MAJOR PROJECTS
ASSOCIATION

Major Projects Association

Gender balance interventions in major projects

A study of existing programmes and interventions

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Executive summary

The proportion of women in major projects has not changed significantly in the past decade. Whilst companies may be recruiting significant numbers of women at apprentice and graduate level they are not staying in great numbers; they are not getting involved in major projects; and are not achieving leadership positions. This is a problem.

Even without the skills shortages we should be trying harder to engage women in our companies. Evidence indicates that increasing the number of women on boards and executive teams leads to greater creativity, improved problem solving, better decision-making and a better bottom line.

As part of the Major Project Association's Gender Balance Initiative, the Association has undertaken a study to determine where there is evidence of success as well as to identify future research gaps. This report outlines the findings of this study.



Raising the profile

There are a variety of social media campaigns and comms programmes aimed at raising awareness of the significance of gender balance. Often these require a public pledge of support. These all contribute to the conversation around the lack of women in industries related to major projects. On their own, however, they do not make changes.



Do not reinvent the wheel

There are as many gender balance strategies, blueprints, reports and reviews of gender balance good practice as there are professional institutions and special interest bodies in this arena. There is value and great ideas in many of them, but we need to be cautious not to reinvent the wheel each time.



Cross-sector initiatives

At a very high level there are several initiatives which are taking effect. The '30% Club' and 'Women on Boards' seem to be impacting upon the number of women on boards in FTSE companies. There are also are a number of good industry-specific accreditation programmes.



The importance of an inclusive culture

Networks and support programmes are unlikely to have an impact upon greater diversity if they are delivered in a culture which is not inclusive of difference. It is therefore important to challenge cultural norms and stereotypes within our industries.



Targets work

Public declarations of top-down targets for recruitment, retention and promotion make a difference.



Mind the gap!

Publishing gender pay gap figures establishes the extent of gendered pay differentials. This can lead to challenging conversations, but can ultimately change stereotypical attitudes and cultures.



Leaders need to take the lead

Leaders cannot abdicate responsibility for this issue to HR teams. They must demonstrate that it matters by taking personal responsibility for the changes which are required. In male-dominated organisations, which are common within major projects, it is even more important to see male champions of change. Those champions need to be 'playing on the pitch' not just 'cheering from the sidelines'.



There is no silver bullet

Use all interventions with caution. From unconscious bias training to mentoring to networks, every initiative or training course has its limitations and is only as good as its application. There is no fix-all except the investment of time, thought and energy.



Be fair and clear

Removing bias and increasing transparency into recruitment and promotion processes will make a difference.



Pay and promotion

Despite much discussion about work-life balance, the evidence tells us that women leave companies for exactly the same reasons as men – poor pay and promotion prospects. Being open about your gender pay gap and clear about how you will address it will alleviate some of this leakage.

Introduction

The proportion of women in major projects has not changed significantly in the past decade. Whilst companies may be recruiting significant numbers of women at apprentice and graduate level they are not staying in great numbers; they are not getting involved in major projects; and are not achieving leadership positions. This is a problem.

The pipeline of major projects which the UK Government (alone) wish to deliver in the next decade requires 100,000 new entrants into this business. The global demand for experienced project delivery people is in the tens of millions between now and 2020. If we only recruit from our traditional sources we will fail to deliver these projects. We must try harder to recruit and retain female talent.

Even without the skills shortages we should be trying harder to engage women in our companies. Evidence indicates that increasing the number of women on boards and executive teams leads to greater creativity, improved problem solving, better decision-making and a better bottom line.

The Major Projects Association has recognised that member organisations are struggling to achieve gender balance in major projects and therefore, in 2015, launched its Gender Balance Initiative to identify and share best practice in this arena. As part of this initiative the Association has undertaken a study to determine where there is evidence of success as well as to identify future research gaps. This report outlines the findings of this study.

The vast majority of published efforts to understand gender imbalance has been focused around the areas of construction and infrastructure. However, we acknowledge that not all major projects are in these sectors. This study draws heavily on those reports and related industry initiatives; it also includes the expertise and advice of business transformation specialists such as McKinsey and Deloitte, which provide a key part of the evidence related to effective diversity and inclusion programmes that are referenced in this study.

This report identifies and provides links to existing programmes, and reviews the effectiveness of specific interventions. It makes conclusions about what works in this field and makes recommendations for further study as well as possible future actions for the Major Projects Association in support of its members.

Methodology

To review the current landscape for diversity and gender balance programmes the following activities were undertaken:

- Online research to establish any publicised initiatives of relevance and their status.
- Academic searches to identify English language scholarly research of relevance.
- Conversations with target professional and special interest groups and organisations to identify any current unpublished activity or future intentions.
- Conversations with key Major Projects Association member contacts to capture relevant thoughts on this topic.

Review of existing programmes

It is one of the challenges of the gender balance topic that there is a huge proliferation of initiatives and programmes that are seeking to tackle a component part of the issue, or indeed the whole issue, but which are focused on a particular sector e.g. construction. This creates an environment where there is a great deal of fragmentation of funding, resources, knowledge and experience and leads to repetitious publication and communication. The wheel is regularly reinvented!

This section identifies some of the initiatives that are most relevant to the major projects environment. It highlights those that are particularly useful in understanding the topic and the possible actions one might take. It is not exhaustive and new initiatives start up all the time, such as the Government's Year of Engineering in 2018 as a component of the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy.

01: Programme activity

Programme activity in the major projects environment

- Women into Science and Engineering
- Construction Industry Training Board
- The Royal Academy of Engineering
- Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation
- The Institution of Engineering and Technology
- Women's Engineering Society
- Institution of Civil Engineers
- National Association of Women in Construction
- Women in Rail
- National Centre for Women in Information Technology
- The Open University
- Association for Project Management
- UCATT/Unite
- Equate Scotland
- Women into Construction
- Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment
- Chartered Institute of Building
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
- Construction Industry Council
- Association of Consulting Engineers
- EU funded research
- Association of Researchers in Construction Management
- World Bank

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Women into Science and Engineering

The Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) Ten Steps programme is focused on the retention and development of female talent in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) workforce. Whilst not specific to major projects or construction, a large percentage of the signatory companies are from that sector, and with the Major Projects Association also endorsing the Ten Steps at the outset of their Gender Balance Initiative many of the Association's members are engaged and aware of the programme.

Originally launched as a pledge programme for CEOs, the Ten Steps has developed into a more action-orientated and practical programme which gives companies the opportunity to complete a diagnostic and be benchmarked against others within the programme. Regular reassessment gives companies the opportunity to assess if they are making progress in putting in place the culture, policies and practices that will encourage a thriving gender-balanced organisation. WISE also provides signposting and supporting interventions to address each of the Ten Steps.

The founding principal of the Ten Steps is that there is no silver bullet: organisations need to be working on all the identified Ten Steps to be sure they become an employer of choice for women and capture the business benefits of a balanced workforce.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Ten Steps as a tool to drive change has to date been anecdotal, but WISE continue to look at more rigorous ways to evaluate the impact of the programme.

Construction Industry Training Board

The Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB's) Be Fair Framework provides a structured approach that helps develop Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) within construction companies, supporting the workforce and management to move towards an improved workplace culture.

This is aligned with the development of safety culture and thus integrates well with existing ways of working at most constructions companies. It also makes use of a common vocabulary that can be extended across sites, joint ventures and supply chains. There are online training modules and extensive resources that range from advice on maternity and paternity policies to outlines for toolbox talks on acceptable language.

Go Construct is the CITB's campaign to encourage more young people and a more diverse cross-section of the population to consider careers in the construction sector. It has a strong website which makes good use of video clips, role-model profiles and myth-busting facts to provide a better-balanced view of the industry.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

The Royal Academy of Engineering

The Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) has been extremely active in the field of diversity and inclusion (D&I), including being a founding partner in the WISE Ten Steps, and in the activities that it generates via its Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Group and working sub groups. The latest report, *Creating cultures where all engineers thrive,* and outcomes have recently been publicised at their Inclusive Cultures event.

