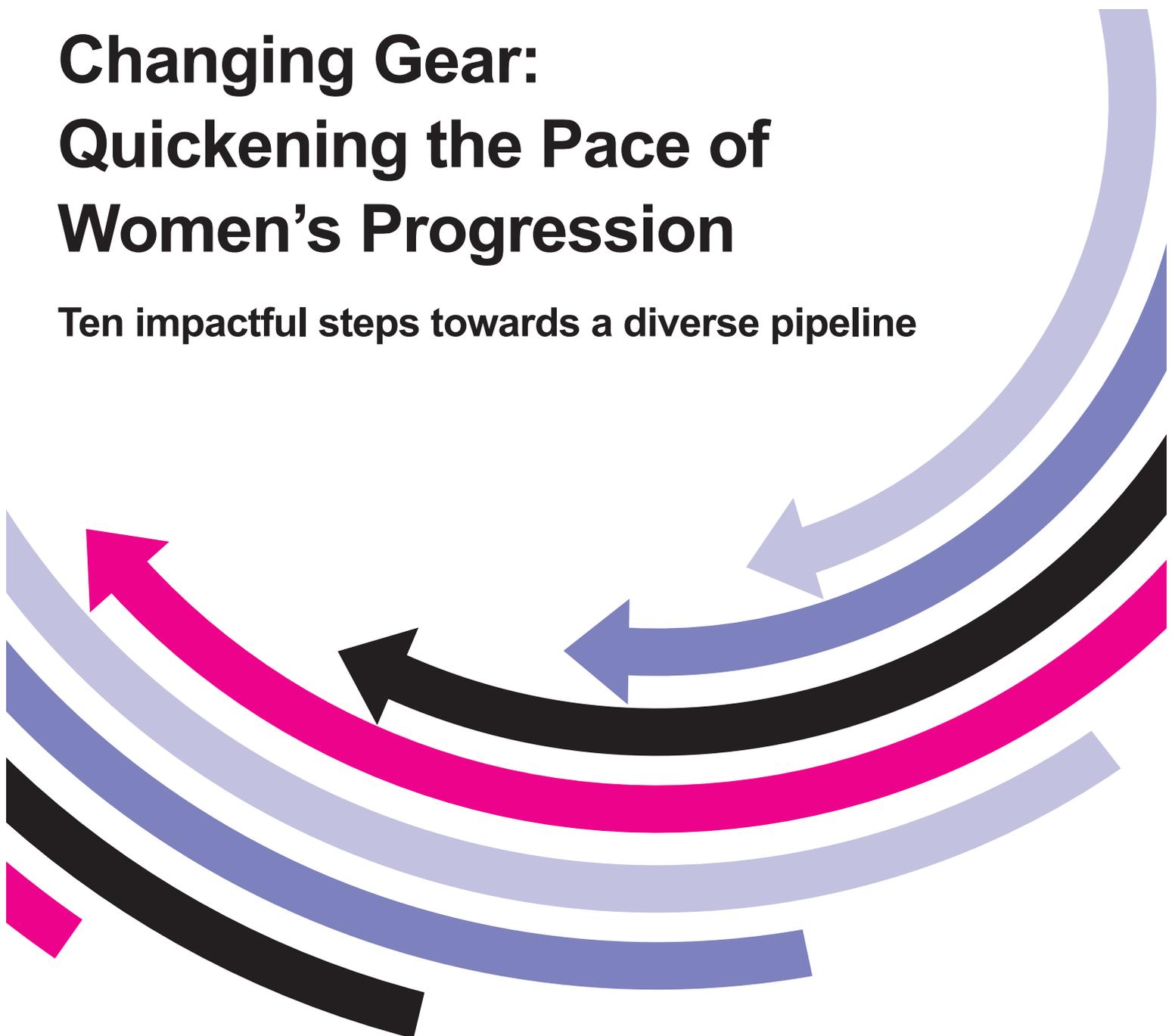# Opportunity Now

Changing Gear: Quickening the Pace of Women's Progression

Ten impactful steps towards a diverse pipeline

Contents

Foreword

Since the publication of the landmark Lord Davies report, *Women on Boards*, UK employers have approached the issue of diversifying our boardrooms with renewed vigour. A central problem remains, however: the pool of potential female candidates reaching senior levels of our organisations remains disproportionately low.

