

#WOMAN



An action plan
for female
leadership

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About this plan

This plan was first published in November 2017 by WoW, a voluntary leadership movement established in 2015. Having achieved its original objectives, WoW was disbanded in early 2018. Three of its founders then established WomanUp, a female leadership training and advisory consultancy.

WOMAN



For more details visit www.Woman-Up.ie



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CLODAGH HUGHES, CEO, WOMAN-UP

Two years after this action plan was first published, we're both encouraged and frustrated at what has happened to ensure greater gender balance among leadership teams.

We're encouraged at the response to the action plan, so much so that we've run out of copies and commissioned this second edition. We're also encouraged by the feedback from senior business leaders. One described the WomanUp action plan as "a stunning lever to provoke and accelerate the journey for many corporations in Ireland."

So why are we also frustrated? Because the pace of change in developing robust female leadership pipelines continues to be very slow, despite the business benefits outlined in this plan. The research sources we drew on back in 2017 continue to show little progress, despite the good intent and the multiplicity of initiatives.

We're convinced more than ever that businesses are missing out by not cultivating their female talent, so much so that we've developed offerings to address that market need.

Our journey began in 2015 when WoW was founded as a voluntary female leadership initiative and we launched a female leadership programme, commissioned research and published the action plan.



While WoW achieved more than we ever imagined, the founders took a reality check and realised it was not sustainable as a voluntary entity. Three of us (Carol Bolger, Aileen O'Toole and I) regrouped, re-researched and recast our strategy to help grow the number of females who take up leadership roles.

Operating under the WomanUp brand, we have developed commercial propositions based on the change model in the action plan and growing evidence that early stage initiatives in a female career are critical. McKinsey calls this the "broken rung" in the leadership ladder.

Our key proposition is a Female Leadership Programme, which has its origins in the WoW programme but has evolved to take account of the latest research on barriers to female advancement, as well as client and participant requirements. Visit www.Woman-Up.ie for more details.

We'd love to discuss how we can help you develop your female leadership pipeline. Please contact me on clodagh@woman-up.ie

December 2019

It started with a hunch.....

Women are not progressing to senior roles at the rate they should and confidence is a key factor. That was the hunch that brought us together and prompted us to take action in Summer 2015. We were determined that we'd make a difference to some of the truly brilliant young women we encounter every day in our professional lives.

Why is it, we asked, that women are holding back, are not being promoted and are being overtaken in their careers by male colleagues? Why, with such a focus on gender diversity within business, are repeated surveys showing little or no progress? And what could we do as a group of senior female professionals?

So we launched WoW, a voluntary female initiative. We conceived and ran an innovative programme to support young, high-potential female leaders and help infuse them with that magic ingredient — confidence. We convinced our female friends and contacts — senior women with busy lives — to mentor these young women. And we launched a research project to unpick the real barriers to female leadership.

We immersed ourselves in this topic. We read books, shared social media content, watched videos and hotly debated the big themes (not always reaching a consensus). We took risks

and made mistakes. Individually and collectively, we're different from the group who met to discuss that hunch.

We had an ambition to share our learnings and our insights. But we didn't want to publish yet another research report. Instead, we wanted to help change the narrative on this topic from problems to solutions and equip business leaders, women and men with actions they could implement.

The result is #WomanUp, an action plan on female leadership targeted at business leaders, women as well as men in the workforce. It's informed by our programme and the research we conducted. We are not diversity experts nor do we claim to have all the answers. And we don't expect everyone to agree with our solutions.

#WomanUp is our practical contribution to advancing the cause of female leadership in business. All five of us have daughters. If our work in WoW helps them reach their potential in their careers and allows for their talents to be nurtured by future employers, then we'll be very happy.

Aileen, Carol, Clodagh, Florence and Patricia*

*WoW who's who: see page 67 for brief biographies of Steering Group members

WoW STEERING GROUP



From left: Florence Stanley, Carol Bolger, Aileen O'Toole, Clodagh Hughes and Patricia Doherty



GREAT INTENT BUT PROGRESS IS “GLACIAL”

At one level, there appears to be lots happening to promote and support women to advance into leadership roles in business. It's easy to lose count of the number of award schemes, events, training programmes and other initiatives designed to empower women and motivate them to move up the corporate ladder.

More Chairs and CEOs of businesses have committed to accelerating the pace of gender balance within their businesses and have committed to a target of 30% female representation in senior management by 2020, via the 30% Club. Companies are setting up working groups (sometimes under a broader diversity and



Denise is Marketing Manager of an Irish financial services company.

30 Denise's current age in November 2017

91 The age Denise will be when the gender gap in Europe will be closed.

Closing the gender gap

Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2017; data based on analysis of Global Gender Gap Index for Europe only. The 2017 report forecast that it will take 61 years to close the gap in Europe and 170 years to close it globally.

inclusion remit), running events, establishing networks and launching an array of other activities to develop their female talent.

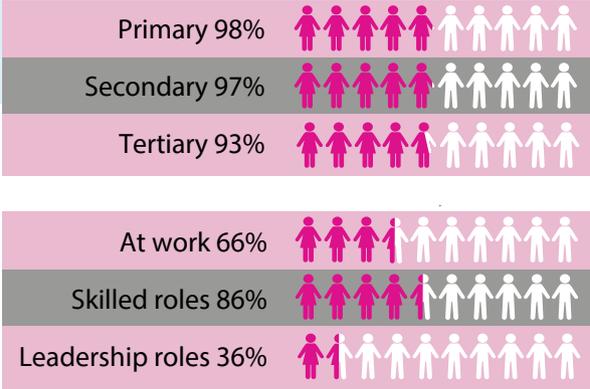
At the other level, though, the level of progress among women advancing to leadership roles in Ireland and internationally has been slow. “Glacial” is the word favoured in multiple research reports that chart the rate of change in female leadership.

The pace of change in closing the gender gap has slowed over recent years, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF). Based on the current trajectory, it estimated in 2017 that it would take 100 years for parity to be reached globally. This compared with the WEF forecast of 83 years in 2016. Europe is in better shape than other regions with the gap expected to be closed in 61 years. That will mean that the fictitious Denise in the graphic would be 91 when parity is achieved.

These forecasts are based on robust data and rigorous analysis by the WEF. Its conclusions chime with several other sources, among them an insightful EY study¹ which said that businesses are not addressing the gender gap in a way that will deliver the change needed.



Same qualifications, different outcomes



Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2016. World Economic Forum, based on international data

Ireland outperforms the EU average in gender equality. It ranks eighth in the world in the WEF rankings, slipping two places since 2016. This rating is influenced by education where we’re among the top ranking countries globally. However, we only ranked 50th for economic participation and opportunityⁱⁱ.

At the gestation of our work on female leadership, we were puzzled. There’s so much good intent, so much positivity, so much money being invested and yet, we questioned, where are the results? Why aren’t females moving to the C Suite faster? Why do so many women we know say that there is a disconnect between the aspirations at the top of their organisations and what they experience on the ground?

We tasked a team of research volunteers – all HR Masters graduates from UCD Smurfit – with the job of collating and analysing the available research and helping us get the answers to those questions.

When they delivered their initial report, the standout findings were the degree to which the issues that were prevalent in the academic literature a decade, two decades and more ago were still prevalent today. The barriers to female leadership – detailed in the next section – remain, despite the energy, the investment and, above all, the good intent on the part of business leaders. We found insights into underlying confidence issues among women and a sense that they didn't feel that they fit in a corporate environment, themes that were

reflected in our own surveys.

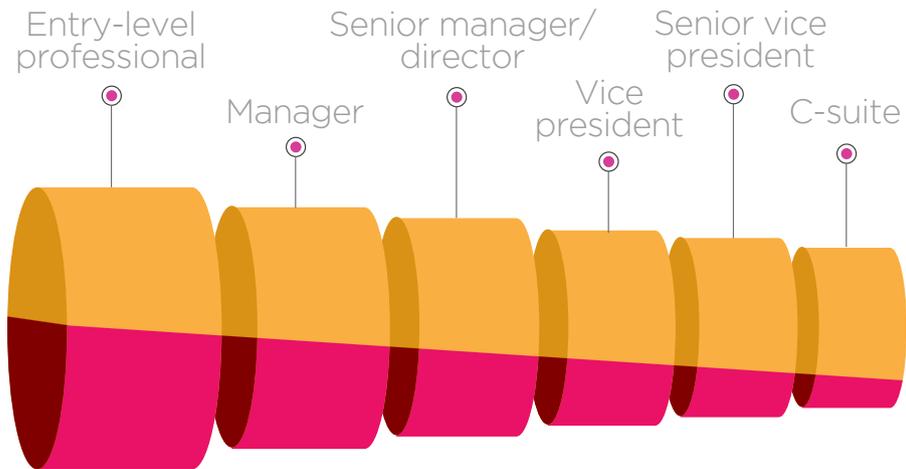
From an early stage, we began to realise the complexity of what we were trying to unpick.

THE CORPORATE PIPELINE

The statistics about females in the corporate pipeline are stark. At graduate level, women usually have the edge on men based on their academic achievements. The genders are generally evenly represented in entry level

Corporate talent pipeline by gender

Women in the pipeline %



Source: McKinsey²

roles but, further up the managerial ranks in the corporate pipeline, a widening gap appears right up to the C suite.

The McKinsey studies became our benchmark. They plot the decline in female representation through every stage of the pipeline through to the C Suite. Although based on a sample of US companies, the trend is similar to what is seen in other countries, including Ireland.

When we first used the McKinsey data, the 2012 and 2015 data were all that was available and little had changed in three years. Newer data that became available as we were preparing the plan painted a somewhat better picture, with females in the C Suite representing 20% of CEO level in the US.

Several research studies³ have been plotting the pattern of women opting out of leadership roles. That female brain drain typically can start at an early career stage but is most noticeable at mid-manager level. This provided us with the impetus to focus the programme we developed at that stage of women's careers, which authorities such as leading gender expert Avivah Wittenberg-Cox say is where the pipeline is most at risk.

"Measurement of the pipeline of future leaders is lacking almost entirely," notes EY.⁴ "Few organisations have metrics in place to follow women as they move along their career path to see where and why outstanding talent leaves the business or falls off the leadership track."

THE HARD FACTS

Many myths persist about why there aren't more women in leadership roles, including that it is about their capabilities, their lack of ambition and their personal interests. The following are the facts supported by many reputable studies:

1. Ability is not the issue, women globally outperform men at every academic level
2. Women are as interested in their careers and as ambitious as men, as this data from Catalyst⁵ shows.

Women want to work and they aspire to top roles

Identity

Profession is an important part of my identity



Ambition

Aspire to be in a top leadership position



Source: Catalyst

The five big disconnects

The reality disconnect	Business leaders assume the issue is nearly solved despite little progress within their own companies.
The data disconnect	Companies don't effectively measure how well women are progressing through the workforce and into senior leadership.
The pipeline disconnect	Organisations aren't creating pipelines for future female leaders.
The perception and perspective disconnect	Men and women don't see the issue the same way.
The progress disconnect	Different sectors agree on the value of diversity but are making uneven progress toward gender parity.

Source: EY (2016) *Navigating disruption without gender diversity? Think again.*

3. Women continue to lag behind equally-qualified men in terms of pay and conditions⁶. The gender pay gap is evident from low-paid grades to high-profile, well-paid roles, such as TV presenters in the RTÉ and the BBC
4. Women's career ambitions can be either realised or constrained depending on the prevailing culture within a business⁷
5. Men continue to be promoted more often than equally-qualified and experienced women⁷

6. Successful female leaders credit male mentors and sponsors with playing a key role in their success

7. Programmes designed to grow the cohort of female leaders and generally increase diversity within organisations are not delivering value. "Sadly, there is little evidence to say they work," writes Iris Bohnet, the director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard⁸

8. There are no fewer than five disconnects between what business leaders think and what is actually happening, according to the EY chart⁹.

