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Supporting Women in the Workplace – Models of Good Practice

This paper explores models for supporting women in employment.

Executive Summary

While a majority of AG4-5 grades in the Northern Ireland Assembly are occupied by women, 28.6% of senior management (AG1-3) are women.

The Assembly Gender Action Plan aims, inter alia:

To increase women's participation at decision-making level in the Secretariat, particularly at a senior level

The main barriers to women progression lie in the fundamental assumptions around women's responsibility for family caring roles, which results in practical, professional and attitudinal barriers.

Options for addressing such barriers fall into three categories:

1. Interventions to build the capacity of women to compete with men

2. Interventions that remove or facilitate family caring responsibilities

3. Interventions that provide for changes to patterns of work

The two major approaches for supporting women in work have been the provision of childcare and the introduction of flexible working.

Examples of good practice in supporting and promoting women in the workplace include the following:

- Establish the nature of the problem through staff surveys and communication with staff

- Make a formal commitment to change, such as targets in a strategic plan

- Initiate a change programme, with objectives and a steering group

- Collect data and monitor change

- Employ external expertise and standards

- Embed commitments to change in policy and practice

- Initiate flexible working arrangements

- Arrange job share options for all grades

- Support parents through direct or subsidised care provision

- Carry out unconscious bias training for all staff

- Carry out targeted capacity building training for women

- Run workshops to educate staff and support women

- Set up peer support groups or networks

- Provide coaching and mentoring opportunities

- Use female role models to inspire women

- Provide other supports in the workplace, such as health checks

- Make resources available for the support of women

Different approaches may be appropriate for different settings and a combination of measures may be most effective.

Contents

1   Introduction

The Northern Ireland Assembly Gender Action Plan states the following aims[1]:

- To develop and implement policies/strategies/actions to remove barriers, actual and perceived, to gender equality within the organisation;

- To increase women's participation at decision-making level in the Secretariat, particularly at a senior level;

- To foster a culture of awareness and understanding of gender issues and gender equality within the organisation;

- To have in place a suite of policies which:

    o are gender-sensitive

    o promote gender equality

    o reflect good practice

    o comply with legislation

The action plan is grouped around three themes:

  1) Leadership and Development

  2) Communication and Engagement

  3) Life Balance/Health and Well-being

This paper has been prepared for the Gender Action Implementation Group of the Northern Ireland Assembly to look at increasing the progression of women in the workforce.

The gender breakdown of the Northern Ireland Assembly workforce by grade is as follows:

NIA Secretariat - number of females and males by grade as at 01 March 2017

	Male	Female	Total
AG1 - 3	10	4	14
AG4	15	18	33
AG5	21	25	46
AG6	26	35	61

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[1] Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (2016), *Gender Action Plan 2016-18*, Belfast: NIA, p.23.

AG7	50	36	86
AG8	70	33	103
Total	192	151	343

Source: Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat, Human Resources

Notes: Excludes Agency staff and inward secondees

Males predominate at AG7 and AG8, women form the majority at grades AG6 to 4, but senior management is dominated by males (AG1 to 3).

The NI Assembly secretariat workforce by gender and SOC (Standard Occupational Classification)[2] is set out in the following table:

NIA Secretariat - number and proportion of females and males by SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) as at 01 March 2017

	No. of females	Proportion female within SOC (%)	No. of males	Proportion male within SOC (%)
SOC 1	43	57.3	32	42.7
SOC 2	29	58.0	21	42.0
SOC 3	15	38.5	24	61.5
SOC 4	54	48.6	57	51.4
SOC 9	10	14.7	58	85.3
All staff	151	44.0	192	56.0

Source: Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat, Human Resources

Notes: Excludes Agency staff and inward secondees

This compares with the monitored Northern Ireland workforce[3], shown in the following table:

Monitored Northern Ireland (All employees) - number and proportion of females and males by SOC, 2015

	No. of females	Proportion female within SOC (%)	No. of males	Proportion male within SOC (%)
SOC 1	16,448	43.0	21,803	57.0
SOC 2	47,973	62.9	28,304	37.1
SOC 3	21,323	40.8	30,933	59.2
SOC 4	51,384	74.4	17,711	25.6
SOC 9	35,792	50.9	34,525	49.1
All staff	276,786	52.2	252,960*	47.8

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[2] SOC 1 = managers, directors and senior officials; SOC 2 = professional occupations; SOC 3 = associate professional and technical occupations; SOC 4 = administrative and secretarial occupations; SOC 9 = elementary occupations. The Assembly does not have employees from SOCs 5-8.

[3] Note: The monitored workforce comprises of all public sector employees excluding teachers and all private sector concerns with 11 or more employees. The following are not monitored: the self-employed; the non-employed; those on government training schemes.

Source: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.26[4]

The Assembly employs more females at managerial level than the monitored workforce, but SOC 1 combines the most senior with more junior managerial posts.

In terms of working patterns, the following table shows the NIA workforce by gender and working time:

NIA Secretariat - number and proportion of full-time and part-time females and males as at 01 March 2017

	No. of females	Proportion female (%)	No. of males	Proportion male (%)
Full-time	116	39.1	181	60.9
Part-time	35	76.1	11	23.9
All staff	151	44.0	192	56.0

Source: Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat, Human Resources

Notes: Excludes Agency staff and inward secondees

This is compared with the monitored workforce in the table below:[5]

Monitored Northern Ireland (All employees) - number and proportion of full-time and part-time females and males, 2015

	No. of females	Proportion female (%)	No. of males	Proportion male (%)
Full-time	221,082	49.2	228,638	50.8
Part-time	55,704	69.6	24,322	30.4
All staff	276,786	52.2	252,960	47.8

Source: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.26

A higher proportion of females works part time in the Assembly than in the monitored workforce.

In terms of gender balance, the main areas of difference are the transition for females from junior to senior management and the transition for male from secretarial to managerial posts. While women comprise three quarters of the part time staff, this is a small proportion of the overall workforce (13%).

The sections below look specifically at the promotion of women to senior posts.

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[4] Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2015), *Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.26*, Belfast: ECNI: http://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Addressing-inequality/Employment/Monitoring-Report-26/Fair-Employment-Monitoring-Report-26.

[5] Note: the monitored workforce includes SOC 5-8.

2   Addressing Barriers to Women's Progression

Research suggests that the most fundamental factor in gender inequality is the interaction between work and care[6]. While both men and women have work-family-conflicts, they are resolved differently according to gender[7]. Part time work is consequently associated with motherhood, not fatherhood[8], resulting in far higher proportions of mothers than fathers working part time and having lower employment rates[9].

The effect of this gendering of caring responsibilities is that women's career paths and lifetime earnings are considerably reduced compared with those of men. The 'gender pay gap' – not to be confused with unequal pay for doing the same job, which is illegal in the UK – is where women's earnings in an organisation are collectively lower than those of men. The main reason for this is that women are situated in lower paid jobs and less represented in senior management[10].

It should be added that there are other factors at work. Chiefly, women may be disadvantaged in the workplace due to discrimination, indeed, while disability discrimination was the most frequent complaint to the Equality Commission in 2015-16, sex discrimination was second, far above numbers of complaints of other forms of discrimination[11]. However, it could be argued that, fundamentally, discrimination and stereotyping result from the same basic assumption about gender roles and caring that inhibits women's careers. Indeed, barriers to equality of opportunity for pregnant women and working mothers have been grouped into three areas[12]:

- Personal attitudes and behaviours held about women that are largely based on negative stereotypes

- Organisation policies and structures which may disadvantage pregnant employees or working mothers

- Societal or cultural norms which determine women's roles in society

Such stereotypes and behaviours they generate are then transferred to all women, regardless of whether they have dependents.

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[6] Jemima Olchawski (2016), *Parents, Work and Care: Striking the Balance*, London: Fawcett Society:

[7] Laura Radcliffe and Catherine Cassell (2015), 'Flexible Working, work-family conflict and maternal gatekeeping: The daily experiences of dual-earner couples' in *Journal of Organisational Psychology*88, 835-855.

[8] Rand (2014), *Parents at Work: Men and Women Participating in the Labour Force*, Brussels: European Commission.

[9] Rand (2014), *Gender Equality in the Workforce: Reconciling Work, Private and Family Life in Europe*, Brussels: European Commission.

