Churchill Fellowship Report

Exploring effective strategies to engage women in leadership roles in non-traditional sectors

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Churchill Trust for their support of my research project. The opportunity to travel to four countries to learn about best practice in engaging and empowering women in non-traditional sectors, but also to deepen my understanding of the challenges faced, was unique. During the course of the Fellowship, I was able to build new relationships which I know will continue throughout my professional life.

I am not sure this report will ever do justice to the experience that I had during the 5 weeks of my Fellowship. I am very grateful to the Trust for providing such a life-changing experience to me, and to the other Fellows. I am also very grateful to the ACT Office for Women for their support of the Audrey Fagan Scholarship. It was an honour to complete this research while holding this award.

I would like to thank the many people who gave their time to contribute their knowledge to this research.

I hope that through this report and by bringing together the many stakeholders involved, we can renew our commitment to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, starting with sectors that have been traditionally male dominated.

While this report does make reference to some specific examples, many of the people who I spoke with asked that their comments be reflected in general terms, but that specific examples provided to me not be cited in this report.
Executive Summary

The experience of meeting with a wide range of stakeholders working to advance gender diversity and inclusion in organisations that had not traditionally been renowned for their commitment to gender diversity, was both humbling and inspiring.

The aim of the Fellowship was to explore barriers facing women’s access to leadership roles in non-traditional sectors and learn from international best practice with regards to what works in the area of recruitment, retention and promotion of women. Very early in the Fellowship, it became clear that the issues facing women in non-traditional sectors may not differ significantly from those facing women in most industries. Instead it was just a factor of the level of awareness, or recognition of importance of the agenda that differed. Obviously, when there are very few women in an organisation or team, this can heighten someone’s experience of not being included. That being said, what is different is the number of women in the pipeline. While women are consistently outperforming men in tertiary education, they remain in the minority in science, IT, maths and engineering.

Some key thematic priorities emerged over the course of the five weeks of interviews. These have formed the structure of this report and its recommendations, and are as follows:

1. Effectively managing change
2. Detailing the Business Case for Equality
3. Changing structures rather than women
4. Enhancing Flexibility/ Job Agility
5. Women’s Employee Resource Groups
6. Sharing unpaid work
7. What gets measured gets done
8. A silent issue: violence against women

The level of understanding and engagement in these eight areas differed vastly across companies visited and between countries. It would be fair to say that no country or company was addressing all of these priorities in a systematized way, but that some progress had been made in some areas by most organisations.

Underpinning workplace inequality is the fundamental issue of sexism and patriarchy which surprisingly, rarely came up in discussions. While it is not covered in detail in this report, it is worth nothing that the fundamental acceptance of the current system and structure of work, will continue to disadvantage women and other workers who do not fit a traditional worker mold.

Highlights

- Meeting stakeholders from a diverse range of industries and sharing their frustrations and success stories
- Having the opportunity to meet colleagues working on gender diversity issues within the militaries in all four countries
- Gaining a better understanding of the most effective ways to link research with business practice
- Building a global network of contacts
- Speaking at Australia’s White Ribbon Day event at the Australian Embassy in Washington
Summary of Recommendations

Effectively managing change

Recommendations:
1. Diversity and inclusion should be considered a strategic change management process and not a human resources issue
2. Leadership commitment to the change management process is required
3. External gender and diversity advisors should be appointed to support leadership teams to be accountable to their commitments

Detailing the Business Case for Equality (Establishing a sense of urgency)

Recommendation:
4. Organisations should develop a specific ‘business case’ for diversity and inclusion and socialize it widely

Changing structures rather than women

Recommendations
5. Organisations to ensure that there is a minimum number of women on each recruitment shortlist and where possible, on selection boards
6. Managers should be required to ensure there is a gender balance in work allocation
7. Internal communications should be reviewed by a gender expert and masculine language should be removed
8. Organisations should review training opportunities offered to employees and assess whether they could be offered remotely or part-time to support more women to participate

Enhancing Flexibility/ Job Agility

Recommendations
9. Organisations should adopt clear flexibility policies and provide training to staff and managers regarding the opportunity presented by flexible work practices
10. Leaders should be required to work flexibly to demonstrate to staff that it is accepted and encouraged
11. Stories of flexibility in practice should be shared across the sector to encourage others to take up flexible work practices

Women’s Employee Resource Groups

Recommendations
12. Organisations should invest resources in developing women’s networks with clear goals around sponsorship and engagement of women
13. Senior leaders should be required to participate in, and sponsor one of the ERGs

Reducing the burden of unpaid work

Recommendations
14. Organisations should enable their paid parental leave to be shared between partners as a mechanism to drive behavioural change
15. Organisations should train coaches who can support parents returning from parental leave
16. Organisations should have clear strategies in place to ensure that women who are returning from parental leave are given meaningful work and key clients to overcome the ‘motherhood penalty’

What gets measured gets done

Recommendations
17. Diversity scorecards, including KPIs, for all senior leaders and managers should be developed and reviewed
18. Organisations should announce gender diversity targets and report against them annually

A silent issue: violence against women

Recommendations
19. Organisations should provide all staff with education about violence against women and public support services available
20. Organisations should encourage all staff to be conscious of violence against women and to be aware of bystander actions.
Distribution

This report will initially be published on the Churchill Trust website.

