

A hand holding a small, light-colored card with the letters 'CEO' printed on it. The hand is positioned in the center of the frame, with the card held between the thumb and index finger. The background is a light, neutral color with a subtle geometric pattern.

CEO

WOMEN @WORK

Gender Diversity in Corporate Pakistan

REPORT 2013

engagewomen

The participation of women in professional organisations in Pakistan and the Middle East is significantly lower than other parts of the world. The challenges for organisations that recognise the value of increasing the gender diversity in their organisation are significant. Apart from the normal challenges companies in Pakistan and the Middle East have to overcome, deeply held cultural and societal values in many cases hinder the advancement of women participation in the workplace.

Organizations have realized that a heterogeneous workplace in terms of gender is the best workplace when it comes to effectiveness, creativity and problem solving. Hence they are now investing in Gender Diversity Research to learn how to engage and drive the female workforce. The business case for gender diversity asserts that organizations that develop and advance women will reap the benefits of gender equality.

Over the years, Engage Consulting has been focused in providing the best HR solutions to our clients. Now, from the platform of Engage Women we extend our focus to providing solutions that make a real difference to women who are aspiring to, or are already in, leadership and management positions.

We offer end-to-end solutions and the resources to organizations that recognize the value of enhancing gender diversity, and to help companies on their journey to increase the opportunities for women and to create a more balanced workforce in Pakistan and the Middle East.

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REPORT 2013

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**‘If you ask for
EQUAL RIGHTS
then accept EQUAL
RESPONSIBILITY as
well.
It’s a tough world
and no one would
really make way for
anyone’,**

- says a senior manager and board member of a renowned organization in Pakistan

According to World Bank statistics, Pakistan is one of the bottom 10 countries with regards to the participation of women in the workforce. A dismal state of affairs and certainly not a reflection of the quality of women in the country as Pakistani women are just as talented as women in any other part of the world. Women can add tremendous value to an organisation or our society as a whole, as some of Pakistan’s most famous women, Benazir Bhutto, Oscar award winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Children’s Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, have shown.

We, as many other progressive organisations, believe that you can only tackle today’s business challenges by engaging the best talent. No matter whether it is a man or a woman: only the best counts. Numerous studies have proven over and over again that companies with a higher proportion of women in senior management and executive positions have a significantly higher return on assets, share value and financial oversight. Engage Women, an initiative of Engage Consulting, is born out of this realization. It aims to support female talent and organisations towards enhancing gender diversity in senior management and executive positions across Pakistan and the Middle East.

To understand what drives gender diversity in Pakistan we launched the Women@Work Study, the first corporate gender diversity study in the country, in collaboration with Pepsico Pakistan. The objective of this study was to: (1) gain insights into the factors that are important to women (2) identify best practices and (3) capture statistics on female participation in leading companies in Pakistan.

More than 1000 female employees from 14 leading corporations in Pakistan responded to our invitation to participate in the study and we spoke to 35 senior female managers through in-depth one on one interviews, providing us with a wealth of information and insights.

This Women@Work report is a summary of our findings and a call to action for:

- Participating companies to lead the way and share their success stories with other organisations and pave the way for women to take on executive positions in the organisation
- Pakistani companies to understand the value women can bring to organisations and create the infrastructure to allow them to flourish
- Pakistani men not to be afraid but to embrace gender diversity
- Pakistani women not to hide behind the gender veil, to stand strong, be themselves and not be intimidated by the challenges that are associated with being a flag bearer.

We at Engage Women are COMMITTED to SUPPORT women, men and organisations alike to create a more GENDER BALANCED workplace

I would like to thank Pepsico Pakistan and in particular Sadia Irfan and Zahra Hussain for their foresight and leadership role in driving gender diversity in Pakistan and enabling this study. Furthermore I would like to thank the team at Engage Women who pulled this project off.

We at Engage Women are committed to support women, men and organisations alike to create a more gender balanced workplace as we know that this will benefit not only the men and women working there but also the organisation and Pakistani society.

Sanober Ahmad – Keijzer
November 2013

The Female Advantage

‘In my first few years, I really had to show and PROVE MYSELF to be capable...

There always may be a sense of jealousy and resentment if a female gets a promotion, but I never felt like there were any obstacles in my way.

