affect employee attitudes about decisions; trust in the organisation, its leaders, and its rules; commitment to the organisation; as well as the rules and procedures, job satisfaction, cooperative behavior, employee performance, and energy and motivation to perform. Procedural fairness also influences employee perceptions of advancement opportunities at their organisations. Women are especially likely to view a lack of advancement opportunities as a reason to leave their organisations. They are particularly likely to leave when promotion decisions are based on stereotypic bias about women’s abilities rather than their actual performance, and when women have no say in promotional decisions and, hence, do not expect career opportunities at their current companies to change in the future. Catalyst research has identified this as a powerful practice for mitigating advancement barriers.</td>
<td>• How are key assignments and high-visibility projects distributed? • Do employees understand promotion criteria and decision processes—what it will take to advance in the company? • Does your organisation have criteria for diverse promotion slates?</td>
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| **LINE OF SIGHT**           | **Refers to understanding how one’s work, roles, and responsibilities impact company success.** When employees understand how their jobs affect company performance and are given opportunities to apply that knowledge, both individuals and companies benefit.  
If employees know what the goals of the company are, believe in them, and see how their work contributes to them, they will have a stronger emotional connection to the success of the company, increased commitment and loyalty, lower anxiety, and lower job burnout. As a result of their roles and responsibilities, senior leaders are more likely to have line of sight, and it is usually necessary to make special efforts to ensure that pipeline leaders understand how their goals are tied to organisational goals. Catalyst research tags this as a powerful practice for increasing employee engagement. | • Who is responsible for describing and explaining “line of sight” to employees?  
• Does your organisation showcase line of sight, especially to the pipeline employees, and, if so, how?  
• At what level in your organisation do employees learn about “line of sight?” |

### NOTES:

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| **CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK** | **Refers to the process of sharing factual information and providing actionable solutions in a timely manner based on observable behaviors.** Constructive feedback is essential to developing and advancing employees, improving performance, and building strong working relationships. It has the potential to decrease advancement barriers for women—especially women aspiring to senior leadership positions or working in male-dominated professions. However, Catalyst research indicates that providing constructive feedback is a skill that many leaders and managers have yet to master. Catalyst research tags constructive feedback as a powerful practice for mitigating advancement barriers. | • What is the general culture in your organisation for giving and receiving feedback?  
• Are employees and managers equipped to engage in the feedback process?  
• Are there cultural and structural reasons that preclude employees from seeking/receiving feedback? |

### NOTES:

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<td>WORK FLEXIBILITY</td>
<td>Refers to a company’s commitment to work-life effectiveness and supporting employees’ efforts to manage their work and personal responsibilities. Formal and informal work flexibility programs allow employees to contribute to their fullest potential while not sacrificing their personal needs or commitments. When companies respect employees’ personal priorities and trust their ability to manage them effectively, everyone benefits from enhanced employee satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and performance. Catalyst and Families and Work Institute have found that flexibility works best when it considers and is responsive to the needs of both the company and employees. Catalyst research tags this as a powerful practice for increasing employee engagement.</td>
<td>• Is your organisation perceived to be an agile and flexible workplace? • What adjectives would employees use to describe the culture in the organisation? • What are the life-career needs of employee segments in your organisation—generational, geographical?</td>
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| SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS | Refers to an employee's perception of career development and career coaching received from the supervisor. Catalyst expertise calls to attention that employees do not leave companies—they leave supervisors. Moreover, Families and Work Institute’s research reveals that supervisory support is one of the most powerful predictors of employee engagement and well-being. Thus, building positive supervisory relationships is a powerful practice for retaining talented employees. | • Does your organisation conduct employee satisfaction surveys that include questions on manager effectiveness?  
• Are there criteria for assessing supervisory competencies in performance reviews?  
• Do women have access to powerful male mentors and sponsors? |

### SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS:
Remember to be mindful of key talent management practices. Refer to the assessment question notes above to evaluate how your current approach to talent management might be similar to or different from the power practices highlighted in Table 1. Summarize your organisation’s strengths and weaknesses.
CASE STUDY:

Neeta was promoted from Director of New Product Development to Head of Regional Sales three months ago. When Neeta accepted her new role, she was informed that her regional sales team was male-dominated (87 percent) and had only a small number of people with different backgrounds, including generational and geographical differences (11 percent). She was also told that her regional customer base has become majority women over the past few years, and that product sales have continued to decline.

Neeta was hired in her new role because of her reputation for having strong leadership and organisational skills, comprehensive knowledge of products and customers, and innovative approaches to tackling problems. The company where Neeta works requires that all director-level managers and above participate in informal quarterly performance review meetings with their respective manager during their first year in a new role. During Neeta's three-month performance review meeting, she received feedback from her manager, Raj, that the men on her team thought she was too collaborative, and that she lacked the necessary competencies for success. Conversely, the women on her team perceived Neeta as too aggressive. The majority of the team was concerned about her focus on certain products and customers.

