

pictures collected by Tiffany Mak

Board & C-Suite Diversity

Top 10 Ranking – Overall Diversity Score

Company	Sector	2007 Score (%)
Vancouver City Savings C.U.	Financials	71.9%
Royal Bank Of Canada	Financials	56.3%
Husky Energy Inc.	Oil and Gas	40.4%
Corus Entertainment Inc.	Communications and Media	37.5%
Hydro One	Utilities	36.6%
McKesson Canada	Healthcare	36.1%
Hewlett-Packard Canada	IT	33.3%
Bank Of Montreal	Financials	32.4%
Petro-Canada	Oil and Gas	31.8%
Shell Canada	Oil and Gas	31.3%

Top Ranked – By Sector

Company	Sector	2007 Score (%)
Ford Motor Company of Canada, Limited	Autos	6.3%
Potash Corporation Of Saskatchewan Inc.	Chemicals	6.3%
Corus Entertainment Inc.	Communications and Media	37.5%
Vancouver City Savings C.U.	Financials	71.9%
Cascades Inc.	Forestry	27.1%
McKesson Canada	Healthcare	36.1%
Hewlett-Packard Canada	IT	33.3%
Sherritt International	Mining	31.3%
Husky Energy Inc.	Oil and Gas	40.4%
Mountain Equipment Co-op	Retail	12.5%
Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd.	Transport and Logistics	6.3%
Hydro One	Utilities	36.6%

Score: Percentage of Board & top 3 C-Suite members that are women and/or a visible minority, as of end of fiscal year 2006. Source: Corporate Knights Corporate Citizen Database™.

The view from the analyst and the expert.

In boardrooms and executive suites across the nation, distinguished, grey gentlemen make the decisions on what we buy and how we live. Who are “we”?

Most likely not distinguished, grey gentlemen—51 per cent of us are women, and almost one in five of us are foreign-born.

By ignoring this reality, by failing to tap the full potential of immigrants and women in the hiring process, employers are causing a personal income shortfall of \$174 billion per year, according to RBC Financial Group.

An RBC-commissioned study conducted in 2005 found that if women and immigrants had the same likelihood of employment at the same average income as men and people born in Canada, respectively, the result would be an extra 1.6 million employees and an extra \$174 billion in personal income—a gain of 21 per cent compared to 2005 levels.

Can't see the forest for the trees, indeed.

AN EXAMINATION OF DIVERSITY WITHIN THE UPPER RANKS OF CANADIAN COMPANIES

As part of our annual Best 50 Corporate Citizens ranking, Corporate Knights takes a look at Canadian boards of directors and C-suites and examines the most recent financial and proxy statements available. Although boards are elected by shareholders, and C-suites are hired, both represent a company's overall philosophy towards diversity—that of the owners and the executives.

Corporate Knights examined companies in the S&P/TSX 60, the top 50 on the FP500 and/or ROB1000, all the companies in the Jantzi Social Index, the top 25 holdings of the Ethical Canadian Index Fund, and additional companies with significant operations in the communications, chemicals, utilities, retail, mining, oil and gas, finance, and forestry sectors.

The constituents of the CK Leadership Diversity Index are the companies with the greatest visible minority and female representation in both the boardroom and the C-suite. In the case of a subsidiary, the parent company's data were used.

The findings failed to reflect Canada's demographics. Of the 140 we surveyed, 75 per cent of boards of directors had no visible minorities, and 23 per cent had no women. There were no female CEOs in the 2007 Best 50 (with data from fiscal 2006).

But change is afoot, and a promising bunch of companies are leading the way.

THE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Doug Soo, a director of Vancouver City Credit Union, doesn't mince words when speaking about the importance of diversity in doing business.

“If you ignore diversity nowadays, you don't last,” he says. “It's a natural part of the fabric of Canada at this juncture.”

Tamara Vrooman, CEO of Vancity, agrees. “An organization can function as they have for decades without changing,” she says. “But they never really reach their full potential if they don't have that diverse focus.”

