

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY**



Opportunity Now

Project 28-40

The Recommendations



Headline recommendations and key findings

If you're serious about change, you as CEOs and senior leaders need to take the lead on women's progression, moving this from a diversity initiative to a core business priority. Set aspirational targets for the numbers of women you want to see at each senior level in your organisation

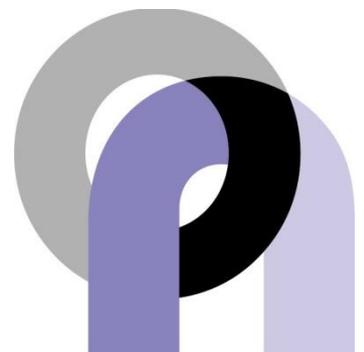
Prioritise the development of excellent managers at every level of your organisation

Create a truly agile organisation, with women and men able to work in a way that makes them productive and engaged. Look at job design, technology, agile teams, and defeat the flexible working stigma that holds women back. Allow for non-linear careers – your top talent will have times in their lives they need to take a step back

Recognise that harassment and bullying still occurs, despite well-meaning policies. Call it out, deal with perpetrators, and make it simple and straightforward to report

28–40 women:

Build your network – be in a position to know about opportunities as they come up. Get real on sponsorship– identify senior people who will advocate for you. If you want a mentor, ask them



Getting the basics right

Ensure there are regular conversations about professional development for each employee. Have annual performance reviews for all. Encourage honest discussion about career path and life outside work
[Find out more online](#)

Include third party assurance in promotion and annual review – such as someone from HR, employee relations, D&I
[Find out more online](#)

Encourage honest discussions between line manager and employee about career path and life outside work. Consider mapping the next two or three assignments ahead for members of staff, where they want to be and when, and determine with them what is needed for progression. Provide regular and constructive feedback

Define what effective sponsorship looks like within your organisation – talk to junior staff about the importance of it and how to use it to their advantage
[Find out more online](#)

Review promotion processes and internal recruitment processes for bias
[Find out more online](#)

Ensure unconscious bias awareness programmes are mandatory for all managers, are adapted to different business units, and are periodically refreshed

Inclusive leadership is essential, managers need to develop all their team members, and ensure minority groups are not being excluded. Review recruitment, promotion and assessment of managers using our Inclusive Leadership toolkit
[Find out more online](#)

Empower network groups to become Business Resource Groups to address business needs. Such initiatives can be used to initiate change, provide support to women who are isolated, provide management with information about the diverse experiences, concerns and aspirations of their team, act as a communications conduit, and serve as a forum for developing new business ideas

Bullying and harassment

Communicate your zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment to all employees. Use harassment advisors to encourage reporting. Focus group participants suggested less formal or confrontational approaches

Establish both informal and formal mechanism by which complaints can be made confidentially. Ensure standards of expected behaviour are clear and that complaints procedures are accessible, safe, and simple to follow

Train managers on bullying and harassment– link with diversity training and unconscious bias training. Cover issues such as;

- what B&H is and how to deal with it
- how to stand up for team members.

Encourage managers to call it out and encourage more reporting

[Find out more online](#)

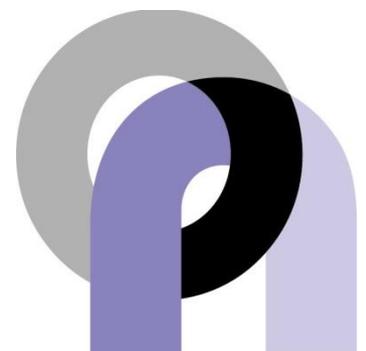
Leaders should challenge inappropriate behaviour and speak about what is and isn't acceptable at internal events or in training

Monitor the diversity of employees bringing complaints and record the nature of the incident – e.g. sexist, sexual or otherwise. If one group is found to be bringing a disproportionate number of complaints, take steps to understand the reasons why and further steps to address this

Consult internally to determine levels of bullying and harassment and find real life examples to use sensitively in training. Run focus groups with women and men to listen to the experiences of workplace culture

Consider the diversity of women – We found BAME women and LGBT women particularly affected. Work with diversity networks and unions groups to understand how women from different backgrounds are affected and how to support them in responding to and reporting bullying & harassment

Use powerful campaigns around everyday sexism, sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination at work, etc to improve awareness. Use real examples and underline your zero tolerance approach. Ensure no offensive images are displayed in the workplace



Agile working

Agile working is seen as potentially career limiting. Flexible workers are seen as less committed and flexible working is viewed as affecting progression.