[10] Deloitte (2016), *Trailblazing Transparency: Mending the Gap*, London: Government Equalities Office: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trailblazing-transparency-report-on-closing-the-gender-pay-gap.

[11] 'Our Legal Work', Equality Commission website, accessed 7 March 2017: http://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Legal#.

[12] Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016), *Expecting Equality: A Formal Investigation into the Treatment of Pregnant Workers and Mothers in Northern Ireland Workplaces*, Belfast: ECNI: http://www.equalityni.org/investigations.

Approaches to addressing barriers to women's progression in the workforce can be grouped into three general areas:

- Interventions that build the capacity of individual women, such as training and development

- Interventions that remove caring responsibilities from parents to allow then to work, such as childcare

- Interventions that provide for changes to patterns of work or workplaces, such as flexible working

Training and Development

The capacity of individual women can be built to prepare and support progression in an organisation. By providing specific support to either selected women or all women, some degree of alleviating the situational and attitudinal barriers that many women face may be achieved. Indeed, research has suggested that training and education initiatives have the most potential for addressing barriers to women's progression. However, the evidence suggests this needs the support of enthusiastic actors within an organisation to succeed[13].

A critique of this approach is that is assumes women to be a problem that can be 'fixed' – educated and trained – to overcome a barrier. Rather, the onus should be on organisations, systems and attitudes to change so that the barriers are not there in the first place[14]. That said, individual developmental initiatives can be part of a solution in addressing barriers, at the very least to equalise access to opportunities that are at present uneven.

Childcare

In 2002 the European Council in Barcelona concluded that the lack of childcare provision was a major barrier to the participation of women in the labour force and set targets of childcare provision for 90% of children aged three to mandatory school age and for 33% of under threes by 2010[15]. While the Barcelona targets were not met, the European Commission has maintained that they are essential to meeting the European 2020 objectives for employment in Europe[16].

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has concluded that a lack of access to childcare is a major impediment to women's employment in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, childcare provision in Northern Ireland is lower than in the rest of the

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[13] Anne McBride (2011), 'Lifting the Barriers? Workplace Education and Training, Women and Job Progression' in *Gender, Work and Organisation* 18(5),528-547.

[14] Michael Potter and Myrtle Hill (2009), 'Women into Non-Traditional Sectors: Addressing Gender Segregation in the Northern Ireland Workplace' in *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 61(2), 133-150.

[15] Presidency Conclusions, Barcelona European Council 15 and 16 March 2002, SN 100/1/02 REV 1, p.12.

[16] European Commission (2013), *Barcelona Objectives: The Development of Childcare Facilities for Young Children in Europe with a View to Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, Luxembourg: European Commission.

UK[17]. Surveys of parents accessing childcare have also found that parents struggle to meet childcare costs, resulting in parents – mostly mothers – leaving work or reducing hours to look after children[18].

Childcare is clearly an important factor in the participation of women in the workforce. However, in the absence of universal low cost childcare provision, there are options for participation in the government childcare voucher scheme[19], which offers savings on tax and national insurance in return for a salary sacrifice process to pay for childcare, or more direct support to parents by employers.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Workplaces increasingly provide flexible working arrangements for employees and advances in technology have permitted alternative working arrangements to attendance at a specific workplace at a specific time. As well as flexible hours of attendance, 'agile working' has been introduced by some employers, which rather than being time and place specific, focusses instead on outcomes delivered to timescales[20]. This has also been referred to as 'flexwork', which includes 'flextime' and 'flexplace' (or telecommuting) possibilities[21].

Research has shown that work-life balance practices can have a positive effect on the progression of women in management, the most effective practices being leave arrangements and direct provision of services, such as childcare or eldercare. However, such positive effects are perceived after a time lag following the introduction of these practices and female progression is less evident in male-dominated organisations[22].

Research on flexible working practices confirms that mothers are more likely to use flexible working and take time off than men. However, the outcomes of these arrangements are disputed. While there are small effects in the progression of women in employment, there is evidence that in some circumstances requesting such arrangements can damage career progression[23].

The foregoing has summarised some factors in addressing barriers to the progression of women in the workplace, specifically measures for individual support, childcare provision and flexible working arrangements. No single measure may be effective in

[17] Ronald McQuaid, Helen Graham, Marina Shapira (2013), *Childcare: Maximising the Economic Impact of Women*, Belfast: ECNI.

[18] Rachel McMenemy (2016), *Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey 2016*, Lisburn: Employers for Childcare: https://www.employersforchildcare.org/news-item/launch-seventh-annual-ni-childcare-cost-survey/.

[19] 'Childcare Vouchers', Employers for Childcare website, accessed 7 March 2017: https://www.employersforchildcare.org/parents/vouchers-information/.

[20] 'What is agile working?', The Agile Organisation website, accessed 7 March 2017: http://www.agile.org.uk/what-is-agile-working/.

[21] Christin Munsch (2016), 'Flexible Work, Flexible Penalties: The Effect of Gender and Type of Request on the Flexibility Bias' in *Social Forces* 94(4), p.1568.

[22] Kateryna Kalysh, Carol Kulik and Sanjeewa Perera (2016) 'Help or Hindrance? Work-life Practices and Women in Management' in *The Leadership Quarterly* 27, 507-518.

[23] Rand (2014), *Family-Related Working Schedule Flexibility Across Europe*, Brussels: European Commission.

isolation, rather a combination of initiatives may be necessary. What emerges from the research is not necessarily the measures themselves – important as they may be on a practical level – or that leadership is the preserve of exceptional women, but the ethos and nature of the of the organisation itself and its approach to women's empowerment. Diversity among decision-makers itself is a factor in the promotion of women[24].

Having set out the general scope of factors conducive to addressing barriers to women's progression, the next section summarises action actions that have been carried out by UK companies for the promotion of women.

[24] Alison Cook and Christy Glass (2014), 'Women and Top Leadership Positions: Towards an Institutional Analysis' in *Gender, Work and Organisation* 21(1), 91-103.

3   Models of Good Practice

This section looks at examples of measures taken to promote women in the workplace using examples cited in the UK Government Think, Act, Report campaign[25]. The campaign is a voluntary initiative by which workplaces are encouraged to promote gender equality.

The full case studies are reproduced in the Appendix.

Identifying the Barriers: Staff Surveys, Communication and Feedback

The first stage in progressing women in the workplace is to identify the extent and nature of the problem, before actions can be undertaken to address any imbalance. This requires accurate data on the workforce and a mechanism to investigate barriers to progression.

At Asda, an imbalance was identified, where 57% of the workforce was female, but 21% of senior management were women. Considering the majority of the customer base was female (80%), this was considered to be a significant issue. Consequently, an organisation-wide consultation exercise was undertaken in all departments to ascertain what female employees viewed as the barriers to progression. The consultation identified work/life balance, limiting beliefs, the home life + career 'double burden' and a lack of female role models.

Committing to Change

Once an issue is identified, there needs to be a formal commitment to addressing the imbalance. Specifying targets for change in a strategic plan, for example, is an acknowledgment of the importance of the development of women in senior posts. Placing such change in the context of a strategic objective and in departmental business plans provides an impetus for measures to be actioned.

At Virgin Trains East Coast, the development of workplace diversity Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was included in strategic planning.

Initiating a Change Programme

Following strategic commitment from the leadership of an organisation, practical commitment is effected through the formation of a mechanism for change to take place. This can be a group or panel, but it must have the participation of those best placed to effect change and the authority for its actions to implemented. These actions would be placed in an action plan.

At Pinsent Masons, a project was established to increase the ratio of female to male partners and board members. This comprehensive change programme, 'Project Sky', was led by a female partner in the firm, supported by the board, and supported a

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[25] Think, Act, Report campaign web pages: https://www.gov.uk/think-act-report.

number of new work streams, such as parental support, career mapping, agile working, unconscious bias workshops and reciprocal mentoring.

Data Collection and Monitoring

In order to ensure actions are working, reliable data is necessary to establish the extent of change that may be attributable to certain actions and to measure progress towards targets. Baseline data is required before a change programme is initiated, so that subsequent assessments can be made as to the effectiveness of actions. Hence, the regular collection of data, whether organisation-wide or in specific areas of concern, facilitate monitoring.