Zabeen Hirji, Chief Human Resources Officer for Royal Bank of Canada, puts it this way: “If you want to serve the market, you have to hire the market.”

Indeed, ensuring diversity is just good business practice, if you ask the senior executives of the firms in the Corporate Knights Leadership Diversity Index.

“When you represent the communities

you serve, I think the company's always seen in a much more favourable light," says Laura Formusa, CEO of Hydro One.

And with more choices and information available than ever before, it's even easier to refuse to patronize establishments that don't meet our needs.

"If you're blind to diversity, people aren't coming through your doors," Soo says.

And that doesn't just mean the storefront doors. According to the 2005 RBC report, Canada faces a labour shortage of 2.75 million workers in the next 20 years over and above our population growth if current immigration patterns hold true.

As well, according to a 2007 study by Catalyst Canada and Ryerson University, Canada stands to lose on the front of competitive advantage as well. The report cautions that emerging economies could very well capture Canada's best diverse talent if Canadian workplaces don't become more inclusive.

And as for that \$174 billion in lost income—well, if women and immigrants face barriers in integration into the workforce, then they face barriers in accessing the markets for housing, consumer spending, wealth management services, and related business investment opportunities, says the RBC report.

All of this adds up to a poor economic forecast for Canada.

But is workplace diversity still a seminal issue in today's supposedly progressive times?

Undoubtedly, Canada's top women agree.

"I still go into many meetings of 30 or 40 people and I'm the only woman," Vrooman says. "You get used to it, but when I talk to older women, the pioneers who really laid the groundwork, they say, 'I thought we'd be so much further along.'"

Anne McLellan, former Deputy Prime Minister, a board member of Cameco Corp. and Nexen Inc., and Chair of the Liberal Taskforce on Women, echoes this sentiment.

"The greatest disappointment would have to be the fact that we have not significantly increased the number of women on our corporate boards in the past decade," she says. "In this country we pride ourselves on our pluralism and our diversity. You want to have that reflected on your board and in your senior management."

"The ideal for me would be when we aren't required to focus on it," Hirji agrees, who is often called upon to speak about diversity issues within and outside of RBC.



PHOTO: Lyle Stafford

““An organization can function as they have for decades without changing,” she says. “But they never really reach their full potential if they don’t have that diverse focus.”

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After one such engagement, Hirji confided to her 13-year-old son that she wasn't sure if she wanted to be profiled as a diversity role model.

"He said, 'Mom, it's not about you—it's about the impact it has on others.'"

LEADING STRATEGIES

What is it that makes a company a diversity champion?

It's often a synergy of a variety of initiatives from a variety of levels, according to executives from the Corporate Knights Leadership Diversity Index Top 10.

To understand the makeup of their firms, many of the Top 10 conduct surveys to monitor the number of female, visible minority, aboriginal, and disabled staff. Employees can identify themselves as a member of one or more groups.

Vancity surveys its employees annually, explains Annika Loftstrand, Manager of Attraction and Recruitment.

From these surveys, companies can identify areas for improvement. Goal setting is

another common thread.

"We've put in goals for 2010," says April Taggart, Senior Vice President, Talent Management and Diversity at BMO Financial Group. "We are renewing our focus and making sure that over the next couple of years we are aggressively improving our leadership on diversity."

"We've got a five-year plan in place to increase our diversity numbers," Formusa of Hydro One says.

But none of these plans could work without the commitment of upper management.

"I don't know that you can really make significant progress without having CEO commitment, as well as commitment from senior leaders," Hirji says. "We have a diversity leadership council which is chaired by RBC's CEO, Gord Nixon. We review the goals and the results every quarter, and members of the council are senior leaders from across the company."

Nixon has often spoken publicly about the topic of diversity, further making RBC's

A PROBLEM NAMED IS A PROBLEM SOLVED

Being aware of our hidden biases allows us to slay them

A Toronto consultant selects a new pair of eyeglasses but does not have an updated prescription. The owner of the eyewear store hands him a business card of a local optometrist where he can get his eyes tested. The consultant goes home and looks at the plain, unimpressive business card, reading the name “Abdeiso Kiyanfar.” He hesitates at calling the number on the card and is momentarily uncertain about the recommendation.

