

Strategies to Increase Diversity in the Civilian Sector: Applications and Effectiveness of the Rooney Rule and Similar Approaches

Response to DACOWITS RFI 4



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Introduction

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) requested a literature review on how the Rooney Rule—a National Football League (NFL) policy that requires teams to interview minority candidates for senior coaching and management positions¹—is being used in the civilian sector. The Committee was particularly interested in research on companies that most closely resemble the military regarding developmental assignment opportunities for employees. Although the Rooney Rule was instituted to support racial/ethnic diversity, the Committee was interested in examining how such a policy might apply in the context of gender diversity. Chapter 1 presents a statement of the problem regarding diversity in the military and the civilian sector. Chapter 2 describes the Rooney Rule and its effectiveness in the NFL. Chapter 3 presents applications in the civilian sector, and Chapter 4 presents the way forward.

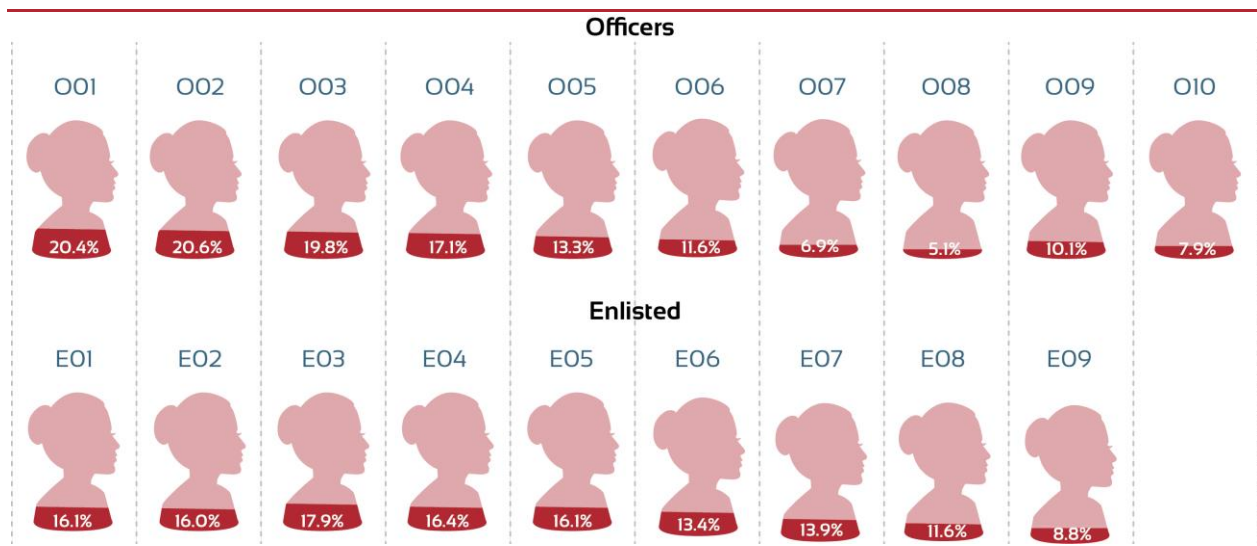
Chapter 1. Statement of the Problem

This chapter provides an overview of the status of gender diversity in the military (section A) as well as the civilian sector (section B).

A. Gender Diversity Among Military Leadership

Although all units and positions were officially opened to women as of December 3, 2015, gender diversity in the military remains nominal, especially at the highest echelons of DoD leadership. As of March 2017, women made up 17.3 percent of all officers and 15.7 percent of all enlisted personnel. Although the overall percentage of women in the Military Services continues to increase slightly each year, proportions of women in the highest ranks are still much lower than in the lowest ranks (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Active Duty Females by Rank/Grade and Service as of March 2017



Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2017²

Note: This figure does not include data for warrant officers, who in March 2017 made up 1.5 percent of the military. Among warrant officers, women made up a disproportionately low percentage of higher ranking officers. Women were most represented in the lowest rank, WO1 (9.4 percent), and least represented in the highest rank, WO5 (7.1 percent).

