

FROM FLOOR TO CEILING



Target's commitment to diversity and inclusion and women's leadership permeates every level of the company, from the mannequins in the store to the CEO's office

BY JACKIE KRENTZMAN



ne day, Target Senior Vice President of Apparel and Accessories Michelle Wlazlo walked into a company store with her 15-year-old daughter. Her daughter saw Target's new mannequins—which ranged from size 4 to size 16—and gasped, “Oh my gosh, look!” She was shocked to see mannequins in different sizes, not just the usual unrealistic body shape that’s seen on a runway or in a fashion magazine.

“Our guest population is diverse,” says Wlazlo. “One way they are diverse is that they come in different shapes and sizes.



Brian Cornell, Chief Executive Officer

So why wouldn't we want to serve them in the best way?”

The mannequins are a distillation of Target's commitment to diversity and inclusion. They represent how Target, which sits at 38th on the 2017 Fortune 500 list, listens to its customers and community base; has a company culture that promotes diversity of thought; and promotes a company-wide shared accountability for diversity and inclusion. Promoting this culture is a CEO who is leading the way to make sure that inclusivity, equity, and diversity are baked into every business decision.

“Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of what we do at Target,” says Chairman and CEO Brian Cornell. “It's not only the right thing to do, but the right business decision—and it's the only way we can deliver on our promise to guests.”

Targeting the community

LAYSHA WARD IS Target's chief external engagement officer. Her job is to develop deep relationships within local communities and make sure that their needs are being met in the stores and also that Target positively impacts these communities.

Target, perhaps more than most national retailers, attracts a broad swath of shoppers, with affordable price points matched by a certain style that appeals to young and old, urban and suburban, all genders and ethnicities, and all body shapes and sizes.

This is no accident. Target is extremely attuned to the local community, says Ward. “With more than 1,800 stores nationwide, we do business in all kinds of neighborhoods, small towns, suburbs, and big cities, and yet no two stores are exactly alike,” she says. “We know we can't use a one-size-fits-all approach if we are going to be successful in serving our local guests. That's why we build relationships with local business and community leaders, residents, and other stakeholders to advance our business objectives and impact in the community.”



Laysha Ward, Chief External Engagement Officer

For example, when Wlazlo's team launched Universal Thread, an apparel line for women of all body types, her team first met with more than a thousand women of different shapes, sizes, heights, and ethnicities to help design the assortment. “These women actually were a feedback loop in the driver of us building that assortment,” Wlazlo says. “We didn't just build it and then say, ‘I hope you like it.’”

Caroline Wanga, Target's chief diversity and inclusion officer, says that reaching out to the community makes good business sense. “We know that in this business landscape people get to choose whether or not they want to engage with us, and they make those decisions with their dollars,” she says. “So in order to continue to be a place where people want to come and spend their money, we have to be connected to who our potential customers are across the board, and in order to stay relevant as a business, we have to be sure these folks are seeing experiences, products, and services that reflect who they are.”

Promoting female leadership

AS WITH MOST clothing retailers, Target has many women in positions of leadership. According to Cornell, about a third of its board and leadership team are women, and almost half of its more than 800 stores are run by women. Altogether, women represent more than 50 percent of the workforce.

The company is proud of these figures, but is not resting on its laurels. “While those numbers are certainly higher than most in the retail industry, there is still much room to improve,” says Cornell.

The quest to increase and strengthen women’s advancement and voice at Target begins with Cornell, who became the CEO in 2014. He has demonstrated a strong commitment to women in leadership. For example, he is cochair, with PepsiCo’s CEO Indra Nooyi, of the Network for Executive Women’s Future Fund, whose mission is to reach gender parity in the retail and consumer goods industry.

Cornell also serves on the board of Catalyst, a leading nonprofit that works

with CEOs to build inclusive workplaces for women and advance women’s leadership opportunities. “True gender parity—50-50 representation at every level of an organization—is an easy number to define, but a much harder one to reach,” says Cornell. “Catalyst knows that’s not enough to bridge the gap. We need to eliminate it completely. So we work with organizations around the globe that recognize they have more work to do in fostering talent and diversity to create a workplace where women have an equal opportunity to succeed.”

Target has implemented some cross-organizational programs. The Women’s Business Council, one example, engages employees through mentorship and career-counseling opportunities. The company also brings in outside speakers through a series called Outer Spaces, designed to spark conversations around topics such as leadership and innovation. Recent guests include marathon swimmer and author Diana Nyad, Oscar-winning actress Viola Davis, and author Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*).

Like most US companies, Target recognizes that women are underrepresented in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. So it has launched Target Women in Science and Technology and the Engineering Management Immersion Program, a 12-month global leadership development program aimed to prepare female engineers for senior engineer management roles. The technology team’s ambitious goal is 50 percent female hires for entry-level engineering jobs in 2018.