In the consultant’s head, a brief image of a musty, disorganized office emerges with an older man whose language and professional skills probably reflect the state of his office. The consultant eventually recognizes that he’s prejudging another professional, pushes through his hesitation and calls the number on the card to make an appointment.

This true story has some interesting plot twists.

First of all, the consultant in the story is a seasoned veteran in diversity and anti-discrimination issues. Secondly, his ethnicity is South Asian. The third interesting fact about the consultant in the story is that he was, in fact, me. As embarrassed as I am to own up to this, I have to admit further that this situation took place only last year.

I share this story because in its subtlety there are some deep lessons about diversity and inclusion. To start with, I am absolutely certain that if that very “plain, unimpressive” business card had said “Steven Wright” or “Jennifer Maxwell” or some other Anglo-Judeo-Christian-Western-European name, I would not have hesitated. As brief as it was, it is my hesitation that is the issue.

Harvard University’s Project Implicit would describe this hesitation — this first negative association with a “foreign-sounding” name—as my implicit, or invisible, bias. Growing up in the context of North America, I have been socialized to trust and value the opinions, decisions, and lives of white people—specifically those of Western European roots and of Judeo-Christian tradition—above and beyond any other groups of people. In fact, all of us in the North American mainstream have, whether we know it or not.

According to Dr. Mahzarin Banaji from Project Implicit, our implicit bias exists not on a conscious thinking level, but entirely on a subconscious, emotional level.

And study after study demonstrates that our implicit bias accurately predicts behavior.

If we are not vigilant in our self-examination and on the lookout for our subtle bias, we can easily mask it through rationalizations and excuses.

“The business card looks unimpressive—I’ll look for someone else.”

Or, we hesitatingly step into an interaction with low expectations and limited hope, ready to step out or chastise or criticize at the slightest misstep on the other person’s part.

“I’ll call this optometrist but as soon as his poor professionalism shows itself, I’ll look for someone else.”

And what we look for, we frequently find. Neuroscience research demonstrates, for example, that our low expectations can actually evoke awkwardness and mistakes in others.

In mainstream North America, there is a general acceptance that discrimination against minority groups is a bad thing. Which is why I chose to put myself squarely into the story, revealing something as subtle as a hesitation. We all carry implicit bias and it plays out on a daily basis in automatic ways, just below the radar of our consciousness. It’s just that most of us do not name the silent ways in which we rationalize, excuse, or make invisible our little “hesitations.”

And research clearly demonstrates that our ability to act in a fair manner is threatened if we continue to let our powerful invisible bias exist in automatic pilot. As Dr. Banaji states, “The best of intentions do not and cannot override the unfolding of unconscious processes...”

Now, when we have a group of us who share the same background and hold positions of power, then the impact of implicit bias is compounded. Looking at Canadian society in which white people still occupy positions of power in all major societal institutions, this implicit bias is compounded and creates barriers for minority communities. This implicit bias, coupled with institutional power, results in what we in the field refer to as systemic discrimination, otherwise known as racism. Or sexism, when we look at the political and economic barriers faced by women.

Racism. Sexism. Discrimination. Volatile, ugly words, I know, and ones that nobody wants associated with themselves or their workplace. But these concepts must be brought into the discussion regarding the business case for “diversity”; otherwise

position clear.

Corus Entertainment offers the Corus Women in Leadership program to women in management, which is attended by the Chair, President, and CEO of Corus, according to Tracy Ewing, Vice-President of Communications for Corus.

Diversity as a visible part of a company’s policy makes a significant difference.

“We find candidates will come to us and say, ‘You’re really serious about having opportunities for everybody,’” Hirji says. “It’s a recruitment tool as well, where people are saying, ‘You’re putting your money where your mouth is. You’re serious about this.

You’re willing to go public about this.”

Formosa finds the same thing at Hydro One. “If your policies are fair and you’re interested in diversity, you’re going to be attracting people from diverse backgrounds,” she says.