DoD Initiatives for Increasing Diversity

In 2015, one Service—the Air Force—introduced several diversity initiatives, including efforts to increase diversity in key military development positions and to better market career fields that lack workforce diversity to female and racial/ethnic minority populations. Corresponding implementation plans were released in 2017.³

In April 2016, Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson submitted a proposal to then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter for a strategy to diversify DoD’s officer corps. The proposal, which raised legal concerns within DoD, would require the Services to consider minority

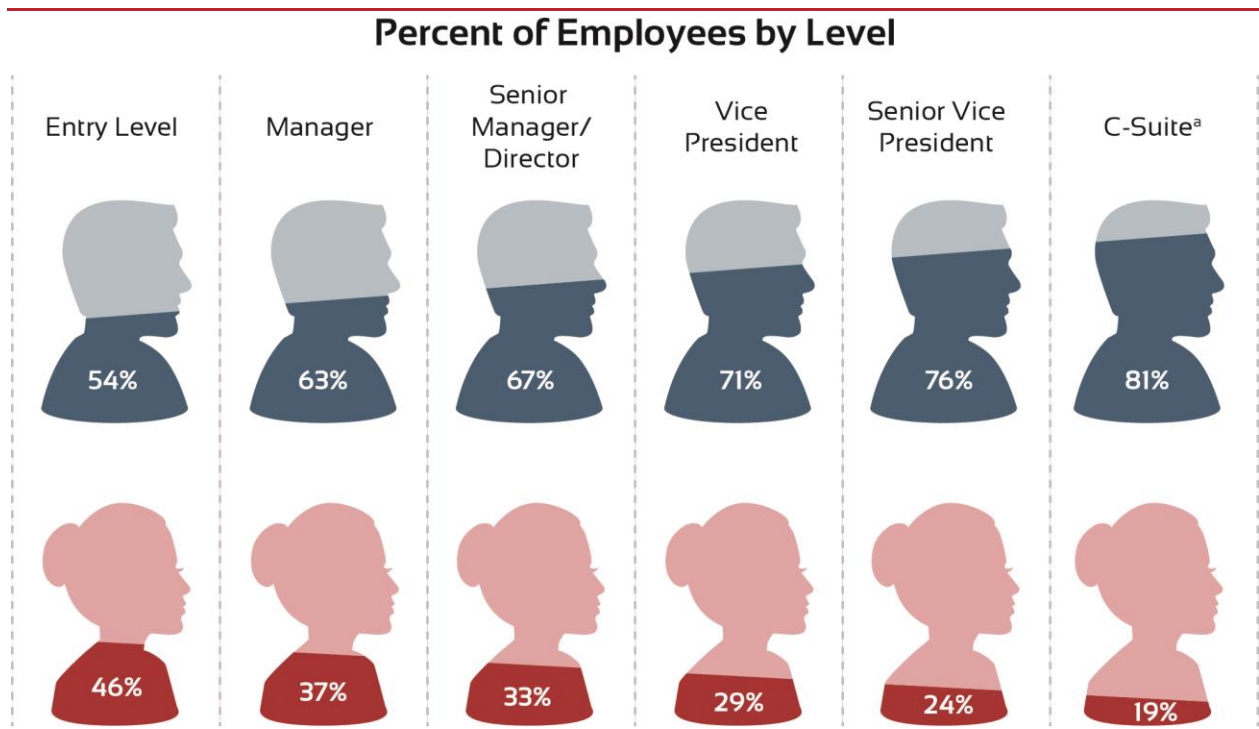
candidates for key jobs that often lead to higher ranking positions.⁴ As of May 2017, these plans had not been enacted, and their status is unclear.

B. Gender Diversity in the Civilian Sector

Similar to the military, civilian employers have also had difficulties increasing gender diversity. Major findings from the 2016 Women in the Workplace Study, which incorporated data from 132 companies that employ more than 4.6 million people,⁵ indicated women continue to face many barriers to equal representation:

