



# Privately Speaking

Insights on private company growth  
from private company insiders

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## Harnessing the power of diversity

*A diverse workplace and a diverse leadership team can be key to attracting top talent and driving sustainable revenue growth. In this edition of Privately Speaking, we explore some of the challenges and opportunities facing private companies as they strive to encourage diversity, support gender inclusivity, and create a more empowering workplace.*

### Diversity matters!

Given the current war for talent and ideas, private companies are increasingly focused on ramping up their efforts to drive diversity and inclusion. The smartest private companies see diversity and inclusion not only as a way to increase their talent pool but also as a path to new, different and innovative ideas and influences.

The value of diversity within private company workforces and leadership is clear. Consider this:

- Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians.<sup>1</sup>
- Workplace diversity is vital to good business and can yield a significant positive impact for the global economy.<sup>2</sup>
- Opening corporate doors wide to women correlates to higher staff performance and innovation.<sup>3</sup>

### Moving towards a supportive environment

According to a recent national survey of more than 2,000 female corporate managers and directors conducted by KPMG, most companies are moving in the right direction on the gender equality agenda.



say their company supports women in leadership



say their company culture allows women to succeed



Women are on the right path—things have improved significantly with an increase in women role models and examples on which to base their own success.

—KPMG Women's Leadership Study respondent



<sup>1</sup>Source: McKinsey & Company web site, "Why diversity matters" (January 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Source: Workforce Opportunity Services web site, "Four Ways Companies Can Foster Gender-Inclusivity in the Workplace" (August 23, 2018).

<sup>3</sup>Source: Workforce Opportunity Services web site, "Four Ways Companies Can Foster Gender-Inclusivity in the Workplace" (August 23, 2018).

However, our survey also finds women are reluctant to take the types of risks that catalyze career growth.



believe that people who take more career risks progress faster than others



are open to taking the bigger risks associated with career development

“The vast majority of respondents believe their companies empower women in the workplace. And that is great news. Our hope is that—with this support structure in place—more women will take the leap and pursue bigger risks knowing the potential rewards for themselves, their organization, and future generations of women.”

—**Brian Hughes**,  
National Private Markets Group Leader and  
Venture Capital Coleader, KPMG LLP

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### Encouraging risk taking

Women recognize the benefits of taking greater risks in their careers.



say it has helped them be more confident in their abilities



say it has allowed them to gain a whole new set of skills



say it has helped them build respect among colleagues

“Organizations can do better at [helping women understand] the unwritten rules of where the opportunities lie...and the right risks to take.”

—KPMG Women’s Leadership  
Study respondent

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It seems that most women are deeply concerned about how failure might be perceived by others.



are worried about looking like they don’t know as much as they should



are worried about being ignored or not taken seriously

“People do not know you have failed unless you act as though you have failed. Women wear it and reinforce the belief that they have failed and hand the victory to everyone around them.”

—KPMG Women’s Leadership  
Study respondent

”

“Women may benefit by taking more risks over the course of their careers, but they can’t go it alone. Organizations must provide supportive structures including inclusive and diverse workplaces, professional development, and mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, all of which set up women to achieve, thrive, and reach the highest levels.”

—**Michele Meyer-Shipp**,  
Chief Diversity Officer, KPMG LLP

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## Creating a supportive environment



How can your organization encourage women to engage in greater risk taking? Our survey suggests there are six actions companies could be taking:

- 1 Offering more training opportunities
- 2 Encouraging mentorship
- 3 Encouraging managers to support risk taking
- 4 Offering more flexibility that allows employees to take a risk without it being all consuming
- 5 Helping employees to develop a trusted group of professional or career advisers
- 6 Offering more flexibility that allows employees to have control/predictability of schedule.



In today's fast-paced business environment, diverse thinking is key to success. Private companies should be focusing on encouraging greater diversity—not only in their workforces but also in their leadership and boards.

**Michelle Wroan,**  
National Media Sector Lead, KPMG LLP



### Encouraging confidence

As private market companies seek to diversify their workforce and leadership, many women are looking for opportunities to be more proactive in assuming greater leadership roles.

Clearly, it requires supportive corporate policies and cultures. But, it also requires women and other diverse employees to be more confident in their capabilities and potential. Success in business correlates as much with confidence as it does with competence.

So how can women act with more confidence?

- 1 Make a conscious effort to ask for what you want. This requires being clear about your true motivations, wants, and needs. Such self-knowledge is the foundation for confidence and greater assertiveness.
- 2 Be aware of the impression you make—particularly your body language and tone of voice. Establish your space, speak in a lower register (which some studies say can increase your sense of confidence and power), and maintain eye contact.
- 3 Speak early, often, and calmly. Even more important—have a point of view; don't just act as a facilitator and don't be afraid to defend your position.
- 4 Take risks. No risk, no reward. We all know this, but fear of failure can sometimes prevent us from taking that critical next step. So, work on your mind-set. Get comfortable with the idea of failure and develop strategies to build credibility so a failure won't derail you.
- 5 Think like an athlete; they face failure every day but quickly learn to recover and move on. They don't just give up. They know that the only true failure is quitting.

## Want to learn more?

Looking for more ways to help women succeed in the workplace? Check out our **2019 KPMG Women's Leadership Study: Risk, Resilience, Reward**.

Download a copy of the full report



## We can help!



Our Private Markets Group professionals understand what it takes to encourage and develop greater diversity in private market companies and boards. In fact, we've worked with companies in multiple industries and across the growth lifecycle to create more balanced governance and more diverse workforces.

Our annual **Women's Leadership Summit** brings together top female leaders from across the business, political, social, and sport worlds to inspire greater advancement and development for women. At the same time, our support of organizations such as WomenCorporateDirectors is helping to drive greater diversity in the boardroom.

**Contact us** to find out more about how KPMG's Private Markets Group can help your organization encourage greater diversity.

## Don't miss a thing

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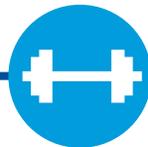
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KPMG's Private Markets Group understands what it takes to drive private company growth. In each edition of **Privately Speaking**, we share our insights—along with practical and actionable tips—to help boards, executives, and management grow, strengthen, and transition their privately held businesses.

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