



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

Success stories

Capgemini Canada

A Canadian case study in diversity and inclusion

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Capgemini Canada: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

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Thanks to Maria Zambakkides, Service Line Delivery Leader, Capgemini Canada, for talking to us.

Using diversity to transform and innovate: leadership development for women

A multinational consulting firm in 40 countries and headquartered in France, Capgemini Group is a leader in technology and professional services, helping businesses transform to improve their performance and competitive positioning. The company has built diversity and inclusion into its corporate responsibility policy with a commitment to a workplace culture that encourages diversity in leadership development. **Isabelle Roux-Chenu**, Group Lead in France for Women@Capgemini, the global initiative that sets the overarching guidelines for gender diversity across Capgemini, explains the company's view on women in leadership. "In today's world it is a business imperative to address the issue of gender balance. We need to reflect the world we live in."

For Capgemini Canada, diversity and inclusion, and Women LEAD, the North American chapter of Women@Capgemini, is led in the U.S. from Houston, Texas, by Janet Pope, North America Corporate Responsibility Leader. Women at Capgemini's four Canadian offices in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver come together with their American counterparts to advance their careers through the Women's Leadership Development Program, a structured, ongoing leadership development program designed to accelerate high performing women at the manager, senior manager and principal levels.

We talked with Maria Zambakkides, one of the program's four sponsors, about what makes the program so successful. Her experience is personal; she was a manager with one of the program's first groups when it piloted in 2007 and the opportunities that opened up for her through the initiative helped her advance to a principal role with the North American service line delivery group.

Designing career advancement for women

Gender diversity is a **business priority** at Capgemini. The Women's Leadership Development Program was developed in 2007 by two executives, women who had achieved success at the company, who identified a need for gender-specific training for other women to grow in their

careers. They wanted to develop an initiative that would focus on skills development and pair up participants with mentors who could progress women along their trajectory.

The program was developed with two goals: to help women move towards leadership positions by providing learning opportunities from experts in the field, and to increase retention and attract high-potential women to the firm. The benefits to women include valuable training and exposure to leadership which open up opportunities for advancing their careers. For Capgemini, the program has helped to identify and promote talent – in fact, half of the participants have been promoted since the program’s start. Participants are selected based on performance, with candidates recommended by leadership through a formal nomination process.

Each participant is assigned an executive sponsor in a mentor role to support the women in their development on an on-going basis. The backing of leadership for the program has clearly contributed to its success. Randy Cozzens, North America Sales & Markets Leader at Capgemini, is part of the executive leadership team and executive sponsor for the Women’s Leadership Development program – and one of Maria’s mentors. As Maria put it, “A key part of the program’s success is the leadership support. Without committed top-down backing, the opportunities for the participants wouldn’t materialize.” Everyone involved gives their time to run the programs.

Capgemini’s commitment to be a diverse organization is to attract the top talent. Their [Diversity & Inclusion Charter](#) states that the company “...integrates diversity and inclusion principles into business systems and activities based on five key drivers: workplace, workforce, marketplace, community, and executive engagement.” Capgemini believes diversity is key to staying ahead of the curve, and promotes diversity of thought for a corporate culture where innovation can flourish.

Paving a path for women to succeed

The Women’s Leadership Development Program was designed with learning activities spaced four to eight weeks apart to allow time for participants to work on assignments and lessons. The sessions – Executive Presence, Leading Relationships and Executive Edge – are facilitated by the sponsors with external experts invited in to support the women in developing their leadership plans and provide training and feedback that will help the women to achieve their goals. Two trusted organizations that Capgemini partners with to run the training sessions are VoicePro and Image Dynamics.

Throughout the program, the women work on presentations they will deliver, on topics selected to be relevant to their goals and the business. At the end of these sessions, participants present their final assignment to Capgemini leadership.

The Executive Presence session

This first session covers developing and practicing presentation skills. Participants present to the group and their presentations are recorded so they can watch themselves afterwards to improve their skills with feedback from the facilitation team. The women have many opportunities to ask questions throughout so they can keep incorporating the feedback into their presentations.

This session also shows the women how to identify and achieve on goals to develop their own leadership plan with a risk assessment. The facilitation team brings in third-party subject specialists to help participants pull together the pieces for their plans.

The next part of this session, *Take Control of Your Career*, gives women a better understanding of the company's promotion process, especially as they move into more senior roles which have more complexity around advancement.

Leading Relationships

This session is about skills development around relationship awareness – understanding behaviours, and learning how to address the kinds of situations and conversations that come with more senior roles.

This part of the program includes 360° feedback. Women are given a survey well in advance of this session to distribute among a group of no more than 25 people they work with, which can include clients, managers or leaders, peers and team members reporting to them. Feedback is gathered and compiled in individual reports by the facilitators who review the results one-on-one with each participant. For Maria, this part of the session was particularly valuable; she still appreciates her own report and refers back to it occasionally to check that she's continuously focused on evolution, growth and development and not falling back into old habits.

The Executive Edge

This final session focuses on personal branding – defined as how women want people to think of them – and critical conversations, those most challenging in the workplace and with clients.

The session also includes the final presentation that participants have been working on throughout the program. Women will have been divided into groups by subject area and this is their opportunity to present to their sponsors. When sponsors invite other leaders, these presentations have a valuable platform for exposure with an audience that can directly impact participants' futures.

