



Inclusive Excellence: Building Diverse and High-Performing Teams

A guide to attracting, advancing and retaining diverse talent within the science, technology, engineering and financially led sectors, written by multi award winning equality, diversity and inclusion executive search experts, Harper Fox Partners.

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Harper Fox Search Partners

Unearthing Leaders, Elevating Business

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A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ages and ethnicities, are smiling and waving their hands. In the foreground, a woman with glasses and a striped shirt is smiling, holding a blue phone. Behind her, several other people are visible, some with their hands raised in a celebratory gesture.

What Does Diverse Talent Mean?

Before we can talk about attraction and retention, we first need to fully understand what is meant by the term 'Diverse Talent'.

When talking about Diversity and Inclusion, most topics centre around Gender or Race. Whilst these are hugely important and vital conversations to have, there are also other aspects of diversity to consider.

We are all different. We have different upbringings, abilities, religions, and life experiences that shape our perspective of the world. These differences affect how we look at different situations and help us solve problems in different ways.

Diversity in the workplace refers to an organisation comprised of individuals with a range of different characteristics and viewpoints in life. Whether that is due to their ethnicity, gender, social class, disability or other differential factors. Diversity and inclusion in business brings together diverse perspectives in the workforce and enables people to thrive whilst being their authentic selves.

There are many types of diversity in the workplace, and this can include (but are not limited to):

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Assigned sex
- Gender identity
- Age
- Physical disability
- Mental disability
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Social Class
- Education
- Relationship status
- Life experiences
- Political beliefs



Why Diversity Is Important

Currently the STEM sectors are not yet representative of the workforce for gender, ethnicity or disability. Overall, the UK STEM sector has a lower share of Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani workers in science, maths and engineering.

Women only make up 24% of the UK core-STEM workforce, this drops further to 10.3% for women in engineering.

When looking at disability, 14% of the UK workforce are classified as disabled under the Equality Act, however this drops to 11% for the UK STEM workforce.

These findings are echoed across the globe too. In the US, Black workers make up only 9% of the STEM workforce compared to 11% in the rest of the workforce. Furthermore, women only make up a quarter or fewer of US workers in computing and engineering.

Moreover, although there has been some progress made over the past 12 years, the majority of European countries have not yet achieved the 50% goal for women in science and engineering roles.



Businesses With a Diverse Workforce can Expect to See:

- Increased profits
- Increased productivity
- Increased experience and knowledge
- Quicker problem solving
- Higher employee engagement
- Reduced employee turnover
- Improved customer service
- Improved company reputation
- Improved recruitment results
- A culture that promotes innovation



Outperform

A diverse and inclusive workforce – with differing approaches and perspectives – is proven to give greater employee engagement and boost business profitability within the globalised economy.

It has also been reported that companies with a diverse workforce are up to 36% more likely to outperform those without diversity initiatives.

Diversity, inclusion and cultural competence is a business must. It starts by attracting exceptional talent, who bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and contributions. This fused with a nurturing and inclusive environment, whereby individuals can be their authentic selves, steers the path for empowered diverse leaders, to thrive and advance business engagement and profitability.

Overcoming EDI Barriers

When considering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion there are many barriers that can prevent your business progressing.

Before we can overcome these barriers, we need to identify and acknowledge that barriers do exist.

When there is a clear understanding of the current business culture and talent

pool, positive and engaged change can be made.

EDI objectives and initiatives can then be put into place to enable equal opportunity through fairness and transparency.

Once barriers have been identified you can use the below strategies to make improvements.

Set Goals

Set the right data-driven targets for your business and representation of diverse talent. Think about what your company needs to prioritise. Once these goals have been set, be clear with your search partner or recruitment team about your talent attraction objectives and reasons why. Support and understanding from the wider internal teams is also just as important as approval from your suppliers and HR department.



Incorporate 'Social Listening'

This can be collated via employee surveys / audits; these are key to understanding what your people want from their working culture and how it is currently viewed. This will reflect what the outside world 'hears' about your business.



Ask Questions

Actively seek to understand your recruitment partners EDI initiatives. Ask your search partners the value they can bring to support your EDI objectives, their statistics, testimonials and case studies will give a good idea as to whether this is really a key driver for them. This can also be extended to your internal HR or recruitment teams. Provide training and continually ask how the team is supporting the businesses EDI goals.

Encourage Authenticity

When people can be their authentic selves, they will develop a sense of belonging and be more open and honest. Local networking groups are a great way to encourage this and share inclusivity.

Be Open and Fair

Enable equality of opportunity through fairness and transparency. It is critical that your business ensures a level playing field in advancement and opportunity and that this is seen by your employees and external partners.

Showcase Your EDI

Develop an employer brand that showcases your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion vision for the business. Live and breathe this and embed it into the culture; this will make your business more attractive to the relevant candidate pool.

Shared Values

Working with a search partner who shares your EDI objectives and passion within this area is a great way to overcome potential internal barriers. Ensure that your search partner or recruitment team understands all of your EDI initiatives, and are aware of how important this is for the business.

6 EDI Questions You Should be Asking Your Search Provider



When recruiting, make certain that your executive search partners or internal recruitment team understand the businesses equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and hiring needs. The aim is to ensure they are aware of how important these objectives are for the overall success of the wider business.

Here are a few key questions to ask your search partner to determine their equality, diversity and inclusion position:

- 1** **How can the prospective search firm bring value to support your organisation's wider EDI objectives?**
- 2** **How does your search partner actively encourage Diverse talent into the industry?**
- 3** **Is your search partner able to share any EDI initiatives that they have been involved with?**

- 4** Do they have any relevant testimonials or case studies that can be shared?
- 5** How is their candidate sourcing strategy likely to reach and attract candidates from under-represented groups?
- 6** What are your search partner's Ethnic Minority, Female and or under-represented talent placement statistics?

It is important to unearth the answers to these questions before a search firm is selected. Prioritising working with an executive search partner who shares your EDI objectives and passion within this area, is key to shared success.

Their passion will be reflected during the search and when speaking to candidates, ensuring the message will be promoted in the industry, reaching a wider pool of your target candidates.



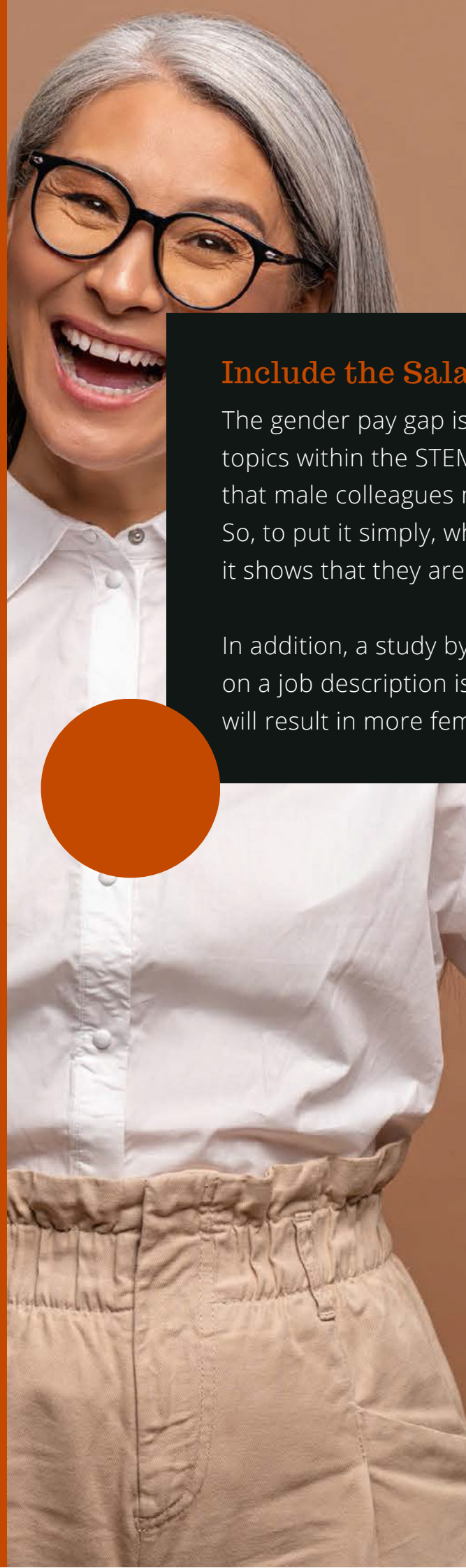
How to Make Your STEM Vacancy More Appealing to Female Candidates

It's important that moving forward, businesses in STEM work to attract more female candidates to their available vacancies. Women and girls represent half of the world's population, yet females make up just 24% of the STEM workforce in the UK.



