

A BLUEPRINT FOR BALANCE.

**Unlocking the six
key areas to
achieving gender
balance.**

CMI's research charts employers' current approaches to achieving gender balance and showcases the best-in-class practices that are starting to achieve real change. From our survey of managers, in-depth interviews and employer best practices conversations, it's clear that organisations have much more to do to close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

**For the full report and recommendations on
CMI Women's Blueprint for Balance,
visit www.managers.org.uk/brokenwindows
[@cmi_managers](https://twitter.com/cmi_managers) and [#CMIWomen](https://twitter.com/CMIWomen)**

SKILLS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The more senior the level of management, the rarer women become: so supporting women's skills and career progression is key. Employers need to ensure women participate in leadership development schemes; dedicated programmes, networks and innovative return-to-work schemes are also supporting career mobility.

Our interviews highlighted that employers are focusing on ensuring that men and women participate in development opportunities. But our survey revealed differences between the sexes in their experiences.

Women are more likely to disagree that they are happy with the development opportunities at their organisation: 31%, compared to 21% of men.

And there are strong differences when asked if career development opportunities are equal for men and women. 27% of women disagreed with this, compared to just 11% of men.

For the leading organisations we interviewed, the response to this challenge included ensuring gender balance in the uptake of their leadership development schemes, but also dedicated development activity for women: whether formal leadership programmes, or broader support networks.

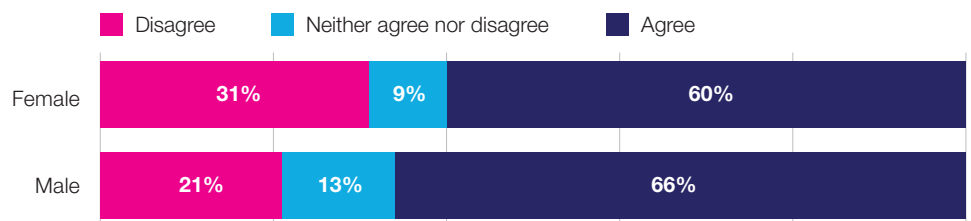


Figure 1: I'm happy with the career and skills development opportunities I have in my organisation

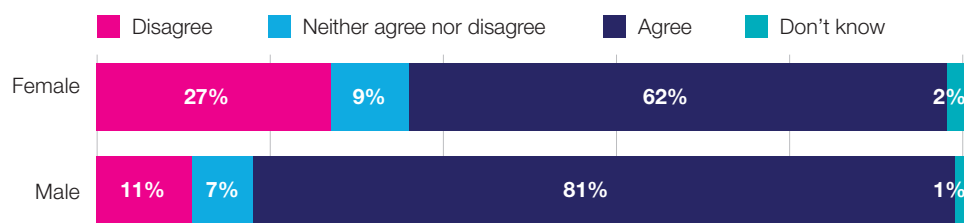


Figure 2: Opportunities for career development/progression in my organisation are equal for men and women

For many organisations, an important part of improving women's chances of career progression is to support women's networks.

Leadership programmes for women

The retailer Marks & Spencer engaged a leading university to help it understand why women were not progressing into more senior roles. It conducted 20 in-depth interviews with women as well as an open survey of 200 women, which revealed three key areas to focus on including better career planning, along with flexibility and inconsistency across the business; and perceptions of culture.

Building on this knowledge, M&S put together a mentoring and leadership programme for women. The company worked with leaders to help them think about who was in their leadership teams.

Says Simone Haywood, M&S's Head of Talent: "Colleagues across the business are seeing the benefits of creating a more inclusive workplace and we're in the process of rolling out a smarter working project to challenge the way people work and offer more freedom and flexibility."

Women's networks

For many organisations, an important part of improving women's chances of career progression is to support women's networks. BlackRock is one such company (see over).

EXPERT VIEW

Women's leadership development – missed opportunities

Dr. Ruth Sacks, University of Northumbria

Have we done enough on gender? When it comes to leadership development, the answer is clearly no.