Opportunity Now research confirms that the pipeline of UK talent still suffers from some very gendered leaks. Even among leading employers who are publically committed to promoting women's advancement, women's workforce participation reduces from 54% at non-managerial levels to 29% at senior management level, and further still to 18% at executive level, or just 12%[†] in the private sector.

Employers wishing to become more representative at the top therefore face a two-fold challenge: to rapidly upskill or recruit senior women leaders ready for director level responsibility, whilst also quickening the pace of change for women's progression at every level of their organisation.

Addressing these challenges can reap significant benefits for employees, organisations and the economy, as Opportunity Now laid out in our recent publication, *The Business Case for Gender Diversity*.

Businesses often ask us, "what one thing can we do to advance our women more quickly?". Unfortunately, there is no singular magic bullet. However, the fact that the question continues to be asked confirms that amid a sea of initiatives, a wealth of policies and a backdrop of extensive debate and guidance, some employers are struggling to see the wood for the trees.

In this document, Opportunity Now has condensed over twenty years of research, knowledge and *insight* into what we believe to be the ten most impactful factors influencing the speed of change for women's progression. In a format which aims to be accessible to everyone in your organisation, not just HR experts, this one stop shop for diversifying your talent pipeline should serve as a health-check for those who are at advanced stages of their diversity and inclusion journey, and a starter for ten for those who are just beginning it.

Now is not the time to reinvent the wheel; but it is, we hope, the ideal moment to change gear.

Helen Wells
Director, Opportunity Now

[†] http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/benchmarking/index.html

Ten impactful steps towards a diverse pipeline

STEP 1 Meaningful measurement: evidence-led learning

Effectively monitoring the outcomes of all interventions to enable the progression of women within your workplace is an absolute. As the well-known business mantra suggests, "what gets measured, gets done", and in Opportunity Now's twenty years of experience, the organisations who have accrued the most detailed and reliable evidence base for their diversity and inclusion strategy are indeed those who also lead the way and reap the best results. Done well, gender-led monitoring highlights longitudinal trends in a company's diversity journey whilst also quickly flagging up anomalies or weaknesses in performance in a timely fashion that allows early response.

Four crucial questions should inform companies approach to monitoring their success on women's advancement: what factors will you measure, what metrics will you use, how will you collect your data, and how will you use it. The more performance indicators you measure against, the more detailed a picture you will accumulate; however, capturing a breadth of information is only worthwhile if all that information is relevant and, most importantly, used to actively inform organisational learning and drive insightful, evidence-led change.

Measuring workforce data by gender is essential, preferably vertically, horizontally, by cross-cutting diversity strands and by **working pattern** [*click through to step 7*]. Other factors leading organisations frequently measure through a gender lens include recruitment and selection, **promotion and appraisal** [*click through to step 6*], learning and development, staff turnover, exit interview, bullying and harassment, pay and reward, change management processes, product and service design, marketing, consumer profile, consumer satisfaction, procurement and purchasing, and community investment. Communicating women's progression data upwards and sideways within an organisation within a regular cycle will ensure all business areas are thoroughly informed of the impact of their actions

Key messages:

Select meaningful performance indicators

Communicate information upwards and sideways

Actively learn from monitoring data and take action where necessary

Why:

Only 18% of leading employers measure the proportion of women on their critical assignments, and as few as 8% measure the number of women on their global assignments[v]

How:

ON Measuring the Impact: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/ evaluate_your_organisation/measuring_the_impact.rma

Who:

BT Transparency Award: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_ awards_2012/transparency_award/bt_the_transparency.html

STEP 2 Accountability: owning the speed of change

The most sophisticated approaches to advancing women in the workplace are only likely to succeed if all invested parties are clear on one essential thing: where the buck stops. Explicit executive accountability for ultimate progress, combined with designated lower-level management responsibility for meeting individual targets or achieving specific outcomes, is the best possible safety net for ensuring an organisation can genuinely control and accelerate the speed of change towards gender equality.

In the modern workplace, extensive evidence suggests that the flatter and less hierarchical an organisation's structure, the more likely it is to excel. A key tool for "flattening" organisational culture

is to reduce perceived barriers between leaders and those who are expected to deliver for them by enhancing communication and inviting employees, as well as external stakeholders, to hold decision makers to account.

