An Unrivaled Place for Talent

**An Interview with Lareina Yee,
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, McKinsey & Company**

EDITORS' NOTE *Lareina Yee is also a member of the global partnership service team, the firm's 16-person leadership team, and the global leader of McKinsey's technology hardware and services practice. She brings 20 years of experience to companies in the technology sector. As a thought leader at McKinsey, she is a sought-after speaker and author on digital disruption, sales growth and technological transformations. Determined to win the war for talent and gender parity,*

Lareina Yee

Yee leads Women in the Workplace, a research partnership with LeanIn.org and The Wall Street Journal. *She also frequently speaks about women in business, including at* Fortune *magazine's Most Powerful Women Summit, the Makers Conference, Techonomy, the Professional Business Women of California Conference, and the Women's Forum. Outside of McKinsey, Yee serves on the board of Safe & Sound, a not-for-profit focused on child-abuse prevention.*
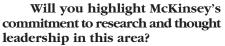
FIRM BRIEF *McKinsey & Company (mckinsey.com) is a global management consulting firm committed to helping institutions in the private, public and social sectors achieve lasting success. With consultants in more than 132 cities in 66 countries, across industries and functions, it brings vast expertise to clients anywhere in the world. McKinsey works closely with teams at all levels of an organization to shape winning strategies, mobilize for change, build capabilities and drive successful execution.*

How do you define the role of a chief diversity and inclusion officer and how do you focus your efforts within McKinsey?

McKinsey, like other companies, has elevated the diversity and inclusion role to one that sits on the executive management team. Other companies have elevated the role as well, underscoring its importance to the strategy and the business. We find that diversity and inclusion is not a nice to-have; it's a must-have for the culture and fabric of an organization.

From a leadership perspective, the idea of putting a senior partner in this role to work with our CEO and our management team is an acknowledgement that it's critical for our culture and our people.

Will you highlight McKinsey's commitment to research and thought leadership in this area?

Thought leadership allows us to learn together with other companies. We're in the cohort with everybody else. We're trying to do better.

The research allows us to understand the state of the state. We look at the common challenges and the solutions that people are applying. We search for the next level thinking that we should be applying to ourselves and to others. That research is really important for us and our clients. Our managing partner once said, "I've been reading what we published, and I want to make sure we're implementing all of it."

Our clients give us a lot of feedback in terms of diverse skills, talent, backgrounds and capabilities that are really important to them. They share how they are evolving and developing more diverse management teams and what their aspirations are.

> **In the end, it's about feeling accepted, included, connected and that you belong to the community and are inspired to be here.**

Internally, we listen to our people and study what inspires them to be at McKinsey. We want to be an unrivaled place for talent. We have to think a lot about how we deliver that experience as things change. Those are the points of inspiration that guide our thoughts on how we execute.

In the end, it's about feeling accepted, included, connected and that you belong to the community and are inspired to be here.

How does diversity relate to inclusion?

Diversity is based on counting the representation of the various groups. Inclusion is based on what their experiences are like. You need representation which is the counting, and you need experience which is the quality of what it feels like to actually be in the organization. You really need both to deliver on the aspiration.

Inclusion can feel nebulous. We've been working on trying to help people make it more concrete and developed an inclusion index. We look at if our people feel connected to those around them and have a sense of belonging. Creating a remarkable experience, not just for a point of time, but over the course of a career, is dependent on inclusion.

What progress has been made in the effort to raise the percentage of women in top-level positions?

Progress has been slow in corporate America. We still see that one in five in a top team across corporate America are women. This pattern has held for the last decade. We see a drop-off to manager, a drop-off to director, and another drop-off to VP. By the time you're all the way at the top, companies on average have 20 to 25 percent women at the level at which they report to the CEO.

I do think that people are more aware of some of the challenges that contribute to those outcomes such as bias, the lack of sponsorship, insufficient work flexibility or too few networks that help women. I think that companies are making strides in thinking through this, but it has to be done consistently; it won't happen if it's just pushed for a quarter or two.

What excited you most about the opportunity to lead McKinsey's diversity and inclusion efforts?

I was really excited to take on the challenge for two reasons. I think that if I can contribute to a more inclusive and gender balanced environment at McKinsey and also help my clients improve, it will be incredibly meaningful.

We also have an incredibly young organization. I think it is the least I can do to help contribute to making the best environment for all of them; to help our next generation reach their full potential and to feel that McKinsey is the place where they belong. ●