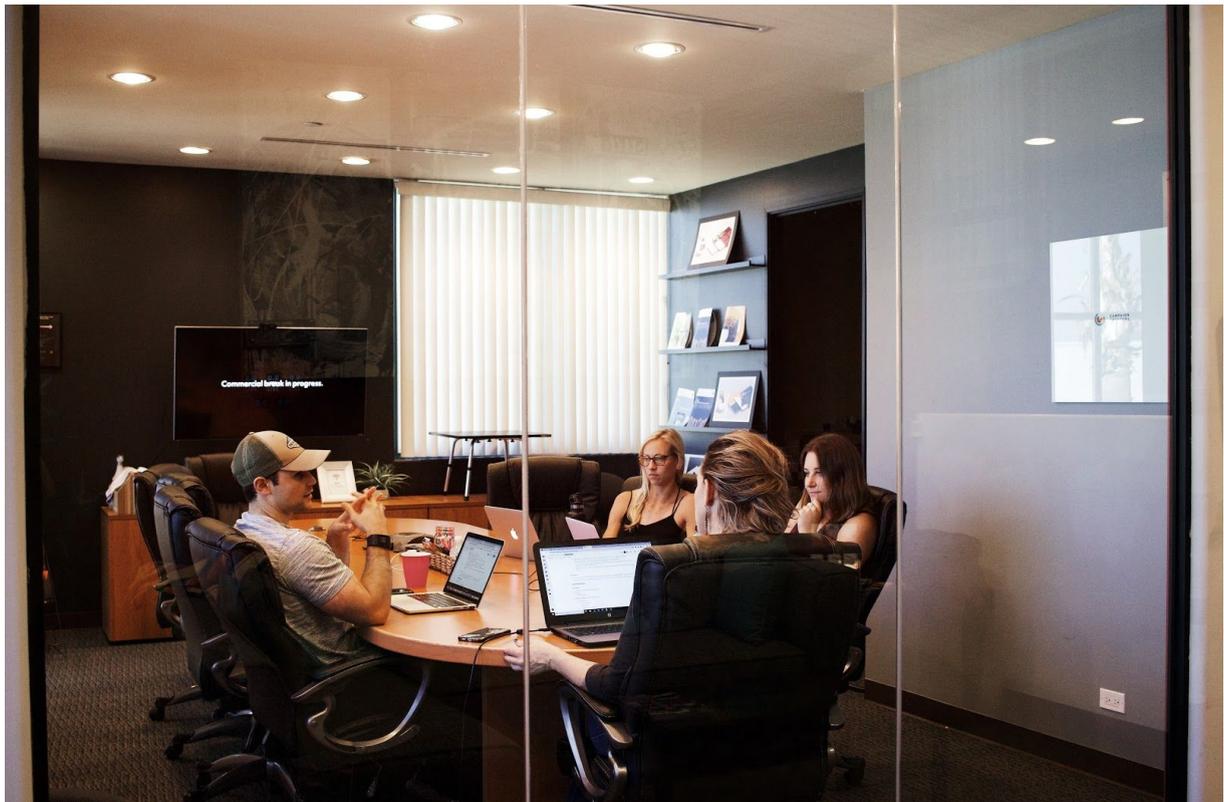


Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

By Eshan Shetty

It's easy to see why men are reluctant to engage in gender equity conversations. But we need to engage men if we want to make progress toward gender equity. On the basis of our research, we find that one of the best ways to bring more men into diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives starts with busting the zero-sum bias that disincentivizes male participation.



By definition, zero-sum situations create winners and losers whose goals are at odds with each other. For zero-sum thinkers, the world is binary: Either I win and you lose, or you win and I lose. Mutually beneficial outcomes are never considered. This thinking — often implicit and automatic — leads to unnecessary division and tension. Examples of the zero-sum bias are all around us, from the debate stage to the negotiation table to the narratives that shape workplace DEI initiatives. When it comes to gender equity, zero-sum bias deters men from even engaging in the conversation because it fuels the belief that men cannot thrive in tandem with women — that they must sacrifice their resources or stature for women to earn a

place at the table. Although zero-sum thinking is invalidated by the data, it pervades the workplace equity narrative.

And without men, DEI efforts will fall short. They are already doing so. From 2019 to 2020 we moved backwards, adding 55 years to the estimated time needed to close the gender gap in economic equality. Research by Pipeline across 4,161 companies in 29 countries shows that for every 10% increase in gender equity, businesses see a 1% to 2% increase in revenue.

We cannot afford to wait centuries for men to fully engage as accomplices and advocates in achieving full gender parity in the workplace, especially at a time when our economic recovery depends on the equitable inclusion of employees. Here are six actions to help organizations overcome the zero-sum bias among male employees, move the needle on matters of equity, and reap the financial upside. Quantify gender equity in terms of economic gains for the company. This will remove the notion of a fixed economic pie and show that improving gender equity expands the pie for everyone. When making the case, bring evidence to show how men benefit when women and people of color are fully and equitably included at all levels of leadership. Research shows that organizations with equitable representation are more successful, profitable, and innovative, which benefits men. These desirable outcomes are facilitated by the increased access to information, greater diversity of networks, and enhanced interpersonal skills that men reap from being part of a more diverse and inclusive organization.

Hold leaders accountable for change by tying DEI metrics to performance reviews. Businesses rely on data to measure progress toward their objectives. That's why implementing a standard DEI scorecard will play a critical role in closing intersectional gender gaps. The scorecard needs to track metrics at every stage of the employee lifecycle and on every step of the corporate ladder. Research shows that men think that other men have a high level of acceptance of sexism — but in reality, most men don't explicitly endorse sexism. This misconception creates a group dynamic whereby men reinforce sexist behavior and zero-sum thinking through conformity. The good news is that often it takes just one man speaking up to change the dynamic. Leadership training that employs a bystander intervention methodology, perspective taking, and self-persuasion activities can also change sexist attitudes tied to zero-sum perspectives.

Establish cross-gender professional relationships. Positive social interactions in a

professional setting that emphasize learning, self-awareness, personal growth, and collaboration breaks down stereotypes, prejudice, and zero-sum bias. Mentoring relationships can be especially powerful bridges to positive interaction. The best mentorships promote both personal and professional growth for the mentee and the mentor alike. This interpersonal bond can be attributed to the mere exposure effect: When we spend more time with people, we grow to like them and break down previous social barriers such as faulty zero-sum thinking.

Frame, focus, and integrate interventions into core business outcomes and mission. Too often DEI initiatives focus on telling those in the majority what they should not do in relation to underrepresented groups as part of broad mandatory compliance oriented training.

Link to Article:

- <https://hbr.org/2020/12/gender-equity-is-not-zero-sum>