The survey-based research identifies three barriers to change in the engineering sector:

- No crisis of inclusion – no burning platform driving change
- Inclusion privilege – many are blind to the need for inclusion
- Complex, personal, often intangible issues

There were also seven key recommendations:

1. Prioritise and reframe inclusion
2. Articulate the benefits
3. Build a critical mass of white and male allies
4. Increase awareness
5. Influence the culture by engaging engineers
6. Provide fair and inclusive career support and talent management
7. Take action across all inclusive culture indicators

The researchers also highlighted the lack of any real innovative thinking around the challenges of D&I, which is disappointing for a self-styled innovative sector. As well as sharing findings and recommendations from the report, working groups reported on action to progress D&I measurement, inclusive recruitment, communication, D&I supply chain leverage through procurement and progress in D&I across professional engineering institutions.

The culmination of this work will be publication of multiple reports including:

- An inclusive recruitment toolkit – 2018
- Guidelines and good practice for a common procurement framework integrating D&I – March 2018
- Measurement framework recommendation – end of 2017

There was no evidence that rigorous evaluation of any suggested good practice had been considered beyond anecdotal or qualitative feedback on success. Despite this, companies were also invited to submit further case study material for inclusion in the good practice guides.

RA Eng has a wealth of reports on diversity and inclusion, and one which specifically evaluates the programmes they have initiated is the *Diversity Programme Report 2011–2016.*

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Their resources also include a toolkit with case studies (aligned with the Ten Steps) along with recommendations and advice for companies: *Increasing diversity and inclusion in engineering – a case study toolkit.*

The Academy has also partnered with the Science Council to produce the *Diversity and Inclusion Progression Framework* to progress D&I across 63 engineering and science professional bodies. This takes a maturity matrix type approach and enables professional bodies to benchmark themselves against each other and monitor progress.

Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation

Of a similar feel to the Royal Academy of Engineering's toolkit is a publication and set of resources created by the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT): *Routes to Diversity and Inclusion*. Supported by a grant from RAEng and also aligned with the Ten Steps, the contributors to the case studies and good practice include many Major Projects Association members such as Amey, Arup, Balfour Beatty, TfL, Morgan Sindall and Highways England.

The Institution of Engineering and Technology

The Institution of Engineering and Technology's (IET's) *Progressing women in Stem Roles: Best practice guidance for employers* is an excellent guidance and best practice report that covers all the bases from creating cultural change through to attraction, retention and promotion.

This includes bulleted action lists, signposting to examples of good practice (some of which are evidence-based), case studies and further reading and references to support practitioners.

Women's Engineering Society

The Women's Engineering Society (WES) has been in existence for over 100 years and has many individual female members amongst the major projects community.

Their high-profile National Women in Engineering Day programme has become a regular calendar feature, as has their Top 50 Women in Engineering list.

WES also host the MentorSet programme (relaunched in 2016 and part funded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) through which female engineers can apply for an independent mentor if they are unable to access a suitable one from within their own employer or network.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Institution of Civil Engineers

In 2015 the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) commissioned a paper from then WES President Dawn Bonfield entitled *Disruptive Diversity*, which aimed to be a challenging perspective on how to increase the diversity and inclusion of the ICE and the civil engineering sector.

The paper presents a summary of those programmes that have an impact on the sector, including many also mentioned in this report, and makes a number of recommendations to the ICE that might help improve gender balance in the industry. These include such things as returnships and mentoring. Actions that are specifically tailored to increasing the number of female engineers who remain members of the ICE could provide future data via member surveys on the reasons for staying/leaving and any barriers to progression that women experience.

National Association of Women in Construction

Originating in Australia but now with branches in the UK, the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) is one of the world's longest running organisations for women working in construction. Their growing membership reflects the range of roles available in the built environment. NAWIC hosts networking for their members and hosts speakers who can share good practice that might boost female numbers in the sector.

Women in Rail

Women in Rail (WR) was created to improve diversity in the UK rail industry through providing networking opportunities and support for all women within the sector, encouraging undertakings and stakeholders to adopt diversity as a business strategy, and devising initiatives aimed at positioning rail as an attractive career choice for young people. WR also offer a mentoring programme.

National Centre for Women in Information Technology

The National Centre for Women in Information Technology (NCWIT) is a US organisation with massive resource and budget that has a host of great resources and programmes focused on encouraging and supporting more women in the tech sector, and IT roles more generally. It produces excellent guidance and reports which are highly evidence-based.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

The Open University

The Open University's (OU's) *Returning to STEM programme* is an online course which coaches and advises women through the process of returning to work in the STEM sectors. Early results are encouraging: in the Northern Ireland pilot 14 of 20 who completed the programme have returned to work and 5 are actively seeking employment.

Association for Project Management

The Association for Project Management (APM) have their own Women in Project Management (WiPM) Specific Interest Group and run an annual conference addressing the issues pertinent to women in the projects sector.

UCATT/Unite

The support of unions and trade associations in creating a more diverse workforce has been identified in many of the reports referenced in this study. In 2014 UCATT held its Women in Construction survey and published the results along with recommendations for making progress.

They also launched their Women in Construction Network Forum and their 'Women Get Women' recruitment campaign but there does not appear to be any current information available on these positive-sounding initiatives. Due to the merger with Unite early in 2017 it is anticipated that further work in this area will be rationalised.

Equate Scotland

Equate Scotland is the Scottish government-funded organisation tasked with encouraging more women into STEM in Scotland. They recently produced a women in construction report entitled *Diversity in Construction* outlining many of the challenges and some specific Scotland-centric findings and recommendations. These recommendations suggested the need for involvement in initiatives that help to change the image of the industry and facilitate the roll-out of more flexible working arrangements.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Women into Construction

The Women into Construction (WiC) project was established in 2008 to provide opportunities for women to work on the construction of the Olympic Park in London, and redress women's longstanding underrepresentation in the construction industry.

Following the project's success in gaining work experience for women on the Olympic Park site, funding was extended and the project has continued since 2011, providing work placements and brokering employment for women in manual trades and professional construction roles in London. The project receives financial support from the industry skills body CITB and is hosted by Be Onsite, the charitable arm of construction company Lendlease.

There is a full report, *The Women into Construction Project: an assessment of a model for increasing women's participation in construction*, evaluating the success of the programme, completed by the Centre for Research in Equality and Diversity School of Business and Management at Queen Mary University of London in 2014.

The report's author, Tessa Wright, also has a recently published book entitled *Gender and Sexuality in Male-Dominated Occupations: Women Working in Construction and Transport* (Springer 2016) in which she details some of the interventions seen as being successful in construction.

There are a number of examples of major infrastructure projects in different countries that have incorporated employment equality objectives, from which lessons can be learnt about improving gender participation. These include US projects such as the Los Angeles Century Freeway and the New York Times building, the Canadian Vancouver Island Highway Project, and in the UK, Heathrow Terminal 5, the Olympic Park and Crossrail. These projects are summarised in the 2015 University of Westminster report: *'No more softly, softly': Review of women in the construction workforce*.

The massive public spending involved in such projects means that they are often highly regulated and subject to public scrutiny. They therefore provide scope for introducing improved employment conditions and workforce parity objectives, working with a range of parties, including trade unions, as was the case at the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA).

There is also an ongoing PhD by Phillipa Groome at the University of Sussex on the subject of women in leadership during the delivery of the London 2012 Games.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment

Based at the University of Westminster, the Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment's (ProBE's) 'Raising the Bar' project culminated in the production of a report *No more softly, softly – Review of women in the construction sector* in 2015. The report gives specific evidence and recommendations around improving female representation in major (mega) infrastructure projects including case studies from the UK and overseas.