Women have to show their DEDICATION, HARD WORK and TALENT and BE MORE ASSERTIVE about having their work represent who they are’,

- says a woman who started off her career in the 80s and is now at director level

Numerous studies have proven that companies with a significant proportion of women in leadership positions:

- Deliver improved company performance
- Have access to the widest talent pool
- Are more responsive to the market
- Achieve better corporate governance

Although there has not been any study in Pakistan regarding the impact of women on business performance we have over the past number of years collected a significant amount of data on the engagement levels of male and female employees as part of Engage Consulting's Best Place to Work studies.

From these studies we have learned that men and women are equally satisfied with their organisation as a place to work (81% strongly agree or agree with the statement that they are satisfied with their organisation as a place to work).

Despite similar satisfaction rates women are however:

- **8%** more energised to go the extra mile,
- **7%** more likely to stay with the organisation and
- **10%** more female employees would recommend their organisation as a place to work to their friends.

Assuming a similar skill set and experience level, women are therefore more likely to be more productive, more loyal and better ambassadors for the company than their male colleagues.

2.

A Long Way To Go



Governments and gender diversity advocates alike have established that at least 25% of a company's leadership needs to consist of women in order to capitalize on the advantages that women in leadership positions bring. Numerous governments have put in place directives and in some cases legislation in order to influence companies to increase women in their top teams.

Strikingly the participation of women in Pakistan's leading companies was significantly lower than the Worldbank figure. A meager **10%** of employees in our participating pool of companies are represented by women (the highest being **17%** and the lowest **5%**).

Not surprisingly this number was significantly lower at more senior levels. Women occupy only **5%** of leadership positions in surveyed companies, compared to **14%** in large European companies (source "Women Matter 2012" - McKinsey).

As we don't have reliable gender diversity statistics for Pakistan from the past we don't know whether female participation in the workforce has improved or remained stable. However qualitative feedback from interviews indicate that little progress has been made over the past few years.

Looking forward we are slightly more positive. Gender diversity has over the past few years gained traction (again). With governments, research institutes and companies embracing the benefits and needs of gender diversity, driving multinational companies to put pressure on their franchises in Pakistan to enhance their gender balance in companies. This is creating a spill over effect where progressive Pakistani companies are taking the lead in creating opportunities and facilitating women to participate in the workplace and progress in their careers.

3.

What Are Women Looking For?

The results from the Women@Work study show that for women in Pakistan to be successful at work they need to be supported through:

- Support from spouse and at home
- A safe work environment
- The practical realities of combining work with the demands of their family
- Being treated equally and fairly and supported by the top.

3.1 Support At Home

Most women can't work unless there is support from home and more specifically from their spouse with **74%** of all women indicating that support from their spouse was the most important factor in their ability to work. The need for spousal support was closely followed by the access to domestic help as a key in their ability to focus on and perform at work.

3.2 To Feel Safe

Not surprisingly given the situation in the country, **54%** of all women indicated that providing a safe work environment is the most important expectation they have from their employer. The need to feel safe which was further highlighted by **53%** of women

indicating that a strictly enforced sexual harassment policy was their top concern.

3.3 To Be Able To Look After Work And Home

More so than in many other societies around the world, Pakistani women are supposed to be the homemaker. No matter whether she works or not she is expected to look after the family and the house. Due to this expectation she is looking for an employer who can provide her with flexible work arrangements allowing her to fulfill personal commitments and accessible child care arrangements (**51%** of women indicated that flexible work arrangement were important to them).

3.4 To Be Treated Fairly

The fourth most important factor for women choosing a female friendly employer is the employer's ability to treat men and women equally and fairly. To provide similar career and development opportunities and at the same time does not discriminate between pay packages for the same responsibility and performance. The role of the company's leadership and specifically that of the CEO is of utmost importance. Women are looking for CEO's that not only do lip service to the gender diversity cause but who are also able to translate their words into tangible support and encouragement for high performing women.

3.

3.5 Different Solutions for Different Situations

Not surprisingly women at different stages in their careers are looking for different things.