WHY BUSINESSES CAN'T IGNORE THIS AGENDA

Early on, we were determined that our work had to be positioned in a business context. This was not about women's rights or women's issues but about the business benefits of harnessing female talent. Countless studies support the premise that gender equality is good for business because:

1. Women have huge buying power and represent a growing proportion of businesses' customers. Through social media, they advocate for brands where they enjoy good customer experiences but



increasingly share their experiences about how some businesses fail to relate to them as women

2. Women are being described as “the engine of economic growth”¹⁰ and their growing participation in the workforce will bring several economic benefits. In the UK, equalising the labour participation levels between the genders could result in GDP growth of 10% by 2030, according to a government report¹¹.

3. There is a growing body of evidence of a strong link between gender diversity and company performance. An analysis of 21,000 public companies in 91 countries established that more women in higher management boosted profitability. A company with 30% female leadership could expect to add up to six percentage points to its net margin compared with a similar business with no female leaders.

4. Top talent will be in increasingly short supply and harnessing and developing female talent will become a source of competitive advantage¹²

5. Teams that are gender balanced outperform those where a single gender, male or female, predominate. Businesses such as Dell and Google have found that engaged, diverse teams land them business

6. Disruption— which businesses are experiencing through the pace of technological change, termed the Fourth Industrial Revolution by the



“Companies that want to survive these challenges will need to tap into a range of opinions, ideas and experiences. Successful leaders must anticipate and address the sweeping changes in global demographics and advances in technology to create an environment where people and ideas flourish. And improving gender diversity not only in senior leadership but across the talent pipeline can help”.

WEF — can be mitigated through harnessing female talent, according to EY.

7. The world of work as we know it will be transformed over the next five to ten years. Females are leading the change through the gig economy, remote working and use of new technologies that position them well for future roles

8. Evidence from a relatively new research frontier, neuroscience, has identified the differences between male and female brains and how more females in leadership roles and decision-making positions can have positive impacts on workplace culture and problem solving.

Gender equality is not a ‘nice to have’. It makes eminent business sense.

KAROLINA KURDYBACHA, PRODUCT MANAGER WITH DAFT.IE

Karolina Kurdybacha's working life has been transformed since her participation in the programme. She has received a promotion and a pay rise but more importantly, she is more confident and happy at work.

Karolina had been with a different company, in a mid-management role, which she enjoyed, but felt that her development opportunities were limited.

"I went on the programme to build my confidence as I felt I had lost that — and the person I used to be. I wanted to reach my full potential. The programme felt like the first step of the process of self-improvement," says Karolina.

"At that stage, I had changed jobs but still had low confidence. The programme was amazing. I was surrounded by women who knew how to balance their professional and family life. I found a place where people understood me. I got to work on my weaknesses and became more professionally satisfied."

After a few months, her confidence started to grow and now rather than seeing other women as the competition, she wants to support them in their careers.

The first day of the programme was the most difficult part for Karolina. "I felt the other women were a lot more confident than me, especially at public speaking. Now I am speaking regularly in front of hundreds of people. The programme opened my eyes that I can change and I don't have to struggle. I can be very successful at work."

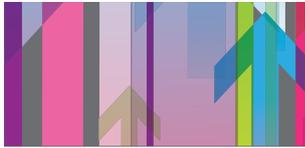
When Karolina's mentor — Marie Hunt, Executive Director and Head of Research at CBRE — first met her, she was surprised at her lack of confidence, given her level of experience. "Karolina felt intimidated and that she didn't fit in as the rest of the women seemed so confident. However, they all had different goals, ambitions and issues to address," says Marie.

"I feel Karolina has achieved everything she set out to at the start of the programme, even getting a pay rise by default as a result of her stepping up. It was hard hearing that Karolina was unhappy and felt she had no room to grow in her role so the best thing about this process was not that she secured a pay rise or a promotion but the fact that she is now more confident and happy in her work."

MENTEE PROFILE

KAROLINA KURDYBACHA & MENTOR MARIE HUNT





SIX CRITICAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN GETTING AHEAD



We're sending our daughters into a workplace designed for our dads

Published on September 27, 2017 | Featured in: [Big Ideas & Innovation](#), [Careers: The Next Level](#), [Et Professional Women](#)



The headline to this post, which philanthropist Melinda Gates shared on LinkedIn in September 2017, said it all. It summed up succinctly what dozens of books, countless academic journals and scores of media articles have been saying for decades on the theme of gender balance.

The central messages? That business models and mindsets have not adapted to societal and demographic changes, such as more women at work, more families where both parents work and more employees having to balance work with childcare and other family responsibilities. Also, there is a lot amiss in our workplaces which prevent half the available talent pool — the female half — from achieving their career potential.

We have identified six critical barriers faced by

women that are inter-related and are what the experts are calling “systemic” – in other words, they’re in the DNA of the business.

1. CORPORATE CULTURE

Corporate culture is defined as the system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs, which govern how people behave in businesses. Corporate culture is seen as one of the biggest barriers to female leadership.

In part, this is a legacy issue. Many current entrenched structures within companies were designed to fit men’s lives and circumstances at a time when women made up a small portion of the workforce. They have failed to adapt to the new reality of more women at work.

Several prevalent myths which suggest that the gender gap in corporate leadership exists and persists largely because of women's choices and actions are completely debunked by Catalyst. It has conducted a longitudinal study, which tracks talented graduates as they take up corporate roles and move through the corporate pipeline in the US, Canada, Europe and Asia. It found that corporate culture was the issue and contributed to men being promoted more often than equally-qualified women and that women tend to receive less development opportunities¹³.

Companies very often recruit, reward, retain, manage and promote staff using a male gender lens. In doing so, they unwittingly create an uneven playing field for women.

Almost every research report we reviewed dealt with the significance of corporate culture. One which reviewed the UK's financial services sector¹⁴, which employs more women than men, concluded:

"Our research shows that in 2015 women made up only 14% of Executive Committees in the financial services sector. Too few women get to the top and there is a "permafrost" in the mid-tier where women do not progress or they leave the sector. This is not just about childcare. Women are leaving because the culture isn't right"

In scoping out our own female leadership programme, we kept bumping up against that thorny

Top barriers experienced by senior professional women*

1. Old boys club culture and networking
2. A long hours culture
3. Senior male colleagues taking credit for my work
4. Resistance by men to female leadership
5. Having your voice heard and influencing male colleagues

* Based on a survey of WoW mentors, all senior and highly successful female professionals

issue of corporate culture. When we asked our mentors – highly-experienced, professional women – about their experiences in developing their careers, the top five they cited were all to do with male corporate culture.

Further insights emerged in the way those women described their working lives. Here's just one example:

"I have worked in a male-dominated industry for my entire career. Behaviours and norms have been shaped by male attitudes. In order to survive, it has been necessary to 'act' more like a male. I had very little flexibility when rearing my children and, without the support of a wonderful husband and both sets of grand-parents, I don't believe I would have had as successful a career as I had."

"I have very strong values around fairness and equity and sadly have not experienced this

throughout my career. On the upside, my acute awareness of these issues has formed and shaped me and I am determined to work to support other women to break down those barriers and ensure there is a level playing field on which they can compete.”

“Trying to balance work and family commitments was a real challenge and I never felt that at work they cared that I had family commitments. You had to commit 100% or not at all.”

Operating in a male-dominated culture can be highly stressful for women. Many say they feel like a “fish out of water” on a day-to-day basis. In a McKinsey study¹⁵, women cite stress and pressure, which are not family-related, as the top issues that dampen their appetite to be promoted to senior positions.

There can be a disconnect between company’s equality policies, such as flexible working and parental leave, and the culture of the organisation which does not support women moving to leadership roles. Also, many don’t avail of flexible working because they see it could damage their career prospects.

Corporate culture is complex and deeply resistant to change.

2. UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

One of the main reasons corporate culture is so difficult to change has to do with the prevalence

of biases. They come in many forms but by far the one that has the most impact on female career advancement is unconscious bias. That’s where quick judgments and assessments of people and situations are made based on our backgrounds, our personal experiences or other factors.

Unconscious bias is bad for business. It can stymie gender diversity, recruiting and retention processes as well as talent and performance reviews. It can affect who gets hired, promoted, and developed— and unwittingly it shapes an organisation’s culture.



The best example widely published about unconscious bias concerns selecting members for US orchestras. In the late 1970s the top five US orchestras had fewer than 5% women. So-called blind auditions were held where a curtain separated the candidate from the jury. That created improvements but did not get rid of the unconscious bias.

The high heels on the wooden floor behind the curtain gave the juries clues about the candidates' gender. Candidates were asked to remove their shoes. By the 1990s, addressing unconscious bias has resulted in an increase in female participation in those orchestras to almost 40%.

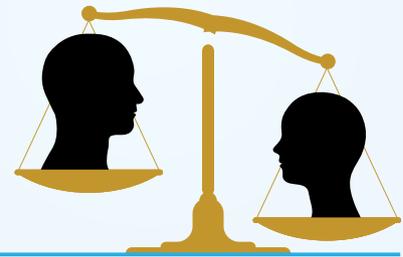
Unconscious bias affects women as well as men. When such biases are pointed out, in a test or at a training session, the reaction is usually shock. That was certainly our experience.

3. GENDER ROLES

From an early age, we are assigned gender roles. Our parents, teachers, the media and others give us messages around those gender roles. Girls are typically told to “be nice” or “work hard at school.” Boys, on the other hand, are told to “go for it”. Such messages underpin how we behave, the career choices we make and our workplace behaviours.

They also determine who does the housework. EU research shows that the lion's share of domestic duties in Ireland still falls on women. And, what is even more revealing, there has been little or no change between the genders since 2005 when the EU think tank began its study. Most of our EU neighbours are no better.

WE TOOK A BIAS TEST AND WE'RE SHOCKED



All five WoW founders would have been horrified if someone had suggested we display biases against females and careers – until we did a gender bias test.

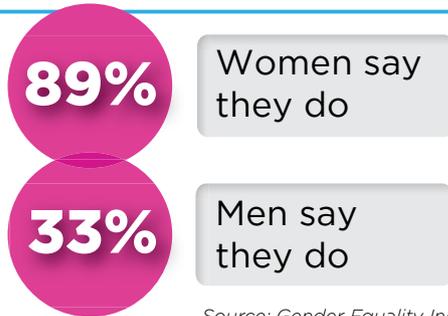
Called the Gender Career Implicit Association Test, it is designed to establish the degree to which male and female names and words are associated with family and career.

All five of us showed an “automatic association for male with career and female with family”. Two had a “strong association”, two had a “moderate association” and one has a “slight association”. We were shocked.

Our results are typical. Some 75% of the aggregated results to date show the same automatic association between male and career, 17% show little or no automatic associations between the genders and just 9% show automatic associations between male and family and between female and career.

What do our findings mean? “Implicit preferences can predict behaviour and are related to discrimination in hiring and promotion, medical treatment and decisions related to criminal justice,” says Project Implicit, the NGO and international collaboration between researchers, which runs the test.

Who does the household chores?



Source: Gender Equality Index 2017, published by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Also, gender roles are reflected in what they choose to study – opting for arts subjects as opposed to STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). It influences the careers they pursue. Many move into support functions like HR or marketing and, while these are critical functions, they don't always deliver that P&L responsibility which we know is much in demand for leadership roles¹⁶.

“The highest proportions of women in management are in the HR and marketing functions.”
30% Club Ireland 2015 research.

These patterns of choice mean women do not get the experience or exposure to lead them to the C Suite.

Aspiring leaders need role models whose style and behaviours they can compare to their own standards. The scarcity of female leaders means fewer role models for younger women and is

known to discourage them from applying for senior positions.

At work, being nice doesn't always get a woman noticed or promoted or even ensure she receives the same pay as her male colleague in an identical role. The gender pay gap has been a major media story across the world in recent times. In Ireland, RTÉ has been under the spotlight because of the disparities in pay between leading male and female presenters. Over 40 years after equal pay legislation, why are women still earning less?

