

AIM Insights

GENDER DIVERSITY IN MANAGEMENT TARGETING UNTAPPED TALENT FIRST STEPS

WHITE PAPER February 2012



Australian Institute
of Management
NSW & ACT



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FOREWORD

This paper has been produced by the Australian Institute of Management NSW & ACT in partnership with the Australian National Committee for UN Women (UN Women Australia), as a contribution to leading thought on relevant management topics.

The Institute's vision is "Better Managers and Better Leaders for a Better Society", and we believe that contributions of this nature are directly relevant to the achievement of our vision. They also serve to engage both our members and the broader management community in the work of the Institute, and provide an innovative source of content for our training programs.

The "White Paper" designation signifies that this document:

- Contains our conclusions on an issue that has relevance to the management community
- Builds on our initial thoughts and insights, developed through a process of qualitative and/ or quantitative research and set out in our Green Paper
- Is ready for circulation to both members of the Institute and the broader management community to inform their thinking, policies and practices.

This paper serves as a next step in our journey to advance equality in management.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to Serge Sardo from the Australian Human Resources Institute—guest speaker at our Green Paper launches, and to Helen Conway, Director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency—guest speaker at our White Paper launch.

Sections of this White Paper are extracts of an EMBA report submitted to the University of Sydney. We thank the author, Julie McKay, for generously granting us permission to reproduce her material in this paper.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Professor Robert Wood and Dr Jennifer Whelan from the Gender Equality Program, Melbourne Business School, for making available to us a draft of their forthcoming paper, *Targets and Quotas for Women in Leadership*.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AHRI | Australian Human Resources Institute |
| AICD | Australian Institute of Company Directors |
| AIM | Australian Institute of Management NSW & ACT |
| DCA | Diversity Council of Australia |
| EEO | Equal employment opportunity |
| EOWA | Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency |
| GEP | Gender Equality Program (Melbourne Business School) |
| nef | national economics foundation (UK) |
| SMEs | small to medium enterprises |
| WEPs | Women's Empowerment Principles (UN Women) |
| UN Women Australia | Australian National Committee for UN Women |

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Ensuring the inclusion of women's talents, skills, experience and energies in business requires intentional actions and deliberate policies. Together with the UN Global Compact, UN Women has developed a framework for companies to use when considering how they will fully integrate gender policies and programs into their operations. The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) provide a gender lens through which businesses can analyse the current practices and reporting and consider their diversity strategies.

The Women's Empowerment Principles are:

- 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
- 5 Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- 6 Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- 7 Measure and publically report on progress to achieve gender equality

UN Women Australia is encouraging all Australian businesses to use these principles to frame their responses to gender equality. Each of these principles describes an area of business which has been identified by global experts as being central to achieving gender equality.

Your organisation can join the Australian Institute of Management NSW & ACT and other leading Australian businesses and sign on to the Women's Empowerment Principles by contacting Jessica French via Jessica.french@unwomen.org.au

Your CEO would be required to sign a CEO's statement of support, expressing his/her support for advancing gender equality between women and men to:

- bring the broadest talent pool into the organisation
- further the companies' competitiveness
- meet social responsibility and sustainability commitments
- model behaviour for other companies
- encourage economic and social conditions that provide opportunities for women and men
- foster sustainable development in the countries in which we operate

Signatories to the WEPs are able to display the UN Women Australia logo on their website and become part of a global network of businesses all working together to achieve equality.

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RESEARCH INSIGHTS

In spite of some key advances for women in the workforce over the past few decades and a growing body of evidence demonstrating a strong business case for gender diversity, women remain underrepresented in management and leadership roles.

This project took as its starting point the seemingly intractable nature of gender inequity in our leadership ranks. We asked: what is stopping us from moving forward? And how could we most successfully intervene to accelerate the change process?

From a business perspective, pursuing the ‘diversity dividends’ of gender-balanced leadership would seem to be a rational choice. However, as contemporary policy makers and change management practitioners will tell us, a number of behavioral factors are at play in the way that we approach change, which means that our decisions are not always as rational as we imagine them to be.

We note in particular the role of ‘habit’—unconscious as well as conscious—in inhibiting progress. Unconscious bias—ingrained stereotypes that we hold and that inform our decision-making but of which we are unaware—manifests in the kind of gendered language we sometimes hear in the workplace and in the perceptions that surround women in leadership (for example, that women are not as ambitious as men).

Unconscious bias can be changed, but the task of bringing unconscious interpretation into conscious awareness is a difficult one. It involves dedicated attention and time in order that habits can be modified and new ways of seeing the world brought into play.

This paper identifies three areas through which AIM and UN Women Australia believe important inroads can be made:

- targets and quotas;
- workplace redesign, including workplace flexibility; and
- a gender equality attitudinal workplace campaign.

Recently, public attention has focused on the low numbers of women appointed to corporate boards. If we are to achieve gender-balanced leadership at the board level, it is important that we increase the numbers of talented women entering our senior management ranks.

We believe there is still greater potential than has been realised to date, to generate meaningful change through the implementation of targets, providing targets are clearly linked to incentives and/or penalties and outcomes are reported and publicised.

We highlight, in particular, the potential for ‘supplier diversity’—that is, sourcing products and services from suppliers who have a good diversity record. We anticipate that Governments will take a lead on this by using their purchasing power to contract only with businesses with a strong diversity record at all levels of their organisation. This would provide a powerful incentive to comply and set a strong message about the value of gender-balanced leadership.

The issue of mandated quotas continues to divide opinion and we acknowledge that there are risks and challenges to introducing a quotas system. Historically, quotas have generated negative behavioural and attitudinal

responses that have sometimes undermined the change process and the individuals who have been recruited or promoted under a quota practice. At the same time, there is evidence that in the case of Norway, where boardroom quotas were first introduced in 2003, initial anxiety has reduced and people are just getting on with the job.

The landscape of gender diversity in Australia has shifted. Women's participation in the workforce has reached 45 per cent, yet organisational structures and culture—particularly at leadership levels—still operate on the basis that someone is at home looking after the children. Advances in technology mean that the requirement for 'nine-to-five' work in the office is far less relevant than in the past. More and more, in knowledge based industries, we can in theory work from anywhere at anytime. We are yet to fully embrace this flexibility.

Workplace flexibility affords many benefits for both employee and employer—creating a richly diverse workforce and retaining talent, for example. Workplace flexibility is not yet the norm and, in part, this is because the concept is construed within a framework that characterizes flexible work arrangements as an employee benefit or right.

We believe that a framework must be engendered that mainstreams flexible workplace options. In this framework, organisations recognise the business benefits

of a flexible workplace and embrace the flexibility that our twenty-first century digital environment enables. Of course, not every industry or occupation is suited to flexible work arrangements. In many areas, however, the potential is not close to being realised.

