

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Tanya has worked in various roles across Marketing, Strategy & Insight over her career. She's been with CMI for 7 years and is now Director of Insight & Development.

Have you ever experienced workplace inequality?

Sadly, yes, on lots of occasions. This has ranged from the micro-transgressions, which in the early 2000s were still a far-too-common part of office life; to being sidelined into a lesser position because I had taken 3 months maternity leave - a real low point.

I've also, more alarmingly, seen how we are perpetuating the challenges with workplace equality by reinforcing gender stereotypes in our children from such a young age. The realisation of this came when I attended a Mother's Day assembly at my sons' primary school and heard them singing "My Mum's one in a million, she may not have a degree, but she cooks and cleans and makes a nice tea".... Cue an urgent meeting with the Head Teacher. They have since removed such songs from their assemblies and have also introduced a new policy on equality.

What's your biggest frustration when it comes to workplace inequality?

There are two things that frustrate me. Firstly, there can be an air of fatigue now when the subject comes up - the eye-rolls of 'oh here we go again....' But there is still such a long way to go that we can't afford to be apathetic. Secondly, where women themselves commit transgressions which damage the careers of their female colleagues. There's a famous quote by Madeleine Albright, the first female US Secretary of State, that says "There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women". I am fortunate to have worked for some amazing, strong and inspirational female leaders, but I have also worked for someone who made it her life goal to prove that the fact I had children meant I was not as capable or committed in my role. She made that time in my career intolerable and I left my job shortly afterwards - it was the best decision I ever made.

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

Having experienced the impact of inequality on my own mental health, I feel that we all have a responsibility to try and drive progress in whatever way we can. Not only that - but workplace equality makes sound commercial sense. There is really strong evidence to support the fact that businesses with better equality and diversity; with more inclusive practices have better bottom lines.



Tanya Aitken
Director of Insight and Development
CMI

What can people do?

There is lots that people can do, both individually and as leaders within organisations. This can be as simple as calling out the smaller, bad behaviours when we see them or making sure we 'read the room' when we have meetings or group discussions to make sure that the same person isn't always looking excluded or disengaged. Or it could be through creating a flexible culture that encourages e.g. women returners or policy that creates parity between maternity and paternity leave. It's important that we see this as not just the responsibility of the C-suite (as important as that is) but that we all have a part to play to improve the current status quo.

What does flexible working mean to you and your team?

As a mother of 8 and 9 year old boys, flexible working is critical to me - as it is for pretty much all of my team, for their own individual reasons. The most important thing about creating a flexible culture is not to be prescriptive as to what this means. For me, it means I can pick my kids up from school every Friday at 3pm and can spend time with them rather than being glued to my laptop, I don't have to worry about what my colleagues might think if I take this time out. I am very fortunate that I work within a culture that focuses on outputs, not presenteeism.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Don't focus so much on what others might be thinking about you - it only seeks to feed your imposter syndrome. In fact - that's advice to my now-self too!

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