Workplace relationship that could drive diversity is rare in Canada, study finds

KPMG LLP, Manulife and TD Bank participate in first Canadian study reporting on the effect sponsorship has on the advancement of Indigenous Peoples, people of colour and women in the workplace

Toronto, Ontario, November 14, 2017—Senior leaders in Canada rarely build the mutually beneficial alliance that the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) has termed sponsorship with professionals of any background. Sponsorship, as CTI has found in prior research, is a crucial driver for the advancement of talent around the globe—and it’s missing in Canada. What happens in its place is ad hoc advocacy, mostly for white professionals.

A new study from CTI and bhasin consulting inc. (bcii), Sponsor Effect: Canada, draws a connection between the elusiveness of diversity in Canada’s C-suite and the lack of sponsorship received by high potential employees. The findings come from a nationally-representative survey of 752 university-educated respondents between the ages of 21 and 64 working full-time in white-collar professions in Canada.

Only three percent of people of colour and four percent of white women have sponsors, CTI finds. These numbers are significantly lower than in the US and the UK: Thirteen percent of women and eight percent of people of colour in the US have sponsors. In the UK, 16 percent of women have sponsors.

“Sponsor relationships are a critical tool for both sponsors and their protégés,” says Laura Sherbin, CTI co-president and co-author of the study. “Sponsors are able to cultivate the next generation of leaders at their companies, while building their own legacies. Protégés receive promotions and development opportunities, so they can build careers that leverage their full potential.”

A previous study from CTI called The Sponsor Effect found that professionals in the US who had sponsors were far more likely than those who lacked them to be satisfied with their rates of advancement—what CTI referred to as the “sponsor effect.” For instance, women with sponsors were 19 percent more likely than women who lacked them to be satisfied with their progression. The sponsor effect for people of colour in the US was even more dramatic: With sponsors, high-earning professionals of colour at large corporations were 65 percent more likely than those without sponsors to be satisfied with their rates of progression.
“With sponsorship, people of colour, women and Indigenous Peoples in Canada could be put on a fast track for career progression,” says Julia Taylor Kennedy, executive vice president and director of publications at CTI.

Sponsorship of people of colour and women in Canada could salve the challenge the country faces around a lack of diversity in corporate leadership. According to Statistics Canada, nearly half (46 percent) of Canadians aged 15 and older are projected to be foreign-born or have at least one foreign-born parent by 2031. But, further demographic data from the Canadian government show that this rising diversity is not reflected in senior management positions: only nine percent are held by people of colour, one percent by Indigenous People, and 37 percent by women.

“It's critical that corporate Canada nurture and advance top talent from diverse backgrounds more effectively, and the support sponsorship provides is key,” said Ritu Bhasin, LL.B., MBA, President of bhasin consulting inc. “The much-needed data in this study should signal to Canadian organizations that race, ethno-culture, and gender differences must be valued in talent decisions, and that teaching inclusive sponsorship is a crucial first step towards advancing more diverse talent into senior leadership ranks.”

The study also includes case studies of initiatives from several Canadian companies. These best-practices can be used as guides for leaders wanting to take the first step toward creating cultures of sponsorship at their organizations. Companies like KPMG LLP, Manulife and TD Bank understand the importance of cultivating a sponsorship culture.

“Good intentions to fix the chronically low level of diversity in Canada’s C-Suite is clearly not enough. This research shows that direct, personal sponsorship is critical to the career advancement of our people – and something that has been nearly non-existent for Indigenous Peoples, people of colour and women in Canada.” – Kristine Remedios, National Leader for Inclusion and Diversity at KPMG LLP.

“Manulife is committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workplace where all employees thrive personally and professionally. We see sponsorship as an avenue to ensure diverse talent has both the visibility and opportunity to develop and succeed in the organization.” – Lisa Butler, Chief Talent and Diversity Officer, Manulife.

“At TD, we have a long standing commitment to advancing inclusion and diversity. This report underscores how equal access to sponsorship is a significant component to this commitment, specifically for the development and promotion of diverse talent." – Amy Hanen, Associate Vice President, Inclusion and Diversity.

For more information on Sponsor Effect: Canada, please visit www.talentinnovation.org.
**Gold Sponsors:**
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**Research Sponsors:**
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**Methodology:**

The research consists of a survey; in-person focus groups and Insights In-Depth® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) involving over sixty people; and one-on-one interviews with twenty-four men and women in Canada.

The national survey was conducted online in November 2016 and January 2017 among 752 respondents (396 men and 356 women) between the ages of twenty-one and sixty-four currently employed full time in white-collar occupations, with at least a four-year degree. Data were weighted to be representative of the Canadian population on key demographics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and region).

The survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Center for Talent Innovation, a non-profit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while the Center for Talent Innovation conducted the analysis.

**About the Authors:**

**Ritu Bhasin, LL.B., MBA,** is the President of bhasin consulting inc. Recognized globally for her leadership, diversity, and inclusion expertise, Ritu has delivered leadership training, coaching, and advisory services across sectors since 2010. She has coached hundreds of leaders and professionals to be more culturally competent and inclusive, and has delivered inspiring and engaging keynotes to thousands. Ritu’s book *The Authenticity Principle: Resist Conformity, Embrace Differences, and Transform How You Live, Work, and Lead* was published in fall 2017.

**Laura Sherbin** is co-president at the Center for Talent Innovation and a managing partner at Hewlett Consulting Partners. She is an economist who specializes in the creation of competitive advantage through inclusion and diversity. She taught "Women and Globalization" at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, and is a coauthor of several *Harvard Business Review* articles, *Harvard Business Review* Research Reports and CTI reports. She earned her PhD in economics from American University.

**Julia Taylor Kennedy** is executive vice president and director of publications at the Center for Talent Innovation. She also drives qualitative research at the Center, and advises on digital learning strategy and implementation at Hewlett Consulting Partners. A seasoned writer, producer, and interviewer, Taylor Kennedy has coauthored CTI reports, moderated sessions and hosted podcasts at the United Nations, Carnegie Council for Ethics and International Affairs, The Conference Board, and many others. She has also collaborated with business and gender experts on articles published in Forbes, Time, and academic journals, and has advised
speakers for major platforms like the World Economic Forum and the United Nations. Previously, Taylor Kennedy hosted 51%, a public radio show on gender issues, and reported for NPR and NPR member stations. She earned a journalism degree from Northwestern University and a master of international relations from Yale University.

**About the Center for Talent Innovation:**
The Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) is a New York City–based think tank that focuses on global talent strategies and the retention and acceleration of well-qualified labor across the divides of demographic difference including gender, generation, geography, sexual orientation, and culture. CTI’s research partners now number more than 85 multinational corporations and organizations.

**About bci:**
As a leading global people strategies firm based in Toronto, bci’s mission is to help organizations leverage the leadership and cultural differences in their midst to be more diverse, inclusive, innovative, and successful.

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