To achieve real change in Australian workplaces, more needs to be done to raise awareness about the issues of gender equality at work among the general public—employees and consumers. From our research, it is clear that there is no easy way to determine which companies are prioritising gender equality and the empowerment of women and which are not investing in talent development for women.

From our consultations, it has become apparent that there is only a very limited public understanding about which organisations were leading in the gender diversity space. As such, a need to run a national attitudinal change campaign on gender equality in the workforce, which focuses on employee and societal responsibilities has been identified. The campaign would aim to simplify the issue of equality to two key messages:

- women want to work for companies who will support them; and
- society will not support companies who perpetuate inequality.

As indicated in our recommendations we intend to take practical action to contribute to these areas of change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 That the Australian Government determine aspirational targets for women in management and work with stakeholders to determine strategies to assist businesses to operationalize these targets.

2 That an independent working group of Government and peak bodies determine and publish best practice management standards to underpin and solidify the aspirational targets for women in management.

3 That the best practise management standards for gender diversity link the achievement of targets to management scorecards and that "at risk" executive remuneration be tied to the achievement of these standards.

4 That companies sign up to the UN Women's Empowerment Principles, which set out the following steps for organisations to take:

- Define clearly the strategic case for advancing gender equality within the organisation
- Establish a monitoring mechanism for benchmarks and progress and report annually
- Include goals for progress towards equality in job descriptions and performance reviews

5 That all companies implement clear guidelines that support flexible work for all employees. In particular, such guidelines might consider:

- Placing limitations on the hours that meetings can be organised, for example, between 10 am–3pm to allow for school/childcare drop offs and pick ups
- Exploring options to work at home where possible
- Looking at offering parental leave flexibility, rather than full time leave, over a two year period.
- Using technology, including video technology, to enable workers to fully participate in meetings while out of the office
- Using ‘dial an angel’ services, which could be shared between many companies or work groups, to look after children or other dependents if an employee needs to attend an urgent meeting and is unable to get other care arrangements in place.

Actions

To support these recommendations, AIM NSW & ACT will undertake a discrete project on workplace flexibility with a particular focus on:

- How to manage effectively as a manager on flexible work arrangements, and
- How to manage effectively staff in an organisation with flexible workplace arrangement in place

This project will also identify ways to raise awareness about good practice in workplace flexibility through

the implementation of a workplace flexibility Award for small to medium enterprises.

Concurrently, UN Women Australia will scope a project on an attitudinal change campaign and develop a concept note about how such a public awareness campaign could be developed. It is suggested that the campaign would have two initial phases targeting different groups:

Phase 1: What's the difference?

This campaign would be a consumer education campaign which would encourage people to choose products and services from companies with a strong diversity record. It would use the experience of civil society organisations such as Oxfam’s coordination of the consumer boycotts of Nike when they were found to be using child labour.

Phase 2: We choose you

This campaign would personalise the issue of equality for people and build awareness amongst women about the importance of working for companies that support women’s leadership. It would need to be a visual campaign which could be shown on TV but also in social media which showed women in a range of sectors experiencing working for employers who were proactively supporting women’s leadership and those who were not. The key message would be – choose employers who will support you.

The key aims of the campaign would be to:

- increase awareness of the current state of gender equality in corporate Australia
- profile the top 10 companies who are supporting women in management
- generate significant media discussion about accelerating progress towards gender equality
- ensure that more than 20 percent of board directorships are held by women by December 2013

INTRODUCTION

In spite of some key advances for women in the workforce over the past few decades and a growing body of evidence demonstrating a strong business case for gender diversity, women remain underrepresented in management and leadership statistics.

This project took as its starting point the seemingly intractable nature of gender inequity in our leadership ranks. We asked: what is stopping us from moving forward? And how could we most successfully intervene to accelerate the change process?

On the surface the idea of gender equality seems quite straightforward: provide women and men with equal opportunities and the rest will follow. In reality, however, this objective has proved difficult to achieve.

There is no shortage of research exploring the barriers to women's progress into the leadership ranks and there is a wealth of academic and practitioner literature on strategies to improve gender diversity outcomes in the workplace. The status of women more broadly has a Federal Government office dedicated to improving social and economic outcomes for women and we have seen a burgeoning of diversity consultants.

During our consultation phase, we heard some inspiring examples of organisations with leading diversity management policies in place and stories of women who had successfully navigated the leadership pipeline. At the same time we registered a sense of frustration at how slow the pace of change has been. Was this "just another talkfest", someone asked, "what were we going to do to make something actually *happen*?"

It was a confronting question but one that we were already asking ourselves.

It is clear that we are not alone in our deliberations. In the introduction to a recent Ernst and Young report on women in leadership, Oceania CEO, Rob McLeod, and Accounts and Business Development Leader, Uschi Schreiber, stated:

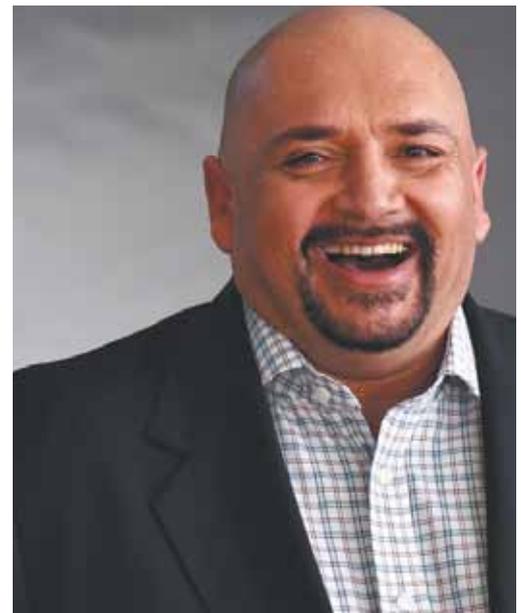
At the end of fiscal 2011...we reflect on the fact that, while awareness is through the roof, champions are on every corner, and many gender equity programs are in place, tangible change is yet to materialise for the majority of organisations (Ernst & Young, 2011: 3).

Why is it so hard to generate change? And what can we do to speed up the process?

This White Paper does three things:

- It addresses the question of why progress has been so slow
- It focuses attention on three different areas through which we believe important inroads could be made to improve gender diversity outcomes: targets and quotas; workplace redesign including flexible workplace options; and a gender equality attitudinal workplace campaign¹
- It outlines recommendations for change including areas where the Australian Institute of Management NSW & ACT (AIM) and UN Women Australia can contribute to the change process

The White Paper builds on our Green (discussion) Paper, which was published in September 2011 and formed the basis for our consultation with AIM and UN Women Australia members and the broader management community. The outcomes of those consultation forums have been incorporated into our findings.



1. We note that there are other areas that require significant attention if gender equality in the workplace is to be achieved, in particular, childcare affordability and gender pay equity.