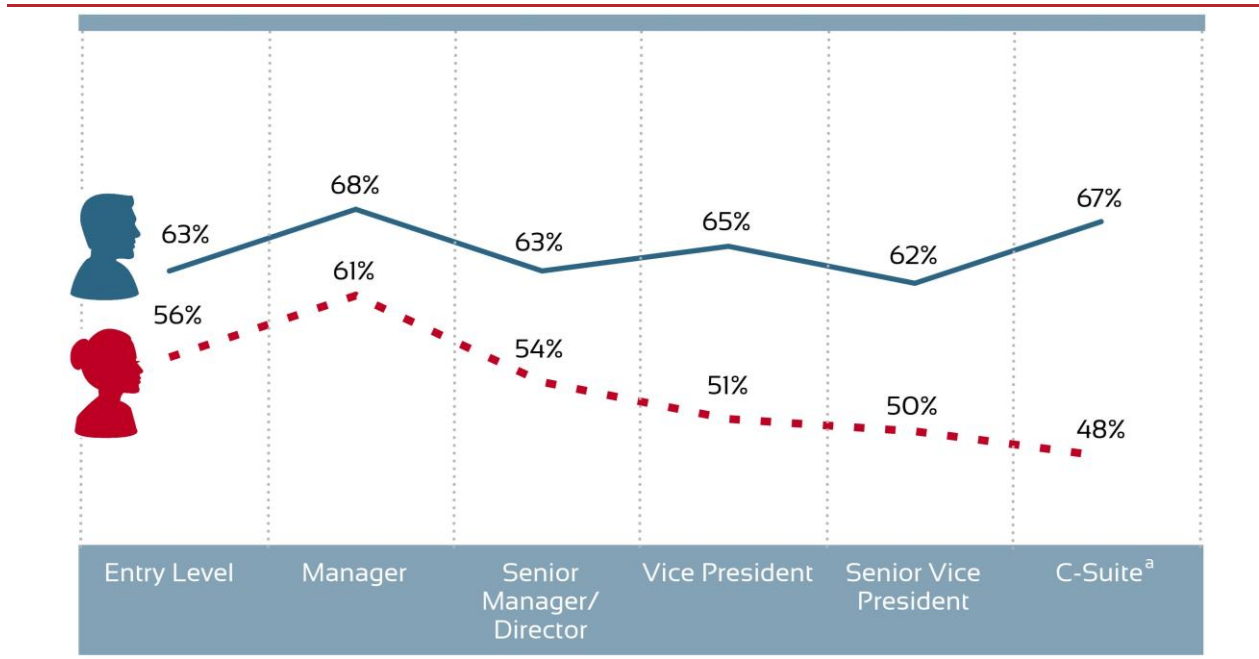
- ▶ **In corporate America, women fall behind early and continue to lose ground with every step;** they remain underrepresented at every level (see Figure 2).
- ▶ **Women are less likely to be promoted to manager,** so fewer end up on the path to leadership and in line to become chief executive officer (CEO). At each level, fewer women than men are in line roles which are positions with profit-and-loss responsibility and/or a focus on core operations (see Figure 3).
- ▶ **Women negotiate as often as men but face pushback when they do.** Women who negotiate for a promotion or compensation increase are 30 percent more likely than men who negotiate to receive feedback that they are “bossy,” “too aggressive,” or “intimidating.”
- ▶ **Women have less access to senior leaders.** Women and men both view mentorship by senior leaders as essential for success, yet women report fewer substantive interactions with senior leaders than their male counterparts. This gap widens as women and men advance.
- ▶ **Women ask for feedback as often as men but are less likely to receive it.** Despite asking for informal feedback as often as men do, women report they receive it less frequently. There is also a difference in the way managers convey difficult feedback; although most managers say they rarely hesitate to give difficult feedback to both men and women, women were less likely to report actually receiving those messages as intended.
- ▶ **Women are less interested in becoming top executives** and see the pros and cons of senior leadership differently than men. Only 40 percent of women are interested in becoming top executives compared with 56 percent of men. Women and men worry equally about work-life balance and company politics. However, women (with and without children) are more likely to say they do not want the added pressure, and women who want a top job anticipate a steeper path than men who do.

Figure 2. Gender Representation in the Corporate Pipeline in 2016



^a "C-Suite" refers to the most senior executives such as the chief executive officer.
 Source: Yee, L., et al, 2016⁶

Figure 3. Distribution of Women and Men in Positions with Profit-and-Loss Responsibility and/or a Focus on Core Operations by Level



^a "C-Suite" refers to the most senior executives such as the chief executive officer.
 Source: Yee, L., et al, 2016⁷

Chapter 2. What Is the Rooney Rule and Has It Been Effective?