If we look at the whole working population, women are also less likely to hold a senior position in the workplace and are generally paid less than their male counterparts. A study in 2021 found that in the UK, the median weekly pay for female full-time employees was £543 compared to £619 for male full-time employees. This study also reported a higher share of males were working as managers, directors or senior officials, with 14% of males in these roles compared to 9% of females.

Gender diversity in the workplace is essential to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, it is widely reported that advancing women's equality could drastically boost the Global GDP. These are not new revelations; the majority of people already know the importance of a diverse workforce and the issue of attracting more women into the STEM sectors is certainly a topical subject within the industry.



So what can be done about this? How can we attract more women to apply for roles in sectors that are traditionally male dominated? As experts in diverse recruitment, we have collated our tips to attract more female candidates to your job vacancy below.

Include the Salary Range for the Position

The gender pay gap is a poignant issue and one of the most talked about topics within the STEM sectors; women and men are increasingly aware that male colleagues may receive a higher salary.

So, to put it simply, when a company is transparent with its salary ranges it shows that they are committed to fair and equal pay.

In addition, a study by LinkedIn showed that including salary information on a job description is more important to women than men which in turn will result in more female applicants than if the salary is not included.

Provide and Advertise Benefits That Appeal to Women

When writing a job description, we need to sell the opportunity to potential candidates, and this often means including the company benefits. This is an opportunity to ensure the benefits being advertised appeal to a diverse talent pool.

Career progression and job security are common priorities for all, however, benefits such as flexible working hours, comprehensive maternity leave programs, childcare salary sacrifice schemes and the opportunity to work from home are likely to be more desirable for women. These types of benefits will also assist with the retention of your current female employees.

Only Include Qualifications That Are Absolute Must-Haves

A Harvard Business Review study revealed that what held women back from applying for jobs was not a mistaken perception about themselves, but a mistaken perception about the hiring process. Women do not tend to apply for jobs unless they meet 100% of the listed requirements whereas men will apply if they meet 60%.

So, review the job requirements: Does the candidate really need 10 years of experience? Do they need to be from a specific sector? Could transferrable skills be considered? Women have generally been given few opportunities to obtain more senior titles, but does their job title really define their capabilities? Review the listed requirements and remove anything that is not absolutely essential, or consider ideals, rather than must haves.



Ensure Your Job Description Uses Gender Neutral Wording

Many job descriptions are written with an unintentional gender bias – we often write this way without realising. We find that job descriptions within the STEM sector tend to be masculine-coded, meaning that the description or vacancy advert uses words that are subtly perceived as more masculine (e.g. head-strong, outspoken, determined) rather than words that are subtly perceived as more feminine (e.g. understanding, polite, considerate).

Research has shown that using masculine language can put women off applying for jobs completely. Of course, there are many reasons why a woman may not apply for a position, however we can make sure that the job description isn't one of them by running it through a Gender Decoder.





Summary of Thoughts

The progress towards gender equality is positively advancing. Businesses are increasingly working to attract more female candidates to their available roles, however, there is certainly more work to do.

The slight but effective changes we can make to our job advertisements and vacancy specifications will make roles more appealing to women and encourage a more diverse range of applicants.

There are many experienced and qualified women across the world with over one million women working in UK based core STEM occupations alone.

How Harper Fox Partners Can Help

Harper Fox Partners passionately exemplify equality, diversity and inclusion within the business world. We lead businesses to define equality objectives to develop a cohesive strategy which will attract, present and advance diversity recruitment. This is supported by EDI business analysis, our Fair Selection Policy, Gender Pay Gap Advisory, as well as identifying and removing bias from the talent recruitment process. We understand that diverse talent is central to building a highly productive and innovative workforce for all. Having achieved a 43% increase in placing diverse talent, compared to the industry average of 11%, your organisation will see the benefits with our proven expertise.

If your company's hiring practices do not produce the diverse list of candidates you are looking for, get in touch with Harper Fox Search Partners to find out how we can support your business.



Eliminating Bias from the Recruitment Process

When recruiting, it is important to follow best practice to ensure you find the best person for the position or opportunity whilst eliminating discrimination.

The aim is for the shortlisted candidates to be truly representative of all segments of society and for each candidate to feel respected and able to be their authentic selves throughout the process. This can be achieved through a comprehensive range of fair and inclusive executive search practices as detailed below.

Assessments:

For any assessments you use, whether internal or external, ensure they meet these requirements:

- Content Validity (Is the assessment representative of the job requirements?)
- Construct Validity (Does the assessment measure relevant traits?)
- Criterion Validity (Does the assessment predict what it's saying it will predict?)
- Face Validity (Will candidates understand what is being tested?)



Advertising:

- When providing information about the available opportunity, ensure the language used is neutral and inclusive. This is to make sure the wording of the job description is inclusive and appealing to all.
- Ensure that the requirements for the position do not discriminate against any potential employees. Where a requirement may indirectly cause discrimination, consider adjustments to ensure a widened candidate pool.
- Use a range of different mediums to reach potential candidates, this is guaranteed to reach the widest range of applicants.

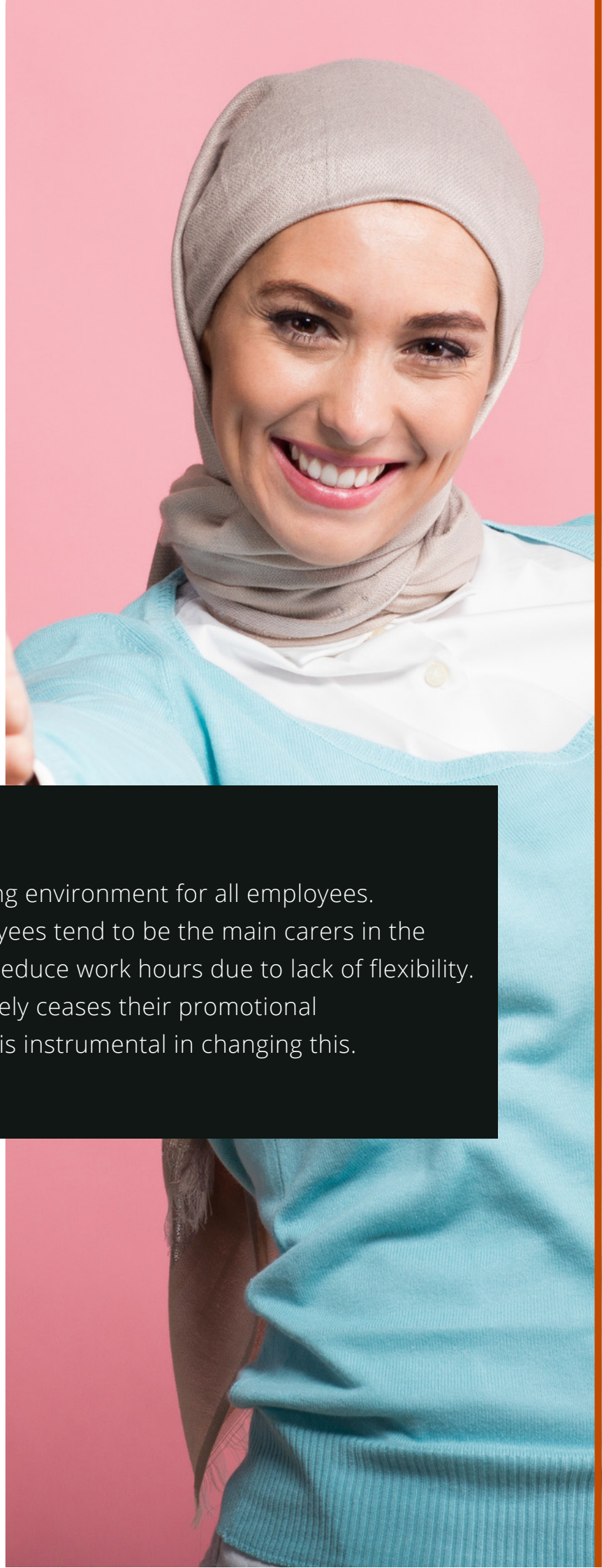


Shortlisting:

- Combine a selection of first stage screening tools to ensure the fair and objective measurement of aptitude, skill, leadership style, team suitability, strength and potential development areas.
- This can include but is not limited to: Blind CV's, Competency-Based Interview, Candidate Verification Check, Ability tests, Psychometric Profiling, Face to Face Leadership Appraisal and Company Culture Suitability.
- Provide complete flexibility with interview times and places with candidates to prevent indirect discrimination.
- Interviews should be held with a minimum of two different employees within the business to lessen any unconscious bias.
- During interviews all candidates should be asked the same questions and scored consistently by each interviewer.
- Detailed conversations regarding a candidate's personal life should be avoided to prevent potential discriminatory bias.