At different seniority levels they are looking for:

SENIOR MANAGEMENT	MIDDLE MANAGEMENT	JUNIOR MANAGEMENT	ENTRY LEVEL
High performing women are encouraged and are given the opportunity to pursue more challenging roles and tasks within the company	I can openly communicate with my male colleagues and always feel respected	My line manager/ supervisor actively promotes a healthy work life balance at my organization	My company offers equal career advancement and job opportunities to both men and women

At different ages they are looking for:

25 YEARS AND BELOW	26-30 YEARS	31-40 YEARS	41-50 YEARS	51+ YEARS
My company offers equal career advancement and job opportunities to both men and women	I am able to fulfill important personal commitments	I can openly communicate with my male colleagues and always feel respected	My company allows me to work from home when needed to help me balance my responsibilities	My company pays men and women similar salaries and bonuses for equal performance

And their marital status also has a significant impact on their needs:

SINGLE	MARRIED
My company offers equal career advancement and job opportunities to both men and women.	I am able to fulfill important personal commitments such as school plays, sports days, doctor appointments, parent/ teacher meetings, etc.

4.

How Are Pakistani Companies Doing?

‘My work has ignited my PASSION. I started work because I needed it but now it has become a way of establishing my own IDENTITY. I am not just a mother or just a wife. I am everything and more’,

- says a woman in a middle level position at a multinational in Pakistan

There has been a huge difference in the verdict of female employees of the 14 leading companies that participated in the survey. The best scoring company had 85% of their women employees agreeing to all the statements whereas the worst performing company had 1 out of 2 (51%) of their female staff agreeing the same.

The most significant difference was in the area of executive commitment. Women in the best scoring company gave their leadership team an 87% agreement score compared to 44% in other companies and a paltry 27% in the worst scoring company.

4.1 Safe Working Environment

92% of polled women state that they feel safe and secure when they are at work, especially if they have to work late and 78% agree that their company has a sexual harassment policy that is strictly enforced. Although 1/3 of female employees think that their employer can improve the facilities for them to do their job.

4.2 Work – Life Balance

One of the biggest gaps was with the ability of companies to help women strike a good balance between work and home. Only 66% of women state that they are able to maintain a good work – life balance and 40% of women feel that they are unable to fulfill important personal commitments. The lack of flexible work arrangements (only half of companies offer this) and the absence of the ability to work from home (only 40% of respondents indicate that they are allowed to work from home) seem to be the main causes for this.

4.

4.3 Fair Treatment

78% of women think their organisations are doing a good job in enforcing a sexual harassment policy and a similar percentage feel that their organisation is rewarding men and women similarly for equal performance. However perception changes significantly if it comes to equal opportunities with more than 1/3 of women who are of the opinion that men are given more (career) opportunities than women and are being held to tougher performance standards.

The facts however don't support these claims as HR statistics from participating companies reveal that 10% more women are promoted and 30% more women than men are seconded abroad. Whereas, as many men as women have been identified by companies as having high potential.

4.4 Support From The Top

Despite the fact that 75% of companies proclaim that they are committed to a diversity agenda, their female employees think and feel differently. 56% of female employees don't see a visible commitment from their CEO and they feel that the leadership team is not convinced of the business benefits of a more gender diverse organization nor do they feel (62%) that the company is measured against specific gender diversity key performance indicators. It can't be ascertained whether the above views are based on facts or simply the absence of leadership teams making public statements and commitments about their desire to enhance gender diversity.

'CEOs need to realise the BENEFITS of having DIVERSITY in the workforce. They need to accept and recognise that having women in the workforce INCREASES BUSINESS RETURNS and then they formulate their strategies and not do it as a favour to the women.'

- says a woman in a middle level position at a multinational in Pakistan.

One thing is clear and that is, that female employees give their leadership teams a **D-** on the results of any gender diversity agenda as only 1/3 of women think that there is adequate representation of women in senior management.

4.5 Elephant In The Room

One of the main issues reported both through our survey as well as through our interviews was the issue of pursuing a career after having children. Although 71% of women state that their organisation supports them in all possible ways during their pregnancy and maternity leave, the issues comes when women want to rejoin their companies. With close to 60% of women indicating that they didn't receive any support from their company to transition back in to work and a same percentage complaining that their organisation is not providing any child care facilities.

5.

What Are Companies Doing To Help Women Succeed?

Most companies claim that they are committed to a diversity agenda and 2/3 of the companies even state that they have specific gender diversity objectives, have adjusted their HR processes to drive a diversity agenda in their company, including the inclusion of women in recruitment shortlists and processes to ensure no gender bias is applied in promotion, bonus or other development decisions

Only a few companies have implemented the much wanted 'flexible work' and 'work from home arrangements' and only 1 out of 2 companies offer child care facilities to help returning mothers.

