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## Our Work Is Not Done

Video Transcript:

**Ellen Shook, Chief Leadership & HR Officer, Accenture**

Thank you everybody for such a warm welcome. I'm really delighted to be here and am very proud that Accenture is sponsoring Inspirefest. Do you believe that your voice has the power to change the world? I do. I have the unwavering belief that every single person can use their voice to help close the gender gap.

I wake up every single day with the opportunity, but more importantly, the obligation, to help achieve gender equality for the 140,000 women of Accenture and also for the next generation who will come through our doors. Each person's voice is essential, so I'd like to share two stories with you today about two of my colleagues at Accenture.

The first story is Amy. I met Amy when she was about eight months pregnant. About five months after she had her baby, Porter, she sent me an email with some suggestions on how she thought we could help women be successful professionally and personally. One of those ideas was about the shipment of breast milk.

So I called Amy and I said, "I'm looking forward to you coming back." We were discussing her email and she said, "Ellyn, I just read that one of the other tech companies is going to pay for the shipment of breast milk. Will Accenture do that, too?" I immediately said, "Yes. We would absolutely do that." And Amy was feeling pretty good about that.

She had used her voice, she had contacted me, and I was able to make the decision very quickly. I hung up the phone and I sat back in my chair and I started feeling not so great about the decision I had just made.

I picked up the phone again, and I called the chief executive of our largest business who also happens to be a woman and I said, "Julie, I just approved the shipment of breast milk for our new moms, but I feel like we solved a very big problem with too small of a solution." Fast forward 30 days, and we rolled out a program that enables new moms and new dads to work in their home location for a year after the birth or adoption of a child.

That was important because it leveled the playing field for our men and women. And it essentially removed the mommy track. That's an example of one voice together with my voice impacting hundreds of people, hundreds of new parents in one year.

My second story is about our Middle East practice. Over the past few years, we've gone from zero percent women to 18 percent women. That's pretty incredible when you think that Saudi Arabia, which is a big part of our Middle Eastern practice, is 134 out of 145 countries on the World Economic Forum's gender equality index. There are also a lot of logistical barriers and cultural barriers. You have to think about secure work space for women; you also have to think about how you're going to get the women to work because they don't drive, and the cultural barriers are even more significant. But our managing director was very committed to the national agenda to create sustainable employment for women.

Our Managing Director Omar (Boulos) went to members of the Kingdom and spoke to them about how we would like to create employment for women at Accenture in Saudi. He said, "We're a professional services firm, and if we're going to create employment for women, we want them working at the client site side-by-side with our clients so that they can have successful careers."

I think it's an extraordinary example of how a woman or a man can use his voice or her voice to use really drive substantial and really profound change in a country.

As an organization, it's really important that we not only have each individual voice, but that we use collective voices and really amplify them so that we can look beyond the horizon at the day when there's true gender equality in our workplace. When you have 375,000 people, that's a pretty big aspiration. So we knew we needed to disrupt ourselves because it was that big. We have focused on three key areas of disruption. First, recruiting women; second, advancing women; and third, sponsoring our women.

First—attracting women. When I was new in my post, about two years ago, I did a lot of listening and learning, and one of the first things I did was I sat down with our CEO and Chairman Pierre Nanterme. I said, "Pierre, Policy 78 is really important to us and it says that every employee has the right to be treated equitably. But do we really feel that way when we see our gender results?" We really were holding up the mirror to ourselves. At that moment, we had the true turning point. It was the first moment that Pierre and I could really see beyond the horizon to that time when there would be gender parity at Accenture. . The first thing we did was set a very bold goal.

We said, and this was in 2015, that by 2017, 40 percent of the people we hire will be women. When you're hiring 90,000 people a year, that's a big goal. But it simply wasn't important enough for us to set a big goal. We felt that it really needed to be transparent, so we published our goal in our UN Global Compact so that the whole world could see it. I am happy to report that we're coming up on the end of our fiscal '16, so two years into it, and we're just shy of our 40 percent goal. I hope next year I'll be able to say we've achieved it and exceeded it.

I think a great story of where we've seen rapid progress in hiring women is in India. We set about to hire women differently than we ever had before. We decided we would go to women-only engineering schools. But we weren't just going there to recruit women, we were going there with an intention to become the employer of choice for women engineers in India. I'm very proud of the fact that our software engineering start group was 70 percent women. We had 1,200 women starting on one day at the end of the first year.

That impact is significant, but our impact and our results are also very broad. In Canada, 43 percent of our workforce is women. Right here in Ireland, 44 percent of our workforce are women. And in the Philippines, where we have 50,000 people, we have achieved gender parity.— 50 percent men and 50 percent women. Those are disruptions starting to work.