Linda Clark, who leads on much of the published work in this area, is also the author of an imminent book chapter – 'Misplaced Gender diversity policies and practices in the British construction industry: developing and inclusive and transforming strategy', in *Value Management in Construction* edited by Fidelis Emuze and John Smallwood, to be published by Taylor and Francis/Routledge.

Chartered Institute of Building

It was 2004 when the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) published its report *Inclusivity: The Changing Role of Women in the Construction Workforce*. They have not published since then on the topic but now have a female President in Rebecca Thompson, and host a Women in Construction conference called 'Inspire' which is sponsored by the likes of Galliford Try and Wates.

Despite its age this report is well quoted, perhaps because of its apparent clarity on the issues. *'To meet the challenge of the skills gap, the recruitment of women is no longer simply a nice thing to do; it has become a necessity. The main factor that unequivocally hinders the absorption of women in the construction sector remains the organisational work culture of the industry, which needs to become more flexible to encompass a good work-life balance.'*

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) have taken a strong position on diversity and inclusion, and under the recent presidency of Louise Brooke-Smith have launched their Inclusive Employer Quality Mark (IEQM) which is supported by online materials about retention, returning to work and other good practice case studies from employers who have signed up to the IEQM.

There is also a self-assessment tool to allow employers to measure progress. The career development of female surveyors is also the topic of a PhD at ProBE, University of Westminster.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Construction Industry Council

In 2016 the Construction Industry Council's (CIC's) Diversity panel published its report *A Blueprint for Change*. The report pulled together statistics on the make-up of the construction industry workforce, and case studies as examples of good practice for creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

Association of Consulting Engineers

In 2016 the Association of Consulting Engineers (ACE) produced a good practice and guidance document *Diversity & Inclusion – marginal or mandatory?* to support their members in achieving greater diversity within their organisations, be they SMEs or major corporate players.

EU funded research

The EU maintains an internet portal through which to access its repository of research and publications relating to gender and science.

There is a huge range of research material relating to the involvement of women in research, the participation of women in science and the consideration of gender factors in outcomes. However, they only reference gender in major projects via papers on gender mainstreaming*. The European Institute for Gender Equality, an autonomous body of the European Union, also has a Gender Mainstreaming Kit, published in 2017.

The recognition that very few women were involved in the field of construction related research also led to the establishment of the WOMEN-CORE project which received EU funding to help strengthen the participation of women in construction research in Europe.

*Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.

01:Programme activity in the major projects environment

Association of Researchers in Construction Management

The Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM) have an excellent website and research paper portal in which there are a variety of papers addressing the barriers to women in construction management, the impact of the culture of the sector, gender and leadership styles.

World Bank

The World Bank has just approved a new strategy to achieve gender equality in its work globally. The strategy provides voluntary guidance rather than mandatory safeguards. Even if the gender strategy were enforceable, it perpetuates the Bank's approach to advancing women's empowerment as an instrument of economic growth without also promoting intrinsic equal rights.

02: Holistic communication

Holistic communication and pledge programmes

- #HeForShe
- Your Life
- #9PercentIsNotEnough
- #LookLikeAnEngineer
- Male Champions of Change

02:Holistic communication and pledge programmes

#HeForShe

#HeforShe is the high-profile UN Gender Equality Pledge programme spearheaded by UN Ambassador Emma Watson. The HeForShe pledge is simple: *'I will take action against gender bias, discrimination and violence to bring the benefits of equality to us all.'*

As the programme approaches its third anniversary it can claim to have to sparked social change by receiving pledges from over 1.1 million men and prompting over 1.3 billion social media conversations.

Beyond the numbers is also has an initiative called IMPACT 10x10x10, which enlisted 10 heads of states, 10 company leaders, and 10 university presidents committed to 'fast-track gender equality in boardrooms, classrooms, and world capitals.' It also has a handy Action Kit for those who want to use the initiative to drive change in their own organisations.

Your Life

Your Life is a three-year STEM campaign to ensure the UK has the maths and physics skills it needs to succeed in today's competitive global economy. Originally anticipated to focus on girls in STEM, the campaign launch widened its focus to both boys and girls. Some blame this lack of focus for its seemingly underwhelming impact – although it does offer some useful guidance on encouraging more girls into STEM.

Your Life looks like it will survive beyond its initial three-year plan. Earlier this year it published its school league tables based on STEM A levels awarded and is looking for corporate sponsors to support ongoing work.

#9PercentIsNotEnough

Over the last couple of months of 2016 and 2017 the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) led a campaign on Twitter to draw attention to the fact that only 9% of engineers in the UK are women. Hundreds of engineers have posted photos with #9PercentIsNotEnough aiming to inspire the next generation of female engineers. The initiative extended to a conference and other supporting events, and was recognised for its excellence by the Association Excellence Awards for its outstanding use of social media and growth in target audience.

02:Holistic communication and pledge programmes

#LookLikeAnEngineer

The I Look Like an Engineer movement was created in August 2015 by software developer Isis Anchalee as a response to the backlash the OneLogin recruitment ad in which she was featured received. The movement aspired to break the stereotypes and promote diversity within the engineering industry. Its primary tactic is the use of #ILookLikeAnEngineer on social media sites, along with pictures of engineers or engineering students.

The 'I Look Like an Engineer' movement has sparked other similar movements that also seek to break stereotypes in their industry, such as 'I Look like a Professor' and 'I Look Like a Civil Engineer'.

Male Champions of Change

An Australian initiative that would be well worth replicating in the UK, the Male Champions of Change (MCC) Institute, works with influential leaders to redefine men's role in taking action on gender inequality. It activates peer groups of influential male leaders, supports them to step up beside women, and drives the adoption of actions across private sector and government.

The heart of The Male Champions of Change strategy involves men of power and influence forming a high-profile coalition and pledging action to achieve change on gender equality issues in organisations and communities. The Women's Leadership Council is in discussion about establishing an MCC in the UK. They produce guidance and regular progress reports to maintain an evidence-based approach.

03:
Cross-sector initiatives

Cross-sector initiatives

- 30% Club
- Women on Boards

03: Cross-sector initiatives

30% Club

The 30% Club launched as a campaign in the UK in 2010 with a goal of achieving a minimum of 30% women on FTSE 100 boards – currently the figure stands at 27%, up from 12.5%. Progress has been achieved through the leadership of the Chairs and CEOs of their members. The Club is run by senior volunteers drawn from its membership who give time and access to facilities for events.

Membership is drawn for the primarily FTSE 100 and 250 companies and is cross-sectoral, with strong membership and support from consultancy, professional services organisations and business schools. The 30% Club also has international chapters in Canada, Australia and Ireland to name a few.

The senior nature of those involved in the 30% Club gives it strong media presence and strategic influence. Specific initiatives such as their cross-company mentoring programme, Women for Media UK database and scholarship access to business school leadership schemes are excellent.

Women on Boards

Women on Boards (WOB) is another cross-sector organisation working to improve the gender balance on corporate boards. They work on both the supply side and the demand side, with board candidates and with those recruiting non-executive directors and trustees.

WOB provides information, encouragement and connections to help women get to the top within their own company or to take on a board or committee role as a non-executive director, trustee or governor. They aim to break down the barriers to entry to the boardroom and build the pipeline of board-ready women.

04: Accreditation programmes

Accreditation programmes

- Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)
- National Equality Standard
- BSI

04: Accreditation programmes

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

The Equality Challenge Unit's (ECU's) Athena SWAN Charter was established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research. Now a well-established feature of the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) landscape of particular relevance to universities and academic institutions, the charter does have some potential for influence in the engineering and construction sector.

The impact of the Athena SWAN accreditation upon universities has been rigorously evaluated by an independent team from the University of Loughborough.