BEST PRACTICES

Key Performance Indicators

- Specific hiring KPIs to promote gender diversity as part of the yearly objectives
- Ensuring that we have female successors in the talent pool and succession pipeline

Networking

A platform providing multiple opportunities in a year to connect with internal female employees and external international forums organized for women to learn from and interact with successful women in various walks of life.

Support for Female High Performers

Female high achievers are provided specialized coaching, mentoring and learning programs for their personal and professional development.

Gender Diversity Training

- Gender Balance Awareness
- Unconscious bias training
- Plant wide gender sensitivity workshops are conducted to support hiring and acceptance of females in manufacturing roles

Women's Leadership Forum

A forum sponsored by the top management focused towards providing mentoring and coaching of our female talent to adapt and progress well within the company

Publicly Support Gender Diversity Programs

Outreach programs, partnering with NGOs and offering scholarships to females from underprivileged backgrounds

Avoid Gender Bias in Reward

The salary and bonus payout is studied across graphs to analyze patterns and ensure consistency across genders

6. What Should Companies Focus On?

For organisations interested in enhancing their gender diversity, the Women @ Work study results provides a clear recipe to follow.

Visible and Genuine Executive Commitment

The first step is for the organisation's leadership team to be convinced that having a more gender-balanced organisation is simply smart business. It is not about being politically correct, or morally doing the right thing. It gives better returns.

In doing so the executive team has to be able to focus on the long-term benefits and not be swayed by the 'naysayers' that focus on short term issues such as maternity leaves and all kind of other gender related performance biases. The stronger position it takes on this, the more successful any gender diversity initiative will have.

The executive team has to: (i) build a business case for gender diversity, (ii) set themselves an audacious goal (like doubling the number of women in 3 years at management level), (iii) come up with a solid actionable plan with key performance indicators and then go public. The last element is important as public commitment increases personal commitment levels as well as it creates a platform for change in the organisation.

As soon as the executive team has made a public and genuine commitment to enhance the participation of women in their organisation, the company has to set its foundations.

5 Influencing the Outside World

4 Maximizing Potential

3 Enabling Female Employees to Combine Work and Home

2 Setting the Foundation

1 Visible and Genuine Executive Commitment

Setting the Foundations

This includes:

- Creating policies on matters such as equal opportunities, reward and sexual harassment to solidify their commitment
- Adjusting HR processes on hiring, development, promotions and succession planning to ensure at a minimum that gender bias is reduced and possibly that women candidates are at least included in people decisions
- Creating a safe and female friendly work place by providing facilities that ensure the safety of female staff at all times and enables them to perform to their ability
- Helping male colleagues and specifically male line managers to become aware of specific gender related barriers and how to create a supportive and female friendly work place.

Enabling Female Employees to Combine Work and Home

Pakistani society has not progressed to a point where it is acceptable for a woman not to be a home maker. As a result she always has to be able to manage the pressures that come with managing both home and work. For companies in Pakistan to be successful in their gender diversity initiatives it is important for them to extend their support in enabling women to do so and not make it a reason for women to leave after they have gotten married or have had children.

Companies should as much as possible create flexible work arrangements and allow, if required, employees to work from home allowing them to fulfill personal commitments.

This flexibility should not only be offered to women but to all employees alike as to not create a visible distinction between gender in the organisation. It will also create a tremendous loyalty from working mothers and be an 'attraction magnet for other working mums.

This approach also applies for the matter of maternity. The more a company is able to support women during their maternity leave and upon their return to the workplace the more women will stay. Providing childcare facilities will not only support women to focus on their work, but will also allow them to be more productive upon their return.

Maximizing Potential

With the foundations and enablers in place it is time to focus on providing high performing women with specific support and opportunities.

This can be done in the form of:

- Assigning executive mentors and coaches
- Nominating women for specific training and development opportunities
- Creating networking occasions (with other women) in the company
- Women talent review sessions in which the senior leadership team reviews and agrees development interventions for high performing female talent

6.

Influencing the Outside World

The final step is to come out in the open and use the traction and success that you have generated inside the company to influence other companies and society.

