

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **WHITE MEN TWICE AS LIKELY TO VIEW WHITE MALE LEADERS AS EFFECTIVE ON DIVERSITY**

#### ***First-of-its-kind study aims to improve white male leaders' effectiveness***

NEW YORK, January 30, 2013 – White men are twice as likely as women and people of color to view white male leaders as effective in the areas of diversity and inclusion, according to new research issued today by executive development firm Greatheart Leader Labs.

The first-of-its-kind study surveyed 670 leaders from eight major companies on how well white male leaders have embraced diversity and inclusion in their work. Entitled “The Study on White Men Leading Through Diversity and Inclusion” the research explored the perceived effectiveness of white male leaders, and the key role they play in advancing diversity and inclusion.

Asked to rate the diversity effectiveness among white male leaders in their company, only 21 percent of women and people of color gave a positive rating, versus 45 percent of white men. This effectiveness gap identifies important disagreements about the effectiveness of white male leaders.

“At a time when global businesses are investing in diversity and inclusion, the effectiveness gap we’ve identified suggests a challenging consensus,” said research leader and Managing Director of Greatheart Chuck Shelton. “White men have made progress when integrating diversity and inclusion into their leadership work, but there is a lot of room for improvement and no agreement yet on what’s needed to close this gap. We’re working on it.”

The four competencies with the largest average gaps between white men and diverse respondents were: coaching to improve the performance of diverse employees (33 points); building strong, diverse teams (36 points); promoting diverse talent on merit (36 points); and including diverse voices in decision making (40 points).

“The study shows that white men – who make up 58 percent of respondents – are committed to leading through global diversity and inclusion,” Shelton said, “and more than 40 percent of all other respondents – identified in the research as women and men of color and white women – recognize strong progress on diversity among white male executives and managers in their companies.”

## **The Conversation Counts**

When it comes to advancing diversity and inclusion with white male leaders, the study found need for conversations of care, respect, and candor. White men said they bring their own sense of risk to diversity discussions, and their diverse colleagues may wonder if white male inclusion will open doors for everyone or only for white males. Almost 80 percent of all respondents rated white male managers highly on their ability to show respect for diverse coworkers. In contrast, only 36 percent of white male respondents rated white male leaders positively for saying just what needs to be said (candor) among diverse coworkers.

The study also found that the conversation about the role of white men in inclusion requires clear definition and purpose. In fact, even the expression “white men” evokes a contentious social narrative around demographic social change, which has been highlighted by the 2012 election. According to the study, all employees want to know why including white men is important, how everyone will benefit from the learning, and what their organizations will gain by taking inclusion in such an unexpected direction.

Dr. David Thomas, study consultant and Dean of the McDonough School Business at Georgetown University, pointed to a startling data point: “White male leaders in the highest rated companies, who indicated they have at least one close career confidante who is a person of color, were twice as likely to mentor, promote, and sponsor employees of color. So personal connections are crucial: when white male managers and their peers of color build close friendships, the pipeline opens for more diverse talent.”

## **The Power of Perception**

In a sobering challenge, almost 80 percent of respondents who were not white men offered a negative effectiveness rating on key competencies for white men leading in their companies. On the other side of the issue, almost seven out of ten white male leaders affirmed the challenge of exclusion: for a lot of white guys, it’s not clear that diversity includes white men.

One research participant, a woman, reflected: “White guys need to understand how they are perceived, and as they demonstrate their learning, it will change our perception of them.”

“This study suggests that white male leaders put their influence at risk when they habitually ignore this simple fact: Diverse colleagues generally perceive white men *as white men*, whether or not we white guys see that our gender and race could be important to our leadership,” Shelton said.

Shelton recommends that leaders at all levels, rather than ignoring or exaggerating dimensions of diversity, instead lead with due regard for the way diversity operates in their relationships and sphere of influence. That way, a white male leader learns how being white and male can impact his leadership, and he becomes a better leader all around.

### **About the Study**

Companies participating in the study included Alcoa, Bank of America, Egon Zehnder, Exelon, Marsh & McLennan Companies, PepsiCo, Wal-Mart Stores, and others. Available for interviews:

- Chuck Shelton, Study Principal; Managing Director, Greatheart Leader Labs
- Dr. David Thomas, Study Consultant; Dean, McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University
- Selected executives from sponsoring companies

For the Executive Summary and more about the research, go to [whitemensleadershipstudy.com](http://whitemensleadershipstudy.com).

### **About Greatheart Leader Labs**

Greatheart Leader Labs, an executive development company, focuses on equipping white men and their diverse colleagues to grow business through global diversity and inclusion. Chuck Shelton, Managing Director, is the author of *Leadership 101 For White Men*, and since 1987, has delivered leadership development services with 64 organizations. For more, visit [greatheartleaderlabs.com](http://greatheartleaderlabs.com).

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