The Gender Pay Gap: 5 Strategies to Accelerate Change

Research shows systemic social change is needed in the workplace to ensure we close the Gender Pay Gap. But how do you accelerate change in your organisation? The below strategies will help you on your journey to equality.



Flexibility:

Consider providing a flexible working environment for all employees. Research shows that female employees tend to be the main carers in the household. This means they often reduce work hours due to lack of flexibility. This in turn delays or even completely ceases their promotional opportunities. Workplace flexibility is instrumental in changing this.

Salary Transparency

Awareness is key to close the gender pay gap. Having a salary transparency policy ensures equal pay for equal roles. It seems however, not many companies are completely transparent in this department.



Earnings History:

As an Executive Search Firm, we see many companies requesting the earning history of candidates. To help close the gender pay gap, businesses should consider voluntarily stopping enquiries into a candidates earnings.

This would ensure a lower salary in a former position does not affect the candidate's entire future earnings trajectory. This is especially important for females returning to the workplace.

Paid Parental Leave:

Paid parental leave is key for equal pay, inclusive of paid paternity leave, leading to equality at home. Further support for parents and carers can go a long way with your employees too.

Partnerships:

The number of organisations who are actively working towards equality in the workplace is growing. Working with organisations that specialise in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can assist with systemic change which puts everyone on an equal footing to earn and secure top leadership positions. This is why we have partnered with The Equal Group to provide a comprehensive EDI offering to our clients.

At Harper Fox Partners, we are able to deliver the support needed to implement sustainable inclusion whilst ensuring the benefits of diverse hiring are reached. Our EDI knowledge and experience at Harper Fox Partners enables us to focus on impactful, inclusive talent attraction campaigns on behalf our clients.



Cost Free Ways to Support Parents and Caregivers in the Workplace

A large percentage of the workforce are parents or caregivers, however a study from LinkedIn found that just over a third of UK professionals do not believe that their employers do enough to support new parents.

Support for employees with family care duties is crucial. In fact, studies have shown that through supporting parents and caregivers, businesses can reduce workplace stress, enhance productivity, and increase employee retention.

One of the biggest challenges faced by parents is immense childcare costs. While many UK businesses do offer additional financial assistance in conjunction with their legal obligations, this is not always a financially viable solution for SME's.

However, not offering additional financial incentives doesn't mean that you are unable to provide support to employees who are caregivers. Below we have listed five ways businesses can support working parents without impacting the budget.



Introduce Remote Working

Homeworking does not equal a decrease in productivity – in fact, it is widely reported that employees who are working from home often work more hours than those in an office.

Allowing parents and caregivers the opportunity to work remotely can help employees work more efficiently and reduce emotional stress.

It can also result in less sickness absence and unpaid leave taken. For example, if childcare arrangements have fallen through, the opportunity to work from home can eliminate the need to take time off work.



Provide Family Friendly Flexibility

A challenge for parents is the need for flexibility. In a recent study, 56.2% of mothers and 22.4% of fathers reported that they had made changes to their employment for childcare reasons. Meaning, mothers in particular are more likely to change jobs if they feel their current employer does not provide the flexibility they require.

Simple changes can make a huge difference to whether a caregiver will remain at a company or not. For example, businesses could amend an employees working hours to accommodate school drop offs / pick-ups or introduce flexible working hours to allow for appointments or other caregiver commitments.



Embrace Fluidity

Balancing work and family life can be hard and they can often blend together. The idea of separating the day into work time and then family time is just is not feasible in today's world.

By introducing flexible and remote working, businesses can create a culture where parents and caregivers don't feel guilty for the fluidity of their lives.

It's okay to have commitments outside of work, it doesn't make employees any less dedicated to their career.

Create a Supportive Community

Creating a community between parents and caregivers is a great way to bring employees together and create a space where they can share tips and offer support to one another.

Managers and Leaders of businesses should also set an example and be open about their commitments – they shouldn't shy away from talking about their children just because they are in a senior position. Lead by example and promote a culture where it is okay to talk about or take time out for family.



Eliminate Bias

If a business is not perceived to be an inclusive employer, job motivation will decline. Companies need to ensure all employees feel seen; that includes working parents.

Raising a family is hard. Try to understand the perspective of these employees and be patient.

Try to eliminate any negative unconscious bias; just because one employee leaves early to pick up their children from school, it doesn't mean they are not working just as hard as other employees.



Make Employees Aware of Your Policies and Offerings

So, your company has implemented a number of offerings for parents and caregivers – brilliant! However, do employees actually know about them?

Many employees do not realise the supportive programs within their business exist or they don't quite understand exactly what they are entitled to. Communicate often and make it really simple for employees to discover the benefits and support available to them.

By showing parents and caregivers they are supported, valued and included, businesses can have an increased positive impact on employee morale and productivity in general. In addition, this culture will help to attract and retain exceptional diverse talent, to create a more innovative and successful workforce overall.

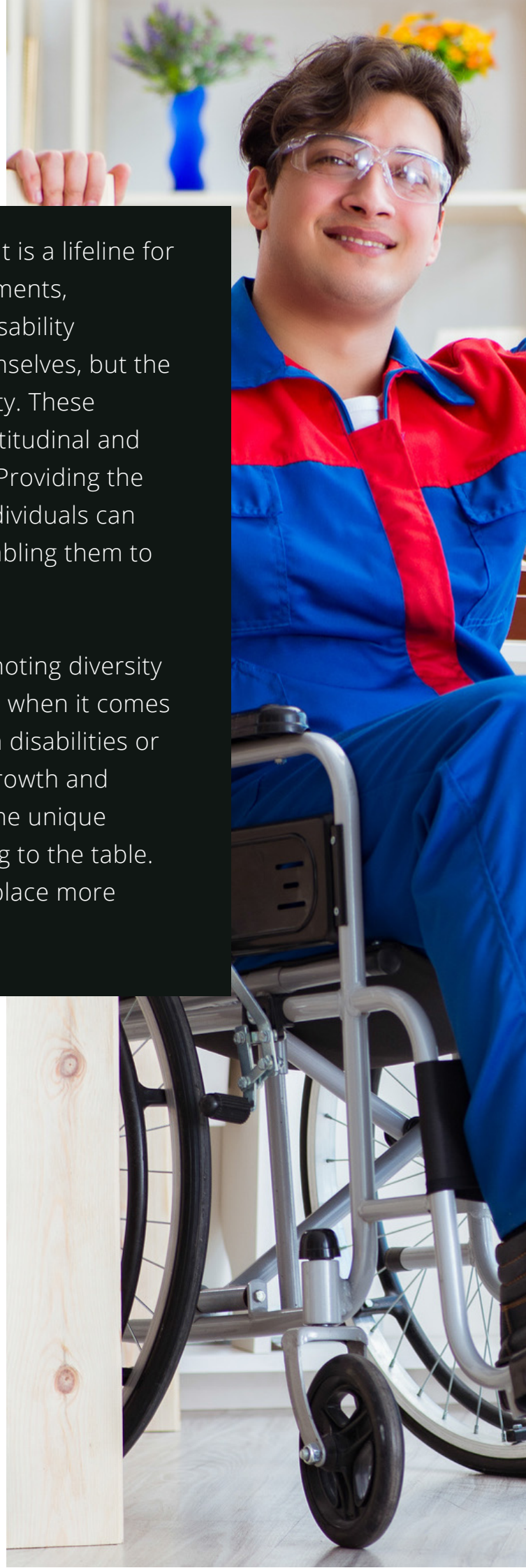
Making Work Accessible for All

Accessibility is more than just a convenience - it is a lifeline for countless individuals facing disabilities, impairments, disorders or conditions. The social model of disability emphasizes that it is not the impairments themselves, but the social and physical barriers that create disability. These barriers can manifest in various forms, from attitudinal and intellectual to sensory and physical obstacles. Providing the appropriate accessibility measures ensures individuals can unlock their full potential in the workplace, enabling them to thrive and succeed.