To quicken the pace of change on women's progress, Opportunity Now recommends that boards set ambitious but achievable targets for increasing their gender diversity, which are communicated to all business areas, with named individuals taking responsibility for defined actions towards achieving them. Organisations should then report a dash board of monitoring data to the board on a regularised calendar, appointing a named senior executive to take responsibility for

driving progress against the agreed targets. Furthermore, devolving accountability to other levels of management and writing this into performance objectives provides a further layer of incentive and answerability, ensuring goals are likely to become a reality.

Publically reporting your progress on women's progress represents cutting edge practice and can lead to a "virtuous circle" in which external interest in your successes reinforces internal enthusiasm for going from strength to strength and truly changing gear in the journey towards equal progression.

Key messages:

Ensure named executive level accountability

Write gender equality objectives into management appraisals

Publically report on women's progression

Why:

73% of board level diversity champions have named accountability for delivery against gender equality objectives[vi]

How:

ON Leadership for Change-leading accountably:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/on_leadership_for_change/index.html

Who:

Deutsche Bank: Colin Grassie, Gender Champion:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/champion_award/the_champion_award_.html

STEP 3 Inclusive leadership: motivation from the top

Inclusive leadership is a leadership style which embraces, encourages and taps into the creativity and ideas which come about in non homogenous groups. Truly inclusive leaders make everyone in their workforce regardless of gender feel more valued, more confident, more authentic and clearer about their career opportunities. As a result, leading inclusively increases loyalty and motivation, leading to better staff retention and greater innovation, as well as, crucially, better advancement of women. Inclusive leaders are currently pioneer leaders; breaking new ground, learning through example and experience, not through organisational design.

Despite the benefits of this type of leadership, inclusive leadership is insufficiently widespread in UK workforce today. 68% of employees told us that less than half the leaders and managers in their organisation are inclusive leaders, and only 5% of employees say that 75% or more of the leaders in their organisation are inclusive. Leaders whose employees currently judge them to be inclusive need to go further, with only 25% of staff confirming their inclusive leader was skilled at challenging non inclusive behaviour in others.

Opportunity Now recommends that employers define the strategic imperative for inclusive leadership,; identify the organisation's inclusive leadership gap; equip leaders to become great inclusive leaders by examining their behaviours, knowledge, skills and actions; and building a change agent group to drive through change by walking the talk. Including inclusiveness criteria into the performance appraisal of management is an effective tool towards making rapid progress; assessment of managers' inclusiveness should include upwards feedback from manages to ensure 360 degree evaluation.

Opportunity Now's *Leadership for Change* research also assesses the crisis in trust brought on by the economic downturn, and how the leadership competencies of effective communication, emotional intelligence and networking are key to future-proofing an organisation.

Key messages:

Assess how inclusive your leadership teams are

Develop leaders' adaptability, innovativeness and open-mindedness

Identify change agents to lead by example

Why:

81% of employees believe an inclusive leader has improved their productivity and performance[xiii]

How:

ON Inclusive Leadership: From Pioneer to Mainstream:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/on_inclusive_leadership/index.html

Who:

Vodafone: Inclusive leadership workshop:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2010/case_studies/global_award/vodafone.html

STEP 4 Inclusive cultures: from fair to empowering

In order for diverse talent to flourish, employers must create a working environment in which each employee can authentically "bring themselves to work" and feel motivated to realise their potential. From meeting times to internal communications, from physical environment to management behaviours, small nuances in a workplace can accumulate into a culture that enhances innovation, individualism and engagement, or one that undermines it.

Regularly gauging employee engagement through surveys and focus groups can provide real insight into the current organisational culture and the impact this has on staff. It is essential that this learning is acted upon and changes put in place wherever negative practices or processes are detected. Information from employees should be disaggregated by demographics to ensure that diverse groups feel equally valued, motivated and rewarded. Where one dominant group is found to succeed and thrive in a workforce at the expense of others, those in the dominant group should be made part of

the solution in working towards a healthier culture to ensure their understanding and buy-in for doing things differently. Opportunity Now's *What Hold's Women Back?* research assesses the impact of different personal styles on women's behaviour. Employee *networks* can be key to quickening culture change, but these should be outward facing and have *leadership buy-in* [*click through to step 2*] to avoid pigeonholing employees by demographic or creating equally exclusive sub-cultures.