A SLOW START: THE 'WICKED PROBLEM'

Research tells us that gender diversity in management makes good business sense. Companies with gender-balanced leadership report increased collegiality, less 'group-think' and better insights into the consumer market. Studies have also shown a positive correlation between gender diverse leadership teams and improved corporate performance (Catalyst, 2004).

From a business perspective, pursuing the 'diversity dividends' of gender-balanced leadership would seem to be the rational choice. Yet organisations have been slow to embrace the value-generating challenge of retaining and supporting talented women through the leadership pipeline.

As contemporary policy makers and change management practitioners will tell us, the 'right' or 'rational' choice is not ordinarily the principal driver in achieving broad scale change.

Historically, public policy issues—often termed 'wicked problems' or 'social messes' (Horn, 2001:1)—were addressed within a framework that took as its starting point the neoclassical economic concept of the 'rational man'. This model assumes that people rationally seek to maximise their welfare. In other words, people assess the choices before them in terms of costs and benefits and then select the choice that maximises their net benefits (Knott, 2008). In the main, today's policy makers recognize that social issues require a complex or multi-pronged response that takes into account the motivations and behaviours of people.

According to the new economics foundation (nef) in the United Kingdom, there are seven behavioural principles that affect people's responses and choices (national economics foundation, 2005). These are captured in the following table.

The seven behavioural principles

| | Behaviour | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Other people's behaviour matters | People do many things by observing others and copying, and are encouraged to continue to do things when they feel other people approve of their behaviour |
| 2 | Habits are important | People do many things without consciously thinking about them. These habits are hard to change – even though people might want to change their behaviour, it is not easy for them |
| 3 | People are motivated to 'do the right thing' | There are cases where money is de-motivating as it undermines people's intrinsic motivation, for example you would quickly stop inviting friends to dinner if they insisted on paying you |
| 4 | People's self-expectations influence how they behave | People want their actions to be in line with their values and their commitments |
| 5 | People are loss-averse | People hang on to what they consider 'theirs' |
| 6 | People are bad at calculating when making decisions | People put undue weight on recent events and too little on far-off ones; they cannot calculate probabilities well and worry too much about unlikely events. People are also strongly influenced by how the problem/information is presented to them |
| 7 | People need to feel involved and effective to make a change | Just giving people the incentives and information is not necessarily enough |

Source: national economics foundation, 2005, Executive Summary

All seven of the above behavioural factors are important and we can see them at play in the gender equality arena. Some of these principles are captured through the discussions that follow. We focus particularly on the second of these principles, ‘habits are important’.

Our habits or sedimented patterns of behaviour require “little or no cognitive effort” (national economic foundation, 2005. p 8). They may remain habits simply because they are what we know and feel comfortable with. They may remain habits because we get some kind of “reward” from them (the chocoholic’s fix for example). Finally, they may remain habits because we are not even aware we hold them; they are a part of our unconscious.

Unconscious bias

The majority of organizations today would be unlikely to consciously discriminate and block women’s progress into executive positions. A recent article by McKinsey and Company identifies ‘invisible barriers’ as the key challenge in advancing gender diversity:

“*The last generation of workplace innovations—policies to support women with young children, networks to help women navigate their careers, formal sponsorship programs to ensure professional development—broke down structural barriers holding women back. The next frontier is toppling invisible barriers: mind-sets widely held by managers, men and women alike, that are rarely acknowledged but block the way. (2011: 1)*

The theory of unconscious bias rests on the idea that individuals necessarily develop an embedded, unconscious belief and response system about the world they inhabit through repeated experiences and messaging. This system of belief makes it possible to filter information so that we can effectively make the myriad of decisions required to get through each day. It saves us from having to sort cognitively through each and every piece of information available to us in any one moment to make a decision.²

Diversity training expert, Howard Ross, explains that, “we are generally convinced that our decisions are ‘rational’, but in

reality most human decisions are made emotionally, and then we collect or generate the facts to justify them” (2008: 3). ‘Gut-feeling’ is a classic example. We may choose not to take an action because something just does not quite feel right.

Unconscious bias influences decision-making in a manner in which the individual is unaware. According to Ross we have a perceptual lens that “filters out certain things and lets others in, depending upon certain perceptions, interpretations, preferences and, yes, biases that we have adapted throughout our life” (2008: 3). In other words, day-to-day decisions are informed by a range of automated interpretations, including stereotypes, that an individual is not consciously aware of having (Williams, 2011).

There are also micro affirmations which we all make towards people who we ‘click’ with like gestures of inclusion and opening doors to new opportunities. Too often, we are drawn towards people who are similar to ourselves, which serves to perpetuate the ‘boys club’ which is seen in so many boardrooms and leadership teams (McKay, 2011: 10). People often are not aware that they have these preferences. Within a work context this bias can become a problem if people (unconsciously) recruit and promote people like themselves rather than strictly applying a merit selection process.

Unconscious bias can manifest in a number of ways—in the gendered language we use, for example, to describe an uncompromising boss: tough=man, bitch=woman; and in the perceptions of women in the workplace, particularly in executive roles.

A report by Catalyst argues that gender stereotypes create some clear predicaments for women in the workplace. The identification of three ‘predicaments’ is based on, first, a study of 1,230 USA senior executives’ perceptions of men and women leaders in the United States and Europe; and second, a qualitative analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 women leaders in a large American corporation (cited in Lo Russo, 2010).

The three central ‘predicaments’ identified by Catalyst are replicated in the following table.

2. Ross notes that we are exposed to up to 11 million pieces of information in any one moment, however our brains can only process around 40 (2008: 3).

Catalyst findings – Predicaments faced by women in leadership³

| Predicament | Description |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Extreme perceptions | Too soft, too tough, and never just right. When women acted in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes, they were viewed as less competent leaders and when women acted in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, they were considered unfeminine |
| The high competence threshold | Women leaders face higher standards and lower rewards than male leaders. Respondents' comments revealed that women leaders are subjected to higher competency standards. On top of doing their job, women have to prove that they can lead, over and over again and manage stereotypical expectations constantly. |
| Competent but disliked | Women leaders are perceived as competent or liked, but rarely both. Respondents' comments revealed that when women behave in ways that are traditionally valued for men leaders (e.g. assertively), they are viewed as more competent, but also not as effective interpersonally as women who adopt a more stereotypically feminine style. |

Increasingly, the concept of unconscious bias is being explored by corporates who are trying to ascertain why their gender and diversity statistics are not shifting. Dalitz argues that this bias is worsened by the fact that many of the key decision makers in corporate Australia are of an age when just as they were taught that the sky is blue and fire trucks are red, they understood that men ran businesses and women ran households. This perception does not take into consideration the fact that subsequent generations of women have had access to more education, have greater work aspirations and have different expectations of their roles as worker, wife and mother. One of the most significant examples of unconscious bias which persists today is around 'maternity leave'. The unconscious bias perpetuated by this term is the role of women as primary carers (McKay, 2011: 10).