There is strong evidence that it positively impacts on the recruitment, retention and development of female teaching and research staff. Evidence seems less compelling that it influences the experiences of female students and this may be one area that Major Projects Association members can use Athena SWAN, as a way to decide upon universities partners for projects, placements and graduate recruitment activities.

National Equality Standard

The National Equality Standard (NES) is a commercial charter mark product created by EY. It was developed for business and sets clear EDI criteria against which companies are assessed.

Through the NES, companies are subjected to a robust EDI assessment. NES assessment provides companies with a comprehensive quality review of their EDI policies and practices, identifies areas for improvement and provides implementation recommendations. Each company that undertakes the NES undergoes a robust assessment against a defined set of criteria across seven standards.

Trained NES assessors review documentation, ensure legal compliance, conduct comprehensive interviews and sample staff through in-depth surveys. The outcome is detailed in a comprehensive report.

Participating in a NES assessment is an expensive process but a number of companies in the major projects environment have undertaken the assessment – for example, EDF Energy, Intu, Westfield, National Grid, UK Power Networks, Arup and Interserve.

04: Accreditation programmes

BSI

In April 2017, BSI, the business standards company, launched a new standard for employers to provide guidance for good practice on valuing their employees through diversity and inclusion. As this a new product, there is not as yet any data on the take-up or impact of the standard.

The standard, BS 76005:2017 Valuing people through diversity and inclusion – code of practice for organizations, provides recommendations for undertaking, reviewing, assessing and undertaking a competent and principled approach to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The recommendations cover people management and development, and the evolution of more inclusive policies, procedures, practices and behaviours within organisations supporting diversity. The building of productive relationships with others – be they customers, clients or people within communities – is also a key recommendation in the standard.

Effectiveness of specific interventions

One of the key objectives of this study was to review the available evidence for the effectiveness of common interventions used by organisations in their drive to improve gender balance in male-dominated major project type environments.

As the Major Projects Association has endorsed the WISE Ten Steps and a large number of member organisation have become signatories to that initiative, common interventions have been grouped to fit loosely around the Ten Steps framework to show alignment with a recognised approach.

Ten interventions:



01 Adopting a business improvement project



02 Understanding the starting point



03 Educating leaders



04 Changing mindsets



05 Being creative in recruitment



06 Supporting families



07 Being transparent



08 Sponsoring female talent



09 Showing you want to retain and develop



10 Sharing good practice

01: Adopting a business improvement project

Adopting a business improvement project

- Creating an inclusive culture
- Targets/quotas

01: Adopting a business improvement project

Creating an inclusive culture

> *"Targeted initiatives, such as establishing networks or support programmes for women and promoting the value of a diverse workforce to employers, while important, are unlikely to have a dramatic impact on gender equality. It is therefore critical that the construction industry finds innovative ways to challenge cultural norms and gendered stereotypes among all its employees."*
>
> Powell, A, Dainty, A and Bagilhole, B (2010) *Achieving gender equality in the construction professions: lessons from the career decisions of women construction students in the UK.*

To understand what companies do and what they could do further, in 2016 McKinsey surveyed 233 companies and 2,200 employees in nine European countries. Analysis showed that while the vast majority of companies have introduced measures to increase gender diversity at the top, many have yet to see significant results.

The findings of the McKinsey report, *Women Matter 2016 – Reinventing the workplace to unlock the potential of gender diversity* include:

- Increasing the number of gender-diversity initiatives is not enough. Although having a critical mass of measures is important, volume alone does not explain women's lack of representation in top management: 52% of the companies in the McKinsey sample implemented more than 50% of the measures, but only 24% of them reported having more than 20% of women in top management positions.

- A mere 7% of the companies in the sample ranked diversity among the top three priorities on their strategic agenda.

- Of the 2,200 employees surveyed, more than 88% said they did not believe their company was doing what it takes to improve gender diversity, and 62% of them did not know how to contribute to gender diversity.

- Regarding the effectiveness of gender-diversity programmes, only 40% of respondents reported that these were well implemented in their companies – that is, programmes had clear follow-up processes in place, they were assessed on a regular basis, and their effectiveness was evaluated at various levels of the organisation.

01: Adopting a business improvement project



McKinsey also identified that there were three game-changers which distinguish best-in-class companies:

- **Persistence:** Best-in-class companies initiated diversity programmes earlier, indicating that it takes time to effect tangible, sustainable results.
- **CEO commitment, cascading down to all management levels:** Companies that have built gender diversity successfully at the leadership level are twice as likely to place gender diversity among the top three priorities on their strategic agenda, to have strong support from the CEO and management, and to integrate gender diversity at all levels of the organisation.
- **Comprehensive transformation programmes:** Best-in-class companies have initiated change programmes that ingrain gender diversity in all aspects of the business. Specifically, those companies are more likely to have change agents and role models at all levels of the organisation; they have also developed and communicated a compelling change story to support the programmes, policies, and processes they have put in place.

McKinsey believe it will take both government and business-led interventions to create an environment that offers women better opportunities; enables them to train for and work in skilled, better-paying roles; reshapes social norms and attitudes; and supports work-life balance. To achieve this, companies will need to transform themselves by re-evaluating their traditional performance models and by challenging the long-term viability of their prevailing leadership styles.

Targets/quotas

Staying with McKinsey, their experience has been that top-down targets make a difference. They did not set explicit gender goals until 2014, and in just one year after doing so, the intake of female consultants increased by five percentage points. In the UK, the emphasis has been on setting voluntary targets to drive change, as with the annual FTSE 100 Women on Boards objectives. There are a number of examples of companies setting challenging targets and seeing genuine progress as well as positive publicity and brand image, for example BHP Biliton, the Anglo-Australian mining company, who have declared their intent to have 50% female employees by 2025.

02: Understanding the starting point

Understanding the starting point

- Gender pay gap reporting
- Publishing statistics

02: Understanding the starting point



Gender pay gap reporting

To help close the gender pay gap, the Government has created new regulations under Section 78 of the Equality Act (2010), which requires large organisations with more than 250 employees to report publicly on how much they pay their male and female staff. The idea is that greater transparency will force businesses to take action to close their gender pay gap and accelerate the pace of change towards gender equality. Useful advice on implementing the regulations is available from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

This data will clearly illustrate the uneven distribution of women and men in the workforce, and where unconscious bias and discrimination are able to seep in. More specifically, it will help employers understand the root causes of inequality within their own organisation, and enable them to develop an appropriate action plan to close the gap.

The pay gap figure must be viewed alongside the other diversity data in any organisation. It is not enough on its own to inform actions – simply focusing on pay will not achieve gender equality. However, it is the most significant measure of inequality in an organisation; measuring it will help an organisation to know their 'starting point' and publishing it will create a level of public accountability that does not currently exist.

As this is the first year of reporting it is too early to assess the impact of the new regulations. However, research from Business in the Community ahead of the new regulations showed that 87% of employees strongly believed that public reporting will help to close the gender pay gap – and that they wanted employers to start taking action towards achieving real gender equality. It will enable employers to understand and explain the causes of their own gender pay gap – especially if they publish figures broken down by grade/job type – and so devise strategies that are tailored to their own gaps and needs.

The extent of the gender pay gap matters to employees. 89% of respondents would feel more negatively towards their employer if the gender pay gap was relatively large in their organisation. If it was relatively small, 71% would feel more positively towards their employer.

The publication of the gender pay gap, accompanied by a strategy to close it, will impact an organisation's capacity to attract and retain talent, since it is likely to inform individuals' career choices. 92% of respondents would use this information if they were looking for a job and trying to decide between two employers, and more than half of female respondents would favour the company with the smallest pay gap or the one that is more proactive in closing it.

02: Understanding the starting point



If further analysis revealed pay inequity between men and women, most participants (91%) would want to talk about it at work. Two thirds of participants reported that they would ask their employer what they are doing to close the pay gap, and more than half of the participants (52%) would ask for more information.