DACOWITS is interested in innovative strategies that could promote gender diversity in the military. The Rooney Rule is one strategy of interest. Though the policy was implemented to promote racial/ethnic diversity in the NFL, it has the potential for broader application. Section A provides an overview of the Rooney Rule, and Section B outlines its effectiveness.

A. What Is the Rooney Rule?

Named for Dan Rooney, former chairman of the Pittsburgh Steelers and onetime head of the NFL's diversity committee, the Rooney Rule was instituted by the NFL in 2003 for hiring head coaches and expanded in 2009 to include the hiring process for general managers and equivalent front-office staff positions. The rule mandates that an NFL team must interview at least one candidate who is a racial/ethnic minority for these jobs.⁸ The policy also specifies penalties for lack of compliance.⁹

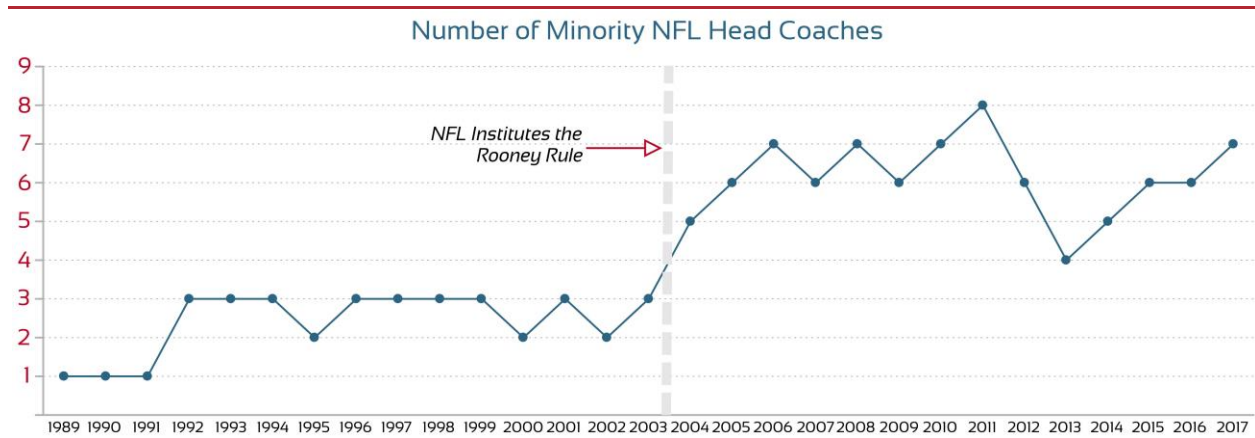
B. Has the Rooney Rule Been Effective in Increasing Diversity in the National Football League?

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ **Results have been mixed. If the measure of success is an increase in the proportion of minority head and assistant coaches, then the rule has been effective. However, if the measure of success is an increase in diversity among NFL staff as a whole, then more work needs to be done.**

Some findings have suggested that the Rooney rule had a positive impact on the hiring of racial/ethnic minorities¹⁰:

- ▶ Fourteen head coaches of color were hired from 2003, when the rule was implemented, to 2015.
- ▶ Among the league's hundreds of assistant coaches, 16 percent were members of minority groups in 1991; that proportion increased to a high of 36 percent in 2007 and had declined to 29 percent in 2013.¹¹
- ▶ Eight of the last 19 Super Bowl teams have had an African American as either head coach or general manager.¹²
- ▶ Non-White candidates have been about 20 percent more likely to fill NFL head coaching vacancies under the Rooney Rule versus before the rule was enacted, a trend that one study found was directly correlated to the policy's institution.¹³
- ▶ Although hiring of racial/ethnic minority head coaches rose immediately after the rule was enacted in 2003, it plateaued from 2006 to 2010 and then dropped to nearly pre-Rooney Rule rates in 2013. However, the number of minority head coaches has steadily increased during the last several years (see figure 4).¹⁴

Figure 4. Number of Minority NFL Head Coaches, 1989–2017



Source: Gaines, 2017¹⁵

However, other studies either determined that the Rooney Rule had little impact on hiring of racial/ethnic minorities or highlighted the work that still needed to be done to improve hiring practices at the NFL:

- ▶ One study that looked at a range of characteristics for coaches found essentially no difference in the consideration of race as a factor in hiring before and after the Rooney Rule went into effect. The study suggested other factors such as the coach's age, experience, and performance accounted for the increase in the hiring of minority coaches immediately after the rule was instituted.¹⁶
- ▶ At its highest points (in 2011 and 2017), minority representation among head coaches was only 25 percent.¹⁷ Although progress has been made from before the rule was enacted, there is much room for improvement.
- ▶ The rule may have been effective in increasing the diversity of those hired for head and assistant coaching positions, but it has not led to organizational change on a broader level. For example, almost 68 percent of the NFL's players are African American, but there are no African-American team presidents and only one team president of color.¹⁸
- ▶ In 2015, no minority candidates were hired to fill any of eight coaching vacancies or seven general manager positions. The NFL then created an advisory committee to help identify candidates and instituted a training program to help candidates of all backgrounds move up the career ladder.¹⁹
- ▶ Some worry that the Rooney Rule leads to tokenism, or symbolic gestures to prevent criticism by giving the appearance of diversity. As one Harvard law school professor explained, "There is a big difference between interviewing and hiring."²⁰

Chapter 3. Applications in the Civilian Sector

Several civilian industries in the United States have launched initiatives to increase workplace diversity in the past few years. In most cases, these diversity initiatives stemmed from employee demographic reports that indicated an extreme lack of racial or gender diversity within the industry or field. Many reports have suggested workplace diversity improves performance and is generally positive for business;²¹ subsequently, companies have attempted a variety of initiatives to increase diversity in their ranks, including some initiatives similar to the NFL's Rooney Rule.

1. How are approaches such as the Rooney Rule being applied in the civilian sector?

Technology Sector

Women's representation in the technology industry is among the lowest of all industries, with women making up 36 percent of all entry-level positions and 19 percent of all "C-suite," or senior executive, positions.²² To increase employee diversity, some large technology firms such as Facebook, Pinterest, Microsoft, and Amazon have implemented hiring practices that are similar to the Rooney Rule.²³ These practices require that at least one woman and/or person of color be included among the candidates who are interviewed for executive and leadership positions. Most of these diversity efforts broadly target all underrepresented groups, including both women and racial/ethnic minorities. Despite creating longer search times and hiring processes because of the companies canvassing for candidates outside of their usual networks, such initiatives have shown promise. For example, Facebook and Pinterest have recently hired women for top executive positions for the first time.

Legal Sector

Women's representation in the legal sector also lags despite the fact that in recent years, nearly equal numbers of women and men have attended law school and received law degrees.²⁴ In private practices, men and women are nearly equally represented at the associate level, but men outnumber women nearly three to one at the managing partner, equity partner, and partner levels. This ratio holds for general counsel to Fortune 500 companies as well as members of the judiciary and deans of law schools. At the Women in Law Hackathon, an event held at Stanford Law School in 2016 with the goal of advancing women in the field of law, one team proposed a rule to support gender diversity in the legal profession.²⁵ The Mansfield Rule—named for Arabella Mansfield, the first female attorney to obtain a license in the United States—would require participating firms to consider at least one woman for top positions and key opportunities such as practice group leadership, executive committee membership, client relationship lead, and managing partner.²⁶ Following the Women in Law event, its host, Diversity Lab, organized the "Hackathon Alliance" to work with the law firms that wanted to implement and pilot the diversity concepts generated at the event, including the Mansfield Rule. As of December 2016, 36 law firms had signed on to implement one or more of the ideas from the event in 2017.²⁷

Law Enforcement Sector

Lack of diversity in the law enforcement community has become an increasingly high-profile topic. Despite pressure to more closely mirror the communities they serve, law enforcement agencies struggle to diversify in terms of race and gender. Furthermore, to date, no major departments have implemented any policies similar to the Rooney Rule to boost their numbers of female or other minority officers. However, some police departments have implemented other successful diversity efforts.