Loughborough University collected data on the composition of recruitment panels for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) appointments. While the average panel was 30% female, there were no women on eight of the 22 panels screened. Consequently, it was concluded that there were two issues: there were insufficient numbers of women on appointment committees and there was insufficient monitoring. In response, a system was initiated by which data was collected on the gender composition of appointment committees and this was monitored on an annual basis.

External Expertise and Standards

It may be recognised that the necessary expertise to facilitate the promotion of women in the workplace might not be located in the organisation. There may be organisations and structures outside the workplace that can provide assistance, models of good practice or support to individuals. Similarly, there may be external standards and principles to which an organisation can affiliate.

For example, FDM accessed three levels of external input for its aim towards a more gender-balanced workforce:

- International principles – FDM signed up to the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEP). These are[26]:

    1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

    2. Treat all women and men fairly at work - respect and support human rights and non-discrimination

    3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers

    4. Promote education, training and professional development for women

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[26] UN Women's Empowerment Principles website: http://www.weprinciples.org/.

5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

- <u>National good practice</u> – FDM participates in the UK Government 'Think, Act, Report' initiative (see at the head of this section).

- <u>Local partnership</u> – FDM has partnered with the Everywoman organisation[27] to assist with encouraging women into IT, sponsoring Everywoman's Technology Awards.

Policy and Practice

Implementing change to promote women in the workforce has to be embedded in a more permanent form than carrying out development and empowerment programmes in isolation. Where there are meaningful practices that can contribute to working towards a gender balance in the workforce, they can be incorporated into policy.

For example, at BT, an issue was identified with regard to the number of women applicants recruited. Consequently, the recruitment policy was reviewed and amended to encourage a more diverse range of female candidates.

Flexible Working

Where a significant barrier to progression is family care, flexible working arrangements – for women and men – can alleviate pressures of family care. Flexible working can include arrangements such as part time work, flexible hours, work from home or compressed hours. Flexible working can also encompass 'agile working' (see previous section).

At Pinsent Masons, the use of agile working places the emphasis on tasks to be carried out within particular timescales, rather than where employees are located. This move away from formal 'office hours', supported by technology, facilitates flexible work that can be suited more closely to work/life balance.

Job Share

Women are more likely to undertake part-time work. However, senior management posts tend to be full time, which excludes those women whose circumstances are more applicable to part time hours. The sharing of a full time post by more than one person allows for more flexibility in hours worked between those sharing the post.

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[27] Everywoman website: https://www.everywoman.com/.

At Marks & Spencer, 73% of those working part time are women. The use of job share at all levels in the business, including senior managers, means that these posts are accessible to people preferring part time hours.

Support to Parents

Caring responsibilities, primarily but by no means exclusively relating to children, are a major factor in determining work choices for families. Consequently, provision for working parents can have an influence on progression in work, particularly for women, on whom caring responsibilities mostly fall. While the provision of or support towards childcare is one form of provision, there are other elements of support that may assist working parents in the workplace.

Pinsent Masons has focussed its assistance to working parents on support before, during and after leave. This has included working with a third party, Talking Talent[28], to develop an online portal to support employees and line managers to address challenges faced by working parents.

All-Staff Training

Rather than focussing on women as the 'problem', all staff and stakeholders in an organisation, male and female, can be made aware of gender issues. Such may be across a whole organisation to instil a gender-neutral or gender-aware ethos, or else a specific business area may be trained to be more gender aware in its work, for example, how to address inherent biases against women in a particular administrative process.

For example, Standard Life initiated unconscious bias training to the specific area of resourcing decisions and nomination to talent programmes. Thus personnel involved in these processes are made aware of issues that may inhibit the progression of women so that barriers can be addressed.

Targeted Training

Specific training to increase the capacity of women can address some of the barriers women face in progressing in an organisation. Such training may be in relation to building personal capacity, such as confidence, or professional capacity, such as job-related skills.

Recognising the low numbers of women in its technology business (TSO), BT approached women flagged as high potential. These were then referred to a specific development programme, aimed at increasing women's involvement in technology.

Events and Workshops

Rather than training programmes, individual events, such as workshops, seminars or conferences, can contribute to building the capacity of women to progress in an

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[28] Talking Talent website: http://www.talking-talent.com/.

organisation, or raise awareness of gender issues across an organisation. Such events can therefore comprise two types: events for women to build capacity, skills or knowledge for advancement; or events for women or men to raise awareness of gender issues.

The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has a Focussed Women's Network (FWN). This facilitates personal development events, such as the following:

- Confidence building

- Leadership skills

- Internal interview skills

- Networking skills

- Creating a personal brand

- Transitioning to flexible working

- Managing promotion/ career change

- Preparing for redundancy

Networks and Support Groups

Connection women through groups or networks can provide opportunities for mutual support, solidarity and sharing of ideas in an organisation, particularly where women are in a minority. Such networks can also form the basis of organising events and workshops in relation to women in the workplace or provide a collective identity to bring about change.

Gemalto formed a Connected Women network (GCW), which developed from a networking event in 2014. This network, connecting local women's networks of all grades and business areas, facilitates information sharing and access to people that individual women might not come across in their usual work and provides a pool of women for training initiative and events.

Mentoring and Coaching

Individual women may benefit from connecting with a senior manager who can advise, assist and support that individual's career progression. As well as give practical advice, such a mentor could transfer knowledge or give guidance on ongoing work in a coaching capacity. While the mentor could be male or female, a senior mentor would have the added bonus of perhaps having faced – and overcome – similar barriers to progression.

Pinsent Masons has a system of reciprocal mentoring. This is a two-way arrangement where a senior male employee may advise and guide a junior female employee, but also the junior in the partnership can advise and guide the senior person with regard to

understanding the experiences of women in the business. The senior leader in this was gains insights into the business from a different perspective.

Role Models

In areas of work where there are fewer females, raising the profile of a senior woman in the workplace indicates to female employees that progression is possible. The experiences of such role models can help to engage potential women leaders, particularly if also used as mentors.

FDM promotes a Female Champion network in the business. Here, selected role models are made available to provide mentoring and to support female employees.

Health Initiatives

Rather than specific work-related initiatives, there are measures workplaces can take to provide for employees while they are there. Workplace health checks have the general advantage of ensuring the continued health of employees by identifying issues early, but certain of such health screening processes are specific to women, for example, for breast or cervical cancer.

Marks & Spencer has a health and well-being strategy, Plan A[29], which includes health initiatives for employees. Separately, the company offers breast screening to over 40s.

Resources

Women in the workplace can also be supported through the provision of information resources. These can be through publications or web-based resources with content specific to women's empowerment, or a more general publication which features gender issues.

Enterprise Rent-a-Car created a magazine intended to address the concerns of women in the business. This is the online and hard copy publication DRIVE, which is targeted at lower to middle range management that are in most need for connecting.

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[29] Plan A web pages, Marks & Spencer website: http://planareport.marksandspencer.com/.

4   Conclusions

The variety of initiatives discussed in this paper demonstrate that different measures may be appropriate to different settings. In addition, no one initiative may be successful on its own and actions are most effective when placed in the context of an overall strategy of plan.

The following diagram suggests a process into which initiatives and actions may be placed.

Key to the process is commitment from a senior level and a steering group to ensure actions are carried out. Such a process also requires a cultural change which looks ta the entirety of how an organisation works in order to address a gender imbalance.

Appendix: Case Studies[30]

Asda[31]

Investigating and addressing barriers to female progression.

Issue to be resolved

All organisations face tough challenges with regards to gender diversity. 2012 (ONS) figures showed that 64% of women working in retail were in lower-paid sales and customer service occupations, whilst only 10% were in managerial, directorial or senior roles (vs. 17% for men).

In 2012, Asda faced a similar challenge, with only 21% of female workers in senior management positions. In a customer-focussed organisation, it's essential to ensure that our key decision makers can relate to our customer demographic and that our colleague make-up reflects that of our customer base. In 2012 80% of our customers were female and 57% of our total workers were female, hence we identified an imbalance.

Action taken

As a result of this we carried out a large consultation exercise across all departments and levels within the business to identify the barriers or drivers for women, which were identified as follows:

- Work/life balance

- Limiting beliefs

- Double burden (feeling responsibility for home-life and career)

- A lack of role models to inspire them

Women in Leadership Programme

After recognising Asda's shortcomings in female presence at senior manager level and above, we invested in designing a 'Women in Leadership' programme aimed specifically at female workers in roles below senior management. Workers were identified for the programme both through their managers and through our talent planning tool as having strong leadership potential.