The business case for diversity

Maria described the biggest change that the Women's Leadership Development Program has brought has been in awareness. Capgemini sees inclusion as a journey for the organization; it has developed gradually, with a growing awareness among employees for the value of diversity and inclusion in everything the company does. People within the organization are more aware that diversity has many meanings and understand that Capgemini needs diversity to assess markets and be on top of market trends.

Capgemini recognizes diversity of thought as a strategic imperative, contributing to continued success for the company, and for its clients. Diversity of thought has given the business a competitive edge. When Maria described why diversity matters at Capgemini, she explained, "Our world and markets continue to change and in order to attract and retain top diverse talent,

companies need to be diverse.” And it matters to finding and retaining top talent. She continued, “The younger generations are coming into the corporate world more socially aware of that. When they’re looking for companies to work for, I believe they’re considering the makeup of that organization. Is it a diverse organization? Am I going to have an opportunity to provide my insight, my ideas?” Maria considers it important for employers to be able to offer that promise.

Tactics that made a difference

For other organizations looking to build a similar program, Maria offered three tactics that worked for Capgemini, based on her experience with the Women’s Leadership Development program.

Determine your definition

Each organization needs to define what diversity and inclusion means to it. This involves finding common ground to come up with a characterization that fits the organization uniquely, and making sure that everyone is in agreement on its definition.

In this case study series, we continue to see how successful diversity and inclusion strategies integrate diversity into their core values, as Capgemini integrates it into **value for freedom**. Diversity touches all parts of the business and the diversity of employees is valued for contributing to the company’s diversity of thought, which has become a powerful driver for innovation, for maintaining a competitive edge and for being on-trend in the marketplace.

Win leadership buy-in

Capgemini’s executives have led how the company defines what diversity and inclusion means to it globally, while giving it room to be regionally relevant. The company believes that diversity should have personal meaning for leaders, which translates to programming that appeals to them, winning their support. Without leadership buy-in, Maria explained, the chances of success are slim. “It’s very difficult to build diversity from the bottom up. Having the support from our executive leadership team has enabled Capgemini to make significant progress in a more diverse and inclusive workforce.”

For those not in leadership wanting to start diversity initiatives, Maria recommends market research to see what others are doing and investing the time and effort to study what’s happening in the global market, the organization’s sector and particularly in the competitive set. She suggested that when the competition is invested in diversity, that’s probably an excellent reason for an organization to be looking into it.

Develop programming

Maria recommends searching out people within the organization who truly have passion for what makes the organization diverse, and working together to come up with ideas for programs and focus launching with just one or two of them.

To find those within who are passionate about diversity, Maria suggests looking to the people who show up and contribute to the conversation at town halls, in newsletters and whatever forums an organization has where diversity is discussed. Explain how people at all levels can get involved and make it appealing and inviting for others to contribute. Keeping it simple will encourage more people to participate.

Moving women in leadership forward for the next generation

Beyond its immediate impact, Capgemini's Women's Leadership Development Program is particularly relevant at the moment, with so much attention globally, and in Canada, on women's leadership in executive ranks and boardrooms, and on building opportunity for the next generation of women. This program opens doors for high potential women, as they expand their networks outside existing teams to connect with peers and leaders across North America.

Capgemini has been cultivating community around women's advancement beyond its offices by reaching out to clients, inviting their female executives in to speak to about their experiences and challenges, and how they met and overcame them.

While the company's commitment to diversity is valuable to talent hiring and retention, it has gone further and contributed to innovation and bottom-line performance. Championing diversity among the company's executives through their participation in leadership development for women has enriched innovation for Capgemini as well as for its clients and has given the company a competitive advantage in talent and markets.

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The Success story initiative

There is astonishingly little published that shines a light on diversity and inclusion successes in Canada, though there are many, across a wide range of organizations. Case studies referenced by trainers and leadership tend to be reporting on different countries, cultures, political and economic settings.

The goal of this initiative is to support diversity and inclusion leadership with stories that are relevant to what's happening now, here in Canada. By sharing their stories, we celebrate the successes of Canadian organizations while contributing to learning for everyone that cares about diversity and inclusion.

The employers who have developed initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion as priorities in the workplace are responding to an increasingly competitive economy that's responsive to the diversity of employees – and the country. We are grateful to those who have participated in interviews.

This series of case studies will be published monthly through 2016. Subscribing to our monthly newsletter at ccdi.ca will keep you updated with the latest case studies, which will all be posted online at ccdi.ca/successstories. For more information, contact mail@ccdi.ca.

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

The CCDI has a mission to help the organizations we work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle. Through the research, reports and toolkits we develop and our workshops, events and workplace consultations, we're helping Canadian employers understand their diversity, plan for it and create inclusion.

CCDI's leadership has a proven model that's cultivated trust as an impartial third party. Our expertise is focused on the topics of inclusion that are relevant in Canada now and the regional differences that shape diversity.

A charitable organization that thinks like a business, we have created a niche with our innovative research technology and data analysis that brings a deeper understanding of Canadian diversity demographics and mindsets at any given moment.

CCDI is grateful for the support of Employer Partners across Canada. For enquiries, contact Susan Rogers, Chief Client Officer, Susan.Rogers@ccdi.ca or (416) 968-6520, ext 103.

CCDI is grateful for the ongoing support of our Founding Partners:

