

# Catalyst Member Benchmarking Virtual Roundtable

## Engaging Men in Gender Diversity Initiatives

### About Catalyst Member Benchmarking Virtual Roundtables

Catalyst Member Benchmarking Virtual Roundtables, webinar presentations, and discussions create a community where Catalyst members share with one another their work, progress, and challenges around diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs and policies. This roundtable focused on Catalyst's work on engaging men in gender diversity initiatives.

### Getting Men Involved

#### Men's Critical Role in Advancing Women

While women make up almost half of the workforce in many parts of the world, the most senior roles in the largest businesses are still [overwhelmingly held by men](#). Catalyst research has addressed a number of barriers to women's advancement in the workplace: [gender bias](#) and stereotyping in the [United States](#) and [Europe](#), a [lack of role models](#), [too few mentors](#) and [sponsors](#), and [exclusion from informal networks](#).

Men have a critical role to play in leveling the playing field for all talent but are often an untapped resource in gender diversity initiatives. Men can—and should—be partners in educating other men and in moving organizations toward gender equality.

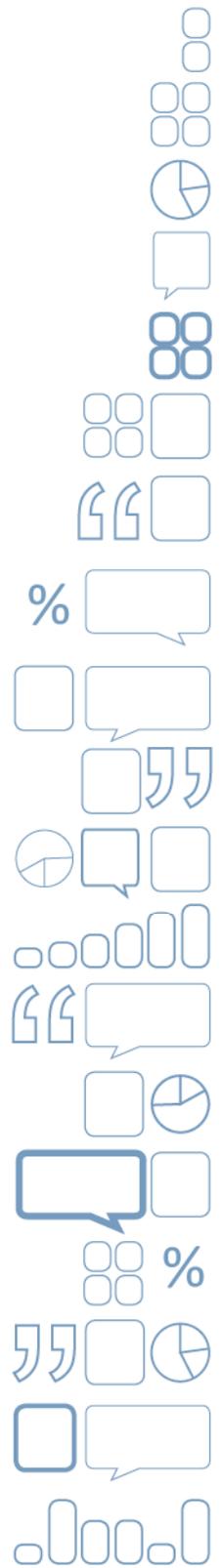
#### Raising Men's Awareness

Catalyst research outlining [what change agents need to know](#) about engaging men in gender initiatives demonstrates that the higher men's awareness of gender bias is, the more likely they were to feel it was important to achieve gender equality. Three factors predicted men's awareness of gender bias:

1. Defying masculine norms such as “avoid all things feminine,” “be a winner,” “show no chinks in the armor,” and “be a man's man.”
2. Having had a female mentor.
3. Possessing a strong sense of fair play (i.e., a generalized concern about inequity in society).

#### Motivating Men to Action

Catalyst research also indicates the best predictor of whether men would be active champions of gender equity was a strong sense of fair play. People's sense of fair play develops over time and as a result of varied learning opportunities, including firsthand experiences with inequity, exclusion, and/or injustice.



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According to Catalyst research, three barriers can undermine men’s support for gender initiatives and need to be addressed to motivate men to action:

1. Apathy, or a lack of concern about issues of gender inequality.
2. Fear that it’s a zero-sum game and that gender equality means a loss of status or privilege for men; fears about making mistakes; and fear about other men’s disapproval.
3. Ignorance, whether perceived or real.

## Action Steps for Change Agents

To address...	Consider...
<b>Apathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framing diversity and inclusion (D&amp;I) as both a business and social issue with far-reaching benefits.</li> <li>• Communicating the benefits men can gain from a more diverse and inclusive workplace.</li> </ul>
<b>Fear</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discouraging zero-sum thinking.</li> <li>• Including men in communications about gender initiatives.</li> <li>• Exposing men to male role models who champion gender inclusion and challenge the status quo.</li> </ul>
<b>Real and Perceived Ignorance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing opportunities for men to dialogue with other men, as well as women.</li> <li>• Pairing men with women mentors (including peer or reverse mentoring).</li> </ul>

## Additional Insights Shared During the Virtual Roundtables

- People are motivated by different messages; use varied forms of communication and include a range of arguments that appeal to the “head, heart, and pocketbook.”
- Championing gender diversity is a necessary skill for every aspiring leader.
- Biases are learned through life experiences, and they can also be unlearned. To increase awareness and empathy, encourage interactions that might not otherwise occur.
- A change in behavior can spark a more permanent change in attitudes. Start with small actions and encourage risks that push people just a bit beyond their comfort zone.
- The way work gets done is quickly changing. Consider innovative uses of new technology. Include working fathers in conversations about flexibility.

For more action steps, please read [Actions Men Can Take to Create an Inclusive Workplace](#).

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