It is important then, that the right tone is set from the top in an organization. As noted in the table above, people do things by observing others. If our leaders tolerate negatively loaded language and practices the workplace culture will develop along these lines. An important change mechanism that

has come into play in recent years, is the emergence of male champions of change—men in our top ranks who recognize the value that a gender balanced leadership can bring to an organization and publicly promote this as well as modeling good practice in their organizations.

Unconscious bias can be changed, but the task of bringing unconscious interpretation into conscious awareness is a difficult one. Our unconscious biases have been developed and ingrained through numerous repetitions. Re-wiring such deeply ingrained habits requires dedicated attention and time in order that habits can be modified and new ways of seeing the world brought into play.

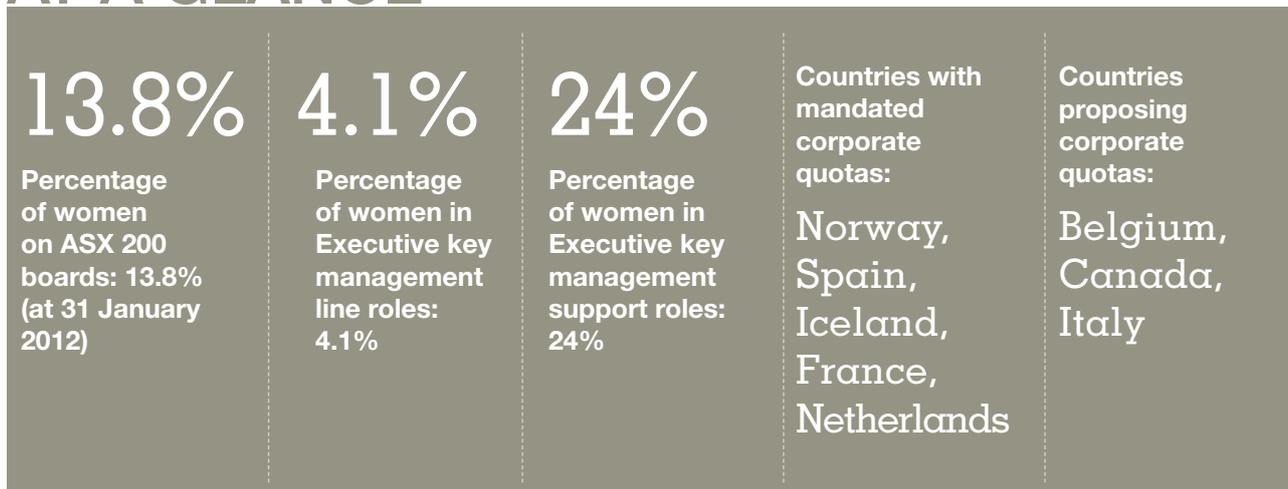
A major piece of research on gender and unconscious bias is currently underway as a part of the Gender Equality Program at the Melbourne Business School. The research will develop socio-demographic and psychological baseline measures on gender attitudes and will examine the impact of unconscious gender bias on a staff selection recruitment task, with the research contributing to the project's training programs.⁴

3. The predicaments and descriptions are taken directly from the Catalyst report, cited in Lo Russo 2010.

4. More information about the Gender Equality Program can be found on the Melbourne Business School website – www.mbs.edu.au

TARGETS AND QUOTAS

AT A GLANCE



In October 2009, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, put on record her support for the introduction of boardroom gender quotas (2009). Fuelled by the changes to the ASX principles,⁵ the issue of gender quotas on boards is now firmly embedded in the media and public imagination.⁶

There are two interrelated dimensions to the debate: the argument for and against gender quotas; and the argument as to whether gender targets or mandated quotas are the best mechanism to achieve gender balanced leadership.

Quotas and targets – what’s the difference?

Gender quotas are a mandated requirement that a specified proportion of women be appointed in particular positions for example to political positions or to corporate boards. Generally quotas are legislated by government, although they may be implemented within an organisation or industry.

It is common for non-compliance with quotas to attract punitive measures. In Norway, for example, where boardroom gender quotas for public limited companies, state owned companies and inter-municipal companies have been introduced, non-compliance attracts specified penalties, including the dissolution of the company (Pande & Ford, 2011: 15).

A **gender target** is ordinarily a “voluntary, aspirational level” that is strived for in order to achieve greater gender-balance. Targets are mostly set on an organisational, industry or sector basis. Targets may be set at board or senior management level or more generally to increase the numbers of women in traditionally male-dominated industries (Whelan & Wood, *forthcoming*).

While targets are not legislated, they can be “given teeth” by linking them to punitive measures — for example, a requirement to publicly report with a ‘name and shame’ response to poor performance— and to incentives, for example by linking gender targets to key performance indicators (KPIs) that are in turn related to performance bonuses.

5. On 30 June 2010, the ASX Corporate Governance Council introduced changes to the *Corporate Governance Principles & Recommendations (2nd edition)*, including recommendations on diversity. Australian listed companies must now adopt and disclose a diversity policy with measurable objectives relating to gender or explain why they have not done so.

6. To-date there have been numerous media articles on boardroom gender quotas and the issue has been raised by high-profile public figures including Her Excellency, the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, and the Shadow Treasurer, Joe Hockey MP.

The arguments

| For quotas | Against quotas |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The playing field is not level. Systemic gender inequality means that women do not have the same access to leadership opportunities as men. Sustained efforts over many years to close the gender gap are not reflected in leadership statistics. Proponents of quotas argue that it is time for legislative intervention. • Meritocracy—the system favoured in Australia in which individuals advance according to their talent and ability and not their class, connections or wealth—cannot be taken at face value. The merits-based system is skewed in favour of men. Quotas compensate for this existing prejudice by ensuring the visibility of talented women as well as talented men. Quotas even out the playing field. • Introduction of a quota system can provide a quick win, which will then have the secondary effects of increasing the pool of positive female role models and normalising the idea of women at the top. Quotas will prompt broader cultural change. • Gender inequality is an ingrained social perception that requires gradual change in public attitude, so quotas serve as a 'temporary special measure' to overcome the structural barriers created by this perception. • The introduction of quotas can help promote gender equality and achieve sustained results if they work hand in hand with other measures such as work-life balance initiatives including work flexibility and career flexibility; support (mentoring, coaching, networking and training) and the promotion of gender equality in the workplace. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those against quotas are not necessarily opposed to the promotion of gender diversity. In fact, the opposite is often true. However, mandatory quotas are seen as a clumsy—and potentially counterproductive—instrument of change. • Quotas are inconsistent with a merit based system where people are selected based on skills and talent rather than their gender. True gender equality should see women competing on the same terms as their male colleagues. A legislated quota system runs counter to this, favouring women at the expense of men. In other words, it is another form of discrimination (sometimes referred to as reverse discrimination). • A quota system will lead to women in leadership positions who are not up to the task; or, at least, to the perception of this. This will have a negative trickle-down effect on women in the workplace. • In the case of corporate boards, imposed quotas interfere with shareholder choice about the composition of their boards. A similar argument is used for gender quotas in politics. In this case a quota system is seen to cut across the democratic rights of voters. • Other measures such as open public debate about diversity coupled with a supportive work culture are as effective as legislated quotas in increasing the number of women on boards and in senior executive positions in the past year. |

