At Boston Consulting Group (BCG), our purpose is to unlock the potential of those who advance the world. Ours is a business of solving some of the world’s most complex problems and collaborating with our clients to make difficult, high-stakes, sustainable change.

To do that, we need fresh, unique ideas and perspectives, and we need to recruit the most talented individuals from all walks of life and corners of the globe — irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, educational background or career path. It is a simple business imperative that diverse talent should want to join us and thrive in long, successful careers.

We have learned some key lessons on this journey:

**Treat this like you would any other major business imperative**: Investing in a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture is not a “nice to have” — it’s a must do. The CEO owns this agenda with support from his or her leadership team and should make it clear to the rest of the organization that it is not optional. There needs to be a clear and shared case for change, defined timelines and goals, and progress that is relentlessly tracked. As our global people chair, Matt Krentz, says: “I believe that all diversity, including gender diversity, is critical to the success of our business, the impact we are able to achieve for our clients and the satisfaction of our people.”

**Measure the right metrics**: Creating a holistic view of progress over time across key dimensions is crucial. There are four key metrics to measure: recruiting, retention, advancement and leadership representation. In other words, check that you are bringing in diverse talent who are being retained through an inclusive culture.
that rewards all talent equally; check that the talent is advancing into leadership roles; and check that these roles are not concentrated in specific areas of the business (such as human resources).

**Focus on what really works:** Not all interventions are created equal — so focus efforts on what really moves the needle. For example, we have seen in our research on gender diversity that solving for retention requires a concerted effort to improve the sustainability of work, with a particular focus on flexible working. Moreover we see that flexibility — and interventions like parental leave and part-time working — are also highly valued by the next generation of men. What works for women in the workplace, it turns out, works for everyone. When it comes to advancement, sponsorship makes a real difference, and we have set up a program called Segment of One to ensure that BCG’s mid- and senior-level women all have sponsors to support their career advancement. As one of our partners, Alicia Pittman, tells us, “Sponsorship is everything at BCG, and we have a formal sponsorship program in place. I’ve been fortunate to have a really good set of mentors and sponsors who have both supported and pushed me.”

**Invest in your people:** Align the people processes to this agenda. Ensure that decision-making and promotion decisions are bias free and based on hard data. Invest in tailored talent development, trainings and coaching that enable the talent you bring in to thrive and want to stay. We have found from our research that these are relatively small investments that yield significant longer-term returns.

Today, 40 percent of BCG’s staff are women. Women represent 35 percent of our Executive Committee and 20 percent of our global leadership. We are approaching our recruiting goal of 40 percent women in our consulting cohorts, having exceeded 40 percent in many regions. And we are retaining and promoting women and men at equal rates. There is still much more to do, but we have seen real progress, and we know we can reach the goals we aspire to.

[www.bcg.com](http://www.bcg.com)