The first year of the Women in Leadership programme featured modules devised to address the key barriers that our female workers told us stood in their way to progression, including work/life balance, limiting beliefs and the double burden of being the best at work and at home. The second year will enable colleagues to carry out a

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[30] All case studies taken from the UK Government Think, Act, Report case studies: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/gender-equality-in-the-workplace-case-studies.

[31] Think, Act, Report: Asda, Accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-asda.

legacy project that will give the opportunity for them to pass on their learning to others and 'pay it forward', both to women in the business and in the community as well.

Originally launched for our female Retail and Logistics colleagues, the programme has since been expanded to include 60 of our colleagues based in our Home Offices. In the first cohort we have 260 women taking part; 200 from Retail and Asda Logistic Services and 60 from Home Offices. On 30 September this year we launched our second cohort with 270 women on the programme.

Celebrating Gender Diversity

We are committed to celebrating gender diversity within our business. International Women's Day on 8 March was marked in the business with a whole week of activities. Over 15,000 colleagues were involved in a host of relevant activities, from inspirational careers events and mentoring in schools to fundraising for Tickled Pink and Women's Refuge Shelters.

We have also held 2 events in our Home Offices focusing on challenges in education and employment for women. These involved presentations from our partner, Princes Trust and Teach First, and also our senior female leaders who gave colleagues a real insight into the realities women in the workplace can face. The informative, honest sessions really helped to raise awareness and motivate people to actively get involved, which has resulted in many colleagues contacting local schools and colleges to mentor young females.

Results

Our approach will ensure that we create a bigger talent pool for the business and ensure that more women aspire to gain director-level roles. The programme is also designed to increase our female representation at General Manager and Store Manager Level in our Depots and Stores, aiming to balance our talent pool by 2016. We have already seen a rise in the number of female store managers, which has moved from 12% to 19.6% - an increase of 63%.

Going forward

We make sure every colleague in the business is educated to understand the importance of having a diverse workforce. As part of the Women in Leadership programme we have put a number of initiatives in place to support our senior management population in promoting diversity. This includes:

- Open minds training (arming our managers with the skills to be able to understand their unconscious bias and how this may impact diverse groups progressing through the organisation): designed to identify and break down barriers to female development, given to 12,000 managers

- Leadership & Development training week: focusing on diversity

- Updated performance measures for directors, to include diversity-related competencies.

BT[32]

Tackling low female representation in STEM parts of the business

Summary

Gender equality is a priority across BT, but our employee data shows female representation is particularly acute in our Technology business (TSO). Targeted recruitment programmes are in place to increase supply, but the marketplace for senior technical roles is male-dominated.

As a result, we are focusing on developing a stronger pipeline of female employees and improving retention of senior women by launching #womenintechnology, which is a female development and role modelling programme. Our long term aim is to make a positive impact on workforce composition. We are already seeing increased levels of engagement among female managers in TSO.

Issue to be resolved

Analysis of our diversity profile and succession plans shows that we don't have sufficient women in senior positions in TSO and the pipeline of high potential women is not as robust as we need.

Action taken

We ensured senior sponsorship and buy-in. The programme is sponsored by the TSO CEO; the leadership team are visibly engaged. A clear programme of communications was developed – underpinning BT's commitment to being a meritocracy, but using data to illustrate more women needed to get to the starting line. The focus was on BT's three core diversity benefits: Customer; Talent; Innovation.

We approached women in TSO flagged as high potential and asked them to apply to #womenintechnology. We positioned it as a development programme and emblematic of our commitment to driving wider culture change.

Quarterly events were set up with external speakers, on a range of subjects from gravitas in the workplace, to how to engage with colleagues in an all-male environment. The events ranged in size from 150 people to smaller, more specific events for 12 people. Each of these events was sponsored by a senior TSO leader. We also held Inclusive Leadership training session for top 80 managers in TSO to raise awareness of the biases that might hinder women's progression, and give them the chance to pledge their support.

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[32] Think, Act, Report: BT, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/bt-case-study.

Results

Demonstrating our commitment to this programme, the most recent external hire to our executive team has been a woman. We are reviewing our recruitment criteria to attract a more diverse range of female candidates. We are using the programme to drive a culture change; encouraging the women in Phase 1 of this programme to go out to graduate fairs and speak about their experiences, for example – and to share their experiences with women in other parts of BT. We are also extending the programme to colleagues in India.

Next Steps

The women who took part in the first phase of the programme are about to "graduate". We are discussing how we continue to support them while reaching out to other women across the business. Questions we are asking are:

- What does this support look like?

- Should it simply be that Year 1 participants meet less often and we rely on them to keep in touch with each other?

- Or should we extend the programme year on year to more high potential candidates?

- Our Women in Technology programme has had a significant impact: senior leaders regularly discuss the question about the number of women in senior roles at leadership team meetings and between senior leaders outside of these meetings.

Enterprise Rent-a-Car[33]

Successfully engaging women at lower level to push for promotion

While our CEO is female, 40% of our board is female and 33% of UK directors are women, analysis of employee data showed that female employees needed support at lower levels to push for promotion. This is particularly important given that the company promotes from within for 99% of positions.

Our Women In Leadership teams identified a need for women to connect with each other and share experiences, however our branches are spread all over the country, so a virtual solution was required: an online women's magazine showcasing Enterprise Rent-A-Car's successful women was launched.

Since its launch, we have seen more women returning from maternity leave, more women getting promoted, and women being more engaged than men in our employee opinion survey.

Issue to be resolved

We operate a decentralised structure with more than 4,500 employees working at over 400 locations around the UK. Most locations are small branches with five or so employees and perhaps only one female employee. Our Women in Leadership groups told us that they would like to help women employees to better connect with each other at peer-to-peer level, to share stories first hand that reinforce corporate messages and communications from management about how the company helps women to succeed.

Action taken

A few years ago we thought that a new internal social media HUB would be a key to better communication between our women. After the site was created, despite dedicated female zones, we saw minimal effect.

Our Human Resources Director identified the opportunity to create a magazine addressing the concerns of women in our business. The result was DRIVE, an online and hard copy publication targeted particularly at lower to mid-level management that are most in need of connecting.

DRIVE profiles recent promotions and provides advice/information on how to make the most of the company career ladder.

Our first edition was launched in August 2013 and we have produced six editions. Hardcopy editions are sent to all directors/ leadership teams a week before the online version is released, so everyone is aware of when the online edition is published.

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[33] Think, Act, Report: Enterprise Rent-a-Car, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/enterprise-rent-a-car-case-study.

Directors then send hard copies to each branch or post to women at home if they are on maternity leave.

Results

More women are returning from maternity leave. The current return rate is 91% and one region had 100% return. More women are getting promoted to regional leadership roles with a 100% increase in women at regional operational roles and women accounting for 51.31% of last year's promotions. Our employee opinion survey results showed women view leadership more favourably than men and their career development and advancement significantly higher (5%).

Increase in engagement with DRIVE

Views on the day of deployment have grown by more than 33% in the last three issues. New user sessions have more than doubled in each of the last three issues. Users are viewing 1.62 pages per session. Over 650 employees read DRIVE online on the first day with 2200 employees reading the last edition.

Next Steps

To build sustainability, we are:

- Growing DRIVE's Editorial Board

- Taking our campaign to Twitter to engage externally with our business partners and universities that we recruit from

- Reviewing development for employee's personal devices to host the magazine

FDM[34]

Women in IT.

Summary

BCS and e-skills UK recently reported that only 16% of the UK's technology workforce is female, so more needs to be done to address this gender imbalance and reduce the skills shortage caused as a result. FDM recognised this and launched its women in IT campaign in October 2011. Since then the company has grown to boast a 25% female workforce as a result of its events, 'Female Champion' support network and close partnership with everywoman.

Issue Identified

The IT industry has a lack of women in its workforce (only 16%) and as a result is losing vital skill sets. It is said that a gender-balanced workforce can lead to great productivity and creativity, and companies should drive this forward.

FDM's business model relies on STEM graduates who are eager to launch an IT career, so we feel it is our responsibility to continuously promote STEM at schools and universities.

According to e-skills, over 550,000 new entrants are required to fill IT & Telecoms professional job roles in the UK over the next 5 years so there are certainly lots of opportunities out there. So what are we doing?