It is my intention to use the findings of the report to do a series of awareness raising events through my employer, the Australian National Committee for UN Women. In October, 2015, the National Committee will host an annual dialogue with the private sector focusing on the strategies to improve women’s workforce participation and access to leadership roles. This forum will be the key in discussing the recommendations with the private sector.

I am also discussing whether the various topics could form the basis for an opinion series, distributed through one of Australia’s leading media outlets.

I will also use social media to promote the report to organisations that may find its recommendations helpful as they consider their gender diversity strategies.
Introduction

No country in the world has achieved gender equality. Despite significant improvements in women’s rights under law, women continue to earn less than men, are responsible for the lion’s share of unpaid work and face violence, harassment and discrimination in the home and in the workplace.

The purpose of this project was to understand some of the main barriers to women’s advancement in the workplace and to learn from the experiences and best practice of organisations in non-traditional sectors.

Interviews were conducted with four types of organisations:

- **Limited awareness**: Those which had limited or no awareness of the importance of women’s participation and had not considered doing anything differently
- **Initial engagement**: Those which had recognised that they could not meet their recruitment numbers or client expectations unless they had greater gender diversity and were trying to change their practices to attract more women
- **Early stage commitment**: Organisations where there was some awareness of gender diversity being important and initial programs to address inequality were being piloted
- **Deeply committed**: Organisations where the leadership was deeply committed to ensuring that the workplace was one which maximised the full talent pool, and recognised that this would require changes to organisational structure and systems

Regardless of where organisations were on the spectrum of awareness/commitment, their insights and experiences were valuable in forming the recommendations in this report.

This report is the compilation of experiences from nearly 70 interviews conducted over the course of five weeks. The recommendations aim to be simple enough such that businesses could implement them over the next 12 months, with the aim of significantly accelerating progress towards gender equality.

Recommendations have been made in the following priority areas:

1. Ensuring Leadership Commitment
2. Detailing the Business Case for Equality
3. Changing structures rather than women
4. Enhancing Flexibility/ Job Agility
5. Women’s Employee Resource Groups
6. Sharing unpaid work
7. What gets measured gets done
8. A silent issue: violence against women

What is meant by gender equality?

The idea of gender equality is that society might reach a state where decisions and opportunities are not limited by gender. The important thing to note in considering gender equality and women’s access to economic opportunity is that gender roles are defined by societal expectations and norms, and that these can be changed if there is the will to make the required changes.
Gender equality means different things to different people. For the purpose of this report, gender equality is assessed in terms of:

- Women’s access to leadership roles;
- Women’s access to economic opportunity and;
- Women’s ability to live free from violence and harassment.

**What are non-traditional sectors?**

Non-traditional sectors are those that have been historically dominated by men such as engineering. They also tend to be the highest paying roles and sectors. Thus, it is important to review the barriers to entry for women in non-traditional sectors if we are ever going to achieve gender equality.

For the purpose of narrowing the scope of this report, a number of key sectors were identified as having a low proportion of women in leadership roles and were the focus of the research undertaken. Defence, extractives, IT and professional services firms were represented in the mix of organisations interviewed as part of this Fellowship.

While gender norms and societal stereotypes have meant that women tend to dominate traditional sectors such as care, education and health, the barriers to their advancement were found to be largely the same as the barriers experienced by women in non-traditional sectors.

As such, while the research focused on gaining insights from the experiences of the non-traditional sectors, the recommendations made in this report are equally applicable to all sectors of the Australian business community.

**Disclaimer**

Undertaking the Churchill Fellowship highlighted the complexity of the barriers faced both by women seeking access to leadership positions in non-traditional sectors and organisations trying to make the necessary changes.

It was very clear that workplace culture impacts women’s experience and likelihood to remain in a role, in an organisation and in the workforce. That being said, the aim of this report was to identify a tangible series of steps that organisations should take if they are serious about attracting, retaining and promoting more women. As such, this report does not provide a detailed analysis of how to build and foster inclusivity, which is a subject for further research.

In addition to the recommendations made in this report, it is important to focus on programs that challenge male attitudes towards women, address unconscious bias and develop a workplace commitment to inclusivity. These types of programs are often ‘slow-burn’ and difficult to measure, however what was very clear from the interviews conducted was that even the smallest amount of awareness about inequality, was beneficial.

**Country selection**

The US and UK were chosen for this research as women in these countries face challenges similar to women in Australia in terms of accessing leadership roles in non-traditional sectors. Relationships between our militaries also made it possible to gain access to military
bases and experts. Sweden is often referred to as the country closest to achieving gender equality, having taken strong legislative and policy steps. Chile was chosen due to its heavy reliance on traditionally male dominated industry (ie mining), its developing country status, and because it’s President, Michelle Bachelet, is a strong global champion for gender equality.