One of the key routes to greater gender equality is through leadership and management development programmes. There are women-only programmes, programmes created for professional groups or sectors, courses for men and women as well as conferences and a plethora of networking and social event groups. They can offer role models, case studies and Q&A sessions to share knowledge, experience and as well as challenge attitudes, understanding and awareness.

Many companies have internal women's networks which offer safe spaces to discuss challenges and difficulties experienced in the company as well as mentoring and coaching schemes. There are also cross-organisational, industry and sector specific groups which offer a more neutral context for such discussions and training.

These all increase awareness, maintain the conversations and debates about gender. After all, there is an assumption that if you don't speak about gender it's not a concern or issue.

Many of the leadership programmes for women focus on communication and presentation skills, self-confidence and those areas of knowledge in which women feel they have least confidence and competence such as finance, governance and networking. Some courses target women specifically looking to gain board level executive or non-executive roles.

Non-gender specific executive development programmes also often address these topics equally well, also including unconscious bias training or similar such topics. Women will delve deeper into certain issues when they are in a women only group. But when the more challenging topics such as bias, assumptions, language, attitude and meaning are addressed in mixed gender groups, skilled facilitators can encourage conversations which are challenging and generate better understanding, among both men and women, to support change.

These initiatives make a significant contribution to driving interest, engagement and actions to improve gender balance. The number of attendees, the frequency of events and the popularity of leadership development programmes are evidence of this. Each of the programmes or events will have an impact on the participating individuals and the network they create because of being involved in the development experience.

But have we done enough? In relation to leadership development, the answer is no.

It's not enough because rarely are there incentives or encouragement for participants to share their learning and understanding, or add value to their performance using their new perspectives, skills and knowledge if no-one appears to be interested: "I can't tell where my boss is on this", as one interviewee told us of her male line manager. This means that the ideas, strategies, cross departmental relationships and networks that are proposed and enthused over during the courses rarely transfer to organisation practice or implemented policy.

When women's leadership development seems not to have any real value to the men with whom the female participants work, its value is massively reduced. If creating a better gender balance is a business issue then learning and behaviour outcomes must have greater importance.



BLACKROCK®



Deloitte.

BlackRock's Women's Initiative Network

Female leadership was in-built at asset manager BlackRock. Two of its eight original founders in the 1980s were women. But the firm recognised that this didn't mean the entire organisation was diverse and wanted to create more formal ways to connect and foster female talent. The acquisition of Barclays Global Investors (BGI) in 2009, offered a key opportunity. BGI, which had also been led by a female CEO, had a well-established Women's Initiative Network (WIN) with women who were deeply engaged in investing in each other's growth.

BlackRock soon appointed Kara Helander as global head of philanthropy and diversity. Helander was formerly the head of corporate social responsibility at BGI and had worked to enhance the scope and scale of WIN. Senior women from both legacy firms came together to create BlackRock WIN. They focused the network on attracting and retaining women, developing an inclusive culture, and keeping its activities business-focused. WIN grew quickly – soon there were chapters in every major office – and it became a catalyst to integrating cultures.

Part of the cultural integration was the inclusion of men as network members. Participating in WIN helped men become not only better managers of women, but also better fathers, according to reports from male members. The inclusion of men in the gender conversation at BlackRock expanded, where men were invited to sit on panels alongside women at WIN events. Mentorship roles, originally filled by senior women, also became filled by men. By engaging with WIN, many men reported 'lightbulb' moments of recognising unintentionally biased behaviour and began to more intentionally manage team dynamics and career advancement opportunities.

The Women's Leadership Forum (WLF) is a year-long leadership programme for senior women at the firm that complements other leadership programmes by focusing on specific challenges women face in advancing in the organisation. "We're working to continually have more diversity in key high leverage roles," says Jonathan McBride, Helander's successor. It has extended its Women's Leadership Forum to director level and is expanding the concept of the programme for a wider set of vice-presidents. "We're taking what worked for women and applying it across broader populations," says McBride.