Key messages:

Regularly assess employee engagement

Ensure inclusive internal communications

Understand the impact of individual and group behaviours

Why:

A highly engaged workforce has been shown to increase corporate growth, boost profitability, reduce sick days and improve client satisfaction[vi]

How:

ON toolkit on changing organisational culture: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/on_toolkits/changingorgculture.rma

Who:

PwC: Inclusive Culture: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/inclusive_culture/the_inclusive_2.html

Building a fully Inclusive Culture at National Grid: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/about_us/on_rfo_media_centre/blog_spot/national_grid.html

STEP 5 Identifying talent: what does your future workforce look like?

The best employers need to be able to recognise the best talent. Traditional methods of assessing the skills and potential of current and future employees have historically been subject to bias on the part of line managers and recruiters, leading to blinkered perspectives of what talent looks like. This in turn has led to unconscious mirror-imaging in appointment and promotions processes, whereby employees who exert similar behaviours and display similar skills sets to their superiors are most likely to flourish.

Opportunity Now recommends employers undergo a rigorous evaluation of their talent identification processes, using employee focus groups to help uncover windows through which unconscious bias could creep in. Talent management systems should then be redesigned taking proactive measures to reduce opportunities for perpetuating inequalities. Evidence should be gathered on where women and men are progressing, and systems tested for bias. For example, an appraisal system where more men are regularly assessed more highly should be reviewed.

Effective unconscious bias training should be rolled out to all staff involved in assessing employee talent, awakening knowledge of their own potential preconceptions, and bringing relevant scenarios to life. Continually measuring [*click through to step 1*] the diversity of candidates against their progression within the organisation will reveal how effective this has been. Opportunity Now also encourages employers to align the particular skills they are seeking to identify and develop to their overall business goals, to ensure capacity to meet organisational objectives now and in the future.

Each organisation should understand their own bespoke business case for achieving a diverse workforce, and this should be communicated thoroughly to ensure all managers and recruiters take responsibility for making decisions which accelerate rather than hinder the pace of change.

Key messages:

Rigorous systems

Unconscious bias training

Business-led skills-base

Why:

85% of executives agree that a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial to encouraging different perspectives and ideas that drive innovation

How:

ON toolkit on talent management and succession planning: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/on_toolkits/talent_management.rma

Who:

GE Capital: Directing Diverse Talent: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/diverse_women_award/the_directing_1.html

STEP 6 Appraisal to promotion: right people, right time

Routine employee appraisals often represent missed opportunities to recognise those who are excelling in different ways and truly reward their success either through remuneration, promotion or personalised development. Where either manager or employee regards appraisals as a tick-box exercise or arbitrary hoop to jump through the process is unlikely to lead to a meaningful exchange which serves to significantly affect the contribution the employee goes on to make within the organisation.

Effective succession planning strategies, considering likely business needs 6 months, 2 years and 5 years into the future for example, are key to making appropriate decisions on the speed at which to develop promising employees. Tight communication between line managers and those with the power to sign off decisions on pay and reward is likewise essential. Most of all, appraisals should represent a genuine two way dialogue; a valuable face-to-face opportunity to listen to the aspirations and concerns of employees, and to receive and act upon feedback their own evaluation of both their professional strengths and areas for development and the organisations' pros and cons as an employer.

Promotions should be closely monitored through a gender equality lens to learn more about each department's record in advancing women to different levels. Extensive internal advertisement of upcoming vacancies should sit hand in hand with intensive management encouragement to ensure factors such as confidence, ambiguity about responsibilities or fear of a long-hours culture do not deter any potential candidates. Appraisal mechanisms which are linked to promotion or progress should be transparent and monitored for differential gender impact. The same rigid best practice should apply to promotions panels as to external recruitment panels, with transparent processes, inclusive methods of assessment and gender-balanced interviewing teams all proving vital.