The data below provides a snapshot of gender equality indicators in each of the chosen countries based on the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global Gender Index (World Economic Forum)</th>
<th>Female workforce participation rate</th>
<th>Women in parliament (WEF)</th>
<th>Women on boards of listed companies (WEF)</th>
<th>Female:male pay ratio (WEF)</th>
</tr>
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<td>45%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>70%</td>
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<td>US</td>
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<td>18%</td>
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<td>70%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Effectively managing change

Recommendations:
1. Diversity and inclusion should be considered a strategic change management process and not a human resources issue
2. Leadership commitment to the change management process is required
3. External gender and diversity advisors should be appointed to support leadership teams to be accountable to their commitments

Increasing the number of women in the leadership roles in non-traditional sectors, will require cultural change to make the workplace more inclusive of women and responsive to their needs. Companies who consider diversity and inclusion as a change management program have greater success in embedding change, than those who treat it as a human resources issue. To this end, it is worth considering what can be learned from the existing research into effective change management.

Change management expert, John Kotter (2012), outlined eight steps for creating major change:
1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create a guiding coalition
3. Develop a vision and strategy
4. Communicate the change vision
5. Empower broad based action
6. Generating short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor the new approaches in the culture

It was evident that while many companies engaged in this research project had considered some of these steps, none had worked through them systematically.

The need to establish a sense of urgency will be addressed in section two of this report, but essentially involves companies developing a business case to assist staff in understanding why the change is necessary.

Companies leading on this agenda had created working groups or ‘champions’ programs to support the change process. Shell UK and BHP Billiton Chile both had Diversity Committees which the Managing Director was involved in. The leader’s involvement ensured that there was visibility of the importance of this issue which is something that is widely discussed in the literature about gender diversity. These groups typically set targets, designed programs and assessed progress against the plans that had been made.

With regards to empowering broad-based action, one of the most transformational moments of the Fellowship, was learning about research being conducted by the US Naval Postgraduate School into the skills which might need to be developed if leaders throughout organisations were going to embrace a more gender diverse workforce.

In assessing the skills required of leaders to manage diverse teams, researchers invited 250 US soldiers from diverse backgrounds to identify the most capable, cross-cultural leaders in the Army (Yuengling. 2012). Surprisingly, only 11 Generals were named and in-depth
Interviews with nine of the Generals about their leadership styles were conducted. The study identified five key competencies of inclusive leaders, best able to manage diverse teams. These included:

- A commitment to fairness
- A belief in the importance of providing and seeking feedback
- A commitment to setting and maintaining clear and agreed standards and rather than focusing on whether minority groups could meet the standard, these nine leaders focused on all individuals meeting the standards
- A focus on task and team meaning that they were aware of the need to use the skills of the full team
- Having had a transformational experience where the leader had come to understand the impact of exclusion, racism or sexism first hand.

While these five skills are not unique to the nine Generals interviewed, they potentially provide a basis for understanding how to best generate and empower broad based action towards greater inclusivity.

In the US and UK there were a number of examples of where companies had sought to showcase and reward short term wins, which is a key part of Kotter’s framework (2012). Goldman Sachs had developed an internal champions recognition program where people who had gone above and beyond to promote gender diversity were rewarded. Other companies applied for Catalyst awards which are seen as very competitive, but also prestigious.

Once the initial change program had been communicated, Shell UK developed some ‘cheat sheets’ for managers to use to consolidate the gains that had been made. ‘Inclusiveness prompts’ asked leaders to consider whether they had heard different perspectives and created space for quiet reflection, before determining a decision. They had also had success with a model which they termed ‘+1’, where leaders were encouraged to think about who needed to be in the room for each meeting and then issued an additional invitation to someone who might be able to contribute a different perspective or might benefit from the experience.

Section seven of this report provides further insight into how organisations have successfully anchored the new approaches into the organizational culture. It is worth noting that there was a difference in the outcomes of the leaders willing to have their performance measured by indicators of diversity and those who said all the right things, but were unwilling to consider financial or performance incentives linking diversity indicators to their remuneration. CISCO and the UK Air Force both reported that leaders now had indicators in their performance reviews about gender diversity which affected promotion opportunities and that this appeared to be driving positive behaviours.

In a number of the interviews, the issue of organisations lacking in house expertise regarding gender diversity was raised. To this end, it is recommended that organisations at the beginning of their diversity journey engage an external panel of advisors who can support and guide the change management process and provide advice on specific programs and initiatives. These groups often assist in holding the leadership accountable to the stated targets.
**Detailing the Business Case for Equality (Establishing a sense of urgency)**

**Recommendation:**

4. **Organisations should develop a specific ‘business case’ for diversity and inclusion and socialize it widely**

In sectors that have been traditionally male dominated, very specific and targeted recruitment and retention programs have been successfully used to attract more women into the organisations. However, in these environments, there is a need to ensure that leaders and staff understand why the focus on gender diversity is necessary and what benefits it could bring for them personally. Without this understanding, staff often resist the change agenda and question the need for the proposed changes. For this reason, many of the stakeholders who participated in this project emphasized the need to build a strong business case for gender equality, specific to each business and sector.