Deloitte's Women in Leadership programme

When Emma Codd took over as managing partner for talent at Deloitte UK, one of the first things she did was to spend time understanding what was holding women back. "We had a women's network and a target of 25% female partners, but we were seeing a steady decline in women joining us at entry level and were making slow progress towards our target," she explains.

Her analysis led to a detailed Women in Leadership action plan, including activities to increase the number of women the firm recruits, to ensure development opportunities are clearly available and to provide a working environment enabling women to balance a successful career with family life or other commitments outside the workplace.

Other key elements of the plan to help advance women included a return-to-work programme for individuals who have been out of professional services workforce for more than two years; coaching for primary carers returning from maternity/parental leave (and mandatory sessions for their line managers) about balancing career and family; and an advocacy-based sponsorship programme. Deloitte also offers flexible or agile working for all.

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Returning from career breaks

Parenthood is widely recognised as one of the most critical challenges facing women’s career progression. But leading employers do not accept that it must mean women are condemned to fall behind their male peers as their careers progress.

One interviewee’s experiences were typical of how parenthood can interrupt career progression. “As soon as I was promoted, I fell pregnant and I then spent my whole middle stage of my career having two children. My career slowed down and it took me about three years to get promoted again, compared to my peers who did it in one-and-a-half years.”

CMI has called for employers to draw on their Apprenticeship Levy funding to support returners, by dedicating one in ten Apprenticeships to parental returners. Leading employers meanwhile are actively working to support parents returning to the workplace, including those coming back from extended career breaks – like, for instance, UBS.



SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS



SKILLS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Tackle women’s perceptions that they have less access to development opportunities by ensuring equal intake to leadership programmes.
- Tailor any women’s leadership development programmes to the needs of the organisation. Be considerate about the language and promotion of single-sex programmes, and make sure they support inclusion rather than separateness, for instance by expanding women’s networks to include men.
- Enhance return-to-work programmes for career-break returners. Use one in 10 of the new management and leadership Apprenticeships to support returners.

Career comebacks at UBS

Swiss wealth manager and investment bank UBS has a unique proposition with its Career Comeback programme aimed at people who have taken a career break of a minimum of two years. Different to its programmes for UBS maternity returners, Career Comeback offers permanent positions and is aimed for those outside of UBS who, for whatever reason (but largely childcare related), took a career break.

“We’re aiming for director and senior-level roles and we’ve found a huge wealth of talent that were operating at that level before taking a break, but are being overlooked by standard recruiting methods” says Carolanne Minashi, global head of diversity and inclusion at UBS. “As all organisations struggle to find women to fill senior leadership roles, we think we have access to a new talent pool that with a bit of creative support can make a fabulous contribution to the business.”

So far, its commitment to female returners is paying dividends with 100% retention after a one-year pilot. The programme has two offerings; a conventional 20 week internship-style programme offered in New York and a permanent-hire programme that runs in Zurich and London. “We wanted to start with both offerings in our pilot year to see which approach was the most effective.”

According to Minashi, UBS is the only financial services company currently

offering such a model for permanent roles: “Internships may lead to a real hire, but it’s hard to find data on real conversion rates. We wanted to guarantee the best outcome. Two years later, we know both approaches have impact but our model for permanent roles makes a strong commitment from the outset for both our Hiring Managers and the candidates.”

Minashi understands the financial impact for women returners. Many organisations discount remuneration on these programmes and it can be hard to bring salary levels back in line, even if the internships lead to permanent roles. “We have a threshold of quality in skills and experience and we’re aiming for director-level and senior roles,” she says. “We’re not entertaining the idea of discounting pay. If people are coming at senior levels, we are paying them at senior levels.”

Restarting a career after a break period is not straightforward and challenged UBS’s standard recruitment practices. “Algorithms don’t work in this case,” says Minashi. Line managers and recruiters need training and support to help them look past the break and only at the skills competencies and life experience the candidate brings, candidates need a higher level of touch and a softer approach. We’re mindful that this can be a nerve-wracking process and a confidence test for many returners. Even if we can’t find a match for someone, we’ll suggest other organisations for them.”