



Distinguished Speaker Series

Deloitte Alchemy School of
Management: Wonder Women
in Leadership

What does it take to Succeed?

25 October 2019

Welcome and context



Dr Martyn Davies, Dean, Deloitte Alchemy School of Management & Managing Director: Emerging Markets & Africa, Deloitte Africa

“How can women best leverage this environment for career development and the ingredients of success?”

One mega-trend of our time is the empowerment, talent development and levelling of the playing field for women in business. This is creating incredible new opportunities for women while also serving as a force for good in the workplace and in wider society. How can women best leverage this environment for career development and the ingredients of success?



From left; Sonja De Bruyn, Roksana Ciurysek-Gedir, Priya Thakoor & Dr Martyn Davies



Audience

Panel discussion: Wonder women in leadership

Roksana Ciurysek-Gedir, Former President, Pekao International (Poland) & Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum

Sonja De Bruyn, Founder and Principal Partner, Identity Partners & Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum

Priya Thakoor, Managing Executive: Digital Channels, Vodacom

Moderator: Dr Martyn Davies, Dean, Deloitte Alchemy School of Management & Managing Director: Emerging Markets & Africa, Deloitte Africa



Roksana Ciurysek-Gedir

The world as well as corporates have become slowly receptive to gender inclusion and diversity. We therefore need to be determined in asking the right questions and having the right conversations regarding the challenges faced by women in executive roles, career progression for women in leadership,

remuneration, driving equality in women management teams as well as ensuring equal additional opportunities for those aiming for executive positions.

Gender inequality and a lack of inclusivity in management, executives and boards is something that companies still grapple with. For example, company boards still have very few or no women at all. These trends need to be changed. Although change in addressing these issues has been quite sluggish, there has been frequent dialogue around the topic, with companies also showing interest in transforming this and effecting progressive change.

Businesses have the transformative power to change and contribute to a more open, diverse and inclusive society. Research has shown that companies with more females in executive positions are more profitable, with some studies stating that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity outperform their competitors by close to 15%. Despite these business cases, women continue to be underrepresented in management and leadership positions.

Numerous companies have realised the significance of having women in leadership positions, both in an executive and non-executive capacity and have taken steps in ensuring gender inclusion. Over 15 years ago, very few women were granted the opportunity to be part of company boards or leadership roles. However, times have changed, with some companies acknowledging the significance of enforcing gender inclusion and diversity in executive positions and understanding the beneficial effects of having at equal (or at least 30%) representation of women in senior management, executive and board positions.



Sonja De Bruyn

South Africa in particular has come a long way in driving gender inclusion and diversity, mainly through transformation agendas such as the Employment Equity code. More women are becoming actively involved in leadership positions – although at a still relatively slow pace – and some companies require having women on their boards. Another policy example is the country's King IV Report on corporate governance which recommends that companies should set board gender diversity targets and annually report on their progress.

Research has shown that as part of the strategy to make a difference at board levels, companies need to appoint three or more women in their boards. This is highly likely to result in increased return on equity and earnings per share within five years. In comparison to some other markets, South Africa seems to be doing well in terms of policy. However, in addition to these policies, more still needs to be done, especially with most companies struggling to reach the target of having 30% of women in executive positions and a minimum of three women in boards.



Priya Thakoor

Companies also have a role in play in terms of supporting women that are already in management and executive positions. With women often still having additional responsibilities at home, work flexibility is of great importance to accommodate women in the workplace. This can be done by granting flexible working hours and by promoting working remotely policies. Fortunately, with the help of technology, this form of transformation is highly possible.

There are additional ways in which gender diversity and inclusion can be enforced such as employing more capable and willing females in male-dominated industries, such as mining or construction; as well as creating more executive career opportunities for women. Despite efforts to address gender inequality and a lack of inclusion, executive opportunities still are uneven for women, with South African women making up only a fifth of the directors who serve on the boards of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). If we take a brief look at the Top 40 JSE listed companies, only one company had a female CEO. This shows that there is still a long way to go in supporting women in executive and management roles.

Summary and close

Dr Martyn Davies, Dean, Deloitte Alchemy School of Management & Managing Director: Emerging Markets & Africa, Deloitte Africa

“We need to set the bar and create a firm foundation for the coming generation by ensuring that gender issues are communicated openly and well-addressed at present.”

More conversations and action relating to gender diversity and inclusion are crucial when seeking to drive change in organisational cultures. We need to set the bar and create a firm foundation for the coming generation by ensuring that gender issues are communicated openly and well-addressed at present. We need to play our part in tackling these issues and shifting the paradigm to ensure that the future generation would have completely different conversations in the coming years.

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