



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Source: Catalyst, 2009. *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know*, by Jeanine Prime and Corinne A. Moss-Racusin. NY.

► Why have so many gender gap programs missed the mark?

- “...too many gender initiatives focus solely on changing women—from the way they network to the way they lead.”
- “too many organizations look to women alone to change the organizational practices that maintain the status quo.”
- “If organizations want to minimize gender disparities, they need to enable women *and* men to make behavioral changes. And perhaps most important, organizations must enlist both women and men to work together as allies in changing the organizational norms and structures that perpetuate gender gaps.”
- “Without the avid support of men, who are arguably the most powerful stakeholder group in most large corporations, significant progress toward ending gender disparities is unlikely.”

This summary provides insights regarding the best ways to reach men.

► What experiences and beliefs help increase men’s awareness of gender bias and its costs in the workplace?

- Four common masculine norms that are emphasized to varying degrees in different North American and Western European cultures:
 - “**Avoid all things feminine**”—the cardinal tenet of masculinity, in order to avoid punishing peer pressure.
 - “**Be a winner**”—any activity is seen as manly that increases men’s wealth, social prestige, and power over others.
 - “**Show no chinks in the armor**”—men should be tough in both body and spirit. In many business settings, showing emotional toughness is often seen as a key leadership attribute.
 - “**Be a man’s man**” (aka be “one of the boys”)—men must comply with all masculine norms; demonstrate that they prefer the company of men over the company of women, and participate in stereotypically masculine activities or pastimes that serve as rituals to reinforce masculine norms and promote social ties and solidarity.



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- The price men pay for conformity:
 - “For both women and men alike, strict conformity to feminine and masculine norms, respectively, means repressing an aspect of one’s personality.”
 - Many men place a priority on career advancement, sacrificing relationships with family, spouses, and friends—relationships that not only improve quality of life, but also offer an important source of psychological support in times of stress.
 - Limited ability to acknowledge and seek help for problems such as depression, anxiety, and illness.

Even though the cost of conformity can be quite high, there are harsh social penalties for deviating from assigned gender scripts.

- The price organizations pay for conformity:
 - By rewarding strict conformity to masculine norms, organizations may inadvertently compromise their performance.
 - Oil company example: high accident rates were the result of rewarding strict conformity to norms emphasizing fearlessness and toughness.

► What motivates men to champion gender initiatives in the workplace?

- How men come to recognize gender bias: (research findings)
 - “Before individuals can support a change initiative, they must first be convinced that there is something wrong with the status quo.
 - “The higher men’s awareness of gender bias, the more likely they were to feel that it was important to achieve gender equality.”
 - “The more men dared to defy some masculine norms, the higher their awareness of gender bias.”
 - “Men who had been mentored by women were more aware of gender bias than men who hadn’t had this experience.”
 - “Men with a strong sense of fair play were more likely than those without this mindset to be aware of gender bias.” (e.g., men who admitted they felt burdened by a lack of fairness about how resources are shared in society)
- How men express their awareness of gender bias: (research findings)
 - Their ability to recognize significant costs to women, men and organizations.

Examples: The ability to recognize the exclusion of women in the workplace and to view that exclusion as a competitive disadvantage for corporations. A greater



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- likelihood to admit wishing that men were not always expected to take on the role of primary breadwinner.
- Note: Organizations have a strong influence over whether men acknowledge the existence of gender disparities.
 - The single factor that predicts men being viewed as champions: a strong sense of fair play.
 - Men with a strong sense of fair play were not only committed to the ideal of fairness or equality but were also willing to stand up publicly for these ideals.
 - The stronger men's sense of fair play, the more likely they were to have experienced the pain of marginalization or exclusion firsthand.

► **What barriers limit men's support for initiatives to promote gender equality?**

Three obstacles to becoming a champion:

- **Apathy:** 74% of interviewees said that many men were unconcerned about issues of gender equality and did not see a compelling reason for becoming actively involved in gender initiatives, or both.

These findings suggest that men will remain indifferent and therefore unlikely to support gender equality unless they appreciate how they can gain personally from changing the status quo.

- **Fear:** 74% of interviewees also identified fear as a barrier to men's support for gender equality.
 - Fears about loss of status and privilege
 - Fears about making mistakes and exposing themselves to criticism from women for the role men play in creating gender disparities or for unknowingly committing an offensive act
 - Fears about other men's disapproval (the risk of losing acceptance from male peers, as well as one's sense of manhood)
- **Ignorance:** 51% of interviewees perceived that some men are reluctant to join in efforts to end gender bias because of ignorance—both real and perceived.
 - Perceived ignorance: The belief that by virtue of being male they are uninformed about issues of gender and, therefore, the lack of knowledge they need to be effective champions of gender equality.
 - Real ignorance: Interviewees agreed that men must first recognize that a problem exists before they can become committed to solving it.



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► What specific techniques and practices enlist men's support for closing gender gaps?

- Recommendations for engaging men:
 - Support men in recognizing that gender bias exists by providing men with opportunities to have discussions about gender issues in the exclusive company of other men.
 - Provide opportunities for cross-gender mentoring.

Example: Ernst & Young's Cultivating Men as Allies strategy—firm-wide leadership workshops, as well as locally driven workshops and solution-building.

- Strategies for removing organizational barriers to men's support:

Barrier	Strategies
Apathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Raise awareness about what men can gain from gender equality○ Raise awareness about the costs of gender inequality for men
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Discourage zero-sum thinking○ Invite men in○ Expose men to male role models who champion gender inclusion and challenge the status quo
Ignorance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provide opportunities for dialogue both within and across gender groups