

EY Women. Fast forward

**An Interview with Uschi Schreiber,
Global Vice Chair – Markets and Chair of Global Accounts Committee, EY**

EDITORS' NOTE *Uschi Schreiber is a member of the Global Executive at EY, where she leads the organization's global go-to-market and planning operations. She was already a highly successful public sector CEO overseeing large government agencies prior to joining EY in Oceania in 2008. Originally from Germany, Schreiber has lived around the world most of her adult life, and her career has also taken her to posts spanning mature and emerging markets across Europe, Asia, and Australia. Now based in New York City, she is the founder of EY's Worldwide Women Public Sector Leaders Network. She is an advisory board member of the Women in Parliaments Global Forum and a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Government. She is an Executive Fellow of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.*



Uschi Schreiber

FIRM BRIEF *EY (ey.com) is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction, and advisory services. In the Americas, it employs more than 65,000 people across 30 countries and generates US\$12.7 billion in revenues. Globally, EY employs more than 220,000 people and as of 2015 generated US\$28.7 billion in revenues.*

Define your role and how you focus your time?

At EY, we're constantly seeking an edge in the market, and I always look for the newest markets, services, and client problems that EY needs to address.

I am responsible for all of our accounts and clients. I also look at the things we need to be ahead of our competitors and even our clients. This includes our focus on industries and sectors and our business development organization. I also oversee our knowledge and insight development team – which is extremely important for a 21st century organization. We must be at the forefront of thought leadership – especially as the world is increasingly driven by knowledge-based economies.

We live in one of the most exciting but unpredictable times in our history. Things move so quickly; we must always adapt and fine-tune our strategy. Right now, businesses and governments are challenged by massive disruption caused by sweeping advancement of technologies. We must know where the growth drivers will be. Geopolitically, there are significant shifts from West to East and North to South. It's important we work in fast-growth markets like Africa, parts of

Asia, and India to maintain our leading position.

Are the types of careers EY offers well understood in the talent market?

Our reputation in the market has evolved so rapidly that people understand we represent so much more than what defined us in the past. Throughout EY, we now employ a very large and diverse range of professionals.

This allows us to accomplish great things with our people. We are proud to be recognized by organizations like Universum and DiversityInc as one of

the world's best places to work and having one of the strongest commitments to diversity and inclusiveness. Our culture and diverse, global staff represents an incredibly attractive package and exceptional career opportunities.

How important is it for EY to mirror your client base's diversity?

There is no question we live in an environment of accelerated change. This can be globalization, technology, demographics, climate change, and the shifting of geopolitical power.

These megatrends constantly present new and unseen challenges to solve. This is why there is now almost a universal demand for diversity across businesses. People from different backgrounds bring greater depth into our discussions and solutions. Innovation is at the heart of this, where insights and practices are being shared across industries.

Naturally, gender is an important part of any diversity discussion. Women make up more than 50 percent of the population. We must ensure they are represented at all levels. As more women advance into leadership roles throughout industries, we want our staff to match the expectations of our clients.

How has Women. Fast forward quickly become an integral part of EY?

We launched *Women. Fast forward*, EY's global program on gender parity, at the 2015 World Economic Forum (WEF). At the launch, the most recent WEF gender gap report from 2014 headlined it would take more than 80 years for women to reach economic parity with men globally. WEF has since released its 2015 gender gap report and, sadly, this number has widened to 118 years.

This gender gap is unacceptable, and we have a responsibility to help close it.

Over the past few years, the demand for gender parity has grown louder as a business issue. So *Women. Fast forward* is our way of bringing this

conversation front and center. Our clients, CEOs, and board members want to talk about this, and they have raised great ideas around advancing more women into leadership roles. We've also hosted many global events raising awareness, and we've had an amazing response.

We see *Women. Fast forward* as a natural part of building a better working world. Recently, *Women. Fast forward* was awarded as the best global initiative for women's economic empowerment at the 2015 WIL Achievement Awards. Everyone at EY is proud of what we have accomplished, but we know there is much more work that needs to be done.

Will seeking the best mean you will fulfill diversity, or do you need to have metrics around it?

Many junior levels across organizations already see gender parity. As people move into more senior roles, women begin to drop off. This happens in every organization. We need to turn this around.

Much of this comes down to a lack of workplace flexibility and work/life integration. At EY, we've made these elements a part of our culture – and we're seeing dividends. It's created clear career pathways where women are in positions serving as role models for staff at all levels.

At EY, we have identified three accelerators that – if pursued and implemented – can make a huge difference for the careers of everyone, especially women.

First, there is illuminating the path to leadership, which provides women clear and solid opportunities to advance into leadership positions. This holds leaders accountable for mentoring and sponsoring women, including measuring progress.

Our second accelerator is speeding up company culture change with progressive corporate policy. This includes making the workplace more welcoming by adopting approaches to flexible working, maternity and paternity leave, and travel. It's especially vital because millennials are taking the workforce in a new direction.

Building supportive environments is our third accelerator. A supportive culture is the top enabler of women's acceleration in their companies, which need active CEOs who visibly support women's advancement. This attitude flows seamlessly throughout an organization and helps combat unconscious bias.

Everyone benefits when women advance in the workplace and contribute fully to the economy and society. Building the blocks to create a supportive workplace with less conscious and unconscious bias will help encourage more women to move into leadership ranks. ●