“My hope for the future is that our next generation of leaders won’t remember a time when it was unusual to see women in leadership roles in any level,” says Cornell. “And not just at Target—but across the retail industry.”

Shaping company culture

ALONG WITH CONCENTRATING on the customer experience, Target is equally



Caroline Wanga, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

focused on the employee experience—and that relationship is not accidental.

“A company’s culture is an amalgamation of the values and behaviors and how they are brought to life every day to deliver on your purpose and execute your strategy,” says Ward.

Just as Target’s guests come in all different ethnicities, genders, shapes, and sizes, so does its nearly 350,000-person workforce. “We’re committed to maintaining a culture where differences are celebrated, where every team member in every part of the organization feels comfortable and confident in bringing their authentic self to work,” says Cornell.

Target has more than a hundred employee resource groups that connect employees to one another and to the multiple constituencies that serve the company’s guest population.

“A company culture that is aware of, inclusive of, and celebrates differences is going to translate that attitude to its stores and community,” says Wlazlo. “And the community of shoppers also will influence company culture. For example,



Michelle Wlazlo, Senior Vice President of Apparel and Accessories

Empowering women in the workforce

Target Chairman and CEO Brian Cornell has made the development and advancement of women in the workforce a top priority—and it has worked, as women represent 56 percent of employees, 54 percent of managers, 42 percent of the leadership team, and more than a third of the board.

The company's success in empowering women is due to diversity-driven hiring policies, as well as a bevy of internal programs for women, many focused on engaging and advancing women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers. They include Target Women in Science and Technology (TWIST), which fosters connections, inspiration, and knowledge sharing, and Women in Engineering and Science (WEST), which encourages connections within the female tech community and organizations near Target headquarters in Minnesota.

“Diverse perspectives strengthen our teams and our work,” says Mike McNamara, chief information and digital officer at Target. In Target's 2016 Corporate Responsibility Report, he shared, “I'm really proud that over one-third of our engineer hires from college campuses and over one-fifth of our experienced hires this year have been women. Now we are working toward a goal of 50 percent female hires for entry-level engineering roles over the next year. We are off to a good start—50 percent of our 2017 intern class are women.”

Other recent programs devoted to women's advancement include:

Science and Technology Teacher and Girls Days

Every year, Target invites young women from Minneapolis–St. Paul high schools to headquarters to promote the importance of STEM careers.

Grace Hopper Celebration

In 2017, Target was a sponsor of this annual technology conference, the world's largest for women in the field. It drew more than 15,000 participants.

Hack the Gap

Target was a host for the 2017 Hack the Gap, a hackathon for local women working in technology. This multiday event gives women an opportunity to connect and collaborate.

Women in Technology Symposium

In 2016, Target hosted a three-day engineering symposium for more than 50 students at its headquarters. Focused on coding, retail technology, tech trends, and inclusion, it aimed to empower female engineering students and equip them with skills and tools needed for career success as well as to encourage interest in Target's technology opportunities.

we have a company culture that listens to guests, and that translates into things like our full-sized, inclusive Universal Thread line. We are also adding an adaptive and sensory-friendly apparel line for people who are living with disabilities, which allows them to get dressed with more ease.”

The centerpiece of that culture may be the focus on mentoring and sponsorship. The company encourages everyone not only to seek multiple mentors, but also to offer to mentor others. “It's not a hierarchical system either,” says Ward. “For instance, we have team

My hope is that the next generation of leaders won't remember a time when it was unusual to see women in leadership roles at any level. — Brian Cornell, Chairman & CEO

members mentoring peers in other business disciplines, and we have young people mentoring older folks on how to better understand new technologies and generational differences. Everyone has something to teach and something to learn.”

At Target, everyone is responsible and accountable for diversity and inclusion—not just the D&I team. “We have shared accountability across the enterprise,” says Wanga. “We've built a strategy that is not dependent upon any one individual or department to carry everything. We call this our ecosystem model.”

The top 300 leaders in the company have metrics tied to turnover and their diversity and inclusion performance, and these metrics impact their performance and compensation reviews, explains Wanga.

“For example,” she says, “the first team goal I talk about is making sure that there is parity in our hiring of people from underrepresented communities, in comparison to the general population.”

In the end, given that Target and its employees interact with millions of people in the United States (as well as worldwide), the company has a great deal of ability to influence issues such as gender, race, and ethnic equity. It takes that platform seriously.

As Wanga says, “Our ability to impact what diversity and inclusion looks like overall puts us in a really good place to champion these values in society.” **DW**