Action Taken

- FDM signed the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEP), sealing its commitment to promoting gender diversity in the workplace and wider business community.

- FDM joined the Think, Act, Report initiative, which is a government campaign to drive greater transparency on gender employment issues.

- FDM partnered with everywoman to continually encourage women into IT. We are the headline sponsor of the everywoman in Technology Awards and inspire and support future leaders at the everywoman in technology leadership academy.

- The company continues to promote and grow our Female Champion network, where selected roles models are available to mentor employees and provide support when required.

- FDM hosts Women in IT 'Advantage Sessions' to directly benefit female graduates, undergraduates and other women seeking to break into the iT industry.

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[34] Think, Act, Report: FDM, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-fdm.

- FDM measures the success of our Women in IT campaign by monitoring the increase in women joining the company.

Results

- UK Guardian 300 listed FDM as one of the Top Ten IT Employers for Women in 012.

- 50% of the Consultants FDM has placed in South Africa have been women.

- FDM COO featured as one of Cranfield School of Management's 100 Women to Watch in the Female FTSE Report.

- FDM COO featured as one of TechCityInsider's Top 100 remarkable people redefining digital business in London and beyond.

- Offer support network for employees. Female Champions are available to mentor all employees. They also organise networking sessions and workshops that are open to all.

Furthermore, with over 50% women in our management team, we are truly championing women in IT and benefiting from a diverse workforce that wholeheartedly believes in equal opportunities.

Going Forward

FDM intends to continue to grow our Female Champion network globally, so more and more employees can benefit from a mentor.

The company has events in the pipeline that will raise awareness and provide opportunity for graduates to network and discover what a career in IT is like as female.

Gemalto[35]

Connected Women Network

Gemalto has a firm commitment to equality and diversity. Our Corporate HR Strategy is structured around 8 activity pillars which implement the tools required to support management and employees' overall development and satisfaction. The formation of a Connected Women Network is in line with our 'Diversity Pillar'.

This is a grass roots initiative formed by pioneers amongst the organisation representing various business areas, functions and seniority. In H1 2014 we held our first global networking event to gather representatives from each country, share experiences, and start to define a more formal network for Gemalto.

As a digital security company, technology is the centre of our success. In the UK, females represent 11% of our technical team and 29% of our Supervisory/Managerial team. With the overall UK headcount at 39% female, it is sensible for us to monitor and give consideration to these statistics.

The organisation has delivered on its aggressive growth by acquisition strategy, and as a result we have several business units operating independently. This has also given rise to a number of employees working remotely from their UK and global colleagues.

It is recognised that pro-activity around this subject could strengthen our diversity angle. The networks facilitate information sharing, access to people/information that you may not necessarily come across in day-to-day work, and provide a good group of delegates for common coaching/training sessions.

The formation of a Gemalto Connected Women (GCW) network has complimented other initiatives assisting the harmonisation and integration of not only the new businesses, but also the inclusion of our remote workers.

It has opened up networking and inter- company business opportunities.

Going forward

The biggest challenge for our network is sustainability. It is clear that our members see the value in having a network and want it to continue. Our focus will be around increased membership, to include males, and longer term the formation of a mentoring programme.

The GCW initiative has the support of our CEO, COO, EVP HR and General Counsel which is a great encouragement to continue.

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[35] Think, Act, Report: Gemalto: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-gemalto.

Herbert Smith Freehills[36]

Increasing the numbers of women in the partnership.

Issue to be Resolved

In 2010, the firm set up a partner-led Gender Group to consider how we increase the number of women in the partnership. The percentage had remained stubbornly the same at around 17%. We were concerned that we were losing talent and not realising the full benefits of greater diversity to our business. The recommendations of the resulting Gender Report informed our Gender Programmes.

The Gender Group reviewed our gender demographics, looked at best practice and research, carried out interviews with women by an external consultant and debated and disagreed. The Gender Report identified the key issues for women in our firm. At recruitment we recruit 50/50 men and women and this continues to Senior Associate level but is not translated in to the partnership numbers. How do we sustain the pipeline of talent to increase women in the partnership?

Action Taken

The Gender Report informed the development of our gender programmes as follows:

- Women Lawyers Network to connect women, support career development and engage with clients.

- A mandatory programme of unconscious bias training for partners.

- Targeted leadership development at key career transition points.

- Mentoring and sponsorship are integral to our programmes.

- Monitoring the pipeline against targets and taking action.

- Role modelling to increase understanding of the pathway and life as a partner.

Results

- There are 400 members of the women lawyers network and increased connectivity

- Monitoring nominations to the Potential Partner Programme saw an increase in women on the programme

- 34% of partner promotions in 2014 were women

- Targets have had the effect of increasing line accountability

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[36] Think, Act, Report: Herbert Smith Freehills, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-herbert-smith-freehills.

- 80% of London partners attended the unconscious bias programme generating over 100 individual actions

Going forward

We will continue to address unconscious bias and introduce Inclusive leadership training for regional executive teams globally to develop regional plans. We will also monitor progress against our targets of 30% women in the partnership by 2019 with an interim target of 25% by 2017. Lastly we will sustain the pipeline of female talent and tackle lateral hire recruitment which can be 100% male.

Participation in the 30% Professional Services Firm initiative has been incredibly helpful in providing an industry focus to our work.

Loughborough University[37]

Promotion of fair recruitment practices at Loughborough University.

Summary

As part of our ongoing commitment to gender equality, Loughborough University recently conducted its first analysis of gender composition on academic interview panels. This exercise identified important data collection issues to be resolved in ongoing monitoring and prompted a major revision in the Code of Practice on the Composition of Appointment Committees.

Issue to be resolved

At the time of the evaluation, a formal system to record the gender of those on interview panels was not in place. From a sample of 22 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) academic appointments in 2013, 30% of panel members were female, which is reasonable based on the subject mix of the university but 8/22 panels were all male. Consequently, two key issues were identified:

1. The need for more effective gender monitoring of Appointment Committees

2. The need for female representation on Appointment Committees

Action taken

- A system has been set up to formally record the gender composition of academic interview panels.

- Gender composition on academic interview panels will be monitored on an annual basis.

- The University's 'Appointment Committees Code of Practice', which previously stated that the composition of Appointment Committees should include representation from both genders, has been strengthened to state that both genders must be represented.

Result

Enhanced reports on gender equality are now delivered to the Human Resources Committee and regular monitoring of appointment panel composition will ensure that the amended Appointment Committees Code of Practice is being followed.

Next Steps

The gender composition on academic interview panels will continue to be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that those involved in the recruitment of new staff adhere to the amended Code of Practice on the Composition of Appointment Committees.

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[37] Think, Act, Report: Loughborough University, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-loughborough-university-fair-recruitment.

Furthermore, any new issues that emerge will be documented and addressed as part of the University's Athena SWAN action plan.

[Loughborough University's Athena SWAN Bronze renewal application and associated action plan](#) is available to download.

Marks & Spencer[38]

Improved gender balance

Marks & Spencer employs around 81,000 people, with 72,000 in the UK. The company was featured in the Times Top 50 Employers for Women in 2011 and 2012.

Marks & Spencer signed up to the 30% Club, a campaign which has a target of at least 30% women on company boards. They reached this target in 2012 with 31% of women on its board. At Marks & Spencer, women account for 32% of senior management below board level. They are encouraged to take on trusteeships and non-executive directorships to help develop and build capability as board directors of the future. 74% of their workforce is female.

Increase employee engagement

Marks & Spencer aims to increase employee engagement by demonstrating that female employees can progress into senior roles. This is an intrinsic part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach and forms part of its brand. The company actively seeks to encourage women into work from disadvantaged backgrounds through its Employability Programme - Marks & Start. This has been running since 2003. Starting as a UK initiative Marks & Spencer has continued to expand this to its international business to help promote opportunities for women in the workplace, wherever they work in the world.

Increasing the health and wellbeing of its entire workforce is a Plan A commitment (under their CSR banner) and the company is actively working to help employees to do this, with specific support for women.

Listening to employee views

Marks & Spencer works to provide employees with clear feedback and communication channels through which they can give their views. The company listens and responds specifically to the needs of female employees.

Marks & Spencer has a diversity working party, comprised of human resources (HR) and CSR functions.