There are many reasons such as ad hoc pay rises, lack of data, little or no transparency but a key one is the way in which pay rates are negotiated. There are different negotiating styles between the genders. Women tend not to be as effective negotiators for themselves as men, according to the authors of the Confidence Code¹⁷, and “sadly even when women negotiate, they tend to ask for less”.

...and
...saying if I didn't
...pay there was an
...ement of wanting to
...e liked that influenced
...my decision to close
...the deal without
...a real fight”

Jennifer Lawrence
Actress



Hollywood actress Jennifer Lawrence admitted this herself in her seminal essay where she described how she had “failed as a negotiator”. Another A-list actor, Bradley Cooper had earned almost twice what she did when they co-starred in the hit movie, American Hustle. How did that happen? Jennifer admitted she was more interested in being liked than negotiating a better deal.

But it would be wrong to blame women. Employers have facilitated gender pay gaps, wittingly or unwittingly. With a move to greater transparency, such as a requirement in some countries like the UK for employers to publish gender pay rates, this may help effect change.

4. GENDER STEREOTYPES

Unlike gender roles, gender stereotyping is simplistic generalisations about particular groups. It has been described as the “single most important hurdle for women in management¹⁸”. Evidence shows that we automatically associate successful leadership with stereotypically male attributes such as assertiveness, independence and decisiveness. This association of power and authority with masculinity makes it difficult for aspiring female leaders.

Gender stereotypes influence our opinion on how men and women should and should not behave. The behaviours for which men are positively valued are not positively valued in women. As female stereotypes do not match with the male leader archetype, women are sometimes judged



THIS TWEET STOPPED US IN OUR TRACKS

We shared this tweet from the Financial Times among our group, discussed it and were puzzled by it. Study after study shows that females do better academically than males. In the 2017 Leaving Certificate results, girls outperformed boys in most subjects. So, what’s going on with the six-year-olds?

The academic journal Science published a US study which set out to establish the age at which girls begin to think that they are less intellectually brilliant than boys. The answer was “Before they have lost the first of their milk teeth, little girls have lost confidence in their gender’s intellectual ability,” the Financial Times reported.

Conclusion? Gender stereotyping, underpinning low confidence in women, starts very, very early.

to be unsuitable for senior roles, or they may not even be considered at all¹⁹.

Evaluated against a “masculine” standard of leadership, women have limited and unfavourable options, no matter how they behave and perform as leaders, according to Catalyst. It highlights three predicaments that undermine them as leaders and their advancement options:

- **Extreme perceptions:** Women are perceived as too soft or too tough but never just right
- **The “high competence threshold”:** Women leaders face higher standards and lower rewards than male leaders
- **Competent but disliked:** Women leaders are perceived as competent or liked, but rarely both²⁰.

5. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND MATERNITY LEAVE

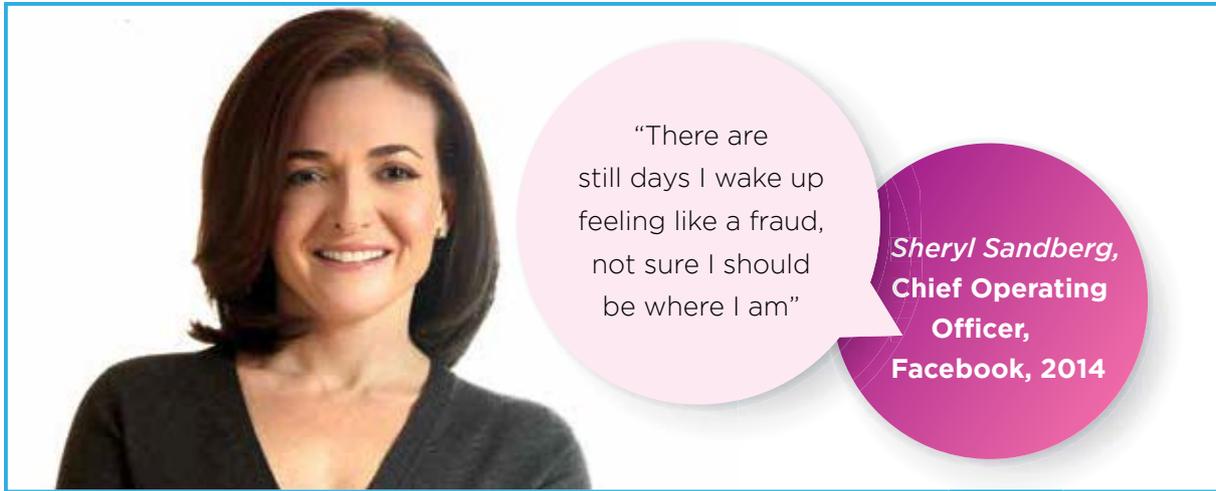
Females with family responsibilities who take maternity leave are often disenfranchised, despite legislation and processes designed to stamp out discrimination. In the course of the **WoW** programme, anecdotes were shared with us about interview panels and their deliberations about female candidates. Within the room, the process is carefully choreographed and the questions well considered. They need to be; asking questions about family responsibilities at interviews is illegal.

What happens after the candidate leaves the room is another matter. We have been told how the discussions often drift into whether the female candidate intends to have children, or more children and how she will balance work and family responsibilities. Female panelists often call out how inappropriate such comments are. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this does impact on women’s career advancement.

Maternity leave is also a factor. A male guest that we met at an event on gender diversity whispered that it hadn’t dealt with “the elephant in the room”. What elephant, we asked. “That women have babies and each time they go missing for the better part of a year,” he replied. He then told us upfront that he’s passed over such women for promotion because of his company’s critical business needs.

“In most cases, women are working two jobs (career and home) whereas men generally only have one job. This is a barrier for women who want to advance their career. Unless women have supportive partners, they become the de facto carer and careerist”

Mentor



6. WOMEN LACK CONFIDENCE COMPARED WITH MEN

Sheryl is displaying signs of what is called “imposter syndrome”, one of a number of well-researched confidence issues that affect women. She is one of several high-profile, successful female leaders who have admitted crises of confidence about performance and competence.

The research collated in books such as the Confidence Code is compelling. Compared with men, women don’t consider themselves as ready for promotions. They anticipate they’ll do badly in tests and they generally underestimate their abilities.

When men succeed, their natural inclination is to attribute it to their own skills, talent and hard work; they don’t point to external factors.

Women do the opposite. When they succeed, they point outward. “I had a great team, I was lucky, I was in the right place at the right time.” Women have difficulty in owning their competence.

When women fail, they point internally: “I’m not smart enough. I didn’t work hard enough.” This plays out in the career progression stakes. Men believe they have innate qualities so they put themselves forward for all opportunities. Women, on the other hand, doubt their abilities. This results in women choosing not to pursue opportunities they are as well equipped for as men.

There is a growing body of evidence that success correlates just as closely with confidence as it does with competence. Closing that confidence gap is critical if women are to advance to leadership roles.

CAROLINE HYNES,

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT AT ONEVIEW HEALTHCARE

Caroline Hynes has always recognised the importance of mentoring. She has been a mentor to others and encourages her direct reports to have one.

“I inherently understood the benefits of mentoring but I hadn’t actually had a mentor for years,” says Caroline. “The programme team did a great job in matching me up with my mentor. Anne-Marie was really good at challenging me on my thought processes and pushing me outside my comfort zone.”

However, initially her mentor — Anne-Marie Taylor, management consultant and co-founder Career Returners — wondered if Caroline even needed mentoring.

“When I originally met with her, I really wondered what value I could add. She is a mentor to others, and is already so reflective, insightful and self-aware that I had to think hard about how I could make sure she benefitted from the relationship. In the end, I think it was about being there for her when she needed to be challenged and encouraged,” says Anne-Marie, who added that she also benefitted from the relationship.

“I got at least as much out of the relationship as she did. She provided a window to a world of

tech start-ups that I had no experience of but more importantly she made me realise that no matter what stage of your career you’re at, you can always benefit from mentoring. Advice I should take myself!”

One important aspect of the programme for Caroline was examining her values. “I have a set of values for myself and Anne-Marie helped me to feel confident in doing what felt authentic to me. She helped me find my authentic voice in the business world and still feel true to myself and get my message across.”

Goal setting is something Caroline was already good at but she says WoW gave her “a great framework for processing my thoughts”.

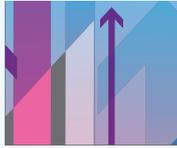
“It has given me another lens to work through things; another tool for problem-solving in relation to career mapping and the managing upwards piece.”

Caroline was always going to change her job during the process but WoW helped her in the way she approached her search. “When I went to look for a new job, I was clear on my values and whether they aligned with the values of the company. My values are my North Star,” says Caroline.

MENTEE PROFILE

CAROLINE HYNES & MENTOR ANNE-MARIE TAYLOR





A LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME WITH A DIFFERENCE



We set out to design and test a leadership programme that would deliver maximum impact in a short time frame.

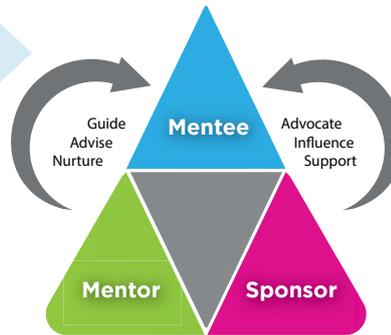
Firstly, we focused on young female leaders at middle management level. Several studies have shown this stage to be one of the weakest links in the female leadership pipeline. We wanted to test if a set of practical interventions at this vulnerable point would make a difference.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

We began with a 360° degree analysis of the barriers to female leadership already highlighted in academic and other research sources. This showed us that traditional mentoring programmes were failing to deliver real benefits for women²¹. The research also identified the importance of:

- Senior female executives who would become role models for younger women and provide unbiased support
- Sponsors within the business who would actively champion younger women to address the predominant issue of male-dominated corporate culture
- Action-focused career planning with a strong emphasis on developing confidence.

Based on this research, we built our pilot mentoring programme around a “triad model”. Supporting the female mentee would be a successful female mentor, who would be external to the mentee’s workplace.



Her role would be to provide unbiased support and create a safe space throughout the mentoring relationship.

A sponsor, a senior executive level within the mentee’s business, would also provide support, increase their visibility within the business and provide “stretch” opportunities within the business.

This core model was combined with:

- A career planning process, to address evidence that women are less inclined to plan their careers and are less confident than men
- A mentee support programme to enhance confidence and develop critical skills.

We decided to measure the impact of what we were doing through surveys before, during and after the programme. This multi-faceted approach contributed to the programme’s impact. We don’t believe that one element on its own would have delivered such an impact.

MENTEE SELECTION AND MATCHING

We used our networks to select our 27 mentees. We targeted a cohort of women who, typically, were in their 30s and were in mid-management but who, in our view, had the potential to

progress to more senior roles. Each had to commit to the year-long programme launched in January 2016.

We then pitched being a mentor to senior professional women we knew. Our ask? Would they mentor a female executive throughout 2016 with a minimum of four mentoring sessions and do so in a structured, consistent manner? We got an overwhelming positive response, despite our mentors being time poor and many already combining busy professional lives with pro bono roles.

Next we did a matching exercise between our mentors and mentees. We asked each to complete a profiling questionnaire, detailing their wish lists for a mentor (or mentee) and providing clues about the essence of a successful mentoring relationship – chemistry. We made our selection and briefed each party.

Our mentors and mentees completed detailed pre-programme surveys – which we called our baseline surveys – and agreed to complete final surveys in early 2017. The sponsors from within the mentee’s businesses also completed surveys.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MENTEES

Our 27 mentees were mainly drawn from large companies and came from across all the main business sectors. All have third-level qualifications, a third hold Master’s degrees and a third

Our mentees are ambitious

89%

Mentees who said they would like to be in a position of influence in their company

93%

Mentees who would like to have input into the policies of their companies

82%

Mentees who would like to move into roles with higher responsibilities

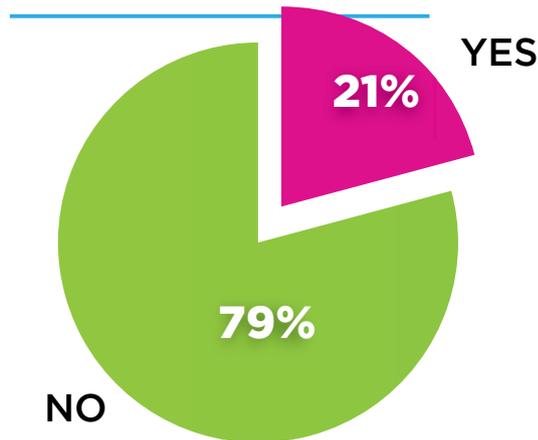
hold professional qualifications in disciplines such as accountancy.