Shockingly, despite the progress made in promoting diversity and inclusion, many workplaces still lag behind when it comes to accommodating and supporting people with disabilities or impairments. This gap not only hinders their growth and success, but it also deprives organisations of the unique talents and perspectives these individuals bring to the table. Below we outline five ways to make your workplace more accessible to all.

There are many types of disabilities, conditions, disorders or impairments that may require reasonable adjustments at work. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Physical impairments**
- **Hidden impairments**
- **Sensory impairments**
- **Learning difficulties**
- **Mental health conditions**
- **Neurological conditions**
- **Developmental conditions**
- **Neurodivergence**
- **Genetic or progressive conditions**
- **Chronic pain**





Understand your legal obligations

Creating accessible workplaces is not only ethically important but also a legal obligation. For example, employers in the UK have a mandate under the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disabilities. Similarly, workplaces in the United States must provide reasonable accommodations as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Understanding these legal responsibilities is crucial when aiming to establish an inclusive and accessible workplace. In addition, it is a proactive approach to preventing any potential legal implications. Regularly reviewing and updating policies and procedures is important to keep aligned with current laws and promote the well-being of all employees. Most importantly though, it ensures that all employees have equal opportunities to fully engage in their work.

Create a Culture of Accessibility

Creating a culture of accessibility means making accessibility a core value in the workplace. It is imperative that it is made clear to all employees that the business is committed to inclusivity, diversity and equality. This encourages open conversations and reassures people they can be their authentic selves at work.

By fostering a culture of open dialogue and collaboration, employers can create an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their needs and concerns which is critical in identifying and implementing necessary adjustments.

Provide training and mentorship

High level training should be provided to key personnel in the workplace, starting with managers, supervisors and HR professionals. Ensuring management is equipped with disability awareness training ensures staff members with disabilities are effectively supported in the workplace.

Following this, it's imperative that training is offered to all employees, not just those in senior positions. This can be in the form of training programs, workshops, or resource accessibility. Attending disability awareness training fosters awareness and creates a more inclusive workplace where employees feel comfortable discussing and disclosing their needs.



Provide Reasonable Adjustments as Standard

There are many reasonable accommodations that can help reduce barriers to the workplace. Some adjustments are more commonly sought than others such as adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs, flexible work arrangements and accessible facilities including ramps and wide aisles. By making these adjustments standard practice within the business, it can help to reduce stigmas and build a more inclusive culture.

Once everything is set in place, create and maintain an up-to-date accommodation policy, which outlines what accommodation options are available and make this easily available for your employees. Be sure to make it clear that employees can request a specific accommodation that is not already provided and that this request will be reviewed and implemented in a timely manner. Some examples of these include assistive technology, specialist support or phased return to work





Actively work to dismantle ableism

Discrimination and prejudice towards people with disabilities, otherwise known as ableism, can be a significant barrier in the workplace. To dismantle ableism, there needs to be an active process that recognises the existence of disability bias and actively seeks ways to address it. This involves implementing a zero-tolerance policy towards disability discrimination and creating open lines of communication where employees who experience harassment or discrimination can report it.

By actively dismantling ableism, employers can create an environment where individuals with disabilities can thrive and contribute to their fullest potential.

Collective Responsibility

Creating a safe and supportive environment for all employees is essential to enhance productivity, creativity, and innovation, as well as creating a positive workplace culture. By understanding the challenges faced by individuals with both visible and hidden disabilities, dismantling ableism, making reasonable adjustments and encouraging open communication, employers can create a disability-friendly environment where all employees can thrive.

It is our collective responsibility to actively work towards making workplaces more accessible and inclusive, as this benefits not only individuals with disabilities but also the entire workforce and society as a whole.

How Flexible Working Improves Retention

Flexible working is a hot topic. Bright Horizons recently reported that companies without flexible working options risk losing employees who have benefited from a healthier work-life balance during lockdown.

In addition, their report found that over half of employees would like a combination of home and office working to be the way forward. For job seekers, two thirds of working parents will seriously consider working arrangements before applying for a job. Therefore, the leadership talent you are seeking could be deterred from even applying if flexible working is not an option.



Unfortunately, the current working world does not reflect employee's aspirations. CIPD research reports just under half (46%) of employees do not have flexible working arrangements in their current role. Businesses need to act swiftly to offer flexible working as standard, or potentially risk losing their valued employees.

But, what are the benefits of moving to flexible working? We take a look at just a few of the highlights.



Wider Talent Pool When Recruiting

Flexibility on location allows businesses to hire from a much wider geographical area. This results in a much larger talent pool and gives companies access to exceptional candidates they may never have reached before.

Diversity and Inclusion Benefits

A move to more flexible working arrangements will assist in retaining a more diverse workforce. Flexibility on working hours and location will also support diverse recruitment efforts, advancing business engagement and profitability.

More Accessibility

Flexible working includes hours worked, not just location. Flexibility on hours can be a huge bonus for those employees with caring responsibilities. We explore this in more detail in our previous chapter: *Cost Free Ways to Support Parents and Caregivers in the Workplace*.

Improved Mental Health

Autonomy over when and where employees work can provide them with a better work-life balance. A good work-life balance plays a huge part in managing stress and overall mental health. A reduction in stress and an increase in mental wellbeing will result in less time off work.

Environmental Impact

If your business is looking to reduce its carbon footprint, offering home working is a great place to start. An employee's daily commute accounts for 98% of employees work-related carbon footprint. Through offering homeworking, businesses could save on average 3.2 tonnes of CO2 per person every year and retain employees that are more environmentally conscious.

Flexible working has a multitude of benefits for employers, and with employees and candidates overwhelmingly in favour of this shift, it is clear that flexibility is the way forward.



Menopause: The Silent Contributor to Inequality and What to do About it

Menopause. It's a taboo subject for many. But why?



It's a natural part of ageing for half of the population, so why aren't we talking about it in the workplace? More recently there has been increased conversation around this topic, with menopause even making the headlines on occasion - but there is still much more work to be done.

The gap between men and women in senior positions is often attributed to caregiving. It's widely acknowledged that women tend to be the primary caregivers and are more likely to leave work to take care of children or elderly relatives. However, what is not often discussed is how menopause may also be contributing to gender inequality in the workplace.

