

## McKinsey's Mission

An Interview with  
Celia Pohani Huber, Director, McKinsey

**EDITORS' NOTE** Celia Huber is a leader in the firm's North American Healthcare Systems & Services Practice, responsible for merger-management and organization efforts in the sector. Huber joined McKinsey as a business analyst in Texas in 1992. She was elected Partner in 2002 and Director in 2009. She holds an M.B.A. from the Stanford Graduate School of Business and a B.B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin.



Celia Pohani Huber

**COMPANY BRIEF** McKinsey & Company ([mckinsey.com](http://mckinsey.com)) is a global management consulting firm that works with clients to fundamentally improve their performance in a sustainable manner. They bring sector and functional specific insights, experience, and capabilities to make this happen. The firm consults with 80 percent of the world's largest corporations and is considered the most prestigious management consultancy.

### What makes McKinsey so special?

The first thing that makes McKinsey special is that we're a true global partnership and we have every incentive to work together. This sets the right tone for us to work together very naturally.

The second is we have a strong culture of collaboration and a distinct way of partnering with clients, so we put our folks on-site with clients, and we work side by side with clients to solve tough problems, and that fosters the right kind of connections and solutions.

Finally, we create an environment for talented people from all backgrounds. Just under half of our people have M.B.A.s and the rest are from different educational backgrounds – Ph.D.s, J.D.s, M.D.s – and may have been entrepreneurs, surgeons, lawyers, computer scientists, or engineers before they joined McKinsey. This is special because it allows us to draw upon the best talent to serve clients.

On a more personal level, McKinsey has offered me great development opportunities with flexibility to pursue my interests and support my family. Since joining the firm, I've gotten married, had two maternity leaves, and I ran the Pittsburgh location. McKinsey also allowed me to help create a scholarship fund called the Pittsburgh Promise, which we've helped design as a pro bono engagement. Over the years, I have also had other leadership roles and continue to learn and grow every day.

One particularly special aspect of McKinsey for me is my role on a global committee to recommend

candidates for election to Partner. I look at European candidates for Partner and I work with my global colleagues to recommend them for partnership. By doing so, I've learned a lot about how business is done in different places, particularly in Europe and, as a result, I've built a lot of friendships around the globe. It reinforces our culture of collaboration and it's one of the reasons I look forward to each day. It's so interesting to experience how the business world is changing and I appreciate my seat at the global table even though most of my clients are U.S. based.

### Is it critical today that companies mirror the diverse client base within their own workforce?

It is important to have a diverse workforce, particularly for a firm like ours that serves clients in many different industries and countries. We think a lot about how to bring folks in and how to make sure their voices are heard. We need to have consulting teams that reflect the world demographic and bring more than the traditional perspective in order to ensure we're serving our clients well and also to ensure we're attractive to the next generation of the world's top talent.

As we think about recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, it requires commitment and role modeling at the top and comprehensive development programs. As the leader of McKinsey's efforts to support women in the Americas, I work closely with regional office leaders and recruiters to track our progress or problem areas, identify year-on-year improvements, and launch specific efforts to consistently do better in how we recruit the top female talent and how we make sure each woman can succeed and make her own McKinsey. We also focus on women sponsorship to make sure that they have a network of senior partners they can draw upon. Having that support can provide the resilience our research shows can make the difference in women continuing to advance in their careers.

In addition, we continue to update our policies on flexible work arrangements so people can not only feel comfortable here but know McKinsey will work for their lifestyle. In fact, we recently accepted the award as one of *Working Mother's* Top 10 Best Companies. We're working hard to make sure our firm is inclusive and it is terrific to see that recognized.

### How do you maintain this culture at McKinsey's size and scale?

Fundamentally, we think of ourselves as an organization that brings in many new people every year but not into a hierarchy around positions. We operate as a meritocracy, and one of our values is an obligation to dissent. To support that, we try to have, at every level of our firm, a very open conversation about making sure there is space for people to have their voices heard whether it is about how the firm works or the solutions we bring to clients.

We think a lot about unconscious bias and how to train our partners and consultants on how these biases can inhibit full understanding. We value everyone's opinion as we go about problem solving and know that a diverse group of people will have stronger collective intelligence and will make better decisions.

### If you're hiring the best talent, will that just lend itself to a diverse culture or do you need to put metrics around these efforts?

All of our research and my personal experience says that if senior leadership isn't focused on encouraging diversity, then it's much harder. It has to be a priority from the top and then on every level. Since the execution happens throughout the organization, it's important to track metrics so we know what's working, can see trends, and can make adjustments.

We also spend time thinking about how to make McKinsey's environment and our overall value proposition for senior women leaders equally as attractive at year 20 as it was at year two.

We continue to invest in gender equality research for the business community to bring more facts to the debate – examples include our McKinsey Global Institute Power of Parity study this year looking at gender equality globally and the Women in the Workplace study we did with LeanIn.Org on women in corporate America.

### How important is it to maintain the relationships with alumni?

McKinsey is very proud of our more than 30,000 alumni and are committed to keeping that network strong by being a constant resource for them with new content, learning, and networking opportunities.

We are connected by our passion for solving tough challenges, working collaboratively, and contributing to making the world better, and we see this as a mission for all McKinsey people, current and alumni.

For example, we recently finished a research piece called Women in the Workplace, which we did in conjunction with LeanIn.Org and one of our alumni, Sheryl Sandberg. That relationship was an alumni relationship that grew into a partnership. ●