They are an ambitious group, with the overwhelming majority aspiring to more senior roles and to having influence on shaping their companies’ policies.

However, just four of the 27 mentees said there were programmes within their companies specifically aimed at helping advance women in their careers. For the remaining 24, there were either no programmes or a lack of awareness of such programmes.

This finding supports what research is saying about the lack of specific programmes to help women achieve career progression²².

Do you have a specific plan to achieve your career goals?



CAREER 'STEP CHANGE'

A day-long goal setting workshop kicked off the programme. Drawing on the latest in brain science research, our mentees were challenged to decide what they wanted to achieve over the next 12 months. Only those prepared to make a 'step change' in their careers were invited to stay. We wanted them to take risks, to stretch themselves and go for goals that would excite and scare them in equal measure.

As well as focusing on what they wanted to achieve, we spent time probing and encouraging our mentees to reflect on any default behaviours and mindsets that had the potential to sabotage their success. Examples include "not

speaking up at meetings", "not taking risks" and "I'm not good enough".

We shared the concept of brain plasticity and how — by thinking and acting in different ways — they could change the wiring of their brains to support rather than hinder their efforts.

The approach was holistic. The mentees had to reflect on all aspects of their lives and set goals in areas that can often be neglected, especially in this mid-career phase. We stressed that setting goals that looked after their physical and mental well-being were vital.

The mentees left with a simple one-page plan. On it was the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely) career and "other" goals for the next 12 months. The plan included key behaviours — and importantly the mindset change — they needed to focus on to set them up for success.

MENTORING

That one-page plan became the blueprint for the mentoring relationship. Our 27 mentors received the WoW guidelines and attended a training event on the WoW programme and on effective mentoring.



They were asked to commit to four mentoring sessions. All did but a third exceeded that number. Early on, mentors picked up the confidence issues.

SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The mentoring was combined with developmental sessions for mentees on themes we knew from our research impacted on confidence, career planning and visibility within their companies. The themes were:

- Influencing
- Self-awareness
- Leadership impact
- Personal branding
- Navigating mid-career

SPONSOR

We believed that sponsors within the organisation in which they worked were critical to our mentees achieving their goals. We crafted a clear role description for sponsors and created guides for them and suggestions on how to champion the mentees.

We put the onus on our mentees to identify and sign up their sponsors as part of our 'step change' mantra. This proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the programme.

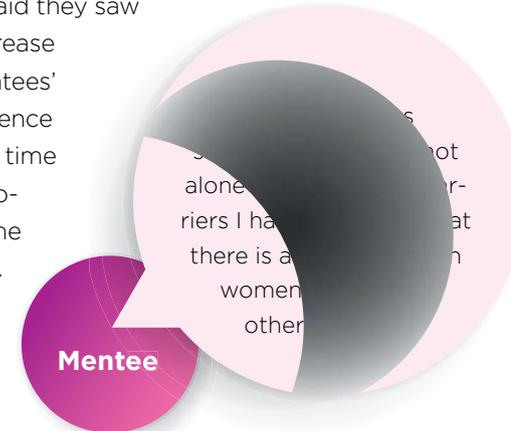
Several mentees expressed unease about approaching a more senior, male executive. Ultimately 18 of our 27 mentees secured sponsors.

In hindsight, we underestimated the challenge we set for our mentees. We believe that was due to a combination of hierarchical cultures and mindset issues. Some of the comments from mentees included: "I can't approach a senior executive" and "I won't be taken seriously".

OUTCOMES

1. Confidence levels among mentees were significantly boosted.

Before the programme only a third said that they were confident. After the programme, the confidence levels had risen significantly and 85% said they had changed their behaviours at work because of their improved confidence. Among the mentors, 80% said they saw an increase in mentees' confidence by the time the programme ended.



PROGRAMME'S IMPACTED ON MENTEES' CONFIDENCE

Before

After

36%

Mentees who described themselves as either "very confident" or "confident"

Mentees who said they got insights into their lack of confidence

74%

Mentees who said they better understood how confidence can have an impact on their behaviour

78%

Mentees who said they applied learnings about confidence with positive results at work

85%

"It was interesting to see that other women struggle with the same issues as me...I am more aware how my lack of confidence can hold me back."

...it made me realise that I'm not bad at what I do I am the only one holding myself back."

"I'm more confident in my ability - the sky's the limit."

Source: Before data from **WoW** baseline survey conducted in January 2016. After data from **WoW** final survey conducted in January/February 2017

Mentee

"This programme has been inspiring for me, instilling confidence to know I can progress to the next level still maintaining a work life balance. I know now that it's possible to have both a career and a family life. My mentor has similar priorities and she has achieved her career goals despite challenges of family."

2. Mentees now know it's not all down to them.

They identified culture as a top barrier to career advancement. So while lack of confidence is a personal barrier, the programme has made them acutely aware that corporate culture may be holding them back.

3. The programme was the stimulus for a third of mentees to change roles.

Twelve of the 27 mentees changed roles in the course of the year and eight of them directly attributed this to this programme. We know that several of our mentees have since been promoted.

4. It is possible to balance career and family.

Some mentees found through their mentors that it is possible to advance in their career while balancing family responsibilities.

5. The career plans were a highly-effective tool.

All mentees said that they derived benefits from their career plans, with 70% stating that they shaped all or most of their career decisions.

6. All participants "get" the power of mentoring.

Mentors were 100% sure of the need for mentoring of younger women. Before the WoW programme, 61% of the mentees had never had a mentor and 74% never had a sponsor. After the programme, 84% of the mentees said that the mentoring helped with career development and 81% said it had helped with personal development.

"I do not believe women are discriminated against (in my company). However there are no programmes in place to help their advancement."

Mentee

7. Sponsors discovered the power of the sponsor role.

Three-quarters had provided advice and support to the mentees on career progression and on increasing their visibility. They also got insights into the hidden talents of their female mid-managers.

WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Confidence is a magic missing ingredient.

The programme showed that the absence of confidence can be tackled with a relatively small investment in targeted development initiatives, that combine mentoring, sponsorship, career planning and leadership development.

2. Mid-career interventions are critical.

The top factor holding mentees back is “focus/drive commitment” to strategic career decisions, according to our mentors. Multiple competing priorities can lead to a lack of career focus among this cohort. For businesses concerned with strengthening the female leadership pipeline, this is where they need to concentrate.

3. Senior experienced women are a powerful resource.

By supporting younger women in career advancement, senior women help address several key barriers, including the absence of successful female role models. All our mentors, with the

Our mentees' journey



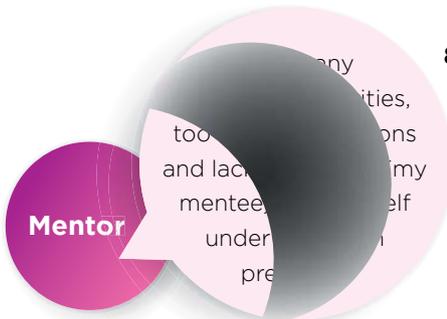
exception of one who does not have time next year, said they would be prepared to serve again as mentors.

4. Mentors and sponsors are a winning combination. Together they can help women (and men) who aspire to leadership roles. Even more powerful is the dynamic of having an external mentor and internal sponsor.

5. Mentors say younger women face significant challenges. Some even went so far as to say that younger women are facing much greater challenges in a cultural context than they did at that point in their career.

6. We were shocked by how little has changed around corporate culture. Our mentors told us this repeatedly.

7. Female only leadership programmes matter. Following the WoW programme, the majority (85% mentors and 73% sponsors) were convinced of the need for female-only leadership programmes.



8. The disconnect between aspiration and reality is stark. Despite commitments



and good intent by business leaders to address gender balance, we found this is not percolating down through their companies. Our mentors, mentees and sponsors told us about the lack of leadership, mentoring and other programmes.

Programmes to help women advance in their careers

There are no programmes in our companies



Endorsement of female-only leadership programmes after WoW programme



IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

and the programme absolutely amazing. The career development I have experienced in the past year has been profound.”

Mentee

work and cultural restraint self-p

Sp

support, energy and enthusiasm of the was awe inspiring. I found the whole process extremely energising and supportive and an eye-opening experience in female diversity which has informed my own work and organisation.”

Mentor

“The programme helped me to develop clarity on what I would like for my career and life. Being part of the programme gave me access to a network of peers in different industries.”

Mentee

“The career planning workshop at the start of the programme was very beneficial and gave me the opportunity to take a step back and look at what I was currently doing, what I wanted and how to get there.”

Mentee

highly-development a fresh and the way.”

mentor

Source: **WoW**
final surveys,
January/
February 2017

ORLA COWZER,

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE BROKING AT DAVY

When Orla Cowzer first heard about WoW, she felt it was speaking to her directly. “I was on a learning curve; at the tipping point in terms of leadership in the organisation. I felt it spoke to where I was in my career; for people who wanted to make a step change,” says Orla.

She was doing well at work, being promoted ahead of her years of service and getting positive feedback. Orla wanted to look at her next steps.

“I had worked at such a fast pace for years and now had a seat at the table and wanted to discover the best way to use that; to map out how to get to the next level.”

Orla feels one of the most impressive parts of the programme was her match with mentor, Carol Grennan, Chief Financial Officer at Touch Press Inc.

“It was great to have been matched with someone whose style was complementary to mine. Carol had very different industry knowledge to me. It was so interesting to get her insights.

“I felt I was able to be open with my mentor and was able to speak freely. There was no agenda;

her only interest was to help me and to listen. I also spoke to her on a personal level.”

At the time, Orla’s division was going through a restructuring “Carol had great insights on change management. Having someone to sound check and ground me really helped me to navigate the change. When reorganisation is happening, you can feel lost coping with the new dynamics so it was amazing to have someone who was so experienced in change management and leadership.”

Carol believes many of the challenges faced by females in the workplace remain the same with the added pressure of an accelerated working pace.

“Orla is a great example of a professional, confident, ambitious young woman who is excelling in her career and has all the attributes to become a great female leader and role model.”

One of the goals Orla had set before the process was to get a promotion in the year, which she achieved. “I achieved most of my short and medium goals and am working on the longer-term ones.”

MENTEE PROFILE

ORLA COWZER & MENTOR CAROL GRENNAN





LEADERS' VOICES



We invited leaders in business and academia to be interviewed for this action plan. Many had never given interviews before on the subject of female leadership. Their insights and perspectives were not only inspirational for us but helped us to shape the solutions we have developed.



Highlights of these interviews are included on the following pages. The full interviews are available on [www.Woman-Up.ie /Interviews](http://www.Woman-Up.ie/Interviews)



MICHAEL BUCKLEY

Michael Buckley is a founder and a member of the Chairs' Advisory Board of the 30% Club Ireland, the business network which aims to achieve 30% female representation in senior management by 2020. He is Chairman of KKR Alternative Investment Managers and of KKR Credit Advisers (Ireland) and holds several other non-executive roles. He is a former Group CEO of AIB and Chair of DCC.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Businesses need talent

"If men and women are no different in their talents, why leave out 50% of the total talent pool? But you need to be very careful about making sure that what you do about gender diversity fits into a broader approach to talent management."

Business models and the glass ceiling

"The glass ceiling is held up by corporate models and unless they're dismantled, the glass ceiling won't go into splinters. That's a huge ask in a world where the standard business model for senior people is 'any time, any place'."