Diversity group setup

The diversity group was established to minimise duplication of work and give advice to departmental contacts for diversity. Since its inception the group has worked together on several projects, including creating a Diversity Matters DVD which is now shown to all employees at induction.

Survey

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[38] Think, Act, Report: Marks & Spencer, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-marks-spencer.

Marks & Spencer runs an annual employee engagement survey and the company ensures all results are split by gender to fully understand responses by women across the organisation. The results showed that the following percentages of employees felt engaged in their jobs and the work of the company:

- 76% of women compared to 73% of men in the retail section

- 79% of women compared to 77% of men in the head office

This year Marks & Spencer is trialling an open comments box to better understand employees, and the company will particularly focus on responses from female employees. The company has also increased the frequency of the survey with quarterly 'pulse' surveys to monitor employee engagement with the business.

Marks & Spencer has consistently removed barriers to work for all employees by introducing flexible working early and often over and above legal requirements. For example:

- the company removed the default retirement age in 2001: 10 years ahead of government legislation because employees and line managers wanted to be able to retain an experienced workforce and give people a choice

- in 2003 Marks & Spencer was one of the first businesses to introduce the right to request flexible working to all employees: 73% of female employees work part-time and 83% of over 50s work part-time

- in 2006 Marks & Spencer introduced flexible retirement allowing people to take their pension benefits and continue working

- in 2010 85% of those taking their pension carried on working for the company and the majority of these were women

The combination of these strategies ensures many women want to work for Marks & Spencer. The company offers flexible employment opportunities to ensure it has more female candidates in senior roles within its business. All senior managers have committed to the actions in the Marks & Spencer CSR report. The company has included gender reporting within its CSR report in recent years in an open and transparent way.

Marks & Spencer has worked pro-actively with a number of charity partners to set and achieve stretching targets to enable women to gain work experience and gain employment.

As part of Marks & Spencer's focus on health and wellbeing, it launched 'Plan A Health.com' in 2010 in addition to an offer of comprehensive breast screening that focuses on the over 40s. This has been offered for many years to female employees and spouses/partners of male employees.

Under the Retail Ambassador programme, employees go into schools to teach pupils about careers in retail. The Retail Ambassador Programme is an offshoot from the National Skills Academy for Retail and Skillsmart UK (prior to changes to this organisation) aimed at improving the skill base in the retail sector. It is a nationwide programme which operates in partnership with retail employers and educational institutions with the aim to inspire young people aged 14 years and above to pursue a successful career in retail.

Supporting the development of women employees

Marks & Spencer has created a positive culture for women by offering part-time opportunities and flexible working options, which have resulted in a 73% female part-time workforce. These include women job sharing at all levels up to and including senior managers in the business and term-time contracts.

The company has female role models in senior positions within retail - 50% of store managers are women. At the top level 31% of the company board were women in 2012. CSR initiatives have also helped the company support women back into the workplace.

Some 5,000 people have been through the Marks & Start programme since it started. The company has targeted lone parents (98% of whom are women) and works with a charity partner to provide them with work experience. 40% of participants go on to find jobs with the company or another employer. Many ex-participants volunteer to become buddies for new participants, wanting to pass on their positive experiences. Therefore buddies are often women, and can relate to the challenges of participants entering the job market. The role of a buddy can be recognised as a step on the organisation's career path of a customer assistant. 82% of buddies learned new skills, 93% feel motivated by involvement and 81% say it makes the company a better place to work.

On PlanAHealth.com the company runs many health initiatives including weight loss and exercise challenges and get people involved as teams across the business to meet targets. The majority of participants were female.

Marks & Spencer also introduced a 'Manage your Menopause' micro-site which had a video and tips on the wellbeing website; this received extremely positive feedback from female employees.

The company's National Business Involvement group (BIG) has 20 women representatives (83%). This group has been elected to represent 72,000 employees across the UK on key business issues and change. The business is dedicated to informing, involving and consulting with this group. The group has influenced major policy changes, eg to the absence, refund and holiday booking policy.

The BIG Idea scheme - which involves National BIG - was introduced in 2010 when results from the Your Say Survey revealed that people wanted to be listened to and get involved. Every quarter, a director poses a question on a specific business issue,

employees can submit ideas and the winner earns the chance to play a part in making the idea happen. The company has had particularly high engagement in the scheme from women and this year 68% of the ideas reaching the quarterly top 10 have been from women.

Employment conditions

Marks & Spencer conducts a comprehensive pay review by gender across the business annually and this data is reviewed by the HR leadership team and actions agreed. Pay ranges are attached to roles and are made available in an open and transparent way on the company intranet. The reward team carries out external benchmarking throughout the year and monitors the impact of managerial pay decisions.

Since the company removed the default retirement age in 2001 and introduced flexible retirement in 2006 (where employees can start drawing their pension whilst continuing to work for the company), the number of employees aged 65 or over has more than doubled, improving the age diversity of female employees.

By extending flexible working and offering part-time opportunities, supported by a clear career management process, the company helped women stay in key roles and continues to progress their careers. Marks & Spencer has retained high-performing women.

Next steps

Marks & Spencer's flexible-working policy gives line managers the confidence to view flexible working in a positive light, prior to making a decision. Flexible working will be further embedded by making information more accessible to employees, making employees more aware of options available to help them achieve a work life balance. The company remains committed to supporting employability in local communities and Marks & Start plays an important role in this strategy. Last year and this year the company will place 1,000 people on the Marks & Start programme in stores across the business. The company has already expanded its employability programme internationally and to date has provided 300 women across Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh with work placement opportunities.

In addition, the company's recently launched new national distribution centre in Donington has a dedicated role setting up the Marks & Start initiative with Remploy. This is an important step to enable those from a disabled or disadvantaged background to work in the business.

Marks & Spencer has expanded work with women to include female offenders. The company works closely with female prisons, through employees using their charitable volunteering day to run employability and skills workshops for women offenders, while promoting employability programmes to them. Some of these ex-offenders have secured jobs with Marks & Spencer since leaving prison.

In the last year the company has had 330 lone parent placements and 40% of those completing a placement have been offered permanent roles.

We will continue to work with an organisation called [Pure Potential](#) which works across schools and colleges helping to provide information and understanding about their options on leaving education. The company provides relevant and up-to-date case studies around women who successfully complete the Graduate and Management Trainee Programmes.

Marks & Spencer works with the Fashion Retail Academy which has a strong female presence by offering placement opportunities for their students, running mock job interviews and participating in careers fairs on campus.

Pinsent Masons[39]

Overcoming the Barriers to Female Career Progression: Project Sky

Summary

A key diversity challenge and a critical business issue for most large law firms is the gender balance at senior levels of the firm. At Pinsent Masons, 20.3% of our Partners are female and 30% of our Board is female. Over the last two years the firm has established 'Project Sky', a wide ranging and comprehensive change programme, led by one of our senior female partners with the support of our Board. Project Sky supports a number of new work streams including parental support, career mapping, agile working, unconscious bias workshops and reciprocal mentoring.

Issue to be resolved

By 2012, it had become obvious that there was a real disparity between the number of females entering the firm through our graduate recruitment programme and the number of females represented within our partnership and senior management team.

As a firm, we are committed to maintaining a diverse and inclusive working environment where all of our people can achieve their potential. We believe this is key to our continued commercial success and enables us to offer a better work product to our clients. The underutilisation of such a significant amount of female talent is a serious business issue for the firm and has been deemed a priority by our Board.

Action taken

With support from our Board, in 2013 we established a new initiative to address this: Project Sky. The focus of Sky is to understand and remove the barriers to female career progression across the firm. It is led by Linda Jones, one of our senior female partners with representation from our Board and senior management team, our support functions and Diversity Network Groups. Project Sky is sponsored by our Senior Partner.

The first step was to commission an innovative piece of research which involved consultation with people across the firm. We worked with external consultants Female Breadwinners in order to do this, and the results were presented to our Board with a series of recommendations in May 2013. The Board approved the recommendations of the Report and as a result a number of new work steams have been established to improve female career progression, and the retention of female talent.

These are managed by Linda Jones, supported by a FT dedicated HR Manager, a core working group and the Sky Steering Group made up of senior stakeholders which meets bi-monthly. In summary:

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[39] Think, Act, Report: Pinsent Masons, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-pinsent-masons.