Vrooman, who started at Vancity in September 2007, found that the reputation of the firm was a driving factor in accepting her position.

“Vancity is an organization that has been a leader in terms of trying to be inclusive and connected to the communities it serves,” she says. “It’s absolutely key to recruitment for everyone from our frontline

services staff right up to our CEO. It was important that I was walking into a culture that was open to the idea of a woman CEO.”

Diversity recruitment also includes proactive measures to ensure that the company attracts applications from the full spectrum of candidates.

“We do targeted advertising,” Loftstrand of Vancity says. “We held our own career fair in September and we had 600 people attend. We proactively sent ads out in the mainstream media, to immigrant services associations, ethnic newspapers, groups supporting or representing people with

we are candy-coating the issue.

As the saying goes, “A problem named is a problem solved.” Successful businesses have always known this, being effective at finding and naming the gaps and addressing them with creative solutions.

Not addressing the issues retains the status quo. We now have at least three decades of studies and research and reports that demonstrate that barriers exist. A recent addition to this list, a 2005 report published by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, compares census data from 1996 and 2001 and demonstrates that:

- Racialized and immigrant people had on average 12 to 13 per cent lower after-tax income than their whiter counterparts. The gap is even greater for racialized women.
- Racialized and immigrant people had higher rates of unemployment, regardless if they are high school or university educated.
- Internationally trained professionals—75 per cent of whom are racialized—are a profoundly wasted resource, with billions of dollars of economic loss to Canada because of our inability to convert and accredit their education and experience. This is the foreign-doctor-who-drives-taxicab phenomenon.

This is nothing new. But again, this is the reason we talk about “diversity” in the first place; it has to be about more than simply competitive advantage, securing new markets in a globalized economy, or about addressing worker shortages.

April Taggart from BMO does a great job [see article at www.corporateknights.ca] in laying out the business case for diversity. One thing that stood out for me is that she continually coupled the word “diversity”

disabilities, aboriginal groups, and employment resource centres.”

Starting at the point of first contact—high schools and universities—is also helpful.

“Hydro One does a lot of work with high school programs to interest both men and women in professions in our industry,” Formusa says. Hydro One is also in the planning phase of launching an Aboriginal outreach program.

Since most companies have federally regulated targets for their general employee pool, which has already reached a representative level of diversity, companies are finding that when they hire internally for

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with “inclusive workplace.”

Bingo. This is the paradigm shift regarding workplace effectiveness that I am most interested in: moving beyond diversity to creating inclusive environments, where people really feel like they matter and belong. Fostering a sensibility in our service climates where our differences, in the myriad of forms that they come in, are truly valued and welcomed. Such inclusive, welcoming approaches are also keys to business success.

As Daniel Goleman’s seminal work in the field of emotional intelligence reveals, service climates alone can predict high-versus low-profit and growth companies. An algorithm has even been developed: every one per cent improvement in service climate results in a two per cent increase in revenue.

From my experience, approaches that are “colour-blind” and ignore differences, that create tokenism, or perpetuate ideas that “our organization does NOT have bias,” are all enemies of inclusive environments. We need leadership that nurtures work contexts in which implicit bias is challenged on personal, interpersonal, management, and policy levels.

Returning to the story at the beginning,

executive positions—and the Top 10 firms we talked to do so—the candidate list is inclusive. Then, it becomes a matter of finding the best person for the job.

“We truly can go out and say we’re going to take the right person,” says Tom Goldie, Vice-President of Corporate Services for Hydro One. “And many times, that is a woman or a visible minority. It’s taken care of itself because we’ve created the culture in the organization where we attract people with that type of background to work here.”

Hirji agrees: “If we have multiple candidates who have all of the required techni-

I went to back to Abdeiso’s office and experienced a highly skilled professional in his mid-30s who gave terrific health advice and with whom I had a great deal in common. Regardless of whether this had been a pleasant or unpleasant experience—whether it lived up to my implicit stereotype—I was pleased that once again, I had broken through the “hesitation,” unlearning a little more of the bias I’ve absorbed. I brought my bias from the subconscious realm into the conscious, thinking part of my mind. I now have more control over it. I will never be entirely bias-free as it is a lifetime of unlearning. I will, however, get better at spotting it and ensuring impact fairness of my decisions and actions.