Key messages:

Ensure appraisals are meaningful two-way communications

Prioritise business-led succession planning

Design rigorous, transparent promotions processes

Why:

88% of leading employers measure who they are recruiting by gender, but a smaller 74% measure who they are promoting by gender[iv]

How:

ON Line Managers and Diversity: Performance and Appraisal:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/line_managers_and_diversity/performance_and_appraisal/p_a.rma

Who:

Addleshaw Goddard: Gender review of promotions process:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/advancing_women_in_the_workplace/addleshaw_goddard.html

STEP 7 Embedding agility, flexibility with impact

Flexible working is a key enabler towards women's participation in the labour market. By acknowledging that most jobs can be designed outside of traditional nine-to-five patterns, employees or potential employees with any number of responsibilities or interests outside their day job can be enabled to make a fuller contribution in the workplace. Creating agile workplaces also saves time, money and the environment. A compelling business case confirms that increasing flexibility reduces overheads, carbon emissions, sick days and attrition.

However, is some workplaces "flexible working" risks becoming a new form of segregation, a "Mummy Track" option available only to people with caring responsibilities or otherwise less able to participate in traditional ways of work. In contrast, modern employers think innovatively of work as an activity, not a place, and assess employee output, not hours. Opportunity Now encourages all employers to roll out flexible working opportunities to their whole workforce, at all levels, re-planning workspaces to enable this as necessary. Doing so is likely to boost productivity, innovation and morale, as well as reducing

the bureaucracy of administering flexibility for the few rather than the many. If this is not logistically possible for your workforce at present, we recommend starting by closely **monitoring** [*click through to step 1*] the pay and progression of those currently on flexible working arrangements, to ensure their arrangements serve as an enabler for progression, not a honey-trap.

Opportunity Now's ***Out of Office*** research analyses the team dynamic of flexible workers and gives crucial advice on increasing trust, morale and productivity.

Key messages:

Support managers to unpick default job designs

Embed agility at all levels

Measure pay and progression of flexible workers

Why:

78% of managers recognise that flexible working increases employee loyalty[viii]

How:

ON Out of Office toolkit: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/on_out_of_office/out_of_office_11/out_of_officeii.rma

Who:

Dell: Agile Workplace: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/agile_workplace/dell.html

STEP 8 Interventions with impact: coaching, mentoring and sponsorship

Offering targeted development opportunities such as coaching, mentoring and senior sponsorship programmes can be a hugely effective way to overcome barriers preventing equality of advancement in the workplace. Employers have become increasingly sophisticated in the design of such programmes and the selection of candidates, with interventions such as reverse mentoring (from senior managers to more junior employees and vice versa) and co-coaching (within organisations or with external partners) have become commonplace.

Consideration should be given to the selection or attraction of appropriate candidates for development programmes, including deciding whether women-only schemes are the most suitable way to advance women candidates. "Sticky" areas of the employee pipeline where female staff fail to progress onwards in equal numbers are obvious cohorts with which to start. Goals, objectives and timescales should be clear from the outset, and expectations of mentors and mentees agreed and mutually understood alongside success criteria. The best programmes are designed to meet the particular development needs of candidates whilst also filling gaps in current business needs and advancing the leadership skills of mentors, coaches and sponsors. Evaluating the short and long-term impact of any interventions is critical, with any disappointing impacts analysed to inform the redesign of future programmes.

Key messages:

Ensure clear expectations, timescales and goals

Tie development programmes to critical business projects

Evaluate the impact of programmes on candidate's careers and business success

Why:

90% of mentees say mentoring has increased their self-reflection about their career progression, and 80% of mentees report an increase in self confidence[iii]

How:

ON training and development guidance:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/exemplar_employers/training_and_development/best_practice_recommendations/index.html

Who:

Credit Suisse: Mentoring Advisory Group:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/advancing_women_in_the_workplace/credit_suisse.html

STEP 9 One size fits few: normalising non linear career paths

Gone are the days when a job was for life and typical careers followed recognised steps from entry level to retirement. In a multi-generational globalised workforce, the paths employees have taken before joining your workforce will be enriched with variety, and their hopes and plans for the future equally diverse. The average length of service with any one employer has reduced considerably over the decades, and employees are more likely than ever to move between roles and industries, as well as in and out of the labour market all together. Employers who can structure their talent management processes in a way which recognises and captures life and work experience gained in different environments will be better positioned than those which are rigid in the types of experience they expect staff to have garnered in order to be considered for particular roles, projects or promotions.