All of this suggests that employees do not want to be kept in the dark over pay. They want to understand the context behind a pay gap, how it can be closed and what their employer intends to do to close it – they are not interested in a single figure that lacks narrative and action.

Publishing statistics

A clearly defined, focused diversity strategy can help an organisation improve its bottom line, attract top talent and retain high-potential employees. Organisations with mature diversity functions follow a similar set of effective practices to make the business case for diversity programmes.

By measuring as many metrics as possible, using an integrated HR system to track demographics and using vendors strategically, organisations can successfully make the case for culture change. Accountability is also important, and the most successful companies tie incentives to the completion of D&I goals. Through data tracking and analysis, organisations will see a more diverse workforce at their company, which can lead to innovation and increased employee engagement. (PeopleFluent report 2015, *Measuring Diversity for Success*)

03: Educating leaders

Educating leaders

- Leadership training
- Understanding the business case
- Male advocacy initiatives

03: Educating leaders

Leadership training

In today's political, economic, and global business environment, diversity has become increasingly important. The number of executives who cited inclusion as a top priority has risen 32% from the Deloitte Human Capital Trends 2014 survey, and in the last three years the percentage of companies that rate themselves excellent at gender diversity went up by 72%.

Based on 2017's survey 48% of companies consider themselves adequate at focusing on global cultural diversity, and 69% of companies consider themselves adequate or excellent at supporting a variety of family models in the workforce.

Increasingly, the issue is broader than the standard business case and requires a more comprehensive view: diversity and inclusion now impacts brand, corporate purpose and performance. Not only is the public increasingly aware of the issue but employees are also expressing stronger views on diversity and inclusion. Millennials, for example, see inclusion as a mandatory part of corporate culture, defining how the company listens to them at work. Shareholders, customers and suppliers are all taking a closer look at this issue.

Despite this increased emphasis and scrutiny, however, it appears businesses face a reality gap: results appear to be too slow. Chief executive officers who have abdicated responsibility for this issue to the chief human resources officer or chief diversity officer need to take ownership and hold business leaders accountable at all levels. People today are slowly becoming aware of both unconscious and explicit bias, and some organisations are starting to take action to expose the issue and make institutional changes to deal with it.

The most popular solution today is training both for leaders and staff. But while such interventions are helpful, it appears that making people aware is not enough. Organisations need to consider making structural changes, implementing transparent, data-driven solutions, and immersing executives in the world of bias to give them a visceral understanding of how bias impacts decision-making, talent decisions and business outcomes.

Deloitte have highlighted this trend in their research and believe this issue has become increasingly important. Employees and stakeholders are starting to voice concerns, but solutions built around training and education are not working well enough. A set of 'new rules' is being written that will demand a new focus on experiential learning, process change, data-driven tools, transparency and accountability.

03: Educating leaders

Understanding the business case

Whilst executives and leaders may feel driven to enhance diversity and inclusion within their business because it is the right thing to do, the compelling business case for diversity is a strong component in any discussion around the topic. Giving your senior leaders a full explanation and access to the reasons behind the benefits of improved gender balance will help them communicate more effectively to other less enlightened employees, become an effective ally for those in the minority, and be more constructive in suggesting ways those benefits can be unlocked.

Numerous reports exist which summarise the business case and the research that has been undertaken to back this up. These include the official government publication *The business case for equality and diversity: a survey of the academic literature*, but if you still have leaders in denial or just unaware of the business potential of a diverse workforce further action is required.

Some companies have also specifically undertaken their own in-house research to look at how diversity affects team performance and other company metrics such as innovation and customer satisfaction. Network Rail are one such company to find a positive link and the results are published on their website.

03: Educating leaders

Male advocacy initiatives

Male or 'majority-group' allies are key for successful change efforts in major project environments like construction and large IT programmes for at least two reasons.

In technical organisations, men hold the majority of formal leadership positions, so they are often in a better position to make change — whether it be in subtle everyday moments or in changing larger business systems.

Second, increasing diverse participation is not a women's issue or an issue that is only relevant to women and other under-represented groups. Diversity and inclusivity are business issues, and they are human issues. People of all genders are held to restrictive standards around gender, racial, and other identities that limit their potential and the kinds of things they are able to do.

Some academic studies, such as the 2017 report from the Center for Women and Business at Bentley University, *Men as Allies: Engaging Men to Advance Women in the Workplace*, have looked at the impact of male advocacy or ally programmes, with the focus on female faculty staff and have found encouraging results.

The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) has also produced a helpful resource to encourage monitoring and evaluation of this approach. 'How to' guides and suggested topics for engagement are also available.

04: Changing mindsets

Changing mindsets

- Unconscious bias training
- Role models
- Reverse mentoring

04: Changing mindsets

Unconscious bias training

Despite all the investment (estimated $6–$8 billion per year in the US alone) in unconscious bias and allied diversity training, there has been little progress. Hence, there is a growing scepticism about whether unconscious bias training is an effective tool to help meet corporate diversity goals. Critics of such training contend that it does not visibly move the needle on diversity numbers, and can even backfire.

Some academic studies support this perspective: one longitudinal study found that traditional diversity training courses are the least effective efforts in increasing numbers of underrepresented minorities, while experimental research has shown that presenting evidence that people commonly rely on stereotypes — information often found in diversity training courses — is not helpful and can even condone the use of stereotypes. On the other hand, a meta-analysis found that diversity training can be effective, depending on many factors including content, length, audience, and accompanying diversity efforts.

Unconscious bias training can be a useful component of diversity and inclusion efforts, but only if it is thoughtfully designed with research in mind and its limitations are well understood. Attention to best practice can help organisations design training that engages employees, motivates them to adopt behaviours that mitigate bias, and empowers individual diversity advocates within companies. But these outcomes can only take an organisation so far. Ultimately it is a commitment to evaluate and innovate organisational processes consistently – designing out the systems that allow for bias in the first place – that will have the most sustained impact on achieving diversity goals.

04: Changing mindsets

Role models

Access to and visibility of role models has been one of the key tenets of many diversity and inclusion programmes and is widely accepted as one of the simplest yet most effective ways to influence women and under-represented candidates or employees positively. Role models can not only positively influence choices and feelings of acceptance and engagement but can also boost performance, particularly for women in STEM, where the influence of stereotype threat can even undermine day-to-day performance. (*Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex*, Cordelia Fine, Icon Books 2010)

Even with role modelling though there is a downside. There is evidence that the sole use of elite high-flying role models undermines women of more modest abilities and aspirations, (Hoyt & Simon, 2011) so a variety of role models are required to ensure targets see themselves reflected in the mix. Young girls too are found to be overwhelmed by role models who are not only intelligent but glamorous, as they feel unable to compete or find the combination credible, (Betz & Sekaquapetewa, 2012) reinforcing that exposure to credible, realistic and varied role models is key.

Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring aims to flip the traditional mentoring relationship on its head and establish a relationship and channel of communication that allows the senior party to learn from the junior party in the pairing. Reverse mentoring programmes were initially used to transfer knowledge around new technologies and new trends between generations, but they also have the power to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of others and how to create a workplace that is more inclusive for the future.

There are now a number of good examples of reverse mentoring being used to educate leaders about the experiences of women, ethnic minorities and disabled employees. PWC operate one such system that they claim has been 'one of the most impactful' initiatives they have ever launched in changing perceptions. PWC's Andy Woodfield, who designed the programme, states: 'the education of white men about inclusion needs to be emotional, not just based on data and logic.'

How PWC are evaluating their programme has not been published, and as yet there is little in the literature to inform rigorous analysis. However, as a current trend it appears to be growing (a number of construction companies are looking at establishing schemes) and at least anecdotally has the power to influence positive and inclusive change.