Similarly, our workplaces will never be bias-free. We can, however, work damn hard to continually monitor the bias—individually, collectively—and create environments that are healthy, vibrant, and inclusive.

As leaders and managers, especially, we need to ask ourselves the uncomfortable questions. It first starts by recognizing all those places where we hesitate. **CK**

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cal skills, we then look at things like our marketplace. It may be advantageous for us to have somebody that spoke another language that was reflective of the market, or somebody that has good relationships in communities who could attract talent from those markets. So it’s very much driven by our business needs.”

David Galloway, Chair of BMO’s Board of Directors, says that BMO uses recruiters to ensure that it is exposed to all possible board candidates.

“We tend to use recruiters much more than we used to, so that it’s not just asking people on the board who they know.”





“*I think all companies that are reflective of their communities are going to be seen as more of a ‘corporate knight.’*”
—Laura Formusa, CEO, Hydro One

Galloway says that when searching for board nominees, BMO directs recruiters to make certain the shortlist is diverse.

“Then [board diversity] just happens naturally.”

Anne Fawcett, a partner with executive search firm Caldwell Partners, says that the demand for diverse candidates is “very real.”

“We absolutely are experiencing it,” she says. “It really is reminiscent of [20 years ago] when people began to pay attention to the fact that there was a big pool of women who were professionals and executives and might be terrific candidates for these roles. We’re finding exactly the same thing now as people try to tap diverse communities.”

Fawcett says that specific recruitment methods are often necessary.

“It’s really about personal outreach, and identifying the leaders in these diverse communities,” she explains. “There’s always a leadership group in any community. It’s about tapping into those communities and seeking advice and recommendations, and appearing in their media.”

While Caldwell does not have headhunters who are assigned to specific communities, Fawcett says that a diversity focus is included in each candidate search.

Search firm Hewitt Associates, on the other hand, employs diversity sourcing specialists to attract diverse candidates.

“We advise clients to take a look at candidates based on the qualifications for executive positions, and seeing the cultural aspect as something separate,” says Suzanne McFarlane, a diversity sourcing specialist in the Toronto office.

“We have connections with different agencies and organizations that service communities and protected groups to ensure that the message is getting out that we’re not just looking for everyone, we’re ‘looking for you!’” she says. “Employers who are interested in infiltrating the ranks in these communities need to start stepping outside of the general recruitment box and look at traditionally untapped labour pools.”

Being flexible within the selection process is equally as important as doing so within

the recruitment process. For example, Loftstrand says that while Vancity has standard interview questions, recruiters are trained to understand that other cultures may answer behavioural questions differently.

“Where there are diverse applicants, we work with hiring managers to understand how a person might answer a question differently based on that diversity,” she explains.

Loftstrand uses the example of a candidate from a collective culture that frowns upon boastfulness.

“Often there are other ways to ask a question—less of an ‘I’, more of a ‘we’. There are other ways to find out what the accomplishment was without pushing a candidate out of their comfort zone, or making the judgment that they don’t have a good answer for that question.”

In the end, the numbers tell how well a company promotes its diverse employees.

“BMO reports diversity data both by hiring decisions and promotional decisions,” Taggart says. “And if we see that it’s skewed or that there are missed opportunities, then we put in place action plans to address that.”

But once a diverse candidate gets to the top, how do companies ensure that they feel like they belong?

The Top 10 use a wide variety of strategies, including mentorship programs, support groups, ombudsmen, sensitivity training, and parenting accommodations such as flextime, paternity, and maternity leaves.

One initiative is RBC’s Diversity Dialogue program, a mentoring program that allows senior management to learn about diversity and inclusion concerns from the front lines.

As well, Hydro One created an award-winning diversity calendar in 2006 with social justice photography group PhotoSensitive. The calendar highlights the various religious and cultural holidays celebrated by Hydro One’s employees.