Women's uncertainties

"As well as changing a lot of processes, you've got to address, carefully and effectively, women's uncertainty about making it (in their careers). And you've got to help them to solve that dilemma of the 'dual burden' that they carry as opposed to



the male single burden. To me, that's one of the two or three ways to unlock the door."

CEOs are critical

"You have got to engage CEOs. Signing them up to a principle is not going to change a whole lot about how they spend their time. For gender balance to change at all levels, it actually is going to require a fairly serious CEO time commitment, as well as a mindset change on their part and that of senior management."

Managers and their roles

"Apart from networks and career ambition discussions, I think it's about male managers being grown-up about this. They need to be very conscious that you can lose really serious talent at this stage. So, from a company perspective, it's about preservation, about managing an existential type of risk. Managers need to be better at managing their people and managing talent."

PETER BARRETT

Peter Barrett is CEO of SMBC Aviation Capital, the leading global aircraft leasing company which is headquartered in Dublin. It also has representation in China, France, Hong Kong, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United States.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Gender equality at home and at work

“My job requires that I travel a lot, but when I am at home we make a real effort to ensure our children see both of us doing the same thing. I strongly believe that until gender equality happens at home it won't happen in the workplace.”

Stereotypical role of men

“There is still a lot of pressure for men to be seen as the breadwinner – the hunter-gatherer kind of thing. I also think material status is more important to men than women and this drives competition in the workplace. It should be equally accepted for a man not to have a demanding and ‘successful’ career.”

Women are better at making choices

“I think women are far better at making choices about what works for them. Some decide that succeeding in the corporate world may not just be worth it when they weigh up everything else that is important in life. So, they either opt out or make decisions to prioritise clearly around work and family. I think men often make poor decisions in this regard.”



Maternity leave affects women's careers

“The reality is that women leave the work place for six to 12 months and men don't. So, if women decide to have children (and, for most of us, having kids is a very important part of our lives) it can be at an important point in a woman's career.”

Career choices are an issue

“My sense is that young women are encouraged to go study and arm themselves for a career in the professions like accountancy and law. As a result, some of the best and brightest graduates are being funnelled into the professions. On the other hand, I think young men are encouraged by parents to take more “risky” career choices.”

Women and adapting to the corporate world

“I think the corporate world needs to embrace the female way of working. But women also have to flex their styles, adapt to that corporate world and learn to take risks and so on. The best case scenario is a combination of both styles and that demands changes from both men and women.”

PROFESSOR NIAMH BRENNAN

Professor Niamh Brennan established UCD's Centre for Corporate Governance in 2002 and is a leading authority on corporate governance in Ireland and internationally. She is Michael MacCormac Professor of Management at UCD.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Women in today's workforce

"There are still the 'dark pools', where in reality what women often experience in the workplace is far from equal. Women can be treated utterly disrespectfully by male superiors who would never treat a man like that."

Different priorities for men and women

"Men want to get on and they don't want any woman to get in their way. In my experience, a man who has a wife who is pursuing a career is more sensitive and conscious of these issues. Women are more interested in the broader 'you' and we have a much more diverse portfolio of interests. I think this is a strength in that if I don't get the top job, in my head and in my female world, it's not the end of the day."

Impact of a career on women

"The decision to have a career can impact on domestic life and to some extent one has to abandon ship. When you are in work and you



are driven, you put huge effort in. It requires absolute singlemindedness. A lot of women don't want that because, in their head, the job is only part of their life and that's their choice."

Societal issues

"It is such a complex issue. To bring it back to something simple: what we really want is a society that gives women choices."

Becoming a CEO

"It requires ruthlessness, climbing the greasy pole and it requires stamping down anybody else who might be on that greasy pole."

"For anybody who gets to the top no matter what realm of society, it requires focused discipline, a 24/7 approach. That will never change and not everybody wants to do that. I think men are more ambitious than women, more single-minded."

DAVID HARNEY

David Harney is the CEO of Irish Life, one of Ireland's leading financial services companies with more than a million customers. With a total workforce of 2,400 employees, Irish Life operates in life insurance, pension, investment and health insurance markets.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Benefits of diverse teams

"The gender discussion has moved on to be a diversity and inclusion conversation and that's a better space for it to be in. It's not seen as a single issue anymore and it talks to everybody about the agenda....people now really understand and appreciate that diverse teams make better decisions. Because of this, people are more comfortable acknowledging the fact that people are different."

The importance of role models

"To get a real breakthrough in senior female leadership, people coming up through an organisation need to see role models. If there aren't any, it's difficult and it takes a while to build up that population of role models...many companies are making substantial progress which creates new role models to inspire others."

Unconscious bias

"The whole meaning of unconscious bias is that it is very hard to be aware of it. People can talk about unconscious bias but I don't think they fully



internalise what it really means. Everybody has bias. I've done the implicit bias test myself but then you sort of forget about it."

Confidence and men

"Confidence may also be an issue for men. It could be an issue for less men but if it is there, it also means we are not maximising our male talent either."

Confidence and women

"I get that women can have personality traits of being more reserved and cautious when it comes to going for opportunities. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. But organisations then need to be more aware of this when recruiting and interviewing."

Leadership pipeline

"I have 11 people reporting into me now, two of whom are females. This is low and really should be no lower than five. I would like to see this number increase but it will take a bit of work and a bit of time."

MARIE MOYNIHAN

Marie Moynihan is Senior Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition, Dell EMC. From a Dublin base, she leads a 500-strong HR team servicing the company's operations in 180 countries. Dell EMC has 140,000 staff globally and has a number of gender balance initiatives which have grown the cohort of women in leadership roles. Currently the gender split in its executive leadership team in its commercial business for EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) is 50/50. Marie was a **WoW** mentor.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Lack of progress in women moving to leadership roles

“For me, it comes back to inertia. People ‘get’ this in a theoretical fashion but, in reality, we’re all programmed to stay in our comfort zones. Leaders will say ‘absolutely, we need to improve the gender diversity of our organisation.’ but when it comes to filling a role that reports directly to them, it’s all about ‘fit.’”

Championing the gender balance agenda

“You absolutely need to have leaders shining a light on it at the top of an organisation and leaders need to know that they’re being held accountable. And without that, honestly, you make very little progress. But you then also need education all the way through the organisation because otherwise, it becomes a ‘check the box’ thing.”



Gender balance as a rights issue

“People intellectually get that this is the right thing to do – but that is not enough to motivate business leaders to change – you have to come at it from the point of view of how will this impact the bottom line both from a revenue and profitability perspective”

What women need to do to move up the corporate ladder

“There is an absolute requirement if you want to move up the ladder that you are able to package what you do, brand it, and make sure the right people know about it. And I think women are not very good at that.”

“Women don’t speak up... we often don’t take risks. We are inclined to overthink things and over-contextualise vs netting out the critical facts. Guys will often just give things a go and not worry too much about it, and tend to just come out and say things in a minimalist, fact based fashion which is often more appealing to senior leaders.”

LIZ CUNNINGHAM

Liz Cunningham is Google's Director of Tax for EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa). She is the Executive Sponsor of Women@Google, a network within the company, which provides mentoring and other supports to female employees. The headcount for Google's Irish operations between staff (called Googlers) and contractors is around 6,000.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Busting biases at Google

"70% of Googlers globally have taken bias busting training. This training is put into practice daily. For instance, at a talent review meeting where we discuss the performance of our people, the HR business partner will start the session by saying: 'Here are the kinds of biases to watch out for.' And sometimes someone will be appointed as a sort of 'bias buster' who will call out biases."

Google's culture

"It's very much a culture of inclusivity, of authenticity, of bringing your whole self to work. It's just ingrained in our culture that it doesn't matter who you are, what gender, colour, race, religion or whatever, you are encouraged to bring your whole self. That is something we talk about and we monitor."

Personal journey

"Women really relate to the personal journey. That came through really loud and clear at the Com-



pass Leadership Summit (a Google event, held in September 2017). We got really strong feedback that this event was different, that women in the room were inspired by the women on the stage and their personal journey - women were inspired to taking individual action."

Work life balance

"When you're aiming for balance and thinking you should be able to 'have it all', you're not setting yourself up for success because it's impossible to get the balance right. Life isn't perfect. Some things will be aligned in some parts of your life and at other stages in life."

The power of incremental change

"If there is only progress with seven (women on a leadership programme) then that's great. Because that seven will influence another seven, will influence another seven, will influence their daughters, their nieces, their co-workers. It's the power of the incremental change, the power of influencing that is underestimated"

PAT GUNNE

Pat Gunne is Chief Executive Officer of Green REIT PLC, the publicly-quoted property company which has a portfolio of commercial property interests. The company has €1.4bn of property assets and is based in Dublin. Pat is a former European Director of CBRE, the world's largest commercial estate agency.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Gender balance and effecting change

"The more this is discussed, the more it is measured and the more it is celebrated the better because then it is seen as something successful. And to celebrate something you need to benchmark it, monitor it and then communicate it. So, I think it is something that should be treated like any other objective: measure it and celebrate it."

Boardroom leadership

"I think that there needs to be positive discrimination first and foremost in boardrooms because that is where a lot of the activity at operational management level can be influenced."

Confidence

"I know a lot of very confident women and a lot of very un-confident men. I do think that it is unfair that, as a woman, you have to work harder to get to the same position. But I think it will be inconceivable in 20 years' time. The next generation will look on that as being totally weird and stupid".



Work life balance

"Sometimes work life balance is thought of in isolation of the reality of the economic situation, the environment and financial situation you are in as a corporate.

"It is much easier to achieve a work life balance in a boom than is in a bust. You can have all the aspirations you want but, in reality, sometimes your time is not your own and you cannot allocate your time between work and non-work in the way that you would like to or aspire to."

Dads have daughters

"Males are dads and dads have daughters so we are working in the same direction. Maybe there is something in the messaging, to get it away from it being a competitive game of men versus women and get the men thinking more about this in the context of their daughters and the evolution of change".

PROFESSOR JOYCE O'CONNOR

Professor Joyce O'Connor is the Founding President of the National College of Ireland and has particular interest in the area of gender balance. She has held several non-executive roles in the private, public and voluntary sectors. Currently she is a professional coach and mentor to CEOs and other leaders. She is an Eisenhower Fellow.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Gender balance and boards

"The board sets the agenda. If gender balance is not an agenda item and the board does not discuss it in terms of leadership development, talent management and succession planning, then it will not be a priority.

"A board needs to be clear about its role in developing talent within their organisation. Failure to include gender balance as part of this discussion can indicate a lack of focus on talent development and succession planning."

Opting out of the workforce

"At a certain stage of the life cycle, women look at their options, they ask the question: "Is it worth it?" In reality, it is not women who 'opt out' but society and business. A support structure is needed that addresses the issue of adequate childcare supports. We have a limited talent pool, we therefore need to create structures and more flexibility to enable that talent to be retained and promoted."



Advice to women on career advancement

"Be yourself. That might take courage but women have it. Find your support group. These supporters are the people who know the real you, not your job, title or role...they are the individuals who will give you that push or just be there to listen to you. These supporters are also the ones you can trust and who will tell you what you need to hear and not always what you want to hear. Cherish them. Have a broad, diverse, cross-industry network. You will ask for help, explore ideas and listen. Find something that combines your talents and that you have a passion for. Your supporters will help you get through difficult times. Have passion and belief, make it a personal priority, and show perseverance over time."

Gender pay

"There needs to be total transparency and accountability. If pay scales are published for all positions, at all levels, then women know what the situation is, where they stand and can make better decisions. Equipped with facts, you can take action."

KENNETH CARROLL

Kenneth Carroll is founder and Managing Director of Carroll Food Services, one of the largest independent contract catering companies in Ireland. Based in Ringsend in Dublin, the business currently employs 40 staff.

The main themes covered in the interview were:

Perceptions about long hours' culture

“The traditional perception of catering — that it has largely unsocial hours and that it doesn't favour family life — is wrong.

“I do have a seven-day business but the working week for staff is a five-day one and operating hours are mainly between 7am and 7pm. We make a point of rostering well in advance so people can really plan their lives around their work commitments.”