This can be done through:

- Sponsoring of gender diversity initiatives and events,
- Specific female candidate outreach and sponsoring programs,
- Taking ownership of specific female friendly initiatives such as:
 - ▣ Supporting women to come back to work after a long maternity break
 - ▣ Launching part-time work or job-sharing initiatives.

By publically supporting gender diversity initiatives you will not only position yourselves as the employer of choice for female talent and positively influence your company's reputation, but you will also be able to influence society and more specifically spouses whose support is essential for any talented woman to go out there and join the workforce.

However, be aware, you can only do this if your house is in order and females in your company are indeed recognizing you as a female friendly workplace. Based on our survey of 14 leading companies in Pakistan only two companies would be able to do that at the moment. Others still have some way to go in creating the environment where women unequivocally will recommend their company as a female friendly workplace.

7. What Women Can Do To Succeed

As part of our Women @ Work study we also interviewed 30+ successful female managers and executives across all participating companies. Although each story is different there were some striking similarities.

Some highlights:

Family Support is the Cornerstone of a Woman's Career

Almost all women mention that support from their spouse and family is the key to their success. Spouses have to be progressive enough not only to support them in their endeavours but also to make a larger than normal contribution to the household and in some cases take over looking after the kids to facilitate their wives to travel and fulfill the sometimes required long hours.

Mentors Help Navigate Tricky Waters

Every woman no matter how successful she has been has landed in situations that needed careful maneuvering. Mentors, either from within the company or sometimes from previous companies have been instrumental in managing these situations. All successful women interviewed could identify a person who they regard as a mentor and who have helped them through difficult career patches.

Building a Network

Being able to build a strong network in the company of both female and male colleagues has paid successful women strong dividends. Networks are there to support, ask for advice, help to step in and create a larger support structure for a person

‘You really have to get an understanding of how women JUGGLE THEIR LIVES because it really takes a lot to manage work and then go home and be a wife and mother and once you UNDERSTAND – then you will be able to MAKE A DIFFERENCE,’

- says a senior executive at a multinational in Pakistan.

to succeed. Successful female executives have stressed the importance of not letting the man run the ‘old boys network’ but to go out and build a strong network in the company.

Focus on Delivering Results

Most strikingly, successful women we interviewed strongly condemned women who conformed to preconceived notions of man's view of women. They confirm that Pakistani society cultivates strong opinions and biases towards working women. Most women interviewed stated that it is only your performance and the delivery of results that will change people's perceptions and not about being distracted by the difficulties that you face. Even if that means that you have to do jobs or activities that you feel uncomfortable with it is about just doing them and trying to do them better than whoever else. It is performance that counts.

8. Where Do We Take It From Here?

The Women @ Work study was the first of its kind, focused on helping to understand the drivers of gender diversity, to help companies, women and men alike understand how to enhance the participation of women in the Pakistani workplace.

We would like to thank the participating companies, interviewed executives and specifically Pepsi for their generous support to make this study possible.

So What's Next for Engage Women?

Our aim is to support female talent and organisations towards enhancing gender diversity in senior management and executive positions across the region.

We have a three-pronged approach to achieve this:

- Support companies in creating a female friendly workplace
- Support women in maximising their potential in the corporate world
- Understand what drives gender diversity

Our next Women @ Work study will most likely be a public study in which we include many more organisations across Pakistan to understand the 'state of gender affairs'. At the same time we are interested to interview men in companies to understand their perspective and finally get a better understanding of how we can influence spouses, family members and the society at large to support their female talent in their desire to make their own career and flourish in the corporate world.

We will continue to engage and update you on our journey and would be looking forward for your continued support.

Engage Women is committed to help companies and women build more balanced companies in which the potential of women is maximized. And yes we do this because we believe the world will become more fair and tolerant if more women have executive leadership positions. But above all we do this because it simply makes business sense.

engage consulting

Engage Consulting has been born out of the strong belief that we can help companies and their people improve the way they live and work with each other. We help organizations to engage their leadership teams, talent and workforce, foster commitment towards a co-created future and build a high performance business.

Engage Consulting has offices in Malaysia, Dubai, as well as Karachi and Lahore in Pakistan. Our team is expanding daily and has work experience from across the world. The diversity of the team is another unique factor which helps the Engage experience stand out from others.

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