Collating the examples provided by a range of different stakeholders, the business case for gender diversity includes (but is not limited to):

- Diverse teams make better decisions and are likely to deliver stronger financial results (Catalyst, 2004)
- To be the best company, we need the best people and therefore need to be recruiting from the entire talent pool
- Maximising performance requires all staff to be working as effectively as possible. If someone doesn’t feel part of the team or is excluded, they will not be able to perform to the best of their ability
- There is significant evidence that demonstrates that having more women in teams improves communication and ideas sharing and that strategy and risks are considered differently. This means that we are likely to give better advice if our teams are diverse
- Everyone wants to work on a diverse range of interesting projects. To win a range of projects, we need to have people from a broad range of backgrounds who see different opportunities
- To maintain our competitive edge, we need to ensure that we build gender diverse teams to meet client expectations
- Women make up a significant proportion of consumers. As such, it makes sense for our organisation to mirror the community we are selling goods and services to

In the UK and US, organisations had taken some steps to communicate the business case for gender diversity. However, too often, the leaders had simply made statements like ‘diverse teams make better decisions’ without providing the evidence base to support the claim. In Chile none of the companies who participated in the research had considered developing a business case for gender diversity. Reflecting on this, the Managing Director of Downing Teal made the point that in the context of economic downturn, it was harder to make the case for recruiting more women.

In all four countries, military contacts reported that the link between operational effectiveness and gender diversity was not widely understood or promoted. The one point which did appear to have gained traction in the US and UK was the fact that recruitment targets were not being met and as such, new population groups needed to be approached to maintain ‘readiness’. In Sweden, a Commanding Officer noted that he had personally witnessed significant improvements in team communication when there was gender diversity in the group.
Goldman Sachs had spent time developing communications about the importance of gender and diversity. They reminded staff that the business succeeded or failed on the talent of its people and therefore, attracting and retaining the best people was critical. Supporting people to understand that if the company only recruited from the male population, it was not reaching the full talent pool had been a successful strategy. Goldman Sachs also noted in their ‘business case’ that the company required people to work hard, and that if they were not included and valued, they were unlikely to do this.

Skanska found that increased team diversity clearly correlated with lower incidents of bullying and harassment. In the legal and accounting professions, it was reported that clients had started asking for gender diverse teams, and as such this was driving organizational change.

While these messages were fairly consistent across the UK, USA and Sweden, it is worth noting that in Chile, the primacy of women’s role as ‘mothers first’, made it difficult for organisations to have these sorts of conversations internally. The importance of women’s role in the home was raised in every meeting undertaken with a Chilean business.

Changing structures rather than women

Recommendations

5. Organisations to ensure that there is a minimum number of women on each recruitment shortlist and where possible, on selection boards
6. Managers should be required to ensure there is a gender balance in work allocation
7. Internal communications should be reviewed by a gender expert and masculine language should be removed
8. Organisations should review training opportunities offered to employees and assess whether they could be offered remotely or part-time to support more women to participate

Much of the focus on gender diversity in Australia has been about how to equip women with the skills, knowledge and attributes they may need to succeed in the workplace. Mentoring programs, leadership training and women’s networks have all been used widely by Australian businesses in a quest to ‘fix’ women. As the agenda matures, there is increasing recognition that it is workplaces and organizational structures that need to change, to realize the benefits from gender diversity.

Throughout consultations, there was a stark difference between the organisations which were taking steps to train women, and those which had progressed to accept that their structure may be inherently patriarchal and may need to change. Only the Swedish military had an active program focused on masculinity, the patriarchy and what might need to change if gender diversity was to be achieved.

In looking at the ways in which the structure of work might need to change, the biggest structural shift required is that of enabling flexible work. Section four of this report has been dedicated to enhancing flexibility. There were four other areas which were raised in the meetings, which are summarized in the recommendations above.

Recruitment
One issue faced in many companies in male dominated industries is the lack of women in the recruitment pipeline. While the pipeline issues are real in some industries, in many (I.E. IT and Engineering) there is an increasing number of women candidates. A Close the Gap Report from the UK noted that up to 70% of women in science, engineering and IT degrees are not working in those industries, indicating that it is not a pipeline issue (Thompson. 2009). Organisations reported that having women included in recruitment panels has led to improved female participation, which demonstrates that women considering an organisation may consciously or unconsciously be influenced depending on whether they can see someone like them in the organisation. Many businesses in the UK, US and Australian companies operating in Chile have developed processes to ensure there are women on all selection panels, for this reason.

**Access to high profile projects**

Another barrier to women’s advancement into leadership roles was seen to be their access to the ‘A team’ projects, which largely determined promotions and incentive based pay. Across all four countries, there was evidence of men being given preference when teams were set up for high profile or high-risk projects. The reasons cited for this usually linked to perceptions of unavailability due to caring responsibilities, however it was rare that this was interrogated by senior leadership. One UK law firm acknowledged that women were less likely to put up their hand for a particular project and as such, were overlooked. Of course there is an opportunity to work with women to encourage them to put themselves forward for projects, however there is also a need to ensure that companies are aware of the biases which exist and develop strategies to engage the best people, rather than the ones who are most confident.