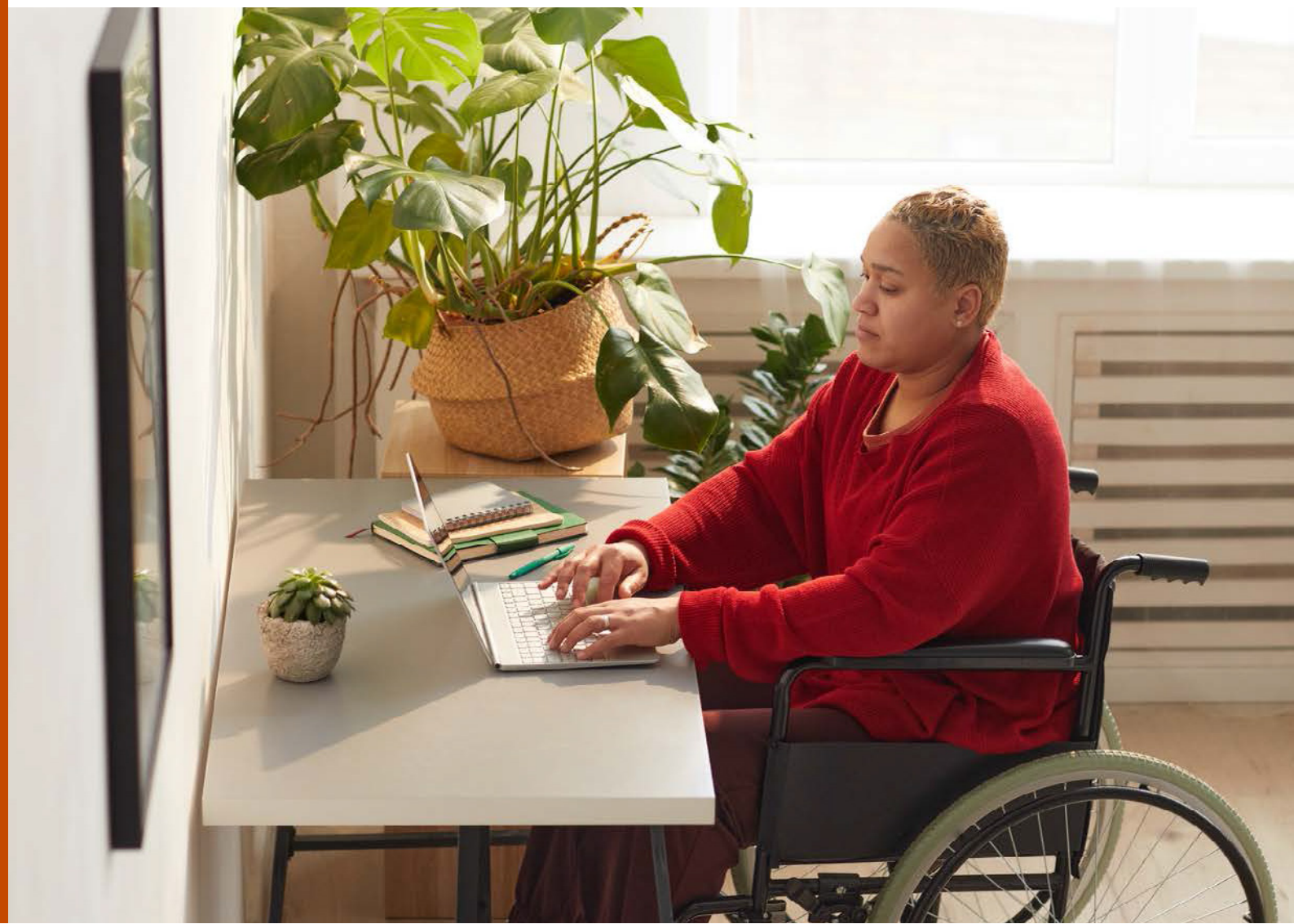
Most women will experience the start of menopause by the time they are 51. In addition, 1 in 100 women will experience symptoms before 40 years of age. This is well before the age of retirement, however a lack of support for people struggling with the menopause means many women retire early.

In truth, nearly one million women have left the workplace due to menopausal symptoms in the UK alone.

So, just as women are reaching executive and board level positions, which usually come with years of experience, menopausal symptoms could push them to leave. This is a huge loss for businesses and has a massive impact on workplace diversity.

With retirement ages increasing, and more women in the workplace than ever before, this natural part of ageing can no longer be ignored. It is estimated that in 2030, about a quarter of the world's female population will be turning menopausal.

So, now is the time to put in place some practical initiatives to support women experiencing menopausal symptoms at work. And here's how...





Listen and Learn

It's difficult to provide support if you don't first understand the struggles. Nearly two-thirds of women who experienced menopausal symptoms said that this impacted them at work. But what are the symptoms of menopause?

Common symptoms can last up to 10 years and include hot flashes, difficulty sleeping, low mood, anxiety and problems with memory and concentration. Just as you may implement equality, diversity and inclusion training, it may be worth considering training on the impacts of menopause for your employees.

Through understanding and listening to the experience of those going through menopause, businesses can begin to implement practical steps to provide the support required.

Be Open

Emotional intelligence is a must for business leaders and can go a long way in encouraging open conversations with teams. Managers should do everything they can to ensure that employees feel comfortable expressing their needs.

If someone is struggling to work because of their menopausal symptoms, they should be able to communicate this without feeling embarrassed. Make sure your employees feel confident that their issues will be taken seriously and that support will be provided without question.

Be Flexible

Flexibility at work provides huge support for women in the workplace in general. But for those who are menopausal, it can mean the difference between working or not. Sometimes symptoms are so debilitating they may prevent you from leaving the house. In this instance the opportunity to work from home would be helpful. In other instances, swapping one long break to more frequent, shorter breaks may assist people managing with symptoms.

Revise Your Office Set Up

Can the temperature be controlled in your workplace? Apart from the toilets, are there spaces designed for privacy? If not, these are great places to start in terms of physical changes you can make.

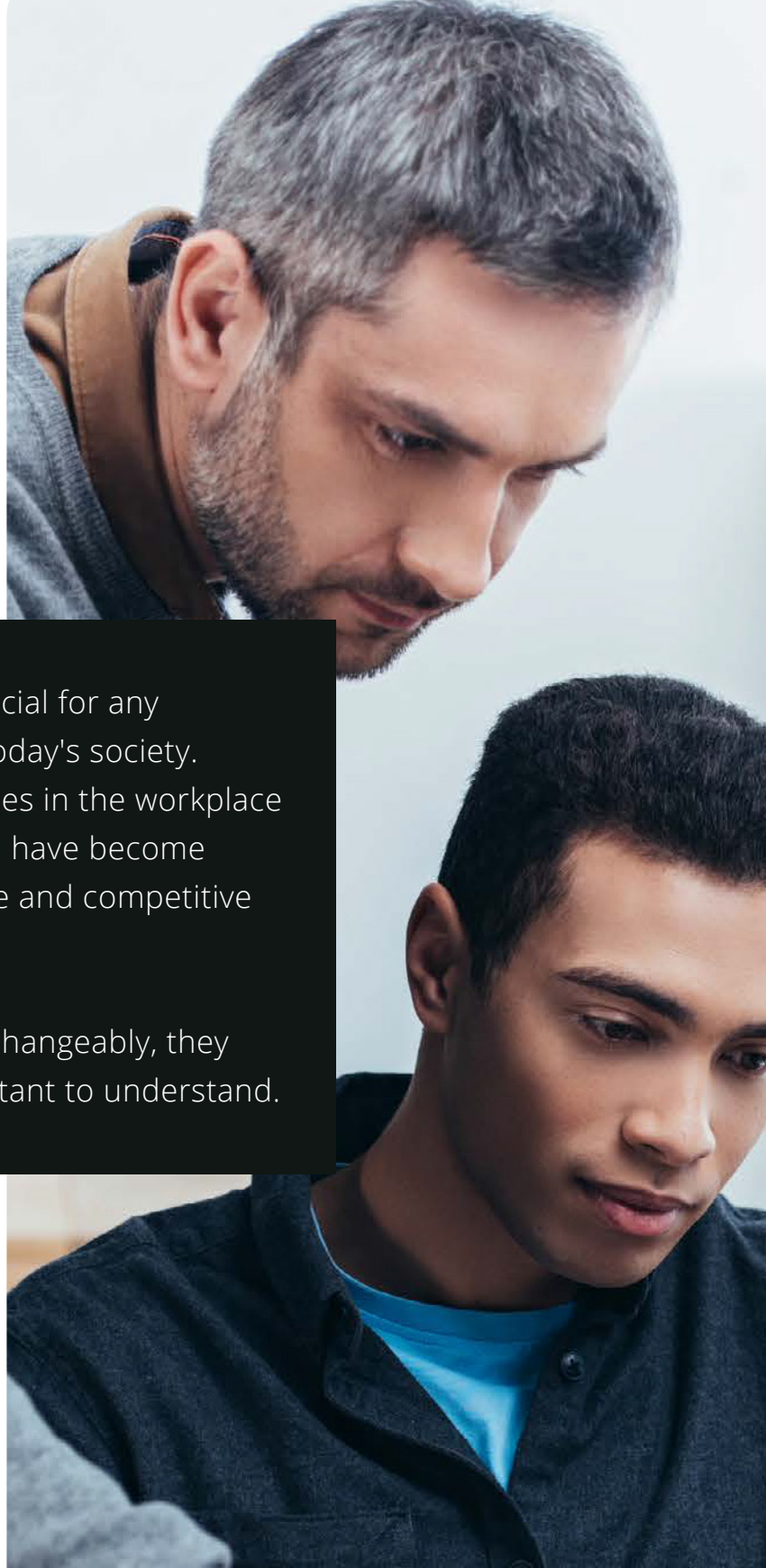
Try providing portable fans or moving desks away from warm areas to ease the intensity of hot flushes. Take a look at your office spaces and provide somewhere easily accessible where doors can be closed to ensure privacy if someone is experiencing high anxiety.

