



## Diversity: The Competitive Edge Part 2 - Attracting and Retaining Women

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While many Canadian women are making great strides in the workplace including those which were once male-dominated, some sectors such as computer science are actually experiencing a decline in female representation. Ryerson University's Diversity Institute recently released a report for the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC) titled Diversity: The Competitive Edge which recommended strategies to address the skills shortage in that sector by effectively harnessing diversity. However, many of these recommendations can assist any organization in attracting and retaining women.

Building on extensive academic and applied research, the report makes the following recommendations on how governments, companies, human resources executives and senior managers can promote full participation by women:

### 1. Socialization and Early Education

Girls need to be encouraged to participate in math and technology courses in the primary grades. Parents, teachers and guidance counsellors also need to be educated on how to inspire girls to take an interest in this area.

### 2. Improve Understanding of Careers in Information Communications Technology (ICT).

The ICT industry needs to take an active role in communicating more effectively. High schools need to have improved counselling about ICT career opportunities and education. ICT in school needs to be more applied, incorporating experiential work to ensure students understand the range and nature of careers in the industry.

### 3. Systemic Action to Improve Participation of Women in Post-Secondary Institutions

The government and post-secondary institutions need to be more responsive to employment trends and the participation of women. They need to track representation of women as students, faculty and administrators in IT and related disciplines to ensure they are able to strengthen and maintain female role models in that sector. Furthermore, classes should reflect required workplace skills, and more opportunities should be given for combined majors and minors in information technology.

### 4. Employers Need to Remove Systemic Barriers to Recruitment

Job descriptions and recruitment strategies need to be aligned with the actual job requirements. Communication skills and general business knowledge need to be reflected in recruitment approaches.

### 5. Employers Need to Provide Better Supports in the Workplace

Parental leave, job-sharing, flexible work arrangements and on-site day care have a significant impact for women in the workplace. Drafting support mentoring, informal networks and career development for women in non-traditional fields are also important.

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