

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Presentation by Laura Liswood, Speaker & Author of *The Loudest Duck* at Kahilla's Step Up Reach Down and Innovate Forum
March 9, 2021

The myth of meritocracy

Despite proclamations of a meritocratic system, many workplaces simply do not measure up. We all have unconscious bias, beliefs, perspectives, preferences, roles, and associations, all which contribute to unleveling the playing field.

Organizations shouldn't confuse *efforts with outcome*.

In Laura Liswood's book *The Loudest Duck: Moving Beyond Diversity*, Liswood warns against the "Noah's Ark theory of diversity" - feeling accomplished by getting "two of each" into the Ark.

What is the risk of *not doing these things*?

Risk is a strong lever for mobilizing effort. Identify and focus on the risks of homogeneity: reputational risk, institutional investor risk, social media exposure risk, and risk of underperformance. Laura Liswood references Katherine W. Phillips on diversity and decision making:

“Homogeneous groups don't come to better solutions - they're simply convinced that they did. Heterogeneous groups, on the other hand, come to better solutions - they just don't think that's the case.”

While we may not be able to de-bias people, every organization can de-bias its processes.

De-bias the hiring process, promotion structure, and meeting setup. Invest in disaggregated data to measure diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts. Laura Liswood cites the effects of Norway's gender quota legislation and sanctions:

In Norway, gender quotas were extended in 2003 under legislation that required at least 40% women on company boards. Citing Aaron Dhir's work in "Challenging Boardroom Homogeneity":

- Women will tend to look at long-term impacts of board decisions - men tend to look at the short-term.
- Women tend to look at stakeholder impact, men at shareholder impact.

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