

A toolkit to help employers recruit, retain and promote more women and bring them onto boards

Introduction

It is now well-known that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women in the workforce. They face the crushing pressures of working from home in demanding professional jobs while juggling family obligations that tend to fall on their shoulders more than their male counterparts. They also dominated the sectors that had the pandemic impacted most significantly – retail, food services, health care etc.

In many cases, women are not only taking care of their children, but also elderly parents and relatives as well, and bearing the brunt of domestic responsibilities. Some have had no choice but to scale back in their jobs, reconsider advancement ambitions, or leave the workforce altogether. Others have excelled in the workplace, either in senior roles or as entrepreneurs. But that has come at a tremendous cost to their mental health and personal lives.

Women in business face barriers, including microaggression, burnout, pay inequity, discrimination, as well as a lack of mentors and allies.

All of these issues have broader economic implications, given the pandemic also laid bare a shortage of skilled labour in Canada. Even as some sectors were decimated, others boomed. Many companies are still struggling to hire the workers they need.

Significantly increasing the number of women in business and in senior leadership roles is vital to address this imbalance. Critical to this effort is tailoring upskilling and reskilling training to the realities of women's needs and lifestyles, confronting discrimination and bias, and setting women up to succeed.



A concerted effort to champion women in Canadian business is not just about gender equality, it's an economic issue. Companies with more women in executive teams are



- Women make up approximately 45% of all entry-level employees but only 25% of vice-presidents and 15% of CEOs. . When it comes to advancing from director to vice-president roles, men advance at triple the rate of women.
- Caregiving realities of the pandemic have had an impact on retention and promotion of women. _____ at the office than fathers. In the first year of the pandemic, 12 times as many mothers as fathers left jobs to care for toddlers or school-aged children.
- Despite facing stress and burnout, _____ taking on extra work, launching new companies, and stepping up to support their teams in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. However, this work is often _____ even though it drives better outcomes for all employees.
- Even at the most senior levels, women face _____ with men due to male-centric norms around leadership, which are behaviors and roles typically associated with male leaders. While representation of women on the boards of Canadian companies is slowly increasing, they still only hold _____ among TSX-listed companies.
-



Practical steps to help employers recruit, retain, and promote more women and bring them onto boards

There are four main areas to supporting women in the workplace and setting them up to succeed. The following table provides suggestions that companies of all sizes in Canada can adapt to their unique culture and



anti-harassment policies, parental leave, and mental health first aid training.





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so they are aware of their role in creating an inclusive workplace. • to eliminate discrimination. • which is particularly pervasive among parents. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for performance reviews to ensure equitable promotion to manager positions and address the “broken rung” phenomenon — where women fall off the corporate ladder the higher up they go. • to see how women are advancing in your workplace. • and provide financial incentives for progress on diversity goals • women leaders for their achievements, particularly around DEI that drives better outcomes for their organizations. • for women to connect with senior leaders and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Tips</u> for supporting effective career path planning and development. • <u>Ways</u> to encourage women to chart their career paths. • <u>Strategies</u> for empowering female employees. • <u>List</u> of networks for women entrepreneurs across Canada. • <u>Leverage</u> organizations like WBE Canada, which bridges public and corporate procurement and Canadian women business enterprises. • <u>Improve</u> access to mentorships and <u>sponsorships</u>. • <u>Provide</u> regular, constructive and actionable feedback.



	<p>other women who can become their champions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ to help connect women with other successful women to build confidence and leadership skills. • _____ who can advocate for their accomplishments and potential, connect them to others in their network, and recommend them for bigger roles. • _____ to better level the playing field for women competing for business opportunities with male-run companies. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ by recruiting and attracting more women to board positions. • _____ that even highly qualified women face when it comes to being candidates for board positions. • _____ requirements are aligned to corporate governance realities of the current economic climate. • _____ and mentoring programs for women to widen the pipeline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playbook for getting women on boards. • Guide: Stacking Your Board for Diversity. • Strategies to get more women of colour on boards. • Tools to help women with career planning and getting board ready. • Actions organizations and leaders can take for a more inclusive workplace.



Additional resources

- Government of Canada: [Women and the workplace – How employers can advance equality and diversity – Report from the Symposium on Women and the Workplace](#)
- McKinsey & Co., in partnership with LeanIn.org: [Women in the Workplace report](#)
- Careers in Construction: [Organizations that help women to get started in the construction trades](#)
- Catalyst: [10 Big Issues Women Face at Work and What Leaders Can Do to Help](#)