BMO also supports several “affinity programs” within the company that bring together people with common issues; for example, a program called Envision for employees who are visually impaired.

The overarching framework to ensure an inclusive work environment, though, is the company’s code of conduct, which outlines diversity policies and disciplinary actions. Companies usually require employees to sign these codes annually.

But codes of conduct are not enough if they are just lip service.

LAUNCH

“I think they’re important documents, and they’re there for the employees, senior management, the board, and the public to see,” McLellan says. “But at the end of the day it takes will and leadership to drive that code of conduct through the board, through the senior management, down into the lived reality of companies.”

Overall, a diversity leader believes that including diversity is necessary for any successful company—and takes that responsibility seriously.

“There’s an obligatory role for organizations like Vancity to take the lead and to be an example,” Soo says.

Formusa adds, “I think all companies that are reflective of their communities are going to be seen as more of a ‘corporate knight.’”

HOW TO CLOSE THE GAP

Despite all the evidence of the benefits of diversity, there is still a lingering belief that hiring diverse candidates means hiring less qualified people.

Fawcett says that this simply isn’t true.

“I have never seen a client choose a candidate that wasn’t the best candidate in the group [just] because they were from a diverse community,” she says. “Keep in mind we’re talking about pretty senior roles, where companies have a lot on the line.”

The name of the game is to populate those short lists, work hard to make sure people from diverse backgrounds get a serious crack at those [executive] jobs. And they will win if they are the best person from a credentials point of view.”

Shakil Choudhury, a diversity and leadership consultant and Program Director of Anima Leadership, says that biases such as these often inadvertently creep into decision-making.

“It is our blind spots individually and collectively that create the barriers and create the problems in the first place,” he says. “We unconsciously trap people into boxes by our stereotypes and we need to consciously and literally think outside the box.”

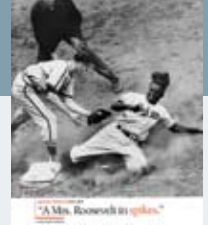
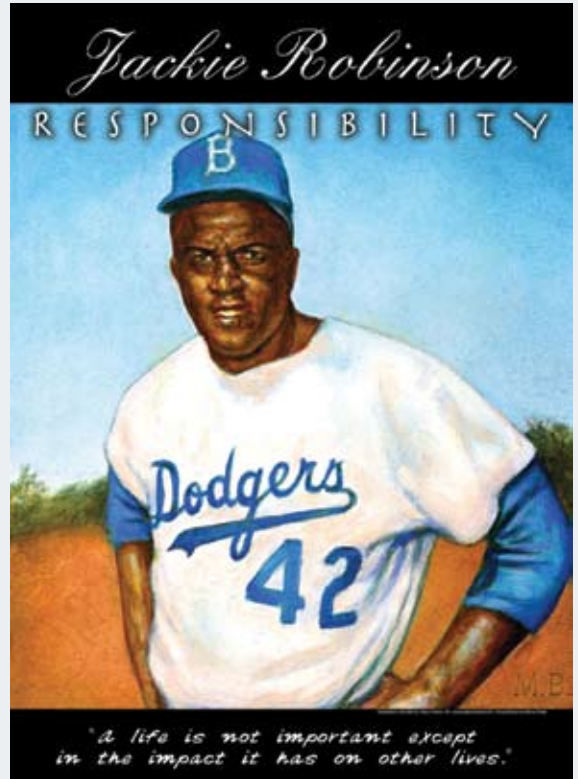
To address diversity, then, is not about reverse discrimination; it’s about addressing a deficit that is created by our collective blind spots.”

McFarlane understands these blinds spots and works to eliminate them. She says that employers may be concerned about hiring diverse candidates, wondering whether they will be fully productive members of their organization.

Before breaking the color barrier in the major leagues in 1947, Jackie Robinson played one year with the Montreal Royals (the Triple-A farm club of the Brooklyn Dodgers), which he led to the Junior World Series Championship.