1. Unconscious Bias Training – The senior leadership team have all attended unconscious bias workshops. Now, working together with external specialist ENEI, we are providing our people with training to identify and address their own biases. This is currently a pilot in two of our practice groups with a plan to roll out to the wider business in time.

2. Agile Working – We are promoting a focus on performance and delivery, not mere presenteeism. This means raising awareness of new ways of working and using technology to move away from traditional 'office hours' to a more flexible trust-based working relationship between employees and the Firm.

3. Reciprocal Mentoring – This programme involves an explicit two-way arrangement. A senior leader in the business (male) will be mentored by a more junior female who has a different experience of the organisation, career progression and corporate culture. This will offer the senior leader the opportunity to experience the business from a different perspective. The female mentoring partner will receive the benefits of a traditional mentoring relationship.

4. Advanced Diversity Training: Handling Challenging Conversations In 2014, we have introduced training for line managers to support them in dealing with complex issues linked to diversity.

5. A new approach to parental support – This programme is focused on our working parents and the support needed before, during and after leave. We are working with a coaching company 'Talking Talent' in developing an on-line portal to support both employees and line managers in the challenges that face a working parent.

6. Career-mapping
   This project is to develop a more flexible approach to career progression for our lawyers, while enabling us to flex our resources in order to meet the demands of a changing market. It is also about supporting honest and clear conversations so that our lawyers understand the different career pathways and can achieve a better work/life balance.

7. New approach to the process of promotions – Group Heads now have a Comply or Explain rule in the promotions process in order to make sure that we are promoting a reflective view of the firm

8. The firm has maintained its support for Female Futures, our female network group which creates opportunities for networking and soft skills development through access to events run by City Mothers and Fathers, Corporate Confidante etc

9. Through our community investment and volunteering programme, we are engaging with female students at our partner schools. Our volunteer mentors are inspiring the next generation of female leaders, providing role models where these may be absent, and encouraging the most able students to consider the possibility of higher education.

Result

It is still early days in terms of measuring the outcomes and impact of Sky and we know we have a long way to go. However, we are pleased by our progress to date:

- Female representation on our Board is now 30%, and on our Remuneration and Partnership Committee we have now 33% female representation, which is a direct result of the work undertaken through Sky.

- We have established a successful reciprocal mentoring programme engaging 15 of our senior management team.

- We have established Aspire, a programme for the development of our potential future partners. We had a total of 18 candidates on the Aspire programme in February, 7 (39%) of these delegates were female.

- For the first time, we have published a target for improving the gender balance within our partnership. Our aim is for this to be 30%, with a first milestone of 25 % by 1 May 2018.

- Our Senior Partner has publicly pledged his support for Sky by signing up to the 30% Club which has a goal of 30% women on FTSE 100 boards by the end of 2015.

Next Steps

Project Sky is an evolving initiative with the long-term aim of not only improving the gender balance within our partnership and board, but supporting our wider objectives for a diverse and inclusive working environment where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Over the next 6-12 months we will be focussing on a wider roll out of the pilot work-streams already in progress. This includes reciprocal mentoring, parental support, unconscious bias training, career mapping etc.

We will also continue to gather feedback and we have long term phase plans over the next couple of years to develop our programme internationally and within our support departments.

The Project Sky Steering Group includes representatives from our BME and LGBT Network Groups and we appreciate the need to consider the potential "double-glazed ceiling" in terms of career progression for BME and LGBT women within our business.

Royal Bank of Scotland[40]

Focused Women's Network

RBS recognises that having improved gender balance at all levels of the organisation enables better understanding of, and responsiveness to, our diverse client base and helps promote diversity of thinking across the organisation.

The RBS Focused Women's Network (FWN) was launched in 2007 to support the group in actively attracting, developing and retaining talented women at RBS.

This initiative has proved to be very successful, and in 2012 a dedicated FWN coordinator was appointed and a significant budget for the network was established to further support the organisation's aim to achieve gender balance in senior positions.

In the last 3 years, the FWN has grown from 2,000 to 6,000 members across 31 countries. This includes 300 male members who recognise the value that a diverse team can bring to the business.

Issue to be resolved

In 2011, our internal monitoring mechanisms confirmed that although 54% of employees across our organisation are female, men currently hold 82% of executive positions and 73% of senior management positions at RBS.

From this, it was recognised within the business that a dedicated framework aimed at providing tools to advance women's careers would be of real benefit to the organisation.

Action taken

The FWN has 4 key areas of focus. Events and initiatives are held in relation to each of these themes - see examples below. These events are open to all RBS employees, both men and women, at all levels of seniority, and are facilitated by both internal and external experts.

Personal development events

In the past 12 months, the FWN has delivered about 100 workshops globally, covering a variety of subjects including:

- confidence building

- leadership skills

- internal interview skills

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[40] Think, Act, Report: Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-royal-bank-of-scotland-rbs-group.

- networking skills

- creating a personal brand

- transitioning to flexible working

- managing promotion/career change

- preparing for redundancy

Networking, mentoring and role models

Internal networking opportunities are offered globally and aim to:

- unite employees from different business areas and divisions and increase collaboration amongst colleagues

- help individuals gain access to senior leaders and increase their own visibility within RBS

FWN offers and supports external networking opportunities in partnership with women's networks at other top corporates and professional women's organisations (eg Women in Banking and Finance, and We are the City), which aim to:

- create new business opportunities for RBS

- connect current and potential customers with opportunities for growth

- share knowledge and contribute to the success of the members of other women's groups

Corporate social responsibility

- FWN empowers employees to give back to their local communities, and has raised more than £150,000 for charities to date

- FWN supports numerous charities including the Breast Cancer Campaign, Everyman Campaign, Sickle Cell Society, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, Action on Addiction and Eaves

Focused Women's Week

The network's annual conference, held each March for the past 5 years to celebrate International Women's Day, has evolved into a week of events that raise the profile of gender diversity issues.

- Focused Women's Week gives RBS staff the opportunity for open dialogue with senior leaders

- Focused Women's Week includes a client event offering customers the opportunity to network, take part in open dialogue with senior leaders, share their own inspirational stories, and most importantly, create b2b opportunities.

High-profile participants have included:

- RBS Chairman Sir Philip Hampton

- RBS Group CEO Stephen Hester

- RBS Group HR Director Elaine Arden

- RBS CEO of Markets and International Banking John Hourican.

In addition to these events and initiatives, earlier this year RBS appointed a dedicated FWN Co-ordinator, supported by a significant budget. This will continue to support the organisation's aim to achieve gender balance in senior positions.

Result

All the programmed activity, initiatives and events have supported RBS achieve the following results:

- over the last 5 years the number of women in executive positions and senior management roles continues to increase. 25% (3 out of 12) of our board members are female: this compares to an all male board in 2008

- there are currently 6,000 Focused Women members in 31 countries

- since its inception, the network has raised over £150,000 for charity

- in 2012, the FWN was instrumental in setting up the Women's Interbank Networking Group (WING) in Hong Kong, in which 13 banks now participate

- the, Chair and founder of FWN, achieved a prestigious place in The International Alliance for Women (TIAW) World of Difference 2012 awards. The TIAW 100 Awards recognise amazing individuals whose efforts have advanced the economic empowerment of women locally, regionally or worldwide

- earlier this year, the Focused Women's Academy was launched as a portal for employees to easily access events, information and learning tools that will help their development

- through the sheer size of its membership, FWN is a powerful voice for change and influence at RBS and has raised the profile of the need for gender balance across the organisation

Next steps

Despite the success of the FWN, RBS aims and plans continue to evolve and develop. Some specific examples include:

- establish a regional FWN committee in India during early 2013

- offer a broader range and higher number of events, both face to face and virtual

- target to increase global membership from 6,000 to 10,000

- secure a senior executive representative from each division for the FWN global committee

- create an advisory board comprised of a mixture of internal and external experts.

- hardwire the FWN objectives of committee volunteers into their appraisals to motivate and re-energise the committee

Any other information

RBS is supportive of the recommendations of Lord Davies' report and recognises the importance of women having greater representation at key decision making points in organisations, particularly in the banking industry.

The diversity agenda remains a key priority for RBS, who are committed to supporting women to reach their full potential through a combination of leadership development programmes and events, the introduction and encouragement of supportive policies, and the utilisation and strengthening of internal and external networks.

RBS is committed to working with clients and other organisations to achieve better gender balance, recognising the expected improvements in business performance.

