

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Have you ever experienced workplace inequality?

Not recently but going back 15 years, many industry bodies were overwhelmingly made up of older males. As part of their 'comradery' they would constantly tell inappropriate jokes that would make women feel uncomfortable and deter women from volunteering which furthered the imbalance. At the time we just ignored it and gradually this generation retired, and new blood joined, and it phased out. Looking back I wish I had done more as I don't think these groups had any awareness of their behaviour or of the impact they had.

What is your biggest frustration when it comes to workplace equality?

Things have massively improved in Marketing and Procurement so that day to day issues aren't so prevalent. But women are still incredibly nervous around pregnancy and worried about telling line managers, the reaction the news will have and the impact it will have on their careers. They are worried they will be treated differently and be overlooked for promotion which often causes stress and anxiety at this time. I think this issue is now felt across genders as many men also worry about asking for paternity leave, they really want time off at this precious time but don't feel 100% comfortable asking for it.

Where does your passion come from to create an equal workplace?

It is all built around a desire to see a fairer society and this includes removing barriers to succeed for all regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability or race. It is nonsensical to hold back or discriminate against huge groups of talented people in our workforce and it is vital that young people coming through never see or experience this.

What can people do to help create an inclusive workplace community?

I think it is trying to remove the stigma or embarrassment that some people feel about discussing the issues and really encourage open dialogue. Making sure the commitment starts from the top, building clear and positive communication around the goals and creating champions and forums for discussion. Encouraging all to express thoughts around barriers and ideas to help create change and be open to piloting new practices that build inclusiveness.

Gill Thorpe FCIPS Chartered
CEO
The Sourcing Team

Gill is a buyer with over 30 year's experience, she developed a passion for ethical sourcing working with suppliers and factories to build sustainability and human rights through the supply chain.

What does flexible working mean to you and your team?

Flexibility means different things to different people at different times, so it is vital not to come up with flexible working policies that actually become quite rigid! Building adult to adult relationships with employees where open discussion about the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation can be discussed, and a workable solution can be found. Also be open to ideas and trial different approaches – often the things you least expect to work, work the best and may bring unexpected benefits.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Give yourself some credit and be more confident in what you have to offer. You may not have the age and experience of some your colleagues, but you will be bringing your own skills, personality and life experiences. And remember organisations want to move forwards and want new ideas and innovation, the challenge and the skill is in how you present and sell your ideas – and if not successful at first, listen to the arguments, regroup, refine and try again. And if all else fails there will be many organisations who would love to have your skills!

FIND OUT MORE



www.managers.org.uk/cmi-women

CMI
Chartered
Management
Institute
WOMEN