Start open dialogue about flexible working in your organisation – with men and women. Define what it means to your organisation and talk to all staff about how being agile can make them more productive

Back to basics – ensure good performance management training for line managers on how to manage flexible workers and those working at home
[Find out more online](#)

Ensure the technology and infrastructure is in place for home based working, where possible. Encourage both men and women to use it to their and the business' advantage

Agile working must work for all men and women – it is not about children. Review job design to ensure it takes into account different ways of working. Pilot agile working within your team, for example ask all employees to work remotely one day a week and review impact on performance

Provide clear KPI's and deadlines for remote workers. Hold regular evaluations between line manager and employee to ensure this works for both parties

Employers need to invest in enhanced paternity/parental leave to improve the experience of both male and female employees. This will encourage a societal shift towards partners sharing the balance of care and responsibility for families

Ensure every member of staff has a work-life balance objective to encourage a culture of flexible working for the benefit of all. Encourage staff to set their personnel objective and discuss openly and in performance reviews or one to ones

Employers should monitor the pay and progression rates of those currently on flexible working arrangements, to ensure their arrangements are serving as an enabler to progression

Profile all kinds of flexible workers and reward people who do it successfully, especially at senior levels. Host sharing forums, create agile work ambassadors in every business unit

Creating agile workplaces saves time, money and the environment. Provide flexible working to all employees and redesign workspaces to enable this as necessary

Opportunity Now has extensive research and recommendations for successful flexible / agile strategies. The Out of Office research examines both the practicalities of flexible / agile working and seeks to identify the levels of trust in workplace relationships. The document summarises team member views on trust, respect and management/ leadership styles

Find out more online:

[Best Practice](#)

[Case Studies](#)

[Research](#)

Aspiration & progression

Women have told us they are ambitious and confident and feel they receive support from their partners, but feel much less encouraged by their employers, both in terms of the actual workplace culture and career development.

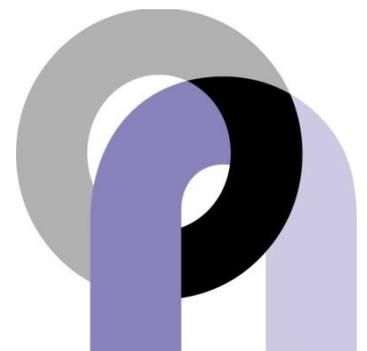
We don't need to 'fix' the women –some interventions are too focused on giving women confidence. Accept that women express their confidence and ambition in different ways. The current model of work is designed for men by men and only rewards a linear progression

Move on from approaches of the past that focussed on "fixing the women". Make the shift to a 21st century workplace. Challenge the inflexible working patterns and practices, which do not work for women and also fall short for many men

Be transparent about the criteria for success and progression in your organisation. Ensure these are not biased towards one gender. Inform staff what is needed to progress to the next level, along with transparent and defined routes for promotion. Ensure these value diverse experiences that will in turn add value to the role and the organisation

Review how people manage and what management attributes are valued in your organisation. Expect managers to take time to have open conversations with women about their ambitions, talk openly about work-life balance, appreciate that male/female ambition is subtly nuanced.