**Use of inclusive language**

Within the US Government, significant work had been done to address masculine language which was found to be deterring female candidates for applying for roles in information technology. The ‘brogrammer’ culture which is widely documented in Silicon Valley appeared to have also taken over other IT hubs (Lobo, 2014). Prior to the changes being made, language like ‘we are looking for a rock star to nail this project’ was frequently used in job advertisements for government positions. This type of language was found to resonate with certain groups of people, but by and large women did not respond positively to ads which were based on macho language. The UK Air Force also acknowledged that the language used may be contributing to a culture that is not inclusive of women. One law firm cited the example of emails being sent to mixed gender teams using ‘Dear Gents’. While these small examples may not seem important they are evidence of a cultural norm where women are not considered welcome or equals. Active steps to make workplace language more inclusive will be needed if more women are going to enter male dominated sectors.

**Training delivery**

Military organisations in the US, UK and Sweden recognised that the training programs which form ‘promotion gateways’ were a key drop off point for women. The inflexible timing and delivery of many courses have led to women opting out at different gateways. In the US, significant work was being done by the military to identify whether there were ways of offering key courses remotely or part-time to enhance the opportunity for women to participate. In addition, early discussions about the military training style were raised.
Recent research at Harvard University found that if the style of teaching was not flexible to the needs of students, then it might unconsciously bias a male learning preference (Kantor, 2015). While the research had not yet been done in the US military, there was a general agreement that this would be found to be the case in the way training was delivered.

Enhancing Flexibility/ Job Agility

Recommendations

9. Organisations should adopt clear flexibility policies and provide training to staff and managers regarding the opportunity presented by flexible work practices
10. Leaders should be required to work flexibly to demonstrate to staff that it is accepted and encouraged
11. Stories of flexibility in practice should be shared across the sector to encourage others to take up flexible work practices

With more families wishing to have dual incomes and more women wanting to participate in the paid workforce, flexibility is being widely discussed in the US, UK and Sweden. Despite many companies appearing to have formal policies in place, implementation remained limited. In Chile, a country which has a 45 hour base working week, the concept of flexibility was not well supported. Across the four countries visited, there was recognition of the existence of an ‘ideal worker’ model which preferred people who were available 24/7 and had no visible caring responsibilities (McKinsey & Company, 2013). This norm is a major barrier to women’s participation in the workforce as they perceive that it is not possible to be valued or compete unless you can commit to 24/7 availability. Interestingly, research from Australia also shows that men value and are seeking workplace flexibility as well, however this was not as widely discussed in the meetings (Diversity Council of Australia, 2012).

The model affects women’s experience of the workforce, as they cannot see a pathway to balancing work and home responsibilities. In Chile, some employers reported being concerned that giving women leadership roles might take them away from their responsibilities at home, and as such, they felt that it was a business responsibility not to put women in a difficult position by offering a promotion. Interestingly in all four countries, there was widespread confusion about what flexibility and job agility would look like, with most contacts using flexible work and part-time work as interchangeable terms, when they are in fact different concepts.

There was a clear difference between the level of awareness of companies that had formal flexible work policies and those that did not. For the US and UK Militaries, flexibility was a relatively new concept. Informal flexible work arrangements appeared to be used, but these were reliant on individual relationships between staff and their commanding officers. In both countries, a lack of flexible work has been cited as a major barrier to women’s participation and promotion in the military. The cost of changing the structure of work was a commonly cited reason for the lack in flexibility. In some ways, the military is unique with regards to reduced hours or flexible work, because the employment contract involves housing, healthcare and other benefits which are linked to a full-time work assumption. However, in the US, the idea of costing re-training and turnover and then comparing the costs of systems and structures which would allow flexibility was being discussed, but had not been progressed.
Pacific Hydro in Chile noted that the introduction of a formal flexible work policy had assisted staff to feel comfortable to take up the options, once they understood the rules and the benefits to the individual and organisation. The Managing Director reported higher engagement and retention since the introduction of these policies, though noted that there had been some initial teething issues with managers unsure how to trust employees working remotely. By contrast, a number of the mining companies in Chile perceived flexible work as a ‘benefit’ that could be offered in boom times, but something that in tough economic times was an unnecessary burden for the company.

One major UK law firm reported that they had some success with an increase in women and men taking up flexible work arrangements after the company had introduced a formal flexible leave policy and all Partners had been asked to work flexibly and promote their choice to their teams. For many, this now involves leaving the office at 5:30pm, even if they then log in remotely, but in leaving the office, it enabled other staff to do the same. Using the company intranet, leaders shared their experiences of flexible work practices and encourage others to consider using the policy. In spite of this, the same company had reported trends where staff left their coats on their chairs when they left for the evening, to pretend they were still at work.

While many organisations recognised the importance of flexibility to women’s advancement in the workplace, very few were investing in policies and practices which were going to lead to a significant change in the structure of work. Formal policies are an important starting point, as is the education of managers and sharing stories of where flexibility leads to strong business outcomes. While there is now significant evidence of flexible and part-time workers being more productive than other workers, discussions about flexibility are very much framed in the context of ‘benefits to workers’, rather than about enhancing productivity.

