

WISE Ten Steps Measuring Progress Event

08 October 2019

Speaker Summaries



TSP Projects
Suzanne Walker
HR Director

Suzanne spoke about TSP Project's diversity and inclusion journey; how a keen interest in wanting to attract more women to their business was developed into a committed long-term action plan last year, which has so far resulted in an increase in the number of women at the company, as well as in technical roles, and an increase in the profile of women at the business.

TSP Projects have long had a desire to increase the number of females recruited into the business. Suzanne started her fact-finding mission by identifying gender ratios and exact numbers of female staff. She developed a statement of intent with support from the CEO and executive team, targets were established, and it was agreed that the company's Women in Business (WIB) group would play a pivotal role in developing and supporting the implementation of the plan.

Close attention was paid to WIB and the delivery of the plan, ensuring the group operated in an effective and purposeful way. Suzanne deliberately took the lead as Chair of the group to ensure it stayed on track. The group's structure, mandate and authority to commit were clearly set out and a plan of action was created. A workshop took place in August to validate the draft plan and to reference this against the WISE Ten Steps. The result was TSP Project's Three Pillars Action Plan, many points of which align directly with the WISE Ten Steps:

- 1. Effective branding**
(i.e. establishing partnerships with bodies who support diversity objectives).
- 2. Support & growth**
(i.e. the introduction of a mentoring programme).
- 3. Attracting talent**
(i.e. introducing unconscious bias training for recruiting managers).

Suzanne highlighted the positive changes that have since taken place: addressing gender imbalance is now a strategic objective that is part of management and executive objectives; a new HR system has improved the ability to report, track and monitor recruitment data, and the Board now regularly track achievement against targets on a quarterly basis. Enhancements to key policies were also implemented.

Despite significant progress being made, Suzanne accepts there is still more to do. There are plans to roll out a Management Development Programme later this year and Suzanne is hoping to balance the gender intake of the company's early career starters. She also plans to recognise more of the company's success stories.



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Siemens
Harriet Padina
Diversity and Inclusion Community Manager

Harriet shared details on Siemens's flexible working experiment, which involved around 500 employees in the legal function and across two engineering businesses over a six-month period.

Unusually, the option to request flexible working hours was open to anyone regardless of circumstances. Participants were encouraged to lead the conversation with their managers - some requested unpaid leave, some worked from home and others shifted their hours depending on their jobs and the requirements of the role. Listening circles were set up to support managers and to enable them to express any concerns, ask for help on a specific topic or even just to express their fears over how this might work. Some managers admitted being worried about giving employees extended rights and 'letting go', while employees were generally excited by the opportunity.

Harriet revealed the experiment to be a success: "We had surveys throughout to see how it was going; 93% of people said at the end of six months it had a positive effect on their work and 87% said they had been supported by their manager. Not a single person in that organisation wanted to let it go."

Harriet also added that the findings were supported by the engagement survey, where more people commented about flexible working than had participated in the trial; "It meant people who weren't doing this were seeing and hearing about the positive effects," said Harriet.

Harriet Padina, Siemens

"I'm hoping this will start conversations, not just about flexible working, but about making sure every single one of our employees is included and able to participate as well as they can."

The experiment also had a positive effect on managers, with many commenting that it made no difference at all in the workplace and some even reporting increased productivity, as employees took ownership of their roles.

Even in a large organisation, Harriet acknowledged that treating employees as individuals and human beings is possible. "It's what diversity and inclusion is all about."

Harriet concluded that flexible working isn't about policy, it's about conversations. "Every single person has their own story for flexible working. Every single person has a different perspective," she explained. "Every single employee needs to design how they can do their job better. The difficult bit now is getting everyone on board. That means we need open, honest conversations."