Supply and demand

Proponents of boardroom quotas argue that increased numbers of women at the board level will have a trickle down effect and will result in increased numbers of women at senior management levels. A positive correlation between the numbers of women on the board of an organisation and the number of women at a top executive level of that organisation has been identified. It is too early to establish, however, whether increased numbers of women on boards in countries with mandated quotas will result in an increase of women in other senior leadership roles (Whelan & Wood, *forthcoming* and Pande & Ford, 2011: 17).

Whelan and Wood from the Gender Equality Program, Melbourne Business School, note that there is some evidence in the case of Norway that women appointed to boards following the introduction of quotas have less senior management experience than their male counterparts and also to women appointed to boards prior to mandated quotas. As Whelan and Wood explain, this finding suggests “that the real issue is the lack of upper management experiences for women” (Whelan & Wood, *forthcoming*).

This finding suggests that there is an insufficient pool of women in the ranks of upper management.

Jane Bridge from Boardroom Partners points out that the present focus on board quotas, while useful, should not be viewed in isolation from the bigger picture of women in leadership. Bridge argues that it is important we do not simply “watch the numbers” but look “more broadly at the overall change in company performance”. Equally as important, Bridge notes that we need to focus on supply as well as demand:

“Boards have a responsibility to look at both the demand and supply side of the equation. Are they developing women in the organisation who could take on senior management, CEO and board roles? (Bridge, 2011: 19)

What this means, of course, is that there is limited value in boosting the number of appointments of women to corporate boards without ensuring there is a steady pool of talented, board-ready women to take on the roles. In short, it is a leadership pipeline issue.

At first glance, the supply side would appear to be robust with women in Australia accounting for 45 per cent of the paid workforce and over 60 per cent of graduate bachelor degrees (EOWA, 2009: 15). Yet as research shows, increased labour participation rates and levels of attainment for women in education hold a weak correlation to the number of women in corporate leadership positions (Pande & Ford, 2011: 5).⁷ The block in the leadership pipeline hits well before board level and the higher up the ‘corporate ladder’ we go the more the gender ratio is skewed (Coffman, Gadiesh and Miller, 2010).

What this suggests is that intervention at board level by the use of quotas or even the softer option of targets may work best if a similar intervention is made at the senior management level.

Do quotas and targets work?

The big question is, of course, do quotas actually work? Unfortunately there is limited data available on the performance metrics of women who have been employed or promoted under target and quota systems (Whelan & Wood, *forthcoming*).

Whelan and Wood argue, however, that there is an abundance of research that addresses the “psychological and attitudinal consequences” of target and quota practices. To a large extent, the findings of this research show that attitudes to quotas and affirmative action practices are negative. Women employed or promoted under quotas and affirmative action practices are viewed as less competent by others. In turn, this can have an adverse impact on those women (Whelan & Wood, *forthcoming*).

In the case of Norway, reports on the success of the quota system have been mixed. Most agree, however, that the fierce opposition to the quota law when it was initially passed through Parliament in 2003 has dissipated. Claire Braund from Women on Boards reports that in her interviews with Norwegian chairs, directors and CEOs that the general consensus is the quota system “was necessary to drive change, happened relatively painlessly and produced good outcomes for company governance and society” (2012: 22).⁸

Targets, on the other hand, are viewed by some as ineffective, precisely because they are not legislatively mandated. In fact, quotas were introduced in Norway because voluntary targets were unsuccessful. It is on this basis, that the call for Government intervention is often cast. Without a big stick (or a very big carrot), people simply will not act.

The absence of meaningful data on the outcomes (for women and business) subject to gender targets means that it is difficult to assess the efficacy of these programs.

Blocks in the leadership pipeline

- Lack of meaningful flexible-work options for working mothers
- Exclusion from informal networks
- Affordability of childcare
- Unconscious bias (stereotyping and preconceptions about women’s abilities)
- Limited career flexibility options
- Insufficient leadership from the top— a failure to actively support women’s advancement
- Recruitment bias

7. In the past decade the percentage of women with bachelor degrees in Australia has risen dramatically—for example in 2002, 29.2% of women in the 25-29 age bracket held a bachelor degree; this rose to 41% in 2011. In comparison, 21.8% of men in the same age bracket held bachelor degrees, increasing to 29.8% in 2011 (ABS, 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Australia 2012). We note that over time we may see an increase in women in leadership roles as the present high proportion of female graduates move along their career paths.

8. The initial anxiety in Norway, which resulted in some affected companies changing to a new legal structure to circumvent the need to comply, perhaps demonstrates behavioral principle number 5, ‘people are loss-averse’ and hang on to what they consider theirs. Principle 6 also comes into play, ‘people are bad at calculating when making decisions’. The introduction of quotas invoked a great deal of anxiety and some relatively extreme decisions to avoid compliance. In actuality, the transition has been relatively smooth.

Our conclusions

Unsurprisingly, views on quotas in our consultation forums were divided. Some believed it was time for strong government intervention and without this, change would continue to trend at a glacial pace. Others felt that—consistent with Whelan and Wood’s research—mandatory quotas would undermine public confidence in women in leadership roles. In other words, female appointments would be viewed as token and appointees as not up to the job. An online poll conducted by AIM NSW & ACT found that 59 percent of women surveyed would be comfortable to take on a board role if a quota was the reason for them obtaining the role.

We believe that there is still great potential to generate meaningful change through the implementation of targets than has been realised to date, providing targets are clearly linked to incentives and/or penalties and outcomes are reported and publicised. There is a need to develop best practice management standards to underpin these targets which would assist businesses to convert policy to outcomes.

The recently introduced ASX Corporate Governance Council guidelines on gender diversity, which require all publicly listed companies in Australia to adopt and disclose a diversity policy will, it is hoped, have a marked impact on the numbers of women on boards and in senior management roles. The ASX changes are significant in that they are the first time that the ASX listed companies will be required to report publically on their progress towards gender equality. It is hoped that bringing these statistics into the public will ‘shame’ companies into improving diversity.

