

A Holistic Approach to Gender-Diverse Leadership



UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S JOURNEYS

In 2015, drug maker Eli Lilly conducted a workforce analysis which identified major gaps in women's representation at senior leadership levels (20%) despite the fact that nearly half (47%) of the workforce were women. Under the leadership of now CEO Dave Ricks, Lilly adapted its "Patient Journey" market research process to develop the "Women's Journey" to better understand the experience of high potential women — and barriers to advancement they might face — as they progress in their careers.

Through anonymous surveys, focus groups, journal entries, and recordings, senior management learned that some women felt they had to act like men to be successful, and that gender bias limited the career support they received and factored into promotion decisions. In addition, the process revealed that women of color had been overlooked and their pipeline was limited. Lilly repeated the project to understand the journeys of African-American, Asian, Latinx and LGBTQ employees as well.

"It was the stories Lilly women told that really connected senior leadership to individual people. I think if we'd only had the quantitative data, it wouldn't have created so much change," Steve Fry, Senior VP of HR and Diversity, told Gallup in December 2019.

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

In response, Lilly's senior leaders committed to a range of initiatives aimed at recruiting, developing and supporting high potential women at all levels, including a formal sponsorship program in which

Executive Committee members personally sponsored women and people of color and a Women in Leadership training program aimed at providing high-level executive skills and networking opportunities for women poised to become vice presidents.

In addition, CEO David Ricks conducted an intensive 2½-day workshop called **EMERGE** with the top 15 African American women leaders at the senior director level. This program, which has since been replicated with Asian and Latina women and Multicultural Men Leaders, enabled women to be heard and gain visibility at the top of the organization — and reinforced the organization's commitment to advancing a diverse set of women.

MEASURABLE PROGRESS AT THE TOP

While Lilly does not have specific quotas for women in leadership, they have aspirational targets and have seen significant improvement.

- As of September 23, 2020, women comprise six of 15 Executive Committee members and four of 13 positions on the Board of Directors. The Board also includes five members from underrepresented groups (minorities and LGBTQ).
- Since December 2016, women in management increased from 38% to 44% and those who report directly to the CEO have increased from 29% to 40%.
- Women of color at the VP/senior VP level has grown from 3% to 9%, outpacing the 4% industry average.

“ While many companies are trying to build more gender-diverse leadership teams and workforces, progress remains slow. We knew it would remain slow at Lilly, too, unless we took a different approach. So we sought to do something difficult: to understand and address our blind spots. Only then could we hope to grow our pipeline of potential women leaders. ”

Joy Fitzgerald, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Lilly (HBR 10/23/18)