05: Being creative in recruitment

Being creative in recruitment

- Blind CVs
- Language matters
- Positive action in recruitment
- Returners programmes

05: Being creative in recruitment

Blind CVs

The use of blind auditions for selection of professional musicians has become a favourite case study by which to illustrate the power of removing gender and ethnicity from the selection process. But other organisations too are experimenting with eliminating names on resumés because candidates with ethnic-sounding names may experience lower hiring rates, or women may be judged against different expectations. Australia has been a leader in this area: the state of Victoria is experimenting with removing all personal details from job applications.

Language matters

Our choice of language in recruitment processes make a difference. Not just in our assessment of candidates based on linguistic cues in their applications, but in the words we choose to put in job descriptions.

For example, Kimberly-Clark in the US revamped its hiring processes by, among other things, changing job descriptions to include transferable skills and demanding diverse lists of candidates for open positions. As a result, in four years, the company increased its share of women in leadership ranks from 17% to 30%.

A combination of structural changes and culture shifts, along with an 'anti-bias checklist' of approaches and technology (like Textio, which gender-neutralises language and thus ensures jobs appeal to a wider audience, or Blendoor, which completely anonymises resumés to remove gender, race and other bias-triggering factors) has the best chance of making a difference.

Positive action in recruitment

There is a growing focus on eliminating measurable bias from talent management processes, including hiring, promotion, performance management, leadership development, succession, and compensation. By measuring each of these processes, removing factors that lead to bias, giving managers a language to discuss bias, and holding them accountable, organisations can move toward true inclusivity.

Some companies also look at patterns of job offers and compare managers against their peers for signs of gender, racial, or age discrimination. New tools from vendors such as HireVue, SuccessFactors, and Entelo can directly monitor manager hiring practices, including job descriptions and interview scoring patterns, to identify gender, racial and cultural bias.

05: Being creative in recruitment

After training to remove bias in the recruitment process, employees in one training evaluation were asked whether, when interviewing multiple candidates for the same role, they ask all candidates the same questions. This method of structured interviewing has been shown to promote more objective, less biased decision-making.

Returners programmes

There have been a number of programmes focused on supporting women who wish to return to their careers after a break from the workplace.

The returners programme at Thames Tideway has been one such highly publicised initiative with a clear and measurable outcome of boosting female employers by the direct number recruited since 2015 (seven in year one, five in year two, and two in year three). Highways England have also launched their returners programme (looking to recruit 20 returners in 2017), adding another major projects player to the list.

These schemes are often heavily oversubscribed though, and an effective way of capturing those who apply but are unsuccessful at the first attempt yet are still credible candidates is urgently needed so they can be channelled to other companies with similar opportunities.

The ICE 'returnship' web page is one example of how the sector can work together to make these roles more accessible.

UKNEST (UK Naval Engineering Science and Technology Forum) are also looking at evaluating the impact and effectiveness of returners programmes within their member organisations which include the likes of Rolls-Royce and Babcock. Although the actual numbers of women are small, these schemes are influential because they bring women into the organisation at a more senior level, due to their prior experience, thus having a potential influence on the gender balance in management and on cultural change.

These schemes also have something in common with the Women in Construction projects, in that they address supply and demand in parallel – matching women with roles and supporting them through the challenges they face.

06: Supporting families

Supporting families

- Does flexible working attract?
- Shared parental leave
- Child care/carers support

06: Supporting families

Does flexible working attract?

In 2016 Ranstad carried out research to support their Awards programme, which put the impact of flexible working in context with other influencing factors for women in the industry.

Their findings, in their report *Women in the UK construction industry in 2016* were as follows: one in five women (22%) described a sense of achievement as their favourite aspect of the job. Another top factor was the variety of work (32%). However, the construction industry suffers from lack of broad awareness and is not perceived as particularly attractive. This lack of awareness was cited as the top reason women do not go into construction (43%), along with lack of suitable role models (42%) and an industry still described as 'macho' (41%).

16% of women also said lack of flexibility or part-time working was one of the reasons they had left the industry or knew someone who had. From September 2017, parents can enjoy up to 30 hours free childcare a week for three and four-year-olds, which should give women with younger children more flexibility and increase the opportunity to return to work.

However, 44% said better flexibility in the industry itself would persuade women to return to a career in construction, as would enforcing equal pay (35%) and improving mentoring and sponsorship programmes (23%). This therefore seems to indicate that there are still a lot of issues the construction industry needs to address if it wants to become more inclusive. Just 5% of women employees left because of poor maternity rights and 1% because of poor promotional prospects.

Results such as these mean that work-life practices are frequently suggested as a strategy for improving women's representation in management. Research by the School of Management, University of South Australia Business School, *Help or hindrance? Work-life practices and women in management*, published in *The Leadership Quarterly* in 2016 showed that overall, work-life practices had a positive effect on the proportion of women in management, but only after an eight-year lag. However, this positive effect was not observed in organisations that were highly male-dominated. Leave arrangements and direct provision of services (e.g. childcare or eldercare) had the strongest associations with women in management. These findings demonstrate the value of work-life practices in improving women's representation in management, but that the effect is not immediate and may not be as powerful for women in STEM as other sectors.

The survey also revealed that the cost-per-hire at companies with a good brand or reputation was 46% lower than those without, highlighting the financial benefits for companies that do improve their image.

06: Supporting families

Shared parental leave

A key objective of shared parental leave was to 'encourage more fathers to play a greater caring role in the first year, via longer, more flexible shared leave,' according to the Government's 2013 impact assessment. Only one in ten employers surveyed by XpertHR agrees or strongly agrees that the new right has been successful in achieving this objective. By contrast, three-fifths disagree or strongly disagree.

Employers that enhance shared parental pay are twice as likely to receive shared parental leave requests as those who offer the statutory rate, according to research by XpertHR Benchmarking.

One employer in four either enhances shared parental pay above the statutory minimum or plans to over the coming year, according to research on the impact of shared parental leave in its first year. But over double this number – more than half of survey respondents – currently offer enhanced maternity pay.

Employers have been far from overwhelmed by shared parental leave requests over the past year. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the 397 employers surveyed said that, to the best of their awareness, some employees were eligible to make shared parental leave requests over the year to 5 April 2016. Eligible employees at one third of these organisations requested shared parental leave over the year, with those in the public sector more likely to make requests than their private sector counterparts.

The actual number of eligible employees making shared parental leave requests per organisation over the past year was low. Among employers reporting that eligible employees had put in shared parental leave requests, half reported that only one eligible employee had made a request, 20% had two eligible employees requesting shared parental leave, and 25% had had between three and eight requests.

Employers believe that affordability is a key reason for the low uptake of shared parental leave. Only one in seven respondents agrees or strongly agrees with the proposition that 'shared parental leave is seen as an affordable option by all eligible employees at my organisation.' More than one in three disagree or strongly disagree.

Employers that enhance shared parental pay are twice as likely to receive a shared parental leave request as those who offer only the statutory rate. The proportion of employers with eligible employees making shared parental leave requests rises from one third across the whole sample to more than half of those offering enhanced shared parental pay. But it falls to only a quarter of employers that do not enhance shared parental pay.

06: Supporting families

Child care/carers support

Investment banking firm Goldman Sachs opened the City of London's first (and as yet only) on-site corporate office creche. It opened in 2003 initially to offer all employees with children 20 days free childcare a year, which can be booked either in advance, or on the day if there is an urgent need. In 2010 they expanded the facility and offered working parents free use of the nursery for four weeks to support transition back to work from parental leave, and then full-time paid childcare was made available for those who said alternative arrangements were challenging.

The business case for providing access to nursery facilities seemed compelling. Goldman Sachs had identified that many senior female employees at the company were very keen to come back from maternity leave but were struggling with childcare provision. They felt that the nursery would be an excellent retention tool.