Opportunity Now advises employers to revisit any unnecessarily rigid pre-requisites for advancement, especially considering factors which inadvertently filter out disproportionate numbers of women such as international placements or previous boardroom experience. Particular attention should be given to revisiting pre-requisites that present hurdles at stages of the workforce hierarchy where monitoring data reveals differences in gender progression are especially apparent. Opportunity Now also recommends developing appropriate policies and line manager training around the management of career breaks, particularly parental leave. Tailored support during the year following return from maternity leave for example can assist long-term retention (many organisations have strong maternity return rates after a first child but diminished rates after second or subsequent children).

With the end of statutory retirement ages and the extension of the state pension age, employers may also wish to examine their provision for staggered retirements, or return to work after initial retirement.

Key messages:

Assess promotion prerequisites to see what is really necessary, and undertake analysis to develop an understanding of what has a gendered impact

Support career breaks and return to work

Offer alternatives to a retirement "cliff edge"

Why:

Over 70% of female executives are not found through traditional recruitment or search channels[ix]

How:

ON guidance on women returners:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/exemplar_employers/women_returners/

Who:

Citi: Maternity transitions:
http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/awards_2009/2009_case_studies/innovation_award/citi.html

STEP 10 Beyond his and hers: occupational integration

Despite material progress on many areas of workplace gender equality in recent years, the segregation of men and women into different occupations remains deeply ingrained. A disproportionate number of women in the UK are clustered in job categories known as the '5 Cs' – cleaning, catering, cashiering, clerical work and caring roles. Women make up only 12% of all posts within the science, engineering and technology sectors, and a mere 1% of frontline jobs in the construction industry[xi]. Even within organisations in which the overall percentage of female employees is well balanced, vertical segregation is often present, for example in the retail sector, where women make up the majority of entry-level positions but a small minority of executive roles. Across all sectors horizontal segregation of professional roles continues to be prevalent, for example the clustering of women into HR roles and men into IT roles.

Both forms of segregation contribute to the UK's continued gender pay gap, with fewer women progressing to better paid levels, and female-dominated vocations being historically less well valued than male. Tackling organisational pay gaps can increase workforce agility, improve employee morale, avoid tribunal costs and cultivate ambition. Opportunity Now advises employers to closely monitor the percentages of men and women in different roles and departments; and to take proactive steps to encourage current and future employees into non-traditional areas. Opportunity Now's ***Sticky Floors, Cement Ceilings*** research details how women are concentrated in low-skill roles beneath their potential, and what organisations can do to better harness their talents.

Job-shadowing opportunities allowing existing staff to experience a typical week in another department can improve internal mobility whilst also boosting whole-business understanding and internal communication. Working with schools, colleges and universities to offer inspiring insights and experience into non-traditional areas can reap rewards in generating a more diverse future pipeline, as can targeted public relations campaigns to bust inaccurate myths about the industry's **culture** [*click through to step 4*], hours, conditions or opportunities.

Key messages:

Understand the gender vertical and horizontal breakdown of your workforce

Proactively promote the image of ill-perceived sectors

Partner with the education sector to attract future talent

Why:

Females consistently achieve higher grades than males in IT-related subjects, but fill just 17% of IT & Telecoms professional occupations[xii]

How:

ON guidance on occupational segregation: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/best_practice/exemplar_employers/occupational_segregation/recommended_best_practice/

Who:

Goldman Sachs: Inspiring the Workforce of the Future: http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2012/inspiring_the_workforce_of_the_future/the_santander_award.html

Further Reading

Understand the business case for gender diversity:

http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/resources/on_food_for_thought_fact_sheets/the_business_case.html

Benchmark your progress on Gender and Race diversity:

http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/benchmarking/index.html

Showcase your successes at the Opportunity Now awards:

http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/events/booking/expression_of.html

Contact us

Opportunity Now is the gender campaign of Business in the Community, which stands for responsible business.

Opportunity Now empowers employers to accelerate change for women in the workplace. We work with our membership of employers, from private, public and education sectors to offer tailored, practical and pragmatic advice on workplace issues.

For further information on Opportunity Now, please call 020 7566 8650 or visit www.bitcdiversity.org.uk

This report was written by Claire Reynolds for Opportunity Now.

With thanks

Opportunity Now would like to thank our Advisory Board for its continued insight and support:

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Notes