Women at senior levels

“I come across a lot of strong women in my business so yes women are well represented at a senior level in our industry. In my experience, some of them try to be too much like men in terms of the way they exert authority and power.

“In my view, it doesn't suit women — or indeed men — to behave in this way. The key message I would have is that we need to celebrate the difference and respect the talents that both sexes bring to the table. Respect and seeing the value in the other person is what good leadership is all about.”



Pushing the agenda

“If gender diversity is seen in the same vein as regulation you have lost the battle. If you try and force it on people, it will fail. A cultural change is needed. If it's forced we could end up with unnecessary tensions and pressures in organisations. That will serve no good purpose and, in my view, will create divides that won't serve anyone.

“Business needs to appreciate both men and women without one taking precedence over the other. I am really pro gender diversity but I have concerns that pushing this agenda too strongly has a danger of creating a divide between men and women, along with operational difficulties for businesses.”

Recruiting female directors

“Maintaining diversity is nearly impossible on the (charity) board I'm on. We recruit mainly through Boardmatch but most of the people applying seem to be men. We are working very hard trying to maintain gender balance. Women just are not presenting themselves and I don't know why that is the case.”

MARK RYAN

Mark Ryan is a former Country Managing Director for Accenture. He is the Chair of Blueface and a Non-Executive Director of Wells Fargo Bank International, Immedis and Econiq. He is a board member of the Abbey Theatre.

Buy-in from CEOs

“The reality is that, for most organisations, there are lots of priorities ...it hasn't been made clear enough that gender equality is good for business. The case for — and value of — gender equality has not been sold up the line. When a new CEO, assuming that it's a man, looks around at the challenges he doesn't see gender equality as a priority... many companies do not change until they are forced to do so.”

Performance management

“At our performance reviews with senior managers (in Accenture) they had to tell us what they were doing to promote gender equality in their areas. What have you done for gender equality? How many women are you mentoring? How many have you promoted? What have you done to support women on your project teams?”

Effecting change

“I'd say to other organisations: you have to have a comprehensive and realistic plan, which clearly articulates what you are trying to achieve, what actions you are going to take, define what success looks like in terms of targets and then you need to measure it. Without a plan it's just talk.



“Because it is fundamentally about a ‘culture’ change in most organisations, you need to be relentless in the pursuit of gender equality and give it ongoing board and executive level attention. This is not a once off initiative or about putting balloons in reception.

Confidence and Generation Y

“Lack of confidence is not just a female thing. Men also lack confidence but it's ok to lack confidence in an environment which is already male orientated. If you lack confidence in a world where inequality exists, then it's just putting females further behind the game.

“Generation Y are much more confident than their predecessors — and with a much greater sense of what equality is all about. If they are made to feel like fish out of water, they will just walk out the door and they will go to somewhere where they feel good about themselves because of equality and inclusion.”



SOLUTIONS: MULTIPLE ACTIONS NEEDED TO ENABLE REAL CHANGE

Our quest for solutions took us in many directions but ultimately led us back to three circles drawn on a flipchart at an early stage of the research into this action plan. Each circle had a single word: leadership, culture and females.

If barriers are to be overcome, if businesses are to leverage female talent, if women want to progress through the corporate pipeline, then, we concluded, multiple solutions are needed under these main headings.

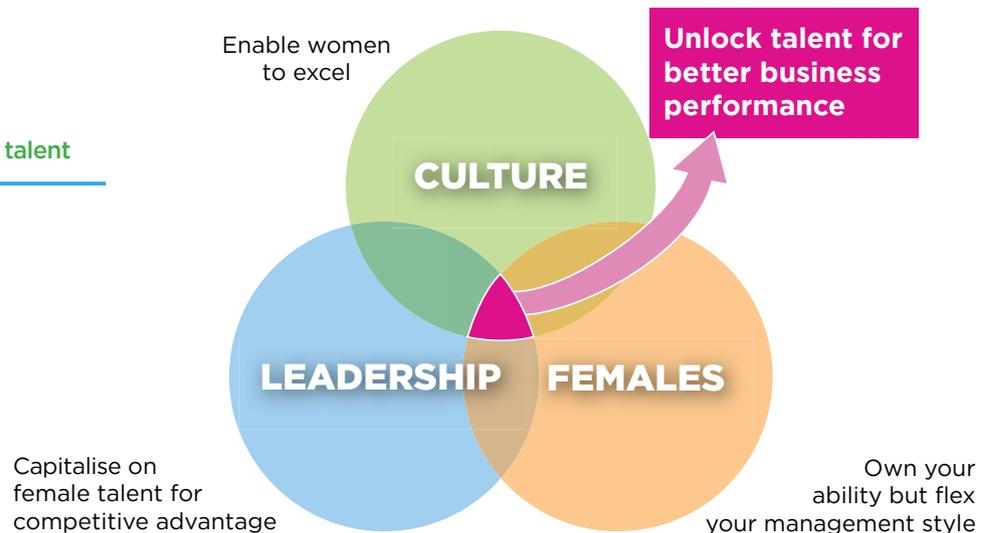
We talked about the circles as being levers for

change and that they needed to work in symmetry to achieve tangible breakthroughs. Where those circles intersect is where the real benefits lie for:

- Businesses, who can leverage more talent and achieve better business results
- Females, more of whom will decide to, and be encouraged to, move into leadership roles
- Men, who as managers, colleagues, fathers, relatives or friends of women in the workforce, will derive workplace and societal impacts

We recognised the complexity of devising solutions, the relentless commitment needed,

Our change model for fostering female talent



on the part of senior leaders, in particular, and the likelihood that the path to change will be a decidedly bumpy one. We doubted whether, despite the endless research and the media attention, women and men in the workforce really understood the underlying societal, cultural and behavioural factors that prevent women from achieving their career potential.

WoW'S KEY MESSAGES

We decided that our actions had to be clear and very practical. They had to be grounded in reality but not shy away from calling it as we see it. This is particularly so when defining the type of culture and environment where female talent will either flourish or flounder.

The system needs fixing, we believe, not the women. Yes, women need to be encouraged to seek a seat at a leadership table but that table needs to be one where women want a seat.

Women do not need to compromise their natural tendencies, their authentic voices or to behave like men to be successful in the corporate world. That said, changing an organisational culture is fraught with difficulties, with no guarantees of success.

Our big message to women is that they cannot and should not wait around for corporate culture to change. Instead, we recommend that they

need to “flex” — but not compromise — their management styles to help boost their confidence and get the attention and opportunities they deserve.

Our main message around culture is that businesses need to capitalise on gender difference to create better and stronger businesses where both women and men can play to their strengths. Everyone has a part to play in forming or changing an organisation culture, but leaders play a particularly important part.

Our key message to leaders is that they need to treat gender diversity as a strategic imperative for their business. Without top female talent, your business will miss opportunities and face competitive risks. Your business needs to be gender bilingual.

10 ACTIONS FOR LEADERS TO DEVELOP FEMALE TALENT

It's easy for a leader to be an advocate for gender balance. But true leadership is different – it requires vision, razor-sharp focus, personal commitment, tenacity and a long-term view on the importance of gender balance to the business. Here are our ten actions.

1. Make this a board priority

The board needs to see this as a strategic priority, one that is linked to the broader talent

10

ACTIONS FOR LEADERS TO DEVELOP FEMALE TALENT



1 Make this a board priority

2 Own the vision

3 Change the culture

4 Harness different leadership styles

5 Engage the managers

6 Use data to drive change

7 Measure, monitor and mobilise

8 Concentrate where it matters most

9 Tackle the tough stuff

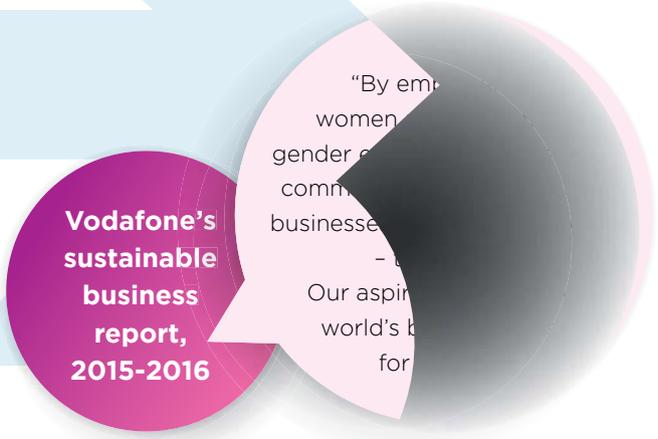
10 Be ready for the long haul

strategy and long-term future of the business. It should be on the board agenda, where targets are set and progress is measured. Unless that happens, the CEO and the senior management team will not devote the time and energy that this agenda merits.

Directors need to confront the disconnects between perceptions and reality (see page 10). They should seek quality data on the real state of gender diversity within the business and ask management for a plan to address the gap. Board members should ensure that the board itself and the senior management team are gender balanced. Chairs in search of female board talent should use resources such as:

- The Board Diversity Initiative, co-founded by WoW mentor Anne-Marie Taylor. It has a database of over 100 qualified and talented females available for board roles. For more details, visit <https://www.boarddiversityinitiative.ie/>
- The Boardroom Centre, run by the Institute of Directors in Ireland, an independent service which helps companies to source non-executive directors. For more details go to <https://www.iodireland.ie/board-services/boardroom-centre>

Not every company has a board with Non-Executive Directors. The majority of Irish businesses are owner-managed, with boards comprising senior management and/or family members. If that's the case, they too need to be looking at this as a priority in the context of their overall business

A graphic consisting of two overlapping circles. The left circle is purple and contains the text 'Vodafone's sustainable business report, 2015-2016'. The right circle is light pink and contains a quote: '“By emp... women... gender e... comm... business... - t... Our aspir... world's b... for...'.

**Vodafone's
sustainable
business
report,
2015-2016**

strategy and the acquisition and retention of female talent.

2. Own the vision

CEOs need to make a real commitment to greater gender balance and they have to bring their top team on board. This means allocating time to the strategy for developing the pipeline of female talent. CEOs need to have a strong vision, which is shared by the top team and is both compelling and relevant to the entire workforce.

At every opportunity CEOs need to communicate that vision — that “north star” state — and set out clearly the steps that are being achieved to meet that vision. They need to own the plan, ensure it is systemic, has concrete actions and hard metrics.

The CEO and top team must own that vision and lead this agenda. They cannot delegate to the HR department or the junior ranks within the business.

3. Change the culture

How CEOs and senior managers behave and act sets the culture for the entire business.

CEOs and senior management teams should firstly recognise and address the perception disconnect. They need to understand that very often male CEOs and senior managers either don't see any barriers to female advancement or think they can be easily overcome, which is at variance with how females perceive the same issues in the same businesses.

CEOs and senior management have to understand and then evangelise the business benefits of gender balance. Commissioning a confidential staff survey or a gender audit often has the effect of enlightening — and in some cases shocking — senior management into action.

Consider establishing a working group led by the CEO and with representatives, both male and females, from across the business. Ensure it does not become a talking shop. Set clear terms of reference and agree a work plan, actions and KPIs. Ensure that the working group's activities are shared throughout the business.

Call it as it is. CEOs and senior teams will earn the trust and respect of workers if they say what's wrong and what their plan is to fix it.