While it is very early days for these policies to have had impact, it remains unclear what the consequence for non-compliance will be and whether ‘reporting’ without quantifiable targets will have the desired impact. We believe, therefore, that the outcomes of this new requirement should be actively

monitored with a particular focus on the gender numbers at senior management level. There is an opportunity to establish an independent group to measure the effectiveness of the ASX principles and make recommendations to the ASX and to Government about what steps are needed.

The area of supplier diversity’—that is, sourcing products and services from suppliers who have a good diversity record—holds potential if governments takes the lead. On 9 March 2011, the former Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon. Kate Ellis, foreshadowed changes to the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. The proposed changes include consequences for non-compliance and in particular that the Government will not contract with any organization that does not meet its gender equality criteria.⁹ Using Government purchasing power in this way would, we believe, provide a powerful incentive to comply and set a strong message about the value of gender-balanced leadership.

The Act applies to organisations with more than 100 staff and they are required to have workplace programs in place to remove the barriers to women entering roles. Currently, some 3,000 Australian organisations report annually to EOWA.

9. The bill capturing the proposed amendments is due to be tabled in Parliament in the Autumn sittings. The Act will be renamed the *Workplace Gender Equality Act*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the Australian Government determine aspirational targets for women in management and work with stakeholders to determine strategies to assist businesses to operationalize these targets.
- 2 That an independent working group of Government and peak bodies determine and publish best practice management standards to underpin and solidify the aspirational targets for women in management.
- 3 That the best practice management standards for gender diversity link the achievement of targets to management scorecards and that “at risk” executive remuneration be tied to the achievement of these standards.
- 4 That companies sign up to the UN Women’s Empowerment Principles, which set out the following steps for organisations to take:
 - Define clearly the strategic case for advancing gender equality within the organisation
 - Establish a monitoring mechanism for benchmarks and progress and report annually
 - Include goals for progress towards equality in job descriptions and performance reviews

An approach to successfully implementing organizational gender targets

- Tie gender equity KPIs to management performance, pay and bonuses.
- Ensure there is buy-in, particularly from the CEO—the importance of gender equity and the supporting business case must be endorsed by the CEO. Establish an internal diversity council to facilitate the change process.
- Involve the wider organization—communicate the business case through multiple channels and often. Ensure there are appropriate mechanisms through which views and concerns can be expressed.
- Communicate the results—publish the results internally and externally and link the reports to the organization’s values, brand and goals.
- Track progress against set targets—regularly track progress (at least quarterly). Regular tracking enables organization’s to intervene early if progress is off-course.
- Establish a supportive framework to help managers reach their gender equity targets including: support from senior leaders; unconscious bias/self-awareness programs; robust recruitment practices; flexible work practices; bias-free review and remuneration processes (Ernst and Young, 2011: 16-17).

TWENTY FIRST CENTURY WORKPLACES

AT A GLANCE

63%

The proportion of mothers with dependent children, in paid work increased from 43% in 1981 to 63% in 2009 (Baird, 2009)

1/2

Almost half of all fathers living in couple households work more than they would prefer (Pocock et al., 2010)

WORK/LIFE
BALANCE

Workplace flexibility and work/life balance are cited as key to attracting and retaining employees across all generations (Ranstad, 2011)

47%

47% of respondents of the 2010 National Work/Life Benchmarking Study 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they are hindered by leaders in their organisation who find it difficult to change their views about the value of flexible working (Holmes, 2010)

The landscape has shifted

Women's role has changed dramatically over the last 50 or more years. Women have moved from a role centered on the home and bringing up a family, to being a joint, or in some cases the major, income earner for the family. At the same time, albeit to a lesser extent, the role of men has changed with an increased focus on family and child care responsibilities.

What has failed to occur in tandem with these shifts are commensurate changes in organizational structures and work culture, which reflect and facilitate changed employment patterns. As Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland point out, many progressive leaders are now realizing that corporate

systems and cultures developed over more than two centuries of industrialization and post-industrialization are no longer relevant in today's workforce (2009).

Wittenberg-Cox takes her argument a step further tying the dominant culture in our workplaces today with the fact that companies were originally designed by men and perpetuate the attitudes, career-cycles and motivations that characterized the needs of men more than half a century ago. What this means is that the workplace today doesn't necessarily work for the 'modern man' either. We need to stop and ask: what design(s) fits our 21st century lives?

A look back in time....

In the 1960s, 'tea ladies' did the rounds, smoking in the workplace was commonplace, and the standard working week was Monday to Friday, nine to five. Men were the major breadwinners, supporting their wife and family. Some—usually unmarried women—worked full time; part time work and childcare services were rare (ABS, Oct 2011). At this point, personal carer's leave and parental/adoption leave were abstract or unformed concepts.

In 1972 women were first awarded 'equal pay for work of equal value'. It took over a decade before federal legislation (Sex Discrimination Act 1984) was passed to ban discrimination on the basis of sex (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2011).

Fast forward to now....

Times have changed. There is no 'tea lady', smoking in public places is banned and business hours vary greatly. Women account for 45% of the paid workforce in Australia and more women than men are now educated at secondary schools and universities (DFAT, 2011).

The proportion of mothers with dependent children, in paid work was 63% in 2009 (Baird, 2010). In 2010 the Australian Parliament passed the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010, which introduced Australia's first national paid parental leave scheme funded by the Government.

What does the twenty-first century environment look like?

Over the past decade or more, advances in digital technologies have seen a shift in our expectations and in the way we work. The capacity to deliver and access information outside regular business hours means our expectations that people will be readily available at all hours of the day to mediate that information has increased. In knowledge-based industries, large chunks of work can be effectively undertaken at any time of the day or night. The concept of a nine-to-five job has limited relevance.

Along with this, more and more people are working from home and/or 'hot-desking' and it is expected that this practice will rise. Consistent with trends in the United States and Europe, the promise of high-speed broadband through the National Broadband Network (NBN) will likely lead to an increase in teleworking in Australia (AHRI, 2010: 20-21). Again, sitting at the office from nine-to-five will become less of a feature in the workforce.

Australia, along with many other developed countries, is experiencing an ageing population. The decline in fertility rate and higher life expectancy rates has led to a polarised workforce with a relative increase in older workers to younger workers and a diminishing pool of younger workers entering the workforce.

A multipronged approach is required to increase workforce participation of our ageing population (e.g. understanding workforce motivations for each generation, increase workplace awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce and so on). In terms of ensuring a sustainable future workforce more generally, an approach with limited traction thus far is increasing female participation in the workforce (Wittenberg-Cox, 2009:193).

Although in some quarters there is the perception that increasing female participation will lead to a further reduction in fertility rates, this is not necessarily the case. In countries where it is relatively easy to work and have children, female employment and fertility tend to be higher

(Wittenberg-Cox, 2009: 194). It's about putting the right structures in place to support the reality of twenty first century life.