These are simple changes that could prove to be a lifeline for someone experiencing menopausal symptoms.

These physical and flexible changes in the workplace could have a huge impact on the business's retention of senior female talent. And whilst they may seem like small changes, they can go a long way to address the current inequality issues and close the gender gap.



Mentorship and Sponsorship: Understanding the Differences and How to Excel at Both



Diversity, equality, and inclusion are crucial for any organisation that wants to succeed in today's society. Essential tools for promoting these values in the workplace are mentorship and sponsorship, which have become increasingly important in today's diverse and competitive job market.

While these terms are often used interchangeably, they have distinct differences that are important to understand.

Mentorship

Mentorship is a relationship between a more experienced employee (the mentor) and a less experienced employee (the mentee). The mentor offers guidance, advice, and support to help the mentee grow and develop in their career. This can include sharing knowledge, providing feedback, and introducing the mentee to new opportunities.

For the mentee...

For the mentee, mentorship can provide valuable guidance and support, as well as access to new opportunities and networks. For the mentor, it can be a chance to give back to the community, develop leadership skills, and gain a fresh perspective on their own career.



Sponsorship

Sponsorship, on the other hand, is a relationship where one person (sponsor) advocates for another person and actively works to champion them and advance their career. This can include recommending the person for new roles, introducing them to key stakeholders, advocating for their promotion and championing them even when they are not in the room. Whilst the sponsor may often be in a more privileged position, they do not necessarily need to be more senior or experienced than the person they are sponsoring. Anybody can sponsor another person within the business or their networks, regardless of seniority.

Examples

One example could be a white sales manager highlighting a black sales manager's excellent work and high billing when they are not present. Other examples could include a male construction worker advocating for their fellow female construction worker even when she is not on site or a business owner promoting an entrepreneur's services whilst playing golf with fellow business owners.

For the person receiving sponsorship, this can be a life-changing experience, providing them with access to new networks, opportunities, and experiences. For the sponsor, it can be a chance to contribute to the organisation's success while also honing leadership skills and building a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

While both mentorship and sponsorship involve a more experienced employee helping a less experienced employee, the key difference is that sponsorship does not necessarily need a hierarchical dynamic and involves a more active role in advocating for the individual's career advancement.



How to be a Mentor

Mentorship is a powerful tool for professional development and can be a fulfilling experience for both the mentor and mentee.

However, being a mentor involves more than just offering advice and guidance. It requires a deep understanding of your mentee's needs, goals, and challenges, as well as the ability to provide constructive feedback and support. Here are some steps you could take:

Build a relationship:

Building a strong relationship with your mentee is key to a successful mentoring relationship. Take the time to get to know your mentee, their goals, and their challenges.

Listen actively:

Active listening is an important skill for any mentor. Make sure you are fully present and engaged when your mentee is speaking and ask questions to clarify their goals and challenges.

Share your experiences:

Your mentee can learn a lot from your experiences, so be open and honest about your own career journey. Share your successes and failures, and offer insights and advice based on what you have learned.

Provide feedback:

Providing feedback is an important part of the mentorship process. Be constructive and specific in your feedback and offer suggestions for improvement.

Encourage growth and development:

The ultimate goal of mentorship is to help your mentee grow and develop in their career. Encourage them to take on new challenges and seek out opportunities for growth.



How to Be a Sponsor

Being somebody's sponsor involves more than just endorsing people for a promotion. It requires a commitment to their success, as well as the ability to advocate for them and provide them with opportunities to grow and develop.

Sponsorship doesn't have to be a full-time commitment to one person. It's about recognising and advocating for those who may have been overlooked or have barriers in the way of them reaching their full potential. You can sponsor many of your fellow employees every day with small meaningful actions to uplift them and promote their fantastic work, even if they are not in the room with you.



Build a relationship:

Like mentorship, sponsorship is built on a strong relationship between the sponsor and the person they are sponsoring. Take the time to get to know the individual, their goals, and their challenges.

Advocate for them:

Advocacy is a key part of sponsorship. Be proactive in advocating for the individual, whether it's recommending them for new roles or introducing them to key stakeholders.

Provide opportunities:

Sponsors should provide opportunities for the person they are sponsoring to develop their skills and gain experience. This can include offering stretch assignments, introducing them to new networks, and providing access to training and development programs.

Offer feedback and support

Like mentorship, sponsorship involves providing feedback and support for growth and career development. Be constructive and specific in your feedback, and offer support and guidance as needed.

Monitor progress:

Sponsors should monitor the progress of the person they are sponsoring and be prepared to adjust their approach as needed. Regular check-ins and feedback sessions help to ensure that the sponsorship relationship is on track.

Allyship: Five Steps to Become a Better Ally



What is Allyship?

Allyship is the act of supporting the rights of a minority or marginalised group without being a member of it. Allyship is an important part of creating a more inclusive workplace. It's also beneficial for your business, as it helps to create a culture that encourages diversity and inclusion. Being a better ally in the workplace involves actively working to support and empower individuals from marginalised groups. Here are some steps you can take to be a better ally.

1 Educate Yourself:

Recognise that you may have certain privileges that others do not, such as being able-bodied, cisgender, or heterosexual. Take the time to learn about the experiences and challenges faced by individuals from marginalised groups. Read books, attend workshops, and listen to podcasts to gain a better understanding of their perspectives.