In Evanston, IL, 12 miles north of Chicago, minority representation on the force exceeds the proportion of minorities in the community they serve. Moreover, 18 percent of officers in Evanston are female, whereas women make up only 12 percent of all law enforcement officers in the United States.²⁸ The Evanston Police Department built its diverse force by implementing specific recruiting practices that are aimed at increasing gender and racial diversity among the total force. The department vastly expanded the scope of its recruiting efforts by organizing open houses and other recruiting events in neighborhoods with large minority populations and ensuring a diverse group of officers attended the events to attract a range of applicants. One female applicant reported feeling a sense of confidence in her ability to meet the department's physical fitness requirements after discussing her concerns with a female officer at a recruiting event.²⁹ As a result of these and other hiring initiatives, women and people of color are now represented at every rank in the department. In a survey conducted to learn more about the practices aimed at diversifying the force, officers reported feeling that the hiring and promotion practices in the department were fair and exhibited procedural justice.³⁰

There is evidence that these efforts to diversify will continue to pay off. For example, in interviews conducted with new officers to learn about the practices employed by the Evanston department that are tied to its departmental diversity, new African-American police officers reported that seeing a diverse group of officers present at recruiting events significantly influenced their decisions to join Evanston's force. Female officers similarly reported that seeing women officers of every rank present before and during the application process was a factor in their decisions to join Evanston's force and gave them confidence they would be able to succeed at every level.³¹

Federal Government

Compared with the private sector, where women hold 14.6 percent of executive positions, women hold 34 percent of Senior Executive Services (SES) positions within the federal workforce. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) attributes this larger proportion of female executives to government diversity initiatives that have been implemented in recent years. Because of these diversity initiatives, women entering the workforce now are more likely to be on the management track compared with those who joined a decade ago.³² One such initiative is the Recruitment, Engagement, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Roadmap, including the use of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which helps OPM collect the necessary data for its inclusion efforts. As part of the REDI strategy, OPM works with agencies across the government to help identify and remove the barriers that managers face in recruiting and hiring the diverse talent they need, including women. This includes meeting with groups that work to help women move up in federal leadership. One of these groups, Executive Women in Government, a network of federal women executives that prepares, promotes, and supports women for senior leadership positions in the Federal Government and military, is piloting a mentoring program for women in the federal workforce. This program will help build a network of women to share experiences, enhance professional relationships, and motivate female leaders to contribute to effective succession planning. One important aspect of this mentorship program is the joint development of a mentoring action plan (MAP). The MAP is based on an assessment of each protégé's own developmental needs; the protégés are then encouraged to seek support and guidance from their respective mentors based on the needs identified in the MAP.³³

OPM has also established a government-wide mentoring hub and a coaching network. OPM has committed itself to ensuring "that women continue to be an indispensable and growing part of the talented and committed workforce that serves this great nation."³⁴ As OPM moves toward a federal

workforce that is engaged, inclusive, and drawn from all segments of society with the REDI strategy, data from the FEVS and other sources guide the way.

2. Are strategies such as the Rooney Rule effective in increasing gender diversity in the civilian sector?

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ **Including one woman in the pool of entrants for high-level positions is not enough to increase the likelihood of hiring a woman. Unconscious biases can still affect hiring decisions.**

Although many companies in the civilian sector have attributed an increase in gender diversity to the application of policies similar to the Rooney Rule, others question its effectiveness. Since the implementation of these practices, overall employment diversity at Facebook, for example, has remained stagnant, despite hiring women for top executive positions for the first time.³⁵ A study conducted by the Harvard Business Review indicated that if only one woman is included in a finalist pool for a job position, there is statistically no chance she will be hired (see Figure 5). This effect held no matter the size of the pool. This study indicated that the barrier to increasing diversity is not the lack of qualified minority candidates in the pool but rather the unconscious biases of hirers.³⁶ Researchers have suggested that people favor preserving the status quo and dislike change when making decisions, a bias known as the status quo bias.³⁷ This bias can affect a person's decision making in the hiring process because hirers may be less willing to select the candidate who is different from the person who previously held the position. The Harvard Business Review study also found that other implicit biases (such as racism or sexism) affect a hirer's decision making. The study suggested at least two job finalists in the pool must be women for a woman to have a statistical chance of being offered the position.

Figure 5. Relationship Between Job Candidate Finalist Pools and Hiring Decisions According to One Study of 598 Finalists for University Teaching Positions



Source: Johnson, Hekman, & Chan, 2016³⁸

Note: Finalist pools ranged from three to 11 candidates (the average was four). This effect held no matter the size of the pool (six finalists, eight finalists, etc.), and these analyses excluded all cases in which there were no women or minority applicants.