Career flexibility

Ernst & Young point out that many organizations are structured to fit the traditional linear career trajectory: the 20's are about career foundation, the 30's career acceleration, the 40's career consolidation and the 50's transition to retirement (2010).

The problem with this structure is that it was established at a time of mostly single-income families. In many organisations this career path model has not been reviewed since (Wittenberg-Cox, 2010).

However, career patterns are, of course, changing—particularly for women, who may leave the workforce to have children and then return, ready to further their career.

Many organisations with a talent policy in place start selecting their high potential talent for more focused leadership when employees are in their 30s. On the premise of fairness this policy is applied to both men and women in the same way—a well-intentioned but classically flawed example of confusing equal practice or treatment with equal opportunity.

The principal issue with applying a talent policy in this manner is that many women are now having children in their 30s—just at the point that their organisations are identifying high potential talent (Wittenberg-Cox, 2010). The opportunity for these women therefore passes.

The adverse impacts of this rigidity are not, of course, confined to women who choose to have children. Employees have a range of reasons for interrupting this linear career pathway—career responsibilities, gaining international experience, studies, voluntary work, and travel, for example. As people stay in the workforce longer, we can expect to see changed career trajectories.

Yet as Ernst & Young note, many organizations do not take into account external factors important to their employees and how they can change the career trajectory to reduce potential loss of talent (2010).

In an increasingly competitive labour market this has to change. Many companies are developing value propositions which essentially set out why talented people would want to come and work for them. The capacity to leave and return without undue penalty should be one of them.

Workplace flexibility

It would, of course, be inaccurate to suggest that corporate systems and cultures have not moved at all in the last fifty years. In many important ways they have, including providing flexible workplace options.

Workplace flexibility, however, tends to be viewed as an optional extra against the norm of a nine-to-five work structure. In particular, flexible work options still have the perception of being an employee benefit aimed at women with children. Ernst & Young note that part-time and job-sharing arrangements are often not offered at the management level and return-to-work support for women on parental leave is largely lacking (2011: 6).

Part-time work, which is predominantly taken up by women (approximately 70 per cent), is often viewed negatively by other workers. Part-time workers are seen as having a part-time commitment to their work and as a result of this are often overlooked for promotional opportunities. So much so, that Women on Boards has initiated a campaign to re-name part-time work. Women on Boards co-founder, Claire Braund explains:

“The term ‘part-time work’ should be removed from the workforce vocabulary because of the destructive effect it has on people’s careers... This would do much to change the perception that part-time workers are somehow less serious about their work and career and just there to do the job and go home. The reality is often very different with many employers knowing that so-called part-time workers are efficient, focused and often doing four days work and being paid for three.”¹⁰

Braund suggests we talk instead about “working flexibly at X per cent” for all employees and argues that this would “help with the cultural transition to more flexible workplaces that integrate with the lives of their male and female employees”.

Flexibility and control are increasingly sought by employees for a range of reasons and can lead to a competitive advantage for those companies offering flexible options. Flexibility needs to be taken out of the gender arena and made a priority for attracting and retaining all employees—male and female, from different generations and from different cultural backgrounds (Wittenberg-Cox, 2009: 145).

A report produced by the University of South Australia, *Work, Life, and Workplace Flexibility*, indicates that just over one in five Australian employees (22.4 per cent) had made a request for some work flexibility in the past year before the survey. However, the rate of requests is highly gendered: almost twice as many women as men made a request: 29.1 compared to 16.3 per cent (2009: 53).

The emphasis on face-to-face hours in the office is another barrier to a truly flexible work environment. Despite the capacity to work from home that technology allows, observed hours in the office rather than outcomes achieved continue to be associated with hours of effort.

We think that it is important that further attention is paid to the issue of our attitudes (and unconscious biases) to flexible work options. A change in the way flexible work options are presented and perceived may be needed in order to improve women’s opportunity for advancement through the leadership pipeline and to capture the current and future needs of the workforce more broadly.

10. www.womenonboards.org.au/news/media110721.htm (accessed 22 September 2011).



Mainstreaming workplace flexibility

Flexible work practices are concerned with 'when', 'how' and 'where' we work:¹¹

- *When* – flexible work hours (for example, condensing standard hours per week into fewer days); working part-time; variable year employment; and purchased leave.
- *Where* – from home (teleworking); hot desking at a telework centre; a regional rather than head office
- *How* – job-sharing, annualized hours (a set number of hours per year instead of per week), phased retirement

Businesses are progressively coming to see that it makes good business sense to adopt flexible work arrangements. There are numerous benefits for both employee and employer including:

- A diverse workplace
- Productivity benefits through retention of skilled and experienced staff
- Reduced HR costs with staff turnover, recruitment and retraining
- The ability to better meet customer needs and adapt to change

- Increase commercial competitiveness
- Minimising legal exposure and risk due to industrial relations issues
- Assisting return to work after maternity leave or illness/injury
- May assist in retaining Gen Y
- Benefits for mature aged workers (DCA, 2010)

Flexible work arrangements are not yet the norm however, and continue to be framed within the context of employee benefits or rights.

We believe that a framework must be engendered that mainstreams flexible workplace options. In this framework, organisations embrace the flexibility that our twenty-first century digital environment enables. Further, they maximise the use of flexible work arrangements to accommodate the needs of modern workers and, in doing so, retain a supply of talented employees. Of course, not every industry or occupation is suited to flexible work arrangements. In many areas, however, the potential is not close to being realised.

National Employment Standards

The National Employment Standards (NES), which came into effect on 1 January 2010, include a provision that enables an employee who is a parent, or has responsibility for the care of a child, to request a change in their working arrangements. Employees are only able to request flexible working conditions under the NES if they have completed twelve months of continuous employment. Employees can request flexibility around hours, patterns and location of work. Employers may refuse the request on 'reasonable grounds (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2010).

11. See www.workplaceflexibility.com.au

RECOMMENDATIONS

5 That all companies implement clear guidelines that support flexible work for all employees. In particular, such guidelines might consider:

- Placing limitations on the hours that meetings can be organised, for example, between 10 am– 3pm to allow for school/childcare drop offs and pick ups
- Exploring options to work at home where possible
- Looking at offering parental leave flexibility, rather than full time leave, over a two year period.
- Using technology, including video technology, to enable workers to fully participate in meetings while out of the office
- Using 'dial an angel' services, which could be shared between many

companies or work groups, to look after children or other dependents if an employee needs to attend an urgent meeting and is unable to get other care arrangements in place.

Action

To support this recommendation, AIM NSW & ACT will undertake a discrete project on workplace flexibility with a particular focus on:

- How to manage effectively as a manager on flexible work arrangements, and
- How to manage effectively staff in an organisation with flexible workplace arrangement in place

This project will also identify ways to raise awareness about good practice in workplace flexibility including through the implementation of a workplace flexibility Award for small to medium enterprises.