The US-based Parenting in the Workplace Institute agrees that the biggest benefits for businesses are retention and recruitment. They state that flexibility and work-life balance are a huge deciding factor for people choosing a place to work, and employees are far more likely to stay loyal to a particular organisation if they feel they are also supported in family life. Replacing staff because of family commitments is a huge cost to businesses (more than £30,000 per employee, according to some estimates), especially if it is a long-term employee who knows the company well and has built important relationships with contacts and clients.

The financial burden of running such a facility means not all businesses can afford to offer these benefits. Nurseries at London's Goldsmiths College and at Royal Mail's Mount Pleasant sorting office in Farringdon are just two of many workplace creches to be threatened with closure in the past few years. The former was costing the university £70,000 a year in subsidies, yet with only 23 places, it served a very small number of staff.

Other companies offer innovative benefits like childcare sickness cover and school holiday clubs to smooth out the child care crises that parents face, and also to reduce absenteeism caused by unplanned childcare disruptions. Measuring the effectiveness of these benefits in attracting or retaining female staff is difficult, as they are also a manifestation of a sympathetic workplace culture rather than a standalone factor in their own right.

07: Being transparent

Being transparent

- Recruitment and promotion procedures
- Succession planning and ambition
- Targets work

07: Being transparent

Recruitment and promotion procedures

Establishing recruitment and promotion that are structured and transparent will ensure that the bias and 'the old boys network' effects are minimised. Whilst most large companies already have these procedures in place, a redesign can often provide ways to remove existing opportunities for bias without having to rely on the individuals involved understanding such things as unconscious bias and stereotype threat. Iris Bohnet's book *What Works: Gender Equality by Design* (Harvard University Press 2016) is a great source of advice.

In SMEs which employ huge numbers in the construction industry and are second and third tier suppliers on major projects, procedures are often less formalised, with hiring taking place by word of mouth. Encouraging these companies to introduce better systems will provide opportunities to attract more diverse candidates and minimise 'word of mouth' hiring.

Succession planning and ambition

Recently analysed employee survey data *Dispelling the Myths of the Gender 'Ambition Gap'* from two global Boston Consulting Group (BCG) data sources, comprising more than 200,000 respondents, shows clearly that women start their careers with just as much ambition as men. Women's ambition levels do vary, but they vary by company, not by family status. When companies create a positive culture and attitude regarding gender diversity, all women – mothers included – are eager to advance.

In other words, the problem is neither inherent nor related to motherhood; instead, it hinges on the day-to-day experiences of women at work. Ambition is not a fixed attribute, but is nurtured – or damaged – by the daily interactions, conversations and opportunities that women face over time.

07: Being transparent

Targets work

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) research shows that diversity efforts are most effective when linked to outcomes. For example, executives' compensation could be pegged to the level of gender diversity in their business. Companies should consider promoting managers who have strong female candidates in their succession pipeline (or they should at least challenge those who do not).

Positive steps benefit all employees – not just women. Finally, creating a culture that enables more women to be ambitious does not put men at a disadvantage. Among the best companies – those showing the most progress on gender equality – both women and men are more ambitious. There are clearly many factors at work, but our data shows that the gains of women do not come at the expense of men.

Transparency is key – companies should communicate their progress, celebrate both effort and outcomes, and identify where they still have work to do.

08:
Sponsoring female talent

Sponsoring female talent

- Mentoring
- Sponsorship programmes

08: Sponsoring female talent

Mentoring

Female professionals themselves identify mentoring as being one of the key factors in helping them support and develop their careers (*Enabling women's career progression*, IBM, 2012). For these reasons formal mentoring programmes within companies are common, and the engagement of women in those schemes is encouraged.

In a quantitative meta-analytic review (Underhill, 2006), the overall mean effect of mentoring was significant, indicating that mentoring does improve career outcomes for individuals. However, it is heavily influenced by the type of mentoring – formal versus informal. Informal mentoring relationships were found to have a much greater influence on career outcomes than formal schemes. Given that it is likely that most women in an organisational setting will receive their mentoring via a formal scheme it is important to understand how such a scheme can be optimised for women in major projects environments.

While some still debate the merit of mentorship within its traditional parameters, when it is expanded to include sponsorship and advocacy, it is accepted to be a critical element of success by providing protégés with the opportunity to broaden their perspective, build social capital, navigate organisational politics more strategically, and muster the confidence to 'lean in' and speak up when it matters most. In male-dominated professions, where women often face even greater challenges building networks and embracing feminine leadership strengths, mentoring and sponsorship has proven even more paramount.

A study by professional services firm Egon Zehnder, *Leaders & Daughters Global Survey 2017*, found that only 54% of women have access to senior leaders who act as mentors or informal sponsors in their career. While advocacy and sponsorship rates decline as age increases, the women with the highest level of support are those already sitting in the 'C-suite' of top senior executives.

This research suggests that if women do not reach a critical threshold in their career early enough, they either stop reaching out for support or their organisations stop extending it. All of which presents a double opportunity both for women and the organisations in which they work: for women, to be more deliberate in seeking mentors and establishing relationships with influencers; for organisations, to be more proactive in developing mentoring programmes that foster a culture where mentoring is institutionalised, as the value of mentoring often goes well beyond the boosting of individual careers. It provides a means for elevating knowledge transfer across divisions, retaining institutional and practical know-how while keeping mentors in touch with the 'front lines' of the business that they might otherwise be distanced from.

08: Sponsoring female talent

Sponsorship programmes

A 2011 US study, *The Sponsor Effect: Breaking Through the Last Glass Ceiling*, by The Center for Work-Life Policy, found that women underestimate the role sponsorship can play in their advancement, and that those who do grasp its importance fail to cultivate it properly. Many women seem to feel that getting ahead based on who you know is a dirty tactic and not really playing fair. They believe that hard work alone will provide them with the rewards and recognition they deserve, whereas typically men do not seem to have this issue.

Male leaders need to be involved in sponsoring to ensure progress. At McKinsey it was found that women are disproportionately sponsored by other women, which places a higher burden on our more senior women relative to senior men. This in turn limits the sponsorship they are able to provide.

09: Showing you want to retain and develop

Showing you want to retain and develop

- Networks
- Career development training

09: Showing you want to retain and develop



Networks

In the best-practice report *Making good connections*, Vinnicombe et al (2004) provide evidence of the benefits of networking for women, but they point out that there are also limitations. Networks are excellent ways of boosting confidence, and giving access to role models and mentors, but will not in their own right boost career progression.

Moreover, by continuing to promote women's networks as a sure-fire career advancement mechanism, there is the danger that women will continue to expend effort in areas which bring them little return on their investment, as well as helping to shore up existing attitudes to instrumental careerism that we would certainly be better off questioning rather than perpetuating (*Does woman + a network = career progression?* Perriton 2006)

Creating a network for women is a long-established intervention to support women in the workplace, but it is a classic example of an intervention where there can be a gulf between the impact of those that are implemented well and those that fail. Research points to the need for the network to be outward-looking, intersectional and inclusive (not just made up of straight, white women) and focused on a mutually beneficial outcome or objective for all members (e.g. outreach to encourage more girls into STEM, or gaining mentor support).

Career development training

One high-profile Women Only leadership programme is at EY. From their own research it is clear that the women truly value and benefit from interventions such as these on multiple levels. In addition to leadership sending an important message to those invited as part of its efforts to strengthen their leadership pipeline, providing the time and space to assist females in their career focus is critical. It is important to affirm the leadership challenges that women face, and provide assistance in taking proactive control of their career, being authentic, articulating the desire and rationale to be a partner, and building the self-confidence to move ahead.

These critical outcomes of women's leadership programmes cannot be underestimated as part of a strategy for building a gender-balanced pipeline and strong female representation at partner and other leadership levels.

Atkins carried out an evaluation of the impact of their women-only development course to which all graduates and professionals have access. They found it positively impacted retention and progression.