Chapter 4. The Way Forward for Increasing Diversity Within Organizations

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ Experts have suggested that increasing gender diversity requires a broader approach than what the Rooney Rule offers by increasing diversity among all levels of employment, not just the most senior positions. Experts have proposed that robust workplace diversity assessments are crucial to improving diversity in any industry.

Addressing the Root of the Problem

Although the Rooney Rule and similar strategies have helped increase racial diversity at the highest levels of organizational leadership, they do not address the underlying problem of a lack of diversity in the career pipeline. For example, in the NFL, coordinator-level positions, a crucial step to the position of head coach, do not fall under the Rooney Rule's umbrella. Similarly, minority coaches are less represented in the college ranks than in the pros; this may create a challenge for achieving equity since many coaches enter the NFL after starting their coaching careers with college teams. Researchers have suggested that if the NFL wants to increase the number of minority head coaches, it should focus on moving more African Americans and Hispanics into the pipeline through entry-level coaching positions.³⁹

The Power of Enforcement

Successes attributable to the Rooney Rule may stem from the NFL's ability to enforce the policy. For example, in 2003, the Detroit Lions were fined \$200,000 for failing to interview a minority candidate to fill the vacant position of head coach.⁴⁰ The positive effects of the Rooney Rule may not transfer to organizations that lack such enforcement mechanisms.

Recommendations for Improvement

A group of female executives and senior staff from several technology firms recently founded Project Include, a program to increase employee diversity in management and CEO positions among technology startup companies.⁴¹ Whereas some efforts outlined earlier in this report focus on increasing racial/ethnic diversity, Project Include also tackles gender diversity; thus, the initiative's findings and recommendations are particularly relevant to the Committee's mission. The founders of Project Include have suggested the Rooney Rule may need slight adjustments to be effectively applied in the technology industry. Unlike many industries, including technology, the NFL has racially diverse star players. Because the technology industry lacks diversity at all levels of employment, the initiative recommends that the Rooney Rule be applied in hiring for all positions, not just those at the senior level, to achieve change in the technology industry.⁴²

Project Include offers its services to technology firm CEOs to help them measure and, ultimately, increase diversity. The program encourages those in hiring positions to review the levels of diversity for

“founders, leaders, and managers . . . people who control resources, budgets, and decisions . . . individual teams such as engineering, marketing, and human resources . . . [and] the hiring pipeline.” CEOs are advised to ask these questions of their companies:⁴³

- ▶ Would a star engineer making sexist jokes or comments get fired?
- ▶ Does lack of experience building and managing diverse teams keep someone from getting promoted?
- ▶ Do men and women take the full amount of parental leave allowed by the company policy?
- ▶ Who is responsible for diversity at the company?
- ▶ Does your company give everyone a fair shot at success?

Project Include urges leadership in technology companies to implement diversity and inclusion solutions that incorporate the following values:

- ▶ **Inclusion.** Companies should improve opportunities for all employees, including all underrepresented groups.
- ▶ **Comprehensiveness.** Diversity takes multiple, sustained efforts; a comprehensive approach; and a long-term commitment.
- ▶ **Accountability.** Change will not happen unless companies hold themselves accountable. Companies should track results over time and compare their success with that of others in the industry.

Project Include also offers a set of detailed instructions for CEOs to regularly measure the progress of their diversity initiatives. The program suggests collecting employee data with well-worded, thoughtfully structured surveys, the results of which can inform policies, procedures, and programs and drive accountability. They offer that implementing robust, regular diversity assessments is a way to start increasing workplace diversity. These metrics have helped many technology companies evaluate the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives.⁴⁴ Similarly, OPM has attributed much of its success in increasing gender diversity among federal employees to the collection of targeted data on inclusion through its survey efforts.

Although an increase in diversity among NFL coaches can be correlated with the implementation of the Rooney Rule, experts have suggested other industries that have applied the rule to their hiring practices have not increased diversity sufficiently across all levels of employment. Diversity and inclusion efforts must be implemented at every position level to identify a diverse pool of qualified candidates for senior level positions. Furthermore, regularly assessing the state of diversity in the workplace will help industries increase workforce diversity.

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