Employers need to recognise this risk of overlooking talented women, and should invest in raising awareness of the gendered nature of sponsorship, and its importance in progression
[Find out more online](#)

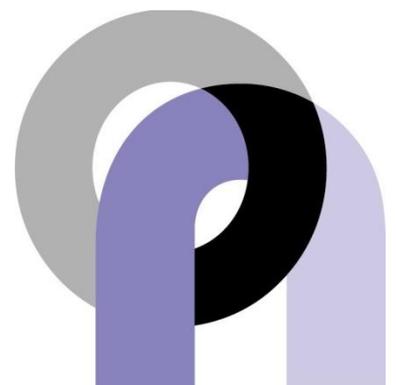


Review your talent management system. Identify weak points where unconscious bias can creep in. Address areas where progression of gender is particularly high or low

[Find out more online](#)

Be inclusive – ensure women are included in all training and development opportunities, not just gender specific programmes. Set targets for women taking up training & career development and monitor the gender of participants

Start early, talk to junior staff about career development and encourage them to consider how using coaches and sponsors can advance their professional development



Balancing work-life and senior positions

Enable senior women to talk about what they value about their work and their professional achievements, as well as how they balance work and family commitments

Enable senior men to make their family commitments more visible. We all have a number of priorities to balance – men talking about this as well could inspire culture change

Shift your work on gender from 'Diversity & Inclusion' to core business activity. This requires excellent leadership that signals that the organisation values all its people
[Find out more online](#)

Formal accountability of the executive team and senior managers, including objectives to increase female progression in performance reviews

Openly discuss the flexibility and autonomy of senior leaders – address the false perception that work-life balance is impossible at senior level

Senior leaders – ensure the recipients of your sponsorship do not all look and sound the same
[Find out more online](#)

Recognise some women enjoy the challenge of juggling work-life balance – encourage more open dialogue from men and women about this. Challenge senior men to talk about time management and role model behaviour. Address the stigma for working fathers working flexibly / going on paternity leave

Encourage men to be allies – provide awareness in public speaking training for male leaders, encourage male leaders as well as female leaders to discuss diversity in day to day operational meetings, client and supplier meetings. Lead from the top

Ensure a gender balance at internal and external business events. Support women who want to be role models publically, allow time for this, but don't pressure women who don't want to

Provide employees opportunities for staff to network and speak to senior women and men. Consider events for staff that are not 'gender specific'

Women returners

For employees returning from a short career break:

Keep in touch with women on maternity leave using online tools, to ease transitions, with terms of contact agreed by the woman and her manager.

Develop training for managers on how to support those returning from a career break, particularly parental leave. Tailored support during the year following maternity leave. Ensure managers are trained each time an employee goes on maternity leave

Provide support for women when they return such as providing a buddy, giving them access to technical updates on recent changes within the industry

For longer term returners (2-3 year career break):

Returnerships offer a potential win-win solution for business and women returners – women returning from a long term career break to work could work for a fixed internship with the possibility of a permanent role at the end, allowing both the employer and the employee to ‘try before they buy’

Returners are able to work on projects of genuine commercial benefit, rebuilding commercial confidence

Find out more online:

[Women and Work the Facts](#)

[Best Practice Recommendations](#)

28-40 women should.....

Identify opportunities for sponsorship – find senior people who will advocate for you. Work hard to earn their sponsorship

Be visible – If you're working hard and achieving, find ways to make sure that others know about it

Build a network – making sure you are in a position to be aware of opportunities as they become available
[Find more online](#)

Step up, volunteer for high-profile assignments, demonstrate your capabilities.

Be proactive about finding your mentor; mentors often benefit from reciprocal mentoring

Opportunity Now recommends that organisations use the data from their Employee Engagement/Opinion Surveys to compare with Project 28-40 findings using analysis of gender and age. Organisations can use this data to further understand the experiences of women of all ages within their organisation and develop an action plan accordingly.

Visit www.opportunitynow.org.uk to find out more



Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7RQ

T: +44 (0)20 7566 8650

F: +44 (0)20 7253 1877

E: info@bitc.org.uk

March 2014



Registered details: 137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ, Telephone 020 7566 8650
Registered Charity No: 297716, Company Limited by Guarantee No: 1619253
Printed on Revive Silk. Designed and printed by SCS Marketing Ltd.