Second is advancing women. It's not enough just to hire women, we need to ensure that our women have opportunities to grow their careers. Accenture women are very ambitious and we're very proud of that. The holy grail for a career in professional services is the promotion to managing director. As part of my exploration and learning, I went back to see just how well we were doing at promoting people to managing directors, and frankly, I didn't like what I saw.

Over the past five years, we had been promoting about 21 percent women every year. Sometimes just a little shy of 21 percent, but averaged around 21 percent. So we tried something different. We sent out a communication to our Global Leadership Council, which is our top 150 leaders around the globe, and said, "This year, we're going to try something different. We're going to promote all the women who are ready first, and then we'll promote the men." And you know what? It worked.

In the first year, we improved our promotion rate by 30 percent. We went from 21 percent women to 28 percent women in our promotion class. It's important that women continue to get to experience career progression all throughout their career.

When these women now look up, they can see women leading 70 percent of the 375,000 women and men around the world. We have a woman leading the United States, a woman leading India, a woman leading China, a woman leading Singapore, and a woman leading the Philippines. That's progress.

Finally, number three is sponsoring women. We have a fundamental belief that our diversity makes us smarter and more innovative. If you were to be walking around the halls of Accenture on any given day, you might hear people say, "Equal makes us greater than." In order to do that, we need to have sponsorship from the top.

There's two ways that sponsorship comes to life at Accenture. First, it's setting the tone at the top, and second, it's ensuring our women have a seat at the table. Our Board of Directors has four women, including our lead outside director. I would say at the very top, we've got this nailed. But even more importantly is our CEO and Chairman, Pierre. His passion is unmatched around gender equality.

He's a true trailblazer who not only uses his voice inside of Accenture, but also outside of Accenture to really drive change. Pierre has an incredible story around gender equality, and I wanted to ensure that the whole world got to hear it. Not just the people of Accenture, but everybody around the world. We teamed with a renowned story-teller from Dear World, so that Pierre could tell his story, and I have a little segment of it today that I'd really like you to hear.

**Pierre:** *Gender equality is just the right thing to do. And guess what? It's not as universal as you might think about. And at Accenture, it's absolutely fundamental we do the right thing for all our people. That is why gender equality is so important for us and for me. We need to make this world better for the next generation. And to be even more specific, I feel extraordinarily compelled to make the world better just for her, for my daughter, Marie. Dear Marie, I love you is not enough. I care about you, and believe me I'm going to do whatever it takes to make your future brilliant, bright, because you just deserve it.*

Pierre not only talks about gender equality, he delivers on it. We have something at Accenture called the CEO Circle, where once a year Pierre gathers 70 leaders from all over the world so that they can help shape and execute the Accenture business strategy.

In order to be part of the CEO Circle, you need to be nominated by your business leaders. So this year, when we got the first set of nominations, I was with Pierre and we were looking at the list and he looked up and he said to me, “Ellyn, this simply isn’t good enough.” Now the list had thirty percent women and seventy percent men, and frankly, it was a pretty big improvement over prior years.

But he didn’t think it was the best we could do. So we sent the list back to the business leaders, and I’m happy to report that if you were to count the number of people in that photo, which is our CEO Circle from April, fifty percent of them would be women and fifty percent of them would be men. And this is really a reminder to each and every one of us that we have push harder, we have to push harder. We cannot settle for what we think is the best we can do.

When I reflect on where Pierre receives his inspiration from, from his daughter Marie, it does also make me think about dad, Manny Axelrod. My dad passed away three years ago, and in his obituary someone wrote, “He’s as tough as nails, but he has a heart of gold.” And people say that I am my father’s daughter.

My dad worked his entire life for education equality. We heard about that why that was so important this morning. He was an educator and he worked his entire career for different types of education equality. But when I was very young, when I was seven years old, that was the first moment when I saw my dad go after something big and have to be bold. My dad was asked to serve the integration orders on the school district I went to school in.

Now think about that, Martin Luther King had just been assassinated and it was the Civil Rights era in our country. And my dad was saying for the first time that the black children and the white children were going to be going to school together, for the first time. This was tough. But he really believed that if people were going to achieve the American dream that he had to do what was right.

Watching my dad then, and watching him throughout his entire career made me understand that if I used my voice, I can also help change the world.

So that’s our story so far. While I’m pleased with our progress, I’m not happy with where we are. Our work is not done. We can and we will do better. We have to. Girls like this are depending on us. Not just on us at Accenture, but all of us, all of us here. By using our voice today, we can truly open the doors for tomorrow. And I hope you believe that your voice can help change the world too.