Shearman & Sterling[41]

Improving our Female Senior Lawyer Retention Rates

Summary

Examination of our retention statistics led to a difficulty in pinpointing trends contributing to low retention rates at the senior level, as a variety of reasons were cited.

Issue to be resolved

Therefore to understand our employees better, a senior female Partner accompanied a HR team member to meet all female employees in the London office. Our intention was to gain a better understanding of their experience working in the office and what improvements could be made.

The feedback was positive, but highlighted some interesting findings:

- The firm was doing a lot to support working mothers, but some issues experienced around work-life balance were also true for women without families and men. This wasn't specific to the firm but the sector as a whole.

- Female business development training and female client events would allow women to build their networks effectively.

Action taken

To address the feedback we rolled out the following programme over 6 months:

We increased business development training and with senior Partner support, rolled out two client female focussed events. To foster more networking opportunities, we also launched 'Lean In' circle events in the office.

Result

The events and training had a fantastic turnout and we are keen to do more.

This programme has reenergised our women's network within the office. They hold regular meetings and some interesting topics have been raised, such as introducing a sponsorship programme and piloting a working from home initiative.

Next Steps

This is just the beginning of our journey. We intend to continue engaging with women to understand and roll out key initiatives that can benefit the office. We will continue to monitor the impact of our initiatives to see an improvement on female retention rates in the long term.

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[41] Think, Act, Report: Shearman and Sterling, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-shearman-sterling.

Standard Life[42]

Driving improvements in Diversity and Inclusion

In Standard Life we recognise the value which a diversity of talent brings – for our business and ultimately our customers. We know we benefit from a diverse make-up in its widest sense and within the context of an overall balance of skills, backgrounds, knowledge and experience. Our Board is focussed on driving continued diversity progress and appreciate gender diversity is an important part of this. A number of initiatives are underway to support improvements in our gender diversity. We're seeing tangible results, but we know there is still much to do.

Issue to be resolved

We identified, through customer and employee data (including pay), that more focus was needed to improve the diversity of our internal leadership and talent populations, to ensure we're representative of our geographical, customer and employee markets. We also recognised that we could do more to create an inclusive environment where all employees flourished.

Action taken

We carried out a number of actions specifically intended to improve gender diversity, including:

- Introduced a Women's Development Network - now two years old and already supporting over 400 women to focus on stretching development to form a stronger pipeline into future leadership

- Expanded our individualised development coaching and mentoring for women in our leadership and talent pipeline

- Agreed to only work with executive search partners who have signed up to our diversity requirements to stimulate more diversity in our attraction approaches

- Launched a curriculum developing Board experience in our female talent to prepare them to take up Non-Executive Director roles

- Audited our policies and processes from a diversity perspective and changed our maternity and adoption experience, introduced carer's leave, and changed our foster care guidelines

- Paid specific attention to resourcing decisions and nominations to talent programmes through unconscious bias training

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[42] Think, Act, Report: Standard Life, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-standard-life.

Result

- Awarded 'Highly Commended' in the 'Outstanding Employee Network' category at European Diversity Awards 2013 one year after set-up

- The group employee engagement survey measured perceptions about diversity and inclusion. 80% of employees scored this question favourably - 6% more than other organisations in the Financial Services norm and 4% more than the high performing norm

- Our Board, Executive Team and Nomination and Governance Committee regularly review our internal talent and succession strength and consider diversity in these discussions

- The gender balance in our Board and talent pipelines has increased at each level. 20% of our Board, 33% of our pipeline just below Executive level and 44% just below senior manager level, are now female

- The engagement and enablement levels reported by women who are members of our women's network are 6% higher than women who are not members

- 57% of our Executive population now hold Outside Appointments in a variety of organisations

- 97% of women in our network are having quality development conversations with their teams and manager and 73% have a more stretching perspective on their development

Next Steps

We will continue to support our women's network, including introduction of maternity coaching, expanding our development coaching and refreshing mentoring.

We will also embed diversity into talent and succession conversations at all levels of the organisation and build capability of managers to identify bias and have career conversations which recognise individual needs.

Further preparatory board development for women is planned, hosted by our Board member and we will pilot a sponsorship approach for our female talent and expand internationally and across other diverse groups.

We are also looking to increase the use of technology to support engagement across our networks and maximise the possible benefits from the introduction of Shared Parental Leave legislation to help foster a family-flexible culture.

Virgin Trains[43]

Improving the gender and ethnicity balance

Building on the legacy of East Coast Trains, new owners Virgin Trains East Coast (from March 2015) want to continue to deliver the best customer experience. We understand that to achieve this our teams and colleagues need to feel valued, included and continue to love working here, so they can be "the best they can be".

Different and diverse people work here and our workforce closely matches the communities we operate in. However we have identified two issues:

- There are some teams and roles which are male dominated. We are therefore working towards being more inclusive and addressing any gender gaps.

- There are also still some ethnicity gaps, so we need to understand any barriers to progression and development, as well as reviewing what's happening in recruitment and resourcing.

Issue to be resolved

The rail industry is perceived to be a white male dominated environment, it is therefore important that Virgin Trains East Coast take the opportunity to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation to enable us be even more high-performing, profitable and customer focussed.

Action Taken

The 2014 East Coast Employee Survey included diversity data to enable further understanding about where any particular groups of people felt excluded or unable to perform and be the best they could be.

The survey highlighted some interesting points and focus groups started in November 2014 to sense check these findings with our colleagues. We developed an Inclusion Plan for the next 2 years which includes a review of our recruitment and sourcing practices to ensure our recruitment is reaching out to our local community groups whilst recruiting and selecting the most talented individuals.

Progress so far in 2014:

- created a focussed HR Team and shared action plan working proactively on diversity and inclusion

- production of detailed diversity and inclusion data and measures, starting with gender and BAME

- development of workplace diversity KPIs for our "Good Together" dashboard

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[43] Think, Act, Report: Virgin Trains East Coast, accessed 22 February 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/think-act-report-virgin-east-coast-trains.

- part of industry groups NSARE & RSSB to work collectively on this agenda

- employee survey included gender, ethnicity and tenure enabling us to gather further insights and intelligence

- employee focus groups designed and planned in November to communicate with our colleagues about inclusion and to explore and understand potential barriers at work

- HR Policy Review underway to ensure they are inclusive

- recruitment monitoring started to review job applicants in terms of diversity and to track them through the selection process

- focussed on future opportunities for increasing diversity e.g. Intercity Express Trains

- engaged with a specialist third party Inclusive Employers to introduce EC Annual Membership with access to training workshops, resources & expertise

- continue with community engagement programmes to reach out to people on our route building our inclusive brand profile

- First East Coast Ladies Event "Inspiring Women" held

Results

Almost 9 out of 10 people completed the 2014 Employee Survey and more than three quarters of our colleagues feel proud to work for East Coast.

In 2009, when East Coast took over the franchise, our vision was to provide the best possible journey experience for our customers, and be a great place to work. At the time, the employee engagement score was 62% with just a little over half of people completing the survey. In 2014 we have scored 74% for employee engagement and have gone a long way towards achieving our vision.

It is too early to understand the impact of our 2014/5 diversity and inclusion work, although we do now have a greater understanding of our workforce make up and how this matches with our local communities. The focus groups will give us some rich information from our colleagues which will be used to help shape our future direction.

Next Steps

2014 - 2016

- Understand more about Employee Survey diversity data and insights

- Unconscious bias training programme for all people managers

- Review make up of development groups e.g. Future Leaders, High Potential to enable these to be inclusive and representative

- Review focus group feedback to help shape future direction

- Create an internal cross function/cross grade working group to give focus and direction – working together proactively on this agenda

- Develop and launch a role model programme – "I can, you can" to consider targeting underrepresented groups

- Workforce data collection exercise

- Further develop data and measures to include other areas of diversity

- More events bringing people together e.g. ladies' lunch

- Implement findings from HR Policy Review

- Review current Equal Opportunities statement to develop a shared commitment to inclusion

- Review and develop our recruitment training programme to include unconscious bias

- Review sourcing strategies to ensure our recruitment is far reaching and inclusive and brings the best talent to Virgin Trains East Coast

- Develop a more deep-rooted inclusion approach so it's embedded in everything that we do at Virgin Trains East Coast

- More apprenticeships, community investment and opportunity.