**Women’s Employee Resource Groups**

**Recommendations**

12. **Organisations should invest resources in developing women’s networks with clear goals around sponsorship and engagement of women**

13. **Senior leaders should be required to participate in, and sponsor one of the ERGs**

Women’s networks and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) were a common factor in all of the organisations which were prioritising gender diversity. While some acknowledged that the groups had originally been started without a clearly defined purpose, the value of women’s networks for developing female talent, engaging employees and reviving communities within organisations was widely accepted.

Catalyst defines employee Resource Groups (ERGs) as ‘voluntary, employee-led groups that serve as a resource for members and organisations by fostering a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with organizational mission, values, goals, business practices, and objectives’ (2015). It goes on to note that other benefits including the development of future leaders, increased employee engagement, and expanded marketplace reach may be realised from investments in these groups (Catalyst, 2015).

The issue of whether women’s networks should remain exclusive to women was contentious. In male dominated industries, it was argued that women have opportunities to
network with each other so infrequently, it should be encouraged. The opposing view was that excluding men may lead to men feeling resentment towards the network and not learning about the experiences of women in their workplaces. One option that some companies had introduced to overcome this issue was a system where men were invited to attend every second meeting of the women’s network.

The UK Navy Women’s Network was established in 2012 with the aim of discussing what would make the workplace more inclusive and reduce the wastage of female talent. It was acknowledged though, that when it commenced, it did not have the support of senior leadership and as such women reported that it was difficult to attend the meetings due to the ‘consequences’ they faced when they returned to their work. As such, a senior leader directive was issued, explaining the importance of the network and asking all managers to actively promote the network to female staff and encourage their attendance. Recognising that the lack of women in Navy meant that it was difficult to broaden women’s networks, the UK Navy started engaging with the Police Women’s Association—which faced many of the same challenges. Zurich also noted that without senior leadership buy in to the importance of employee resource groups, it was difficult for staff to attend and participate fully.

One CISCO employee noted that ERGs were not just good for the members, they also had positive business impacts. She reported that at CISCO, the women’s network members had been involved in designing recruitment campaigns for women in non-traditional roles and had also been doing promotion in schools and universities of the sorts of roles available at CISCO. In addition, the company had survey data from graduates which demonstrated that the opportunity to participate in ERGs was a factor in choosing a career at CISCO.

Experience from Shell in the UK which has one of the more mature networks of employee resource groups, showed that in addition to having a senior leader champion for each group, requiring senior leaders to participate in an ERG had been a positive experience for the group and for the leader. Leaders had been asked to attend one of the groups which they may not typically associate with, to experience what the issues being discussed were and the impact of the issues on the business. Shell’s experience was that leaders became better informed about the issues which were of importance to the ERG members.

Reducing the burden of unpaid work

Recommendations

14. Organisations should enable their paid parental leave to be shared between partners as a mechanism to drive behavioural change
15. Organisations should train coaches who can support parents returning from parental leave
16. Organisations should have clear strategies in place to ensure that women who are returning from parental leave are given meaningful work and key clients to overcome the ‘motherhood penalty’

In all of the countries visited, the issue of traditional gender roles impacted women’s access to the workforce, and limited their engagement in male dominated sectors. While some businesses (especially the Chilean owned ones) accepted this to be true and believed that organisations should work within societal norms, most understood that the business community would need to play a role in shifting societal attitudes if women were ever going to reach equality at work.
Like Australia, all countries reported increases in women’s workforce participation over the last decade, however there had not been an equivalent decrease in the amount of unpaid work women were doing (UN Women, 2015). UN Women’s recently released Report Progress of the World’s Women cites unpaid work as one of the largest barriers to gender equality, with women still doing the majority of unpaid care work in all countries (2015).

While recognizing that not all women have children, addressing the burden of unpaid and care work would challenge many of the biases which affect women’s progression in organisations, regardless of whether they have dependants. As recently as 2014, Opportunity Now found evidence of the existence of a ‘motherhood penalty’ with 75 percent of female respondents perceiving that having children would negatively impact their career, compared to 30 percent of male respondents (2014).

In the UK, there were a number of examples, including the UK military and Shell, where paid parental leave could be shared between parents. This provides families with flexibility to share care, even when one partner worked in a company that did not provide paid leave. The UK Government has recently announced a similar change to their policy (2015). The Swedish Government had gone a step further, and legislated additional ‘daddy months’ for paid parental leave which were on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis (2015). This had received a very positive response with more than 90 percent of fathers taking up the additional leave. Interestingly in Chile, where the Government legislates paid leave for all workers (six months for women and five days for men), the majority of men did not use the leave entitlement, which suggests that some form of incentive may be needed to change societal norms.

In addition to introducing policies that enhance incentives for families to share unpaid care work between men and women, many companies have introduced programs for women who are returning to work after parental leave. The US Navy now has ‘maternity coaches’ to provide advice and support to women returning. These coaches have had specific training, and have direct links to services, and career management should the women report needing additional support. Pacific Hydro’s experience in Chile also reflected improved retention and engagement since implementing maternity leave coaching.

While these issues are not unique to non-traditional sectors, retaining highly qualified women through programs that challenge the balance of unpaid work and support women returning from leave can only add value to the broader gender and diversity agenda in these organisations.