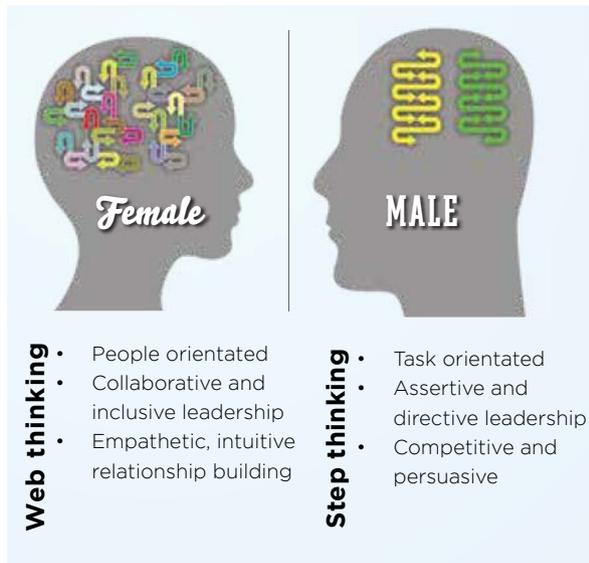
4. Harness different leadership styles

There is a wealth of research which details the business benefits of diverse leadership styles and the positive impacts that this can have on an organisation. The benefits will depend largely on the prevailing culture within the business. Brain science research is shining an important spotlight

...considerations support...
equality, better business performance,
better adaptation to client and company
needs, better productivity of individual
cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives.”

“Rather than taking a short-term, initiative-based approach, we have embarked on a long-term, strategic journey to firmly embed a culture where all different perspectives are understood and valued for the benefit of our employees, clients and the business.”

**Margot Slattery,
Managing Director,
Sodexo Ireland**



on the value of difference.

“At this stage of knowledge, it looks as if men’s brains work on an either/or basis, while women’s have a both/and capacity,” says Paul Brown, clinical psychologist and co-author of a seminal book on neuroscience and corporate culture²³.

“What organisations are missing at the moment is awareness that the differences have great value.”

As a leader you should:

- Learn and understand the value these differences bring to an organisation
- Design workplaces that respond and amplify the benefits of those differences
- Put organisational power where it belongs – in the possession of both men and women.

5. Engage the managers

People leave managers not companies – that’s how one management guru summarised the importance of managers to businesses and individuals’ career choices²⁴.

Managers are responsible for much of what happens in women’s day-to-day working lives. If managers are not role models for gender inclusivity, behaviour change will not happen on the ground, irrespective of a company’s strategy or vision.

Supportive managers are known to be particularly critical at that vital mid-career stage. “A manager who shows close involvement and personal interest in the individual along with a whole life approach to career-building is a key differentiator for women and builds mutual trust,” notes one report published by the 30% Club²⁵.

As leaders, you should focus on this all-important managerial layer. Recognise that managers will need developmental support to manage, motivate and encourage females in a different manner than in the past. Focused awareness and training activities are needed (See culture actions).

6. Use data to drive change

As a leader, firstly you need to establish the baseline data about the current level of gender parity in your management layers. Unpalatable as it may be, you have to accept the facts. The data will give you clear indications of the size of the task facing you and you can use that data to plan

the types of interventions that are needed.

A simple example from Google can work for you, even if you run a small business. Google puts the same rigour around its HR data as it does around engineering data. When its analytics showed that women were not putting themselves forward for roles, an email was sent out by a senior figure which simply said: “We’ve noticed that women aren’t nominating themselves and, hey, you should be.” Laszlo Bock, the ex HR head of Google, says it worked with more women self-nominating and getting promotions²⁶.

As leaders, you need to start by amassing and analysing your data and, if possible, benchmarking with others through your networks. Using this data to set overall gender diversity targets, as well as specific targets for teams, recruitment, promotions and developmental opportunities, will begin the process of culture change.

7. Measure, monitor and mobilise

Having started the journey, and commenced the implementation of a number of diversity initiatives, it is critical that you track the progress of the targets you have set and the effectiveness of the different initiatives. Mobilise your team to implement corrective actions to ensure they remain on course to deliver on those targets. Successful tracking includes:

- Create a gender score card that is regularly reviewed at board and executive team meetings
- Make managers accountable for achieving targets



- If appropriate, build gender targets into managers’ performance review processes
- Ensure this data is shared across the business, along with regular updates on the progress of your strategic gender diversity plan.

8. Concentrate on where it matters most

Focus on supporting younger women to get into the management pipeline, paying particular attention to those women who have achieved mid-management roles. Provide safe spaces and supports for women to share their experiences of the barriers they are experiencing at this point in their careers.

Act on their concerns. Introduce multi-faceted initiatives. Help females build their “tribes” (See No. 4 female actions), particularly by ensuring that they are supported by sponsors. Communicate what you are doing.

9. Tackle the tough stuff

Correcting the gender imbalance in your business is not for the faint hearted. It will require focus and rigour. Leaders should consider this issue as demanding and difficult as some of the greatest corporate transformation challenges – akin to a merger or acquisition – where the overwhelming majority fail to deliver the expected value because of cultural clashes.

This may involve a totally different leadership culture; less command-and-control hierarchies and one that is more open, responsive, networked and respectful of different values. You need to avoid the trap of light-weight PR opportunities, such as applying for awards or seeking recognition at female empowerment evenings. Avoid, that is, unless you have something to really celebrate. Such initiatives can spectacularly backfire, if they lack substance and there isn't real change, where it matters – among women in your workplace.

Instead:

- Be open and honest about where your business is, or isn't, on this journey
- Prioritise “quick wins” but not at the expense of addressing the more difficult tasks
- Challenge your management team and prepare to be challenged.

10. Be ready for the long haul

You need to take a long-term view and you may be disappointed that the effects of change aren't seen



more immediately. Moving your business from one, which, most likely, has a male corporate culture to one that is gender bilingual will take a lot of time.

Even businesses which are considered stellar examples of gender diversity admit that they struggle. However, leaders of those businesses have not allowed the challenges they face to dampen either their commitment or their determination.

That's true leadership.

10 ACTIONS FOR CULTURAL CHANGE TO FOSTER FEMALE TALENT

Culture is what everyone is doing when no one is looking, said leadership expert Gerard Seijts. Another, the late Peter Drucker, famously said that culture eats strategy for breakfast.

Culture can either inhibit or enhance outstanding performance from everyone in the workforce.

10

ACTIONS FOR CULTURAL CHANGE TO FOSTER FEMALE TALENT



1 Diagnose
your
starting point

2 Gender
proof your
organisation

3 Confront
your
biases

4 Enlist
advocates
men as

5 Invest in
flexible
workplaces

6 Reframe
workplace
conditions

7 Make it
personal

8 Promote
role
models

9 Expect
resistance

10 Remember:
you can
be a change
agent

Women, as much as men, form that culture. If it's to change, everyone has to play a part. Leaders play a particularly important role.

1. Diagnose your starting point

In aiming to become gender bilingual, your business is starting on a long journey. Having set the vision, it now needs to define the starting point. The CEO and the senior team should commission a gender audit, a staff engagement survey or another diagnostic project to get a real understanding of corporate culture and the barriers to developing female talent. Engage an external, objective party to do this work, as this is more likely to win trust among staff.

2. Gender proof your organisation

Conduct a rigorous root and branch overhaul of HR practices, procedures and policies to ensure that they fully support the goal of becoming a gender bilingual business. Broaden the extent of performance review systems beyond past performance, ensuring managers cover employees' long-term career and developmental issues.

Scrutinise the messages in your job ads for terms that could be off-putting to female candidates. Develop systems and supports to encourage females to apply. Ensure interview panels are gender balanced and that biases are called out during evaluation discussions.

When head-hunters or recruiters are tasked with finding talent, insist that the short list comprises

more female candidates who meet the core competency requirements. A 30% minimum female quota is considered good practice for short lists. Don't accept that the female candidates aren't out there. They are.

Be transparent in pay structures and ensure that incidences of pay inequality are addressed.

3. Confront your biases

We all have biases. Most of us are oblivious to them and how they affect our everyday decision-making. As a leader, you need to help your management and staff to understand and accept bias as a normal human condition, not something to be embarrassed or afraid of. You then need to help equip them with the skills to lessen their impact in the workplace.



Unconscious bias can be changed but it's difficult and does take time. A good starting point is to do what we in **Wow** did: take a bias test. (See page 17). The Gender Career Implicit Association Test takes about 10 minutes to complete. Log on to <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> and select the Gender Career IAT.

Consider doing this as a team exercise, with all members sharing and discussing the results and their implications. Consider how the results play out in your daily interactions and what you will do differently based on your new-found knowledge.

Commission a formal training programme on unconscious bias. Consider innovative approaches to training where men are asked to spend a day in a woman's shoes (not literally of course). Involving, rather than telling, can be a game changer. Pay particular attention to ways the business can put what has been learned at the training session into practice. Adopt the "stop, think and act" approach. Consider nominating someone as a "bias buster" whose job it is to call out biases as they arise at internal meetings.

4. Enlist men as advocates

Men have been, and will be, critical in supporting women to progress in their careers. Among our own mentors, three quarters identified the support of a male sponsor as important to their career progression.

Senior professional women with male sponsors

*Based on a survey of **Wow** mentors, all senior and highly-successful female professionals*

75%

Men can — and should — do more to champion females in the workforce. What to do? Understand the issues and perspective of your female employees or colleagues. Apply the learnings from unconscious bias training.



WHAT MEN CAN DO

Advice from Gary McGann, Chairman of Paddy Power Betfair plc and Chairman of Aryzta AG:

- * Remember privilege is invisible to those who have it
- * Stop being in denial
- * Take responsibility and ownership. This won't fix itself
- * It's not simply a women's issue - it's much more holistic
- * Remember confidence is not competence
- * Mentor and sponsor women - a mentor listens and speaks to you, a sponsor talks about you
- * Wake up to the facts

Encourage and foster potential female leaders. Become a sponsor. And don't be blinded by the notion that women are less committed or capable when they have family commitments.

Use the content and other resources created by Men Advocating Real Change (MARC), a not-for-profit community committed to achieving gender equality in the workplace. It runs training programmes and events but also provides a lot of excellent content for free that to help leaders and men in the workplace. Visit <http://onthemarc.org/home>

5. Invest in the right type of initiatives

Avoid the trap of investing in generic training or other programmes that don't fit your business's culture and needs and are not closely linked to an integrated gender diversity strategy. Disconnect-ed stand-alone interventions, while appearing to support gender diversity, are insufficient to address the significant systemic change needed.

Be conscious that the initiatives perceived to have no discernible impact might have the potential to alienate both men and women. "To build leadership capacity, leadership training programmes targeting women need to move beyond helping them navigate the existing playing field to more sustained interventions that can eventually redesign the field," advises Iris Bohnet, author of *What Works*.

Start with mentoring, sponsorship and networking initiatives, but ensure they are integrated. Where

possible, recruit senior females as mentors as they can act as role models, and aim to secure mentors who are external to the business. At its core, mentoring is about providing a safe place for women to share their goals and challenges. This is much easier with an external mentor.

Both men and women in managerial roles should become sponsors of aspiring females. The CEO and the senior team have responsibilities not only to act as sponsors themselves but to inculcate a culture where sponsorship is the norm.

Consider female-only leadership programmes — such as the one we ran — that are multi-faceted and address career planning, confidence, behavioural change and cultural factors that impede career progression.

6. Reframe the rigidities of work

Mega trends, such as new technologies, the gig economy and the move towards self-employment, are allowing people to work in ways that were unimag-



inable 20 years ago. This can be liberating for parents – both women and men – who try to combine their jobs with family responsibilities and long commutes.

Enable managers and staff to achieve a better work life balance. Move away from the traditional mindset that work needs to happen within set hours and that people have to be physically present to do their jobs. Consider introducing flexible working arrangements and family friendly initiatives.

Rewards for employers include greater loyalty and productivity than you might achieve from more traditional work regimes. Don't automatically assume that such initiatives are an additional cost to your business.

Show leadership. Niall FitzGerald, then Co-Chair of Unilever, was told by a senior colleague: "We must identify very clearly those jobs which can be operated in a flexible manner." His response? "You're going in absolutely the wrong direction. We will say: 'In principle, every job can be operated in a flexible manner unless it can demonstrably be shown to be otherwise.'²⁷"

7. Make it personal

Individuals will ask, "what's in it for me?" and this needs to be addressed head on. Highlight the business case and direct benefits. In the case of Accenture, which was losing three times as many women as men, the arguments were about this hurting growth potential and not getting a



the cost of
someone staying home
one day a week is far
lower than what you
spend recruiting and
training new
people."