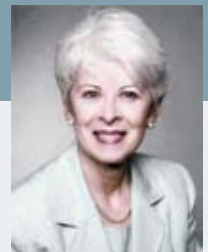
After the final game of the season, the Royals were leaving the ballpark when a crowd spotted them, and they mobbed Robinson.

“It’s probably the only time in history that a white crowd chased a black man down the street with love rather than lynching on their minds.”



PROGRESS

Up until 1989, the venerable Calgary Petroleum Club did not allow women to become full members. Today, venerable bastion for old boys on the oil patch is chaired by a farm girl, Bonnie D. DuPont, who is also Group Vice President, Corporate Resources, Enbridge Inc.



Leadership traits and women that embodied them according to Bonnie DuPont:



HARD WORK
ROBERTA BONDAR
Astronaut



DEDICATION
JEANNE SAUVÉ
Governor General



PERSEVERANCE
EMILY CARR
Artist



“If you want to serve the market, you have to hire the market”

—Zabeen Hirji, Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Bank of Canada



She gives the example of an “internal conversation” an employer might have about a disabled candidate.

“There’s going to be a lot of sick time. I don’t know about these benefits.’ These conversations may impact decisions to hire or to recruit,” she says. “But [for disabled employees,] there’s a higher level of retention, less sick leave, and generally, greater loyalty than the average.”

McFarlane adds that once given the opportunity to excel and thrive in an organization, these findings also hold true for members of visible minority groups.

Companies that fall short of representing their communities may not find it to be a priority from their stakeholders.

At BMO, the demand for diversity on the board of directors comes from within the company as opposed to it coming from

shareholders. “We don’t feel any push from outside at this point in time, but it’s a factor we’re conscious of ourselves,” Galloway says. “We just think it’s good business.”

The onus, then, falls partially upon we, the consumers, to demand change.

“If that metric of diversity is important, and companies are assessed on that metric, and that is publicly known, then I think there’s an aspect of transparency and accountability there,” McLellan says.

Essentially, what gets measured gets done.

Using an analogy from her findings for the Liberal Party’s task force on women and gender balance in politics, McLellan says that a company’s commitment needs to be visible and tangible.

“You need your leader and the party to make a commitment to a target,” she says.

“Because if you just keep saying ‘we’ll do our best,’ then I’m not sure a lot happens.”

Soo frames the challenge to boardrooms and executive suites as: “How do you grow an organization that is truly felt to be owned by the people who work in it and do business with it and are members of it?”

And demand for diversity is increasing all the time, as companies become more and more attuned to the economic reasons for increasing diversity, according to Fawcett.

“It’s because people understand how important it is for the whole public to relate to your business,” she says. “And a major way they relate to it is by the people who are serving them. People do pay attention to what the faces look like in the annual reports. And what’s really reinforced that, and accelerated the demand, is the war for talent.”

But there is something to be said for being unreasonably committed to rigid targets.

“There’s sort of a paradoxical mentality,” Soo cautions. “You want everybody to be treated in a way that is based on individual abilities and contributions, [while] there’s still sensitivity to who’s not at the table.”

But you don’t want to be so wrapped up in the need to have a representative of every colour. You don’t want to end up being like Noah’s Ark, where you’ve got to make sure you have two of each.”

Eventually, the hope is that diversity becomes a natural part of corporate Canada’s landscape, instead of needing to be espoused explicitly.

“It’s like walking into a forest—you just don’t pay attention to the fact that some of them are cedars, and some of them are alders, you just take it for granted. It’s part of the backdrop,” Soo says. “And when people see that, they say, ‘You’re one of us. You’re relevant.’ That’s the key thing to do.”

But the task is far from over.

“We won’t be successful in the future if we’re not constantly paying attention to our communities,” Vrooman says.

Hirji agrees. “Yes, we’ve made progress, but are we there yet? No. We’re not where we want to be—it’s a journey. Which is why we’re continually focusing on diversity,” she says.

We’re not out of the woods yet. **CK**

Melissa Shin is editorial assistant at Corporate Knights.