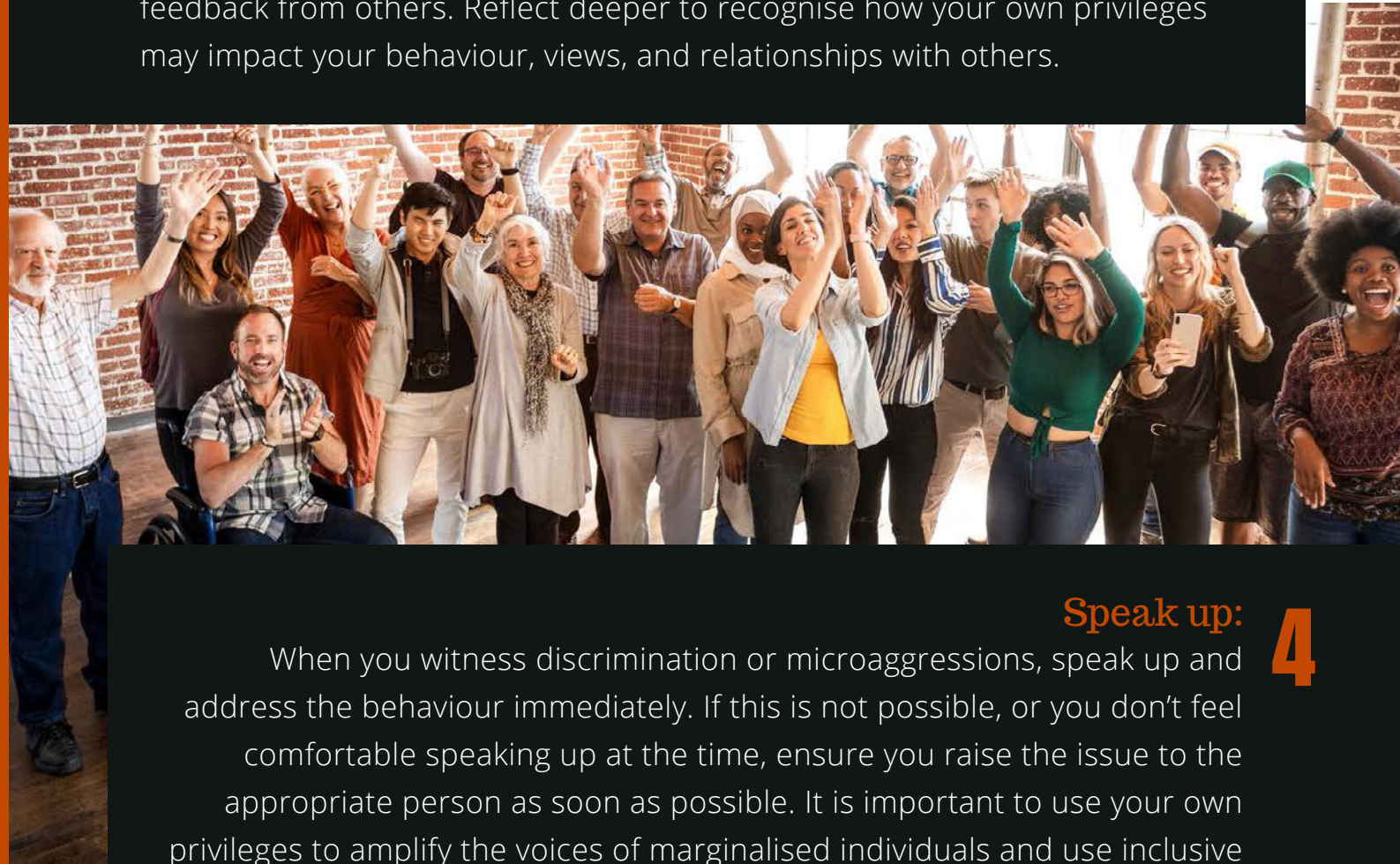
Listen: 2

Actively listen to the experiences and concerns of individuals from marginalised groups. Allow them to speak without interruption and validate their experiences. Being an ally means being open to feedback and criticism and using this information to continue to educate yourself and grow.

3

Check your biases:

A growing number of studies show a link between hidden biases and actual behaviour. Be aware of your own biases and work to challenge them. This can involve reflecting on your own experiences and assumptions and seeking feedback from others. Reflect deeper to recognise how your own privileges may impact your behaviour, views, and relationships with others.



Speak up:

4

When you witness discrimination or microaggressions, speak up and address the behaviour immediately. If this is not possible, or you don't feel comfortable speaking up at the time, ensure you raise the issue to the appropriate person as soon as possible. It is important to use your own privileges to amplify the voices of marginalised individuals and use inclusive language that recognises and respects the diversity of your co-workers.

5

Take Action:

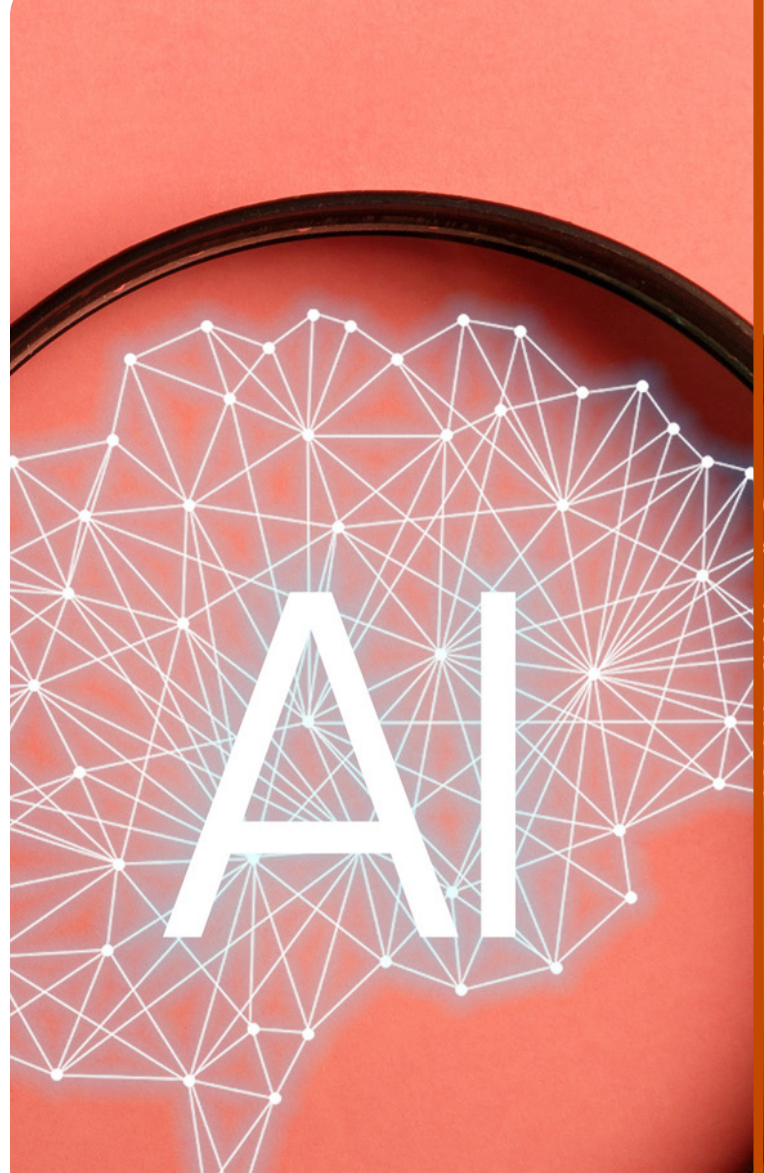
Actively work to create a more inclusive workplace. This can involve advocating for policy changes, supporting diversity initiatives, enrolling on diversity training courses, or getting involved with mentorship programs. You could also work to promote inclusive hiring practices, such as blind hiring or diverse interview panels. This can help to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace from the start.

Safe Space

Allyship is an important part of creating a more inclusive workplace. By cultivating an inclusive environment, you can improve employee engagement and morale, create a safe workplace for everyone, foster collaboration and innovation - and ultimately make your company stronger.

Championing Equality in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is growing at an unprecedented rate and transforming how we work. According to McKinsey, one-third of workers are now using AI as part of their workflow. It is rapidly transforming various industrial sectors, offering numerous benefits such as increased efficiency, innovation, and productivity. However, as with all significant social and technological advancements, it remains crucial to consider the potential consequences.



What are the Risks of Artificial Intelligence?

- **Increased job displacement:** As AI continues to develop, many jobs may become automated, leading to the displacement of workers.
- **Potential for bias:** AI can unintentionally perpetuate or amplify existing societal biases and discrimination. This is because AI is only as fair as the datasets used to train it. This potential for bias may lead to discrimination or a lack of diversity in the workplace.
- **AI Dependence:** An overreliance on AI leads to a loss of creativity, critical thinking skills and innovation.
- **Loss of collaborative and human connection:** As AI takes over mundane tasks, a disconnection from organic human interactions and emotional intelligence could arise, resulting in diminished empathy and social skills due to a reliance on AI-driven communication and interactions.
- **Privacy concerns:** Given the capacity of AI to analyse large amounts of personal data and the influx of employee monitoring tools, employee privacy and security is at risk.



The Impact on Women

The risks of AI are certainly concerning and it is becoming more apparent that it will disproportionately affect women in the workplace. Women are statistically more likely to be situated in supportive roles that overlap with AI capabilities, such as jobs in the administrative, clerical or customer care sectors.

In fact, it is estimated that 71% of employees in AI-exposed jobs are women. The loss of these roles caused by AI automation could perpetuate existing economic and gender disparities.



Unintended Biases and Discrimination

There is a subtle difference between mainstream human led data handling and artificial intelligence (AI) programs. Without human intervention, decisions or predictions made by AI algorithms can produce biased or unfair results that disregard or discriminate against individuals.

Biased algorithms pose a significant concern for women, as they may promote measures that exclude them from certain opportunities in the workplace, leading to a lack of representation, employment opportunities, and wage discrimination.

With this in mind, it is important to highlight that low levels of diversity in the AI industry may underlie the creation of biased AI applications that do not account for the unique experiences of women. This is something we all need to be aware of.

What are the solutions?

Whilst the future sounds bleak when looking at the risks, all is not lost. There are solutions we can all put in place today to reduce the impact of AI on Diversity, Inclusion and Equality.

Research:

Before you can begin putting resolutions in place, it would be beneficial to audit your business to identify any roles that may be under threat of being made redundant through AI advancement.

Re-Train or Reskill:

Instead of eliminating jobs, businesses should provide reskilling programs to help employees acquire new skills that are in demand in the changing job landscape.