**Vittorio
Colao,**
Chief Executive,
Vodafone
Group

return on investment on the training provided to female consultants.

For team leaders, provide evidence that gender balanced teams make better business decisions and are more innovative. For the general population of men, talk to their innate sense of fairness. HP in its 'Dads and Daughters' campaign achieved real breakthroughs by getting fathers in the company to put themselves in their daughters' shoes as they navigated the challenge of working in a male-dominated culture.

Effecting change is hard. You have to appeal to the head as well as the heart. More often, it's the appeal to the heart that ultimately wins out.

8. Promote role models

The visibility of female role models, particularly in atypical senior or responsible roles, is essential to demonstrate to women that they too can make it to the top. Our mentors allowed younger women to understand that it's possible to have both a

successful career and a family life.

Use every opportunity to promote these role models. If your business does not have its own female role models, think laterally. Consider inviting senior females from other companies or networks to your offices to meet staff. Circulate news of females within your sector who are making breakthroughs.

Boards should ensure that female Non-Executive Directors should get opportunities to meet staff members either formally or informally. Role models are not always female. Male CEOs and senior team members who leave work at 6.00p.m., take paternity leave as well as their full allocation of holidays are important role models.

9. Expect resistance

Resistance is inevitable but remember it may not be conscious. Strongly-worded memos from the top can be ignored or deleted. You can plaster the walls with banners proclaiming new values but the reality is that people will continue to work with the habits that are familiar and comfortable.

Change behaviours and mindsets will follow. Neuroscience research suggests that people act their way into believing rather than thinking their way into acting. So focus on changing some critical behaviours which will drive your gender diversity agenda forward, such as the “bias buster” role outlined in action 3 above.

Link those behaviours to business objectives,

improved financial performance and benefits for all. Make it tangible and concrete. Harness the support of authentic informal leaders: people who, because of their outstanding expertise, performance or positive relations with colleagues, yield considerable influence. Their support with culture change is invaluable if they become models for the new desired behaviours.

10. Remember: you can be a change agent

Everyone in a company, irrespective of gender, grade or experience, can be a change agent. Organisations don't change, people do. Both women and men need to be open to and willing to change. Your interaction with your female colleagues and the degree of support you offer can have a profound effect on their confidence and their career ambitions.

So ask yourself some searching questions: Do I understand why the change is necessary? Do I resist because I will lose face or control? Do I feel involved and well informed? What can I do to support this change to happen? Take responsibility for getting the answers to these questions and playing an active role in promoting gender parity in your workforce.

10 ACTIONS FOR ASPIRING FEMALE LEADERS

Not every woman wants to climb the corporate ladder. Others are more content to stay at the level they are at or to take extended career breaks for family or other reasons. As women we are far

10

ACTIONS FOR ASPIRING FEMALE LEADERS

1 Crack confidence and believe in yourself

2 Don't over-think, just grab that opportunity

3 Capitalise on your professional relationships



4 Build a tribe to support you

5 Think big. Get a game plan

6 Get noticed. Visibility is vital

7 Seek opportunities to give you P&L experience

8 a

9 Negotiate and remember - you're worth it

10 Recognise what drives you and don't give up

better at making those choices than men.

For those women who do want to move into leadership roles, our advice is that they need to understand default behaviours and “flex” their managerial styles to take account of the corporate world.

1. Crack confidence and believe in yourself

Firstly, understand that lack of confidence may be your default setting. As women, we are conditioned to be understated and low key. Lack of confidence may lead to sizeable knots in our stomachs when asked to speak at an event or do something else outside of our comfort zones. Your confidence may have been further eroded by your experiences in corporate life.

If you feel you suffer from confidence issues, relax

as you’re in exceptionally good company. Christine Lagarde, who is head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an iconic female leader. She exudes confidence but admits that she has had to work on it throughout her career. She admits that she still worries about getting caught off guard²⁸.

Even if your confidence is currently low, you can find ways to build and strengthen it. As a first step, why not take a confidence quiz?. The Confidence Quiz on the Confidence Code’s website takes about 15 minutes to complete. Check it out on: <http://theconfidencecode.com/confidence-quiz/>

Mind Tools – How Self Confident are You is another such test. It takes less than five minutes and you can do a read across from your score to get tips on how to nurture your self-confidence. Go to https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm



Why not seek out a trusted adviser who can help give you insights and coping mechanisms to deal with your lack of confidence? That person could be a colleague, a former colleague, someone in your network, a mentor, coach or a sponsor. Trust is what you are seeking in this type of relationship.

From our experience, we are convinced of the positive impact that mentoring and sponsorship can have on boosting confidence and applying that learning to a workplace setting. If you're fortunate enough to work in a business where mentoring or self-development programmes are offered, then sign up.

We would heartily recommend that you read *The Confidence Code*²⁹, a highly-accessible book, which drills into the issue of female confidence. "Confidence, at least the part that's not in our genes, requires hard work, substantial risk, determined persistence, and sometimes bitter failure," say the book's authors. The book's main tip is: "Nothing builds confidence like taking action, especially when the action involves risk and failure."

By cracking confidence, you will be much better placed for others to see and appreciate your competence.

2. Don't over-think, just grab that opportunity

Women tend to overthink and over-analyse potential risks. That holds women back in corporate life where rapid-fire decision making and risk taking are valued attributes. Have you ever been

at a meeting when a male colleague blurts out the first thing that comes to mind and gets the boss's attention and praise? You may have had a better answer that you've been working on in your head but the opportunity has passed.

You need to seize new opportunities – go for that new role, take on the project that will test and stretch you. Be more spontaneous. Give your opinion on that business problem, even though it may not be fully thought through. Taking action will also act as a confidence booster.

Treat a failure as a good outcome as it is one you can learn from. The world's greatest leaders are those who treat failures as learning opportunities.

3. Capitalise on your professional relationships

Women don't use their networks in the same way men do. It's not that we don't have networks, or have valued contacts within those networks, it's that we are uncomfortable to use them for career or business purposes. Men don't have such inhibitions.

Same-sex networks are powerful. There is much evidence to suggest that women feel less threatened when sharing information with other women. However, they don't always like asking those contacts for professional advice or help. And when it comes to asking a male contact within a network, there is even greater reticence. With new-found confidence, have the courage to make that call, send that email or have that coffee date with a key contact. Don't be shy to ask

for advice, to be considered for opportunities or to be introduced to someone who can help you and your career.

Generally, a trusted contact will want to help. Always acknowledge your appreciation for the help you have received and also offer to reciprocate that favour.

4. Build a tribe to support you

You also need to have a number of people who will provide more ongoing and deeper support than you can expect from members of your networks. Ideally, your tribe should include:

- A mentor, who will create a safe environment, listen without judgement and foster a deep and trusting relationship that will help guide you through your career
- A sponsor, who will typically be a senior figure with influence within your company and who will advocate for you when new roles or opportunities are being discussed
- Peers within your company or within your networks, who are going through similar career and life stages and from whom you can learn and share experiences.

We know from the programme the power of peer support. When our mentees first met at the career planning workshop in January 2016, they didn't know each other. A few weeks later, we heard stories of them swapping not only contact details but books on career-related themes.

Securing a mentor and a sponsor will very much depend on your individual circumstances. You may be fortunate enough to work for a company that has formal mentoring programmes or be part of a network or a professional body which provides mentors. But, if not, ask someone in your network if he or she could help you identify a mentor.

The pathway to securing a sponsor is to ensure you are noticed by more senior people (See No 6 below). A natural outcome is that a senior person would speak up for you and provide you with opportunities. But if that's not happening, consider asking a senior figure to keep you in mind if roles or "stretch" opportunities come up.

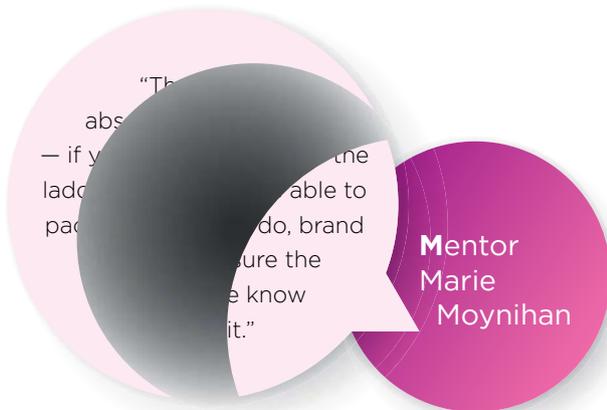
5. Think big. Get a game plan

Our default is to think small and to avoid roles or experiences where we don't believe we are a natural fit. We are also less inclined than men to consider where our careers are going and what we need to do in the long-term.

If you really want to progress up the corporate ladder, don't assume that it will just happen. It won't. You need a plan. You need to take stock of where you're at, where you want to get to and the steps that you need to take. This has to be a "whole of life" plan that takes account of your personal circumstances and aspirations outside of work. You need to realise that you may need – and can get – help from your tribe, in particular your mentor and your peers, to craft that plan.

6. Get noticed. Visibility is vital

Don't expect that your work will do the job of getting you noticed. That's what happened when you were in school and university but that's not how it works in the corporate world. Your work and your performance are only one element of what you need to do to move up the ladder. You should ensure that others within the business, particularly more senior people, are aware of your work and what you're capable of.



7. Seek opportunities to give you P&L experience

Women tend to be clustered in functions, such as marketing and HR, which are not always considered to be natural pathways to senior management roles. What's in demand in the C Suite is P&L experience and if you lack such experience that can affect your chances of progressing to more senior roles.

Seek opportunities to broaden your experience by applying for different roles or getting involved

in projects where you get some P&L experience. Consider doing a course or pursuing a professional qualification that will help you make that transition.

8. Don't allow perfection to swamp you

From our school days, we strive for perfection. Again that doesn't work in the corporate world. Endless polishing and the quest for perfection impede career development. Of course you want your work to be of a high quality. But be careful that such a commitment to quality is not a fancy cover for your fears. Remember, getting it done is more important than getting it perfect.

So stop polishing and perfecting. Instead, use the time to familiarise others with your work and, in the process, your visibility and perceived value to the business will be enhanced.



9. Negotiate and remember - you're worth it

Don't underestimate the value that you offer to your employer. Your male colleagues tend not to and that's one of several reasons why gender

pay gaps happen. Women are more likely to have conditioning about being liked, which is a definite handicap in workplace negotiations. Various studies show that women are better at negotiating deals on behalf of others than they are for themselves.

Don't follow Jennifer Lawrence's example and throw in the towel too early in pay negotiations. Learn how to negotiate effectively for yourself. While every pay negotiation is different, Sheryl Sandberg, in her book *Lean In*³⁰, provides some useful pointers for how women should handle negotiations for themselves:

- Don't automatically accept the first offer
- Use "we" not "I"—for instance, say "we had a great year"
- Cite industry standards, for example, "the standard package for someone of my experience is..."
- Consider framing the discussion around the gender pay gap. For instance, "as a general rule, it's known that women doing similar jobs are paid less than men..."

10. Recognise what drives you and don't give up

You need to work out what's important to you – family, career, sport, health and well-being – and strive to achieve the optimum mix that works. If the "always on" frenetic culture of some organisations works for you, then go for it. If it isn't, then select what does, set boundaries around your working life and stick to them.

Many successful busy leaders – both men and women – do leave the office at 6.00p.m. That doesn't mean that they don't take calls or logon to emails later in the night.

Striving for work life balance may be setting you up for failure. Work life mix is a better term. Working women have exceptionally busy lives and, at times, the constant juggling can be frustrating and exhausting. Don't give up – with time and some planning, you can get a better mix.

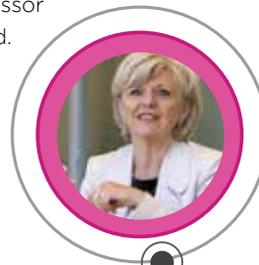
Sources

This action plan draws on over 200 different academic and other credible sources. The main substantive sources are referred to below. These full references and others are detailed www.WoWempowering.ie/research

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We are extremely grateful to.....



Our mentees

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