What gets measured gets done

Recommendations

17. Diversity scorecards, including KPIs, for all senior leaders and managers should be developed and reviewed

18. Organisations should announce gender diversity targets and report against them annually

Kotter’s framework for creating major change indicates that the new approaches must be anchored in organizational culture (2012). It became clear that change was embedded much more quickly in organisations which placed responsibility for inclusion on individual team leaders and managers. To do this, an organizational scorecard should be developed which measures the specific areas that each organisation wishes staff to focus on. In addition to
gender disaggregated feedback from staff culture surveys, the sorts of measures are being considered by leading businesses included:

- Has the number of women in your team grown in the last year?
- Are the male and female separation rates similar in your team?
- Who are you currently mentoring?
- What diversity events have you actively supported or attended in the last 12 months?
- How many of your direct reports have a mentor?
- How many of your direct reports have had a detailed performance review in the recent period?

There was no company in Chile who reported having diversity scorecards in place, however one mining company did admit that the previous CEO (who had driven a lot of change in the area of diversity) had been required to report on a range of diversity measures to the Board. With a change of CEO, this step had been lost and unsurprisingly, the focus on gender diversity had reduced.

The US Marines have developed a ‘command climate survey’ which enables them to do a series of pulse surveys at the beginning and end of a commanding officer’s time in command. The aim of this exercise is to start to develop a picture of which leaders were most inclusive and effective in their roles. While it was not yet linked to promotion, there was scope to provide feedback that had previously not been available. Moreover, the fact that commanding officers were aware that they were being measured on their inclusiveness, meant that they appeared to take the issues more seriously.

A former staff member of Goldman Sachs noted that once diversity and inclusion were considered business priorities and measured regularly against agreed targets, this triggered a broader review of policies. One example of where a policy unfairly disadvantaged women, was the structure of the bonus system which penalized people who took time out of the workforce or reduced their hours, by measuring total hours worked, rather than productivity. The review also found that there needed to be ways to measure and value time taken to train others and most importantly outcomes achieved, rather than hours worked. This is consistent with the findings of Sheryl Sandberg, that women tend to do most of the ‘office housework’ which goes unrewarded (Williams & Dempsey, 2014).

The recent Opportunity Now Report (2014) highlighted the importance of accountability and transparency from the perspective of individual women in the UK, considering their career options. The most important thing that women respondents wanted was clear, transparent performance reviews – objective setting and appraisals – which included clear definitions of roles and what would be required to reach the next level ( Opportunity Now, 2014). It is recommended that including a measure about conducting regular and detailed appraisals could be included in a diversity scorecard which was being designed to measure overall engagement with diversity and inclusion.

The UN Women’s Empowerment Principles recommend that companies set and publically announce targets for women in leadership roles as part of holding themselves accountable (2012). Like in Australia, the topic of quotas and targets was very controversial in all four of the countries visited. While none of the countries had taken the step of having legislated quotas for women in parliament or on boards, Sweden had taken steps to ensure that all political parties had stated targets for the participation of women. These targets have been in place since the 1970s and it is unsurprising that Sweden has the second highest number of
women in parliament of any country in the world. The lesson here is that publically committing to a target, drives change.

Some companies had set targets for their recruitment companies, as a mechanism to ensure enough women were being considered in the pipeline. One representative of a global law firm noted that too often, recruiters come back to the firm and say that they couldn’t find any qualified women. Rather than accepting this to be true and correct, the firm looked into the model being used by the recruitment firm and found that the model of searching for and getting to know candidates, relied on them making themselves available during business hours for coffees and meetings. For many women, this additional time burden, on top of busy jobs and responsibilities outside work was simply not seen as a priority. Targets assisted the recruiter to understand that it was a priority and to maintain the client, they would need to change their search process.

While targets do ensure that leadership groups continue to focus on gender diversity as a priority, unless they are publically stated, they can be easily forgotten. The City of London had committed to 20,000 new part-time roles by 2016, an initiative which will benefit a significant number of women. However, one year out from the deadline, the goal is unlikely to be met, but the lack of transparency about the target means that there is very little public commentary about the broken promise.

The only caveat to the importance of setting targets came through a comment made by a policy expert in the US who advised that it was critical to ensure that organisations measured the right things. She cited the G20 target of reducing the gap between women and men’s workforce participation by 25 percent by 2025 as one which potentially failed to measure the right thing. In focusing on the creation of jobs for women, she argued that there was a risk that countries failed to pay attention to whether the roles were ‘decent work’.

A silent issue: violence against women

Recommendations

19. Organisations should provide all staff with education about violence against women and public support services available
20. Organisations should encourage all staff to be conscious of violence against women and to be aware of bystander actions.

In each of the meetings, the issue of violence against women was raised to assess whether the organisations had considered it as a workplace issue. Overall, there was a disappointing level of awareness in most organisations in all four countries. Of concern, two companies in Chile reported that violence against women was not a workplace issue and one reported that there was no sexual harassment in Chile, something that was clearly not true based on stories from other organisations. Most stakeholders acknowledged that violence was prevalent in the communities where they operated but stopped short of acknowledging a role for the business community.