Neeta informed Raj that she felt that the team was questioning her competencies and struggling with her work style because of stereotypes related to women. Raj and Neeta had worked together in several capacities over the past 16 years. Although he is very confident in her abilities to lead the team successfully, he is not sure how to manage the issues raised by Neeta and her sales team. He wants to support Neeta in resolving the matter, but he wants to hear Neeta's suggestions on how to best manage the issues.

Since Neeta is the only woman heading one of Raj's teams, he decided to speak with the HR department about the dynamics presented during Neeta's performance review process. The HR department reported that they had heard similar stories from other departments and that they were currently reviewing proposals from external vendors and consultants who offered workshops on effective team building and inclusive workplace training.
INDIVIDUAL—WHAT SHOULD NEETA DO?

A. Neeta believes that her sales team could benefit from diversity training focused on working effectively with women. She can provide data to her manager supporting her suggestion that diversity training will improve team effectiveness and increase regional sales significantly.

B. Neeta can schedule focus groups with customers within her region to learn about their perceptions of the products, sales staff, and company brand to determine how her team should move forward. Neeta can then share this data with her team to build credibility and establish herself as a leader.

C. Neeta can meet with team members to learn about their perceptions of the products, regions, and company brand, and seek suggestions to move forward as a team. At the same meeting, Neeta should discuss issues/concerns raised by the team and be prepared to share her perspective on the goals/tasks for the team.

D. Neeta can meet with team members and discuss these issues directly. She should come prepared to listen to her team members and share her perspective on the goals/tasks for the team.

Please note the option you selected and what thinking prompted your selection.

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MANAGERIAL—WHAT SHOULD RAJ DO?

A. Raj can set up a department- or unit-wide diversity training focused on working effectively with women and culturally diverse coworkers.

B. Raj can make himself available to coach Neeta and strategize next steps to address issues raised by the team. He should familiarize himself with research on barriers and stereotypes faced by women leaders and recommendations on what managers can do to help.

C. Raj can tell Neeta how he introduced her to the team and what aspects of her previous leadership experience were shared (if any). This will provide Neeta with a good understanding of the team dynamic at play.

D. Raj can ask Neeta’s team members for concrete examples of Neeta’s behavior that compromised the team’s ability to achieve its stated goals or tasks. This will set the stage for giving and receiving objective, constructive feedback necessary for development and advancement.

Please note the option you selected and what thinking prompted your selection.

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ORGANISATIONAL—WHAT SHOULD THE ORGANISATION DO?

A. The organisation can provide diversity training focused on working effectively with different others (e.g., across gender, generation, disability, sexual orientation, etc).

B. The organisation can establish a diversity task force that consists of employees from different departments and levels and focuses on pinpointing company-wide diversity and inclusion issues and planning and implementing programs and strategies to minimize such issues.

C. The organisation can consider conducting cultural assessments, focus groups, and/or pulse surveys across the organisation focused on perceptions of workplace inclusion and leadership competencies and expectations.

D. The organisation can develop employee networks for the women and other diverse groups of employees (e.g., generational diversity) on the sales team to increase their connection to the organisation and develop strategies for increasing sales among women customers.

Please note the option you selected and what thinking prompted your selection.
Now that you’ve completed the case study questions, review the following Catalyst Insights for each category to gain greater understanding of talent management issues in your company. The Catalyst Insights can also serve as a discussion tool within your organisation.

**INDIVIDUAL**

Options A and B focus on building the business case and providing diversity training to create an inclusive workplace and an effective team. Options C and D involve engaging in a dialogue with the team members. It is critical for Neeta and the team members to have undergone awareness building and communication training to create an environment where team members feel safe sharing and receiving feedback.

**MANAGERIAL**

Option A includes building the business case and equipping the team members with strategies to work effectively in a diverse team. Options B and C involve mentoring and coaching Neeta. These options require Raj to be aware of gender stereotyping in the workplace and its impact on women’s leadership. Option D involves Raj engaging in a dialogue with Neeta’s team such that they feel comfortable and safe in providing feedback. This option assumes Raj and the team will be trained in providing and receiving constructive feedback.

**ORGANISATIONAL**

Options A and B convey the message that the organisation is invested in improving gender diversity and inclusion and preparing employees to work more effectively with diverse coworkers, customers, and clients. When employees are more effective and productive, organisations are more competitive and successful. Option C suggests using survey data to understand the issues impacting a team or group to decide on next steps or approaches to focus their energy. Option D calls upon employee networks as a possible solution. Numerous companies have used employee networks as tools to increase retention and promotion of women. Employee networks have been used effectively as a knowledge source for the organisation to better understand issues impacting a group of employees and create community-building opportunities. Assess network success by collecting rigorous measures on effectiveness among subgroupings.
HARNESSING YOUR KNOWLEDGE FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Our policies ensure that women don’t feel out of place since most of the policies are not women-centric but also available to men...so both men and women feel [justly treated]. For us, delivery and performance is all that matters, and this has led to women being a part of the organisation rather than thinking that [they] will work here for two years only and move out.

