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International Girls Day In The Marketing Community



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Started in 2012 as a United Nations Declaration, [International Girls Day](#) gives pause to reflect on what has been so far a momentous year for women generally, and specifically in the marketing community. While still a lot of room for improvement, we saw a meaningful shift across the marketing calendar, from the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity through Advertising Week and moving now into the remainder of the fall marketing fixtures.

We've seen the demise of 'manels' – all-male panels. Any event organizer will tell you how important gender balance is in programming. Speakers too. In fact, a Bloomberg company policy even prevents male executives from participating in a panel unless there is representation by both genders, according to [Kaydee Bridges](#), VP of digital and social media strategy at the firm.

Gender balance has been building momentum for a few years now, but it was historically kicked off in the marketing community with the introduction of the [Glass Lion](#) at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity in 2015.

The Glass Lions was created in collaboration with LeanIn.org to reward outstanding efforts challenging gender biases. Proceeds from the award get re-invested each year into creating more gender-neutral communications, and this year's proceeds, €114,450 (some \$133,000), have been awarded to the [Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media](#) and the [UN Women's Unstereotype Alliance](#).

Kaydee Bridges, VP of digital and social media strategy, Goldman Sachs, on She Runs It Panel "From CMO to CMTO" during Advertising Week. MARYLEE SACHS

Female empowerment initiatives are inescapable. And even when they aren't called out by headlines and hastags like #SeeltBelt, #ShelsEqual and #SeeHer, businesses are being borne out of the movement and they are flourishing. [Free The Bid](#) was established in 2016 by award-winning filmmaker [Alma Har'el](#) to advocate advocating on behalf of women directors for equal opportunities to bid on commercial jobs in the global advertising industry. Research doyenne [Shelley](#)

Zalis established the [Female Quotient](#) with a goal to transform workplace cultures through its [Girls' Lounges](#) which are de rigueur pop-ups at virtual every event that might appeal to marketers – from the Cannes Lions to SXSW to Davos and many others in between.

The Girls' Lounge during Advertising Week on "Why The Best CMOs Have Purpose In Their DNA" featuring, from left, moderator Hayley Romer, CRO & Publisher of The Atlantic; Alicia Hatch, CMO of Deloitte Digital; Dara Treseder, CMO of GE Business Innovations; Kristina Cleary, Global CMO of Ceridian; Alicia Tillman, CMO of SAP; and Kathleen Hall, CVP, Brand, Advertising & Research, Microsoft MARYLEE SACHS

During last week's Advertising Week in New York City, the Girls' Lounge offered a revolving door of presenters and topics designed to further the conversation around gender balance and beyond, taking on the subjects most critical to marketers. An impressive all-female CMO panel spoke passionately about the importance of purpose. [Alicia Tillman](#), CMO of SAP, reflected on purpose and its impact on the bottom line: "There is so much research, and more and more comes out every day about the impact of companies who have a purpose and its impact on the bottom line. It's a fact that companies that are very purpose driven, very value driven, outperform in stock price by the factor of 12. The other thing, in terms of its link to revenue and profitability, is its impact on retention and acquisition of your work force."

There is a lot of talk. But more importantly, there is also some action. Last month, California went that extra step by becoming the first state to mandate women on corporate boards by 2020. Some 25% of publicly-held corporations with headquarters in California don't have any women on their boards of directors, so there is some improvement to be made.

Alicia Tillman (left), CMO of SAP, speaking at the Girls' Lounge during Advertising Week on "Why The Best CMOs Have Purpose In Their DNA". (Left is Kathleen Hall, CVP, Brand, Advertising & Research, Microsoft) MARYLEE SACHS

On a [She Runs It](#) panel during Advertising Week, [Stephanie Stopulos](#), EVP and MD of Starcom, suggested that more companies could and should sign up to the '[Parity Pledge](#),' "an effort that companies have signed onto where they've

committed to interviewing at least one qualified woman for every role VP and up. Which I think is a specific thing that companies can do. They're not saying that they're going to hire someone unqualified, but they're committing to making sure that pool is diverse."

Stephanie Stopulos, EVP & MD of Starcom, speaking on She Runs It Panel during Advertising Week MARYLEE SACHS

Most importantly, advocating for greater gender balance can carry real business impact for brands.

As [Alison Lewis](#), CMO of Johnson & Johnson Consumer, said in Cannes this year: "I just want to do a little plug though for the gender equality index and the measurements we put in place. Every single company that's put the gender equality measure into place is seeing they're making improvements first of all. The second thing we're seeing is higher ROI associated with ads that have less stereotypes in them than the ones that have more stereotypes. So there's actually hard metrics now across many, many companies. And so a plug to use that gender equality measure. It's a simple thing to do. It's just a few questions you add to your ad testing and boom, you'll see greater ROI."

But we still have a long way to go. As American journalist/news anchor [Katie Couric](#) related in introductory comments at a Girls' Lounge panel at Cannes in June: "As many of you know, the statistics stink, but I think they bear repeating.

Alison Lewis, CMO of J&J Consumer, speaking at Cannes Lions in June 2018 MARYLEE SACHS

- 91% of women think advertisers don't understand them
- 44% don't think they see themselves reflected in the women they see in media 55% of adults believe that women are portrayed negatively in programming.
- Only 4% of films made in Hollywood between 2007 and 2017 were directed by women; over the same time period only 13% were written by women and as for women of color, the numbers are much worse."

Couric continued to rail on remuneration:

"Don't get me started on the pay gap....[and] I haven't even touched on other less high profile and glamorous workplaces like the hospitality industry but just to give you one sickening finding. 49% of housekeepers surveyed have had a guest or guests expose themselves, flash them or answer the door naked. Almost half. What the hell is wrong with people? Seriously, I can't figure it out."

Katie Couric (left) speaking at Girls' Lounge at the Cannes Lions in June with Shelley Zalis (right) MARYLEE SACHS

So much more room for improvement but we need to celebrate every small win.

I am a marketing consultant, speaker and author of two books about CMOs: "What the New Breed of CMOs Know That You Don't" (2013) and "The Changing MO of the the CMO" (2011). I also am the cofounder and US CEO of Brandpie, and the former global head of marketing at a major WP...

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