As a company that seeks to be a trusted partner to its customers in more than 40 countries around the world, MetLife has had a longstanding commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workforce.

I believe one of MetLife's most effective practices in the diversity and inclusion arena is the engagement approach we use across all levels of our organization. It combines clear and consistent direction delivered through formal management structures with active participation by employees at a grassroots level.

Our management commitment begins with the importance I assign to our diversity and inclusion initiatives in my interactions with employees and external stakeholders, as well as my role as chair of MetLife's Global Diversity & Inclusion Council. The council sets annual diversity and inclusion goals for the company and monitors progress toward achieving them at all levels of management. It includes senior leaders from all global regions in which we operate.

The benefits MetLife derives from its diversity and inclusion efforts are broad. They help us better attract top performers and build a workforce of engaged employees, understand the needs of our customers and communities, and strengthen our image and brand. Perhaps most compelling, research continues to show that firms with greater leadership diversity deliver higher earnings and better returns than those that lag in this area, making diversity and inclusion a business imperative.

The Council and the regional task forces that support it set our overall direction on diversity and inclusion and ensure accountability throughout the organization.

Our affinity networks, which are made up entirely of volunteers, play a vital role by helping our employees forge the personal and professional connections that create successful and satisfying careers. The networks also support our business goals by helping us build ties to potential customers and strengthening our recruiting efforts.

MetLife sponsors seven Diversity Business Resource Networks that operate through 43 chapters around the world. More than 20,000 of our employees are engaged with these networks, which connect women; families; those with diverse abilities; military veterans; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals; and multicultural and rising professionals. Through their participation, employees learn from each other's experiences and access professional development opportunities while also
supporting the communities in which we operate.

Another of our most effective practices has been our focus on preparing women to assume leadership responsibilities.

Our main vehicles for this are our Global Women’s Initiative (GWI) and our Global Leadership Development Program. The goal of GWI is to shape MetLife’s culture in ways that will make us an employer of choice among women. Within GWI we have created a Developing Women’s Career Experience program that gives women the opportunity to develop their skills and access leadership experiences while connecting with leaders throughout the company. Women who have completed the program have reported greater confidence in their ability to achieve their leadership aspirations and career goals. Last year, graduates of the program won promotions to the vice president level at three times the rate of our general employee population. We have also been seeing growth in the number of women in our officer ranks, both overall and among new officers.

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