

Conduct that counts: Why CEOs can't afford to pay lip service to gender equality

- **Leadership survey of 1,500 Australian executives finds most CEOs are not serious about inclusive behaviour or about tackling the tough issues on gender equality**
- **Less than half of women believe their CEO makes gender diversity a real priority: Bain & Chief Executive Women Gender Parity Survey**

Sydney, 5 December 2014: The single most important factor that enables women to succeed in organisations is a personal commitment by CEOs to gender diversity and demonstrated inclusive behaviour.

The finding comes from the fourth in a series of landmark gender parity surveys by global management consulting firm Bain & Company and Chief Executive Women, Australia's pre-eminent organisation of 300 senior women leaders.

Some 1500 executives across the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors, responded to the survey about what actions and behaviours by leaders correlate with employee engagement and which ultimately make a difference in creating successful, diverse organisations.

Yet the message is still not getting through to some senior executives, according to the survey report [Actions speak louder than words: CEO conduct that counts](#). Fewer than 50 per cent of women surveyed agree with the statement: The leadership team at my company or organisation has made gender parity a visible priority.

Melanie Sanders, Bain partner and report co-author, said: "We found that employees are not content with rhetoric about equality from supervisors or the C-Suite. CEOs have to walk the talk by actively shaping employee impressions of their work environments and clearing a path to greater opportunities for women. "Creating a positive work environment, where every employee feels they can achieve their full potential, isn't just an individual benefit. It can also boost an organisation's bottom line.

Christine Christian, CEW President, said: "This research collaboration between Bain and CEW, now in its fourth year, is providing much-needed evidence that it's time for Australian leaders to lift their game around gender equality. The economic imperative demands it – and so do their staff."

Bain and CEW have identified a handful of critical leadership behaviours that translate into conduct that counts when it comes to creating employee engagement. CEOs must:

- Be effective in delivering business performance outcomes
- Seek and accept diverse ideas, opinions, and leadership styles
- Talk and act in a way that is inclusive for both women and men
- Have no tolerance for behaviour which excludes either women or men

When asked about perceptions of their organisation as a place where women can progress, leadership “conduct that counts” is about walking the talk:

- Track record of ensuring women are appointed into senior line roles
- Track record of actively sponsoring women, assisting their career progression
- Holds other senior executives and managers accountable for gender parity outcomes

Kathryn Fagg, CEW Council member and report co-author said: “The message to CEOs is loud and clear. Leaders who want sustainable business success with an engaged workforce can’t afford to ignore the benefits of actually practising inclusive behaviour. They can’t afford not to appoint women into senior line positions.”

Information for media

Melanie Sanders and Kathryn Fagg are available for interview

Download copies of the report [here](#).

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