Reskilling programs can help underrepresented groups acquire the necessary skills to thrive in AI-driven industries and access new and better employment opportunities.

Upskill or Promote:

AI tools can automate mundane and repetitive tasks performed by Clerks, freeing them up to engage in more productive and fulfilling aspects of their jobs. However, employees need to gain the necessary skills to realise this positive outcome fully. Therefore, investing in upskilling the current workforce is essential.





Ethical Guidelines and Policies for AI Deployment:

Businesses using AI should carefully screen and oversee providers of AI models and related services to ensure they are non-discriminatory and bias-proof. These screenings should address issues such as bias, discrimination, privacy, security and transparency.

By ensuring that AI technologies are developed and utilised in an ethical and responsible manner, we can prevent further marginalisation and ensure that AI systems serve everyone equitably.

Diversifying

Every business should prioritise creating a more diverse workforce that represents a broader range of backgrounds and experiences. By bringing diverse perspectives to the table, we can create systems and processes that are more inclusive, less likely to perpetuate biases and able to deliver substantial progress.

Offering support and creating environments that encourage underrepresented groups to flourish will help create a pipeline of talented people who can contribute to AI's development and use it in a way that benefits everyone.

Conclusion

It's evident that AI is the way of the future. To ensure women are not disproportionately impacted by this shift, it's in our best interest to start implementing these solutions now. By carefully considering the potential consequences of AI and implementing solutions, we can mitigate the negative effects of AI and create a more equitable and inclusive workplace for all.

Diverse Representation In Business: 5 Actions to Create Change

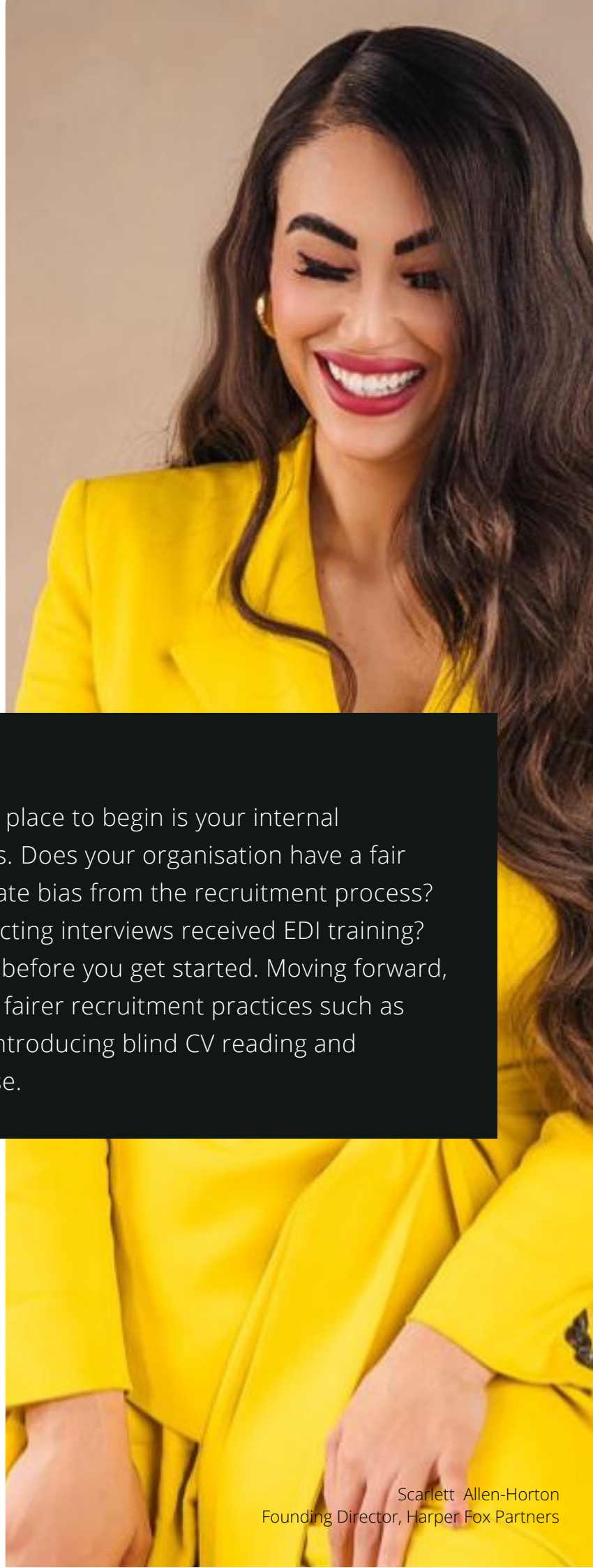
Making systemic changes takes time, resilience, and dedication. We need organisations across all industries to commit to real positive action in the EDI space. Here are 5 ways your business can action positive change.

Internal Recruitment:

The first and perhaps more obvious place to begin is your internal recruitment policies and procedures. Does your organisation have a fair selection policy? How do you eliminate bias from the recruitment process? Have the employees who are conducting interviews received EDI training? These are all great questions to ask before you get started. Moving forward, the business can look to implement fairer recruitment practices such as gender decoding job descriptions, introducing blind CV reading and ensuring interview panels are diverse.

Supply Chain

If your business is passionate about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, your suppliers should be too. Through working with suppliers who are passionate about EDI compared with their competition, you are actively supporting positive change within this space.



Scarlett Allen-Horton
Founding Director, Harper Fox Partners

A photograph of a man with short dark hair, wearing a blue lanyard and a dark blue shirt, speaking into a microphone at a podium. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting with large windows. An orange circle is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Internal Engagement and Retention

Finding and hiring a diverse workforce is just the beginning, you need to actively work to retain this talent. Ensure the working environment is inclusive and accessible. Make certain your team are engaged and feel valued. Employees should feel comfortable enough to be their authentic selves at work. Retention and engagement play an integral part in building a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Positive Partnerships

Alongside EDI improvements, many sectors are dealing with a skills deficit; one of the most prominent being within STEM. Working with schools and educational institutes can go a long way to closing the skills gap and improving diversity within these industries. Inspiring the next generation to pursue careers in industries with lower diverse representation is highly rewarding and instigates real change.

Call in the Experts

There are some fantastic organisations doing great work within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion space. Whether you are looking at recruitment, retention, progression or auditing your businesses success, there are companies who can assist. For example, our partners, The Equal Group, support organisations to establish robust EDI systems, procedures and policies, enabling businesses to measure successful progress over time.

When it comes to Executive Search, the team at Harper Fox Partners lead businesses to develop a cohesive recruitment strategy which will attract and include diverse talent. Get in touch to find out more.

ABOUT HARPER FOX PARTNERS

Who We Are

Harper Fox Search Partners are a multi-award winning, purpose led executive recruitment business, providing leadership talent solutions for the global energy, renewables, engineering, technology, manufacturing and financial sectors.

As an ethical search firm we do things differently. Led by exceptional and inclusive practices, we bring perfect fit leadership talent first time to businesses, endorsed by our 98.9% client service excellence record.

Our Values



Inspire:
dynamic,
passionate,
advocates of
change



Exceptional:
Innovators, adding
value through
outstanding
deliverance



Ethical:
honest, open, fair
and respectful



Inclusivity:
Proud to embrace
and represent all



We Do Things Differently

We are a new generation of transparent, forward thinking executive recruiters; inspiring change whilst adding value to businesses, through outstanding deliverance. Our team of accomplished Consultants, Senior Partners and International Research Professionals share the vision for every boardroom to be reflective of the diverse society we live within, creating positive change for all.

Our team combine years of experience from Corporate, SME, Executive Search and talent recruitment environments. Offering a wealth of knowledge, we deliver quality talent acquisition solutions, leadership assessments and workplace diversity and inclusion advisory to enable companies to achieve their business goals.

97%

Candidate
Retention
Rate

98.9%

Service
Excellence
Record

43%

Increased
Diverse Talent
Representation

100%

Of Our
Clients Would
Recommend Us



Our Global Services:

- Leadership Search Solutions
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Leadership Talent Assessment
- Succession Planning
- Interim Management

Our Global Disciplines:

- Manager/Director Search
- Executive Search
- C-Level Search
- Board Composition
- Interim Management

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