ATTITUDINAL CHANGE CAMPAIGN¹²

AT A GLANCE

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <p>1 in 2</p> <p>Almost 1 in 2 Australian workers are female</p> | <p>28%</p> <p>Ranstad (2011) found 28% of Australian employees believed their employer would choose a male candidate over a female candidate of equal merit</p> | <p>ATTITUDE CHANGE</p> <p>Wood (2000) argues that there are three central motivations for attitude change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with self • Rewards and consequences • Valid understanding of reality | <p>FEAR</p> <p>Hastings, Stead and Webb (2004) explored the use of fear in attitudinal campaigns finding that fear can often lead to unintended negative consequences</p> | <p>LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS</p> <p>Numerous studies from Catalyst at Harvard show that women have if not equal, more of the characteristics that are identified as leadership strengths than men</p> |
|---|--|---|--|---|

Broad-based awareness

To achieve real change in Australian workplaces, more needs to be done to raise awareness about the issues of gender equality at work among the general public—employees and consumers. From our research, it is clear that there is no easy way to determine which companies are prioritising gender equality and the empowerment of women and which are not investing in talent development for women. This paper already refers to the need to strengthen the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency as one mechanism for ensuring that companies are reporting about their progress towards equality and being held to account publically for the targets which are being set. However, these reforms would still not necessarily mean that the general public would have access to this information.

From our consultations, it has become apparent that there is only a very limited public understanding about which organisations were leading in the gender diversity space. As such, a need to run a national attitudinal change campaign on gender equality in the workforce,

which focuses on employee and societal responsibilities has been identified. The campaign would aim to simplify the issue of equality to two key messages: women want to work for companies who will support them and society will not support companies who perpetuate inequality.

In an increasingly competitive labour market, many companies are developing value propositions which essentially set out why talented people would want to come and work for them. One of the biggest opportunities to accelerate progress towards gender equality would be for gender equality policies to become central to people's decision-making when considering different employers. There are examples of other sectors or issues which have driven consumer behaviour – most notably the campaign against child labour which started from public awareness of Nike using children in their factories and the recent fair-trade chocolate campaign run by World Vision. These examples demonstrate that creating competition among corporates can ultimately drive consumer behaviour.

12. This section is an amended extract from, McKay, J., 2011, Taming a Wicked Problem: A Business Plan to Accelerate Progress Towards Gender Equality in Australia. This material has been reproduced with permission from the author.

Building on this, campaigns could promote companies who were taking a leadership position on gender equality and encourage graduates and people looking for new opportunities to consider only roles with those companies. If employees were citing gender equality as a key reason for not choosing a particular role, change would start to happen as companies simply could not afford high turnover and a drain on their talent pool. It would be possible to conduct a study of the economic power which women hold, simply through their willingness to participate in the labour market.

Encouraging consumer boycotts of certain products and services has also proven highly effective. While women in leadership roles is not as emotive as some other campaigns, including child labour, there is still an opportunity to encourage people to avoid companies that are not supporting women's leadership and by virtue of their inaction are discriminatory towards half the population. The campaign could highlight companies in comparable industries and encourage consumer choice based on their commitment to equality.

One of Australia's leading banks led a significant market change with regards to being environmentally conscious. Announcing its plans to become the 'green bank', the company did widespread marketing to the public and to employees and potential employees about the importance of working for an organisation which cared about the environment and was actively working to reduce its impact. Within 12 months, the other major banks were forced to compete with the policy, each announcing similar environmental policies to allay concerns being raised by customers and staff. This is an example of where competing for talent can lead to significant policy change.

Critical success factors

From the analysis of other attitudinal change campaigns which have been conducted, it has been concluded that there are several critical success factors in achieving social change which could be translated into the gender equality framework. These include:

Importance of personalisation, consequence and an understanding of the broader issue

Gender equality advocacy has historically been framed within a rights-based approach, essentially focusing on women's right to equality. From the research, it seems more likely to gain traction if it is reframed in a personal context. One example of this could be focusing pay equity on the importance of your mother, sister or daughter being equally rewarded for her work so that people feel a personal sense of attachment to the issue.

Over the last four decades there has been very little focus on the consequence of not achieving gender equality and as such, the importance of the issue has not been understood. Now that there are clear statistics which show that risks are mitigated, profits are higher and consumers are more satisfied when there are women in senior leadership roles, the consequence of inequality is easier to promote.

Finally, there is not broad-based awareness of the current situation for women in Australia. There is no one document which profiles the current statistics of women's participation and as such, gaining an understanding of the broader picture is complex and time consuming.

The need for clear messages and focus

From the research about other attitudinal change campaigns, the importance of picking one focus area and mobilising people around that central cause is paramount. Safe driving campaigns do not depict unlicensed drivers, speeding, drinking and not wearing seatbelts, while texting. Each of these issues is considered in separate campaigns to ensure that the key message is not lost. In the context of gender equality, this paper proposes that the focus of the initial campaign be on women in management, as this will be a key lever to achieving broader equality.

Ability to build a strong supporter base

The campaigns which have had the most success have been those which have been able to not only influence legal change, but to become institutionalised into the policy making process. The gender equality movement should learn from the experience of the environmental movement and develop strategies to broaden connections with individual members of parliament; lobbying skills with strategic use of media and electoral based campaigns.

Building a sense of positive reinforcement, rather than fear

From the analysis of attitudinal change in campaigns about the dangers of smoking and skin cancer, it was found that fear was not a useful tool to achieve long term attitudinal change. While it did have some short term impact in changing behaviours, in most cases, less than 3 weeks after the advertising campaigns, there was not demonstrable impact. In the context of gender equality, this reinforces the need to use positive messages and reinforcement of the benefits of achieving gender equality for business and society rather than fear as a tool to drive change.

Action

UN Women Australia will scope this project further and develop a concept note about how such a public awareness campaign could be developed. The campaign would have two initial phases targeting different groups:

Phase 1:

What's the difference?

This campaign would be a consumer education campaign which would encourage people to choose products and services from companies with a strong diversity record. It would use the experience of civil society organisations such as Oxfam's coordination of the consumer boycotts of Nike when they were found to be using child labour.

Phase 2:

We choose you

This campaign would personalise the issue of equality for people and to build awareness amongst women about the importance of working for companies that support women's leadership. It would need to be a visual campaign which could be shown on TV but also in social media which showed women in a range of sectors experiencing working for employers who were proactively supporting women's leadership and those which were not. The key message would be – choose employers who will support you.

The key aims of the campaign would be to:

- increase awareness of the current state of gender equality in corporate Australia
- profile the top 10 companies who are supporting women in leadership
- generate significant media discussion about accelerating progress towards gender equality
- ensure that more than 20 percent of board directorships are held by women by December 2013



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