The issue of role models remains challenging in all sectors. Despite representing one of the most progressive cities in the world, the Mayor of San Francisco has a domestic violence conviction, which despite being widely known, did not affect his election. The behaviour of NFL stars had received widespread media coverage during the period of the Fellowship, but
Despite this, many of the players involved continue to be heralded as role models and leaders.

Like Australia, the US Military has done a lot of work regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention, partly because of incidents that have taken place on Defence establishments leading to public investigations. The model designed for the review of violence in the US Military is now being used to research the experience of sexual assault in university colleges. Commitment to understanding the scale and scope of the problem is an important first step. Other employers should also be researching the prevalence of harassment and potentially experience of violence against women in their workplaces if they are committed to achieving gender equality. The Swedish military is arguably leading a global discussion about sexual violence in conflict and providing a range of pre-deployment training for troops from NATO countries, however despite this, there was not education programs for staff about violence in the community and how to respond and prevent violence.

Many of the women’s organisations that were engaged in this project in the UK and USA reported a lack of funding to services as the major barrier to greater awareness about violence against women and ultimately prevention. This issue is consistent with the issues faced by the service sector in Australia. UN Women called for governments to invest in sustained funding for primary prevention and awareness raising programs in its report *Progress of the World’s Women*, released last month (2015).

Consistent with the recommendation made in the *Opportunity Now Report*, providing employees with information about violence against women and the services available to victims and perpetrators of violence was an important first step for business responsibility for this issue.

**Conclusion**

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are increasingly recognised as social and economic imperatives. It was clear that in Sweden where there has been significant intervention by the Government, equality and inclusion were more ‘mainstream’ discussions in the business community. Workplace flexibility in most industries (excluding military) appeared to have been normalized. The UK and USA are in a similar position to Australia, where there are strong basic protections, but little political will for a stronger stance to ensure women’s participation. Despite having a very strong female leader, Chile is lagging behind, with strong acceptance of the ‘machismo’ that informs gender roles.

While much of the focus in public discourse is on the responsibility of government to enact policies and laws that ensure equality, the business community must also take responsibility with regards to women’s access to leadership roles and employment experience. To this end, this report makes 20 recommendations that businesses (large and small) should implement to enhance diversity and inclusion.

Continuing to expand women’s participation in the workforce is likely to be one of the most significant business challenges faced in the next decade. The complexity of inequality in workforce structure, policy and attitudes means that change remains slow and that the problem will be intractable, unless commitment and resources are dedicated to advancing equality and inclusion.
This report seeks to provide some insights into ‘what’s working’ in non-traditional sectors to recruit, retain and promote more women. The recommendations made in this report call for a transformation in the way that business thinks about the ideal worker, and investment in systems and structures that allow all employees to maximize productivity and balance their personal and work responsibilities. They are based on the experiences of organisations working in different environments, facing the same challenges.

It is recommended that further research into quantifying the cost of inequality be undertaken as it was very clear that this resonated with leaders in the businesses involved in this research.

Incremental change is simply too slow. If this generation wants their daughters to have equal pay, access to leadership and economic opportunity and live free from violence, then transformational workplace change, starting with the recommendations made in this report, will be needed in the next five years.
### Appendix 1: Fellowship Program

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<td>Jessica Weatherford</td>
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<td>Host, Young Women's Leadership Conference</td>
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<td>Annie Wright</td>
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About Julie McKay

Julie McKay has held the role of Executive Director of the Australian National Committee for UN Women for the last 7.5 years. In that role, she has grown the organisation from a ‘start-up’ to a nationally recognised advocacy organisation supporting the mandate of the United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). In that time, she has raised more than $2 million for programs that support the empowerment of women and girls in the developing world.

A trusted advisor to the Australian Government on gender issues, Julie was selected as one of two civil society representatives on the Australian Government Delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2014. In April 2014, she accepted an appointment as the inaugural Gender Advisor to the Chief of the Australian Defence Force. Prior to this appointment, Julie had served on the Chief of Defence Gender Equality Advisory Board and a Committee supporting the Chief of the Australian Navy with integrating gender into the cultural change process.

Julie has worked with a range of organisations to strengthen their gender and diversity outcomes. From strategy development, to implementing specific initiatives and providing gender awareness training, Julie has demonstrated her understanding of the complexity of workplace gender equality. Recently, she has been leading an innovative conversation in the business community about how to drive gender equality through supply chain reform. She was invited to do a Tedx talk on this topic in 2012.

In addition to these roles, Julie is the Vice President of the YWCA of Canberra, a Steering Committee Member of the University of Sydney Business Alumni Network and was appointed by the Prime Minister to the C20 Steering Committee in 2014.

Julie completed an Executive MBA in 2012 at the University of Sydney, which also involved her studying at Stanford, the London Business School and the Indian Institute of Management. She has a Masters in Public Policy from the Australian National University and Bachelors Degrees in Business Management and International Relations from the University of Queensland. Julie has been admitted as a Fellow in Ethical Leadership at the Melbourne Business School and in 2013, was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to continue her research into women’s leadership in non-traditional sectors.

Julie was the 2013 Young Australian of the Year (ACT) and 2012 Telstra Young Business Woman of the year (ACT).