—SENIOR LEADER, Human Resources, Financial Services

INSTRUCTIONS:
The previous two sections of this guide were intended to build awareness regarding the definitions and concepts related to talent management practices and to provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your organisation’s approach to talent management, and to learn from a practical case example. In this section, Catalyst provides the opportunity for you to actively apply your knowledge about effective talent management to your own organisation.

1. Read the following section on Talent Management and Gender Diversity.
2. Use the guidelines here to screen your organisation’s talent management practices and policies for gender diversity.
3. Assess the risk of gender bias in your talent management system.

Talent Management and Gender Diversity

Senior leaders and HR professionals must recognize that women do not face the same workplace issues as men, or at the same magnitude. Without an awareness of the complexities facing subgroups working in an organisation, some talent management efforts may be too all-embracing to be effective. Such efforts may take a “one-size-fits-all” or “silver bullet” model in attempting to create an inclusive environment for all employees without focusing specifically on the unique needs of any particular group of employees.

Organisations should periodically assess the effectiveness of their talent management approaches to determine whether their practices are successful and remain relevant to their business goals and employees. A good first step is to analyze promotion and retention rates of subgroups (i.e., by gender, level, functional areas, etc.) at critical career development stages. Employee surveys can also provide a sense of how inclusive or exclusive the work environment is perceived to be by different groups of employees.

An important goal for improving talent management and gender diversity practices is the elimination of cultural norms that give men an advantage over women. This can be achieved by:

• Identifying critical norms in the dominant culture with a diverse team.
• Having leaders committed to making change,
• Communicating frequently.
• Modeling by influential champions at every level.
• Establishing formal guidelines where appropriate.
• Using rewards and penalties to hold people accountable.
1. **Determine where women are in your organisation by reviewing gender representation by level.**

   If the representation of women in your organisation is significantly lower at specific levels, then your organisation may have talent management practices that disadvantage women and your ability to benefit from your entire talent pool.

   - Percentage of employees who are women
   - Percentage of managers who are women
   - Percentage of senior managers who are women
   - Percentage of senior executives who are women
   - Percentage of executive team who are women
   - Percentage of board directors who are women

2. **Compare performance ratings, compensation, and promotion rates of women and men by level, department, and function.**

   - Identify any gaps/areas of concern and underlying drivers.

3. **Examine talent development programs in your organisation for access.**

   - How is access determined?
   - Identify gaps or areas of concern and underlying reasons.

4. **Evaluate whether criteria for leadership development and promotion go beyond stereotypically masculine characteristics to include a broad range of competencies and characteristics.**

   - Do women and men have equal opportunity and access to promotion criteria specified by your organisation?
   - Identify or initiate specific measures for adjusting compensation and promotion inequities.

5. **Develop strategies for minimizing gender stereotyping in performance reviews.**

   - Are training programs offered—and how frequently—to increase awareness about gender stereotypes and biases?
   - Create a handbook for writing unbiased performance reviews.
   - Use multi-rater feedback for employees at all levels so that diverse perspectives about competencies and contributions are considered.
   - Complete pay equity analysis that includes internal and external benchmarks on salary ranges for specific skills, roles, and levels.


3. Effective talent management refers to the process of attracting, recruiting, developing, and advancing talent and ensuring that the right person, with the right skills and experience is hired for the right job at the right time. Anika K. Warren. *Cascading Gender Biases, Compounding Effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems* (Catalyst, 2009).

4. These definitions are based on a review of the literature and Catalyst’s and Families and Work Institute’s research and work with companies, also described in *Leaders in a Global Economy: Talent Management in European Cultures* (Catalyst, 2008). We used regression analyses to identify practices that are powerful in increasing employee engagement (such as positive view of company, positive view of job, commitment to doing a good job, and intent to stay at the company) and mitigating advancement barriers (such as lack of a sponsor, mentor, or champion; limited political knowledge; few role models; and limited career opportunities).


17. Catalyst, forthcoming research on gender bias and talent management.


21. Studies have shown that perceptions of leadership competencies are influenced by gender stereotypes, and that both women and men hold stereotypes about leadership competencies that disadvantage women. Moreover, differences between workplace characteristics and employee values create more disadvantages for women than men. See *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge.” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (Catalyst, 2005); *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (Catalyst, 2006); Galinsky, Carter, Bond.