

When hiring top executives, competencies should be the focus regardless of gender.

That's happening more frequently in parts of the world, but not everywhere, even after years of progress, with more women in the workplace, or the greater employment of women and men's acceptance of this.

Advances have come in Canada and the U.S. But more can be done. While women make up 45% of the labor force there, they hold only 25% of senior management positions, 19.2% of boardroom seats and 4.8% of CEOs roles. Men still lead and are in line for promotions, meaning that for the next few years, at least, they will continue to hold the top posts.

In Latin America, things are different. Foreign companies are looking for the best talent to run operations regardless of gender. A well-trained woman capable of leading has the same chances for a senior position as a man of equal talent.

Our duty as executive search professionals is to make sure the opportunities are equal for both genders, focusing on competences and nothing else.

More governments are trying to narrow the gender divide. This year, Germany approved a gender quota law for the boardroom, following the lead of Norway, France, Spain, the Netherlands and other countries. Effective in 2016, at least 30% of non-executive members at large companies in Germany must be female.

Companies can do more to provide equal rights by supporting the performance of women through flexible time and parental leave, among other things.

The trouble is that companies still prefer men at the helm. Foreign companies, for example, believe men are better suited to manage difficult territories like the Czech Republic and Russia, says Susanne Doenitz, a managing partner of Alexander Hughes Russia.

Of interest, however, is that women dominate the second and third tiers of management in Russia, where in Soviet Union - times women were dedicated to both their families and work as board members, general directors, engineers and department heads.

Gradually, the business world will place more trust in women, but a lot depends on the willingness – and wisdom – of the male leadership to let women into their inner circle.

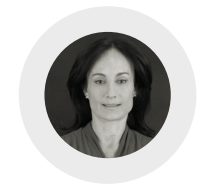
“Smart leaders know that they can either lead the movement toward making profound and lasting impact, or be left behind,” says Deborah Gillis, president and CEO of Catalyst, a research and advisory organization working to change workplaces and improve lives by advancing women into business leadership. “The way of the past is not the way of the future.”

GENDER DIVERSITY



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