

"A more diverse leadership will give us the economic and social advantage we need to succeed in a global economy."

Ratna Omidvar and John Tory, Co-Chairs,
DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project

1 Make diversity a strategic priority

RBC's President & CEO Gordon Nixon recognizes that his public commitment to diversity in leadership both sets the tone and creates the conditions for systemic change. And because the bank also recognizes the business case for diversity, talent management practices that embrace the principles of diversity are integral to how leaders are recruited and cultivated from within.

2 Break out of your comfort zone

YMCA Canada's Scott Haldane recognizes that along with new opportunities diverse leadership will require change. "You can't get there without taking some risk," he says. Now with a more diverse leadership in place, discussion at the senior management and board room tables has evolved as has his own leadership style. "We think differently and more creatively. We're willing to consider new options and try new things."

3 Capitalize on all your networks

Harbourfront Centre took advantage of the more than 450 community-based organizations it works with to reach out to prospective board members. Focusing on one-on-one networking, they asked everyone they knew for recommendations and then created a grid system to assess, track and monitor qualifications.

4 Be proactive through targeted recruitment and cultivation

Even though board appointments are not its responsibility – Cabinet has this role – The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the provincial government, actively recruits qualified candidates from a variety of backgrounds and guides them through the government appointments process. Senior staff and volunteers approach community leaders directly and post positions online and in targeted local media. On a bi-monthly basis they track the progress of applicants.

5 Ensure engagement, not just representation

Family Service Toronto shrunk their board by one-third and increased diverse representation through targeted recruitment strategies using ethnic media and other outlets. Now with a more nimble size, the board is more actively engaged in its own development. By experimenting with new techniques to surface minority opinions, a confidential board self-evaluation survey, and a learning framework for workshops and presentations, the board has increased attendance and engagement.

6 Recognize that there's no quick fix

United Way of Toronto's former President and CEO, Frances Lankin, referred to the process of diversifying their leadership as a "journey that is never over." What started with building a governance structure that is more reflective of the communities they serve, moved next to senior management. Now they are going beyond mere numbers to track skills so that they can reap the most rewards from their diverse leadership.

7 Create a culture of diversity

Scotiabank put measures in place to imbed a culture of diversity within the organization and to address what VP of Leadership Naomi Shaw refers to as "unconscious biases" that may pose obstacles to the hiring and upward mobility of diverse people. As well, the principles of diversity are entrenched through "cross-cultural leadership," a strategy that promotes cross-functional moves at the executive level thereby cultivating respect for a range of ideas and perspectives.

"We think differently and more creatively. We're willing to consider new options and try new things."

Scott Haldane, President & CEO, YMCA Canada

"It does not help to turn one's attention to the issue of leadership diversity only when vacancies arise."

L. Robin Cardozo, President & CEO, Ontario Trillium Foundation

For more on DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project go to: diversecitytoronto.ca.

DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project is a partnership of Maytree and the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance



Maytree promotes equity and prosperity through leadership building.

Catalyzing collective leadership on tough issues and big opportunities facing the Greater Toronto region.

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"It was a matter of making sure that everyone in the firm had equal opportunity and that people were not being overlooked because of language or other barriers."

Michael Bach, National Director of Diversity and Inclusion, KPMG

8 Line up senior internal ambassadors

Group mentoring happens at TD Bank Group through up to eight sessions annually that bring VPs and AVPs together with staff in pre-executive positions. Leadership development is supported through networking, the sharing of personal stories about career progression, and open discussions regarding the challenges and opportunities for visible minorities.

9 Develop the pipeline

At Pitney Bowes, diversity is imbedded in its business development strategy. As part of its strategic talent management program, diversity is a lens used in identifying "high potentials." These leadership prospects are then cultivated through coaching, mentoring and through assignments on high profile national or global projects, as well as through work on advisory boards. The boards convene diverse perspectives and experiences at the director level to build business cases to present to senior management. When leadership gaps require an outside look, search firms are mandated to present a diverse pool of candidates.

10 Count and report on your results

KPMG started with establishing measurable goals and made itself publicly accountable for them by posting to its website and other venues. KPMG is committed to its partnership reflecting 10% visible minorities by 2012 and will achieve this through training and development so that "everyone in the firm has the opportunity to shine," says Michael Bach, the firm's national director of diversity and inclusion.