10: Sharing good practice

Sharing good practice

- Case studies
- Toolkits
- Working with the supply chain

10: Sharing good practice

Case studies

The preparation and signposting of case studies by expert organisations and professional bodies has been a long-established method of sharing good practice.

Case studies abound in the publications and projects referred to in this document, and yet there is no published data on how effective this method of knowledge sharing is. Access to web page hits for both the RAEng and the CIHT case studies may be a useful way of establishing how well used they are, and thus whether the creation of them is as valuable as it was once assumed.

Toolkits

The creation of toolkits expands on the case studies referred to above. They include other resources and examples of good practice that bring together advice and evidence in one place to help the end user build on existing knowledge rather than have to rediscover or reinvent it.

In addition to the diversity toolkits specifically referenced earlier (RAEng and CIHT) there are numerous others present online which have generic relevance to the major projects arena.

They include:

- The Harvey Nash Group's Inspire Diversity Toolkit – business leaders give perspectives on creating a diverse workforce
- Equality and Diversity Toolkit to help promote careers in STEM
- Cook Ross Diversity Toolkit
- WISE Apprenticeship Toolkit

10: Sharing good practice

Working with the supply chain

A number of companies have established supplier forums in order to facilitate the transfer of good practice amongst their suppliers on topics related to EDI. Companies include Highways England, HS2, Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail. The Highways England Supplier Forum are considering creating a case study portfolio/toolkit to enable them to publish and share good practice more widely.

They are also interested in researching how to attract women into the sector. It is understood that an initial approach has been made for the forums to work together rather than duplicate efforts, as for the most part the same suppliers are involved, discussing the same challenges and issues.

Sharing D&I good practice from other project organisations such as the Olympic Delivery Authority can ensure continuity.

Through the supply chain information collated by the likes of Highways England it may be possible to evaluate the impact of certain D& I interventions and activities. For example, Highways England track supplier D&I survey scores and the number and type of interventions that they are involved in. They know their top ten with the highest percentage of women and could map that against, for example, the percentage of the workforce working flexibly.

The Major Projects Association Gender Balance Initiative is one example of sharing best practice amongst members via its web pages and bulletins. In addition, the Association is working with the Infrastructure Client Group to share best practice more widely to avoid duplication of effort.

What works?

This study has uncovered a large number of initiatives and reports on gender balance. After such extensive research can we conclude with any certainty which initiatives are having an impact and make recommendations to companies that will help prioritise and optimise gender balance efforts?

The study uncovered only one report which attempted to undertake a comparative study of a range of initiatives: *Getting the Most from your Diversity Dollars* by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

This informative report aimed to establish which of a list of 39 interventions were most effective, and produced both a 'Top 5' (which notably includes flexible working, role model visibility and public commitment) and a useful table which categorised those initiatives into four quadrants – proven measures, hidden gems, baseline measures and overrated measures, as shown below.

Gender diversity initiatives fall into four clusters

Effectiveness as perceived by women respondents

High

HIDDEN GEMS

Highly valued by women on the ground, but underestimated by male senior leaders

- **Targeting interventions to moments of truth**, such as returning from parental leave or taking an overseas position
- **Addressing unconscious bias in recruiting**, evaluation and promotion decision points
- **Increasing the visibility of role models** in the organization
- **Supporting internal and external networks** for women
- **Offering professional development**, such as talent management programs and executive coaching
- **Engaging male employees** to promote gender diversity

PROVEN MEASURES

Known measures with proven return on investment – valued by women and known to be effective by leaders

- **Offering flexible working models** such as part-time or flex-time options
- **Committing publicly to gender diversity**, in combination with middle management support
- **Tracking performance** through meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs)
- **Sponsoring women** through a scalable program
- **Crafting antidiscrimination policies** as a statement of organizational values

Low

BASELINE MEASURES

Basic steps that have value but do not have a transformative effect on women's daily experience

- **Mentoring women** (often not enough to overcome systemic problems for women on the ground)
- **Addressing the gender pay gap** (differences in individuals' pay aren't usually public)
- **Taking a public stance in female advocacy organizations** (does not change the day-to-day experience)
- **Launching disconnected cultural initiatives such as reducing face time** (done in isolation, they often fail)
- **Conducting employee surveys** (typically lack follow-through from leaders)

OVERRATED MEASURES

Seemingly promising initiatives that often do not lead to real cultural change

- **Holding one-time-only training sessions** (too frequently outsourced and isolated events, and not enough to reshape an organizational culture)
- **Establishing grievance systems** (necessary for egregious actions but typically insufficient to change women's daily experience)
- **Incentivizing senior leaders** (usually gets lost among a long list of leadership targets)
- **Recruiting senior role models** (not a quick fix for failure of the organic pyramid)

Low High

Effectiveness as perceived by male senior leaders

Source: BCG Global Gender Diversity Survey 2017

What works?

The BCG work definitely provides some useful guidance, but it must be pointed out that the research relies exclusively on self-reported, anecdotal evidence – asking male and female employees which interventions they are aware of and which they perceive as most effective. This is a not a rigorous quantitative assessment of return on investment (ROI) or actual increased numbers of women in the workplace.

It also prompts the question of what we define as a successful or effective intervention. Is it to increase numbers of women in the organisation? Is it to achieve a proportional representation of women at all levels in the business? Is it the retention of women in roles in which they are both successful and fulfilled? For example, it is known that women themselves often identify mentoring and women's networks as support that they value highly as part of their professional life, but those are more likely to help with job satisfaction, engagement and retention than they are with direct performance or promotion.

Where efforts have been made to evaluate the individual impact of interventions to improve gender balance there is both positive and negative reporting of impact in almost all cases. Indicating that whilst a single intervention may be beneficial for an individual or group of individuals, or have an impact at a particular organisation, it is as much about how you do it as what you do. Mentoring, networking and unconscious bias training are all examples where best practice can yield progress, whilst poor practice can have an adverse effect.

Whilst there are some excellent good practice and guidance reports, for example, the IET's *Progressing women in STEM roles: Best practice guidance for employers of women in STEM,* they stop short of 'how' to implement many of the things they suggest, such as unconscious bias training.

For the majority of the specific interventions mentioned in this study, context is important.

- Is the intervention part of a suite of activities within a coherent plan?
- Does the organisation have an inclusive culture on which it is building? – as much of the recent research underlines this as the key to success.
- Has the intervention been given sufficient time and resource to bear fruit? – recent research shows that there is often a significant time lag between intervention and effect.

The outcomes at the London 2012 Games and Crossrail are encouraging, and the success story of companies like AECOM (in Australia and NZ) illustrate what can be achieved when you engage at all levels and across all fronts.

What works?

An inclusive culture

All strategic business consultancies considered to be knowledgeable in this arena are emphatic that the creation of an inclusive culture is the essential foundation for building a diverse and high-performing workforce. Inclusion, engagement and redesign of work patterns and processes to eliminate bias are the new fronts on which the gender balance agenda needs to push forward.

However, high-quality supporting interventions still have their role to play, with mentoring, sponsorship and networks still shown to be powerful interventions when delivered effectively. For maximum benefit, they must be part of a much more comprehensive programme that is addressing corporate culture, flexible working practices and career development support.

Those programmes that have been shown to have a distinct impact, and a legacy of improved female participation on specific major infrastructure projects, have worked simultaneously at addressing both supply (suitable female candidates) and demand (project roles), followed by ongoing support through such vehicles as Women in Construction or Women Returners programmes.

Whilst overall numbers may seem small, if retention is high and employment terms lengthy, similar schemes should be rolled out more widely as they have clear evidence of success.

Gender mainstreaming

The major projects environment is an ideal sector for the application of gender mainstreaming concepts, in order to bring about new, innovative and just infrastructure, information and transformative project solutions. Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.

It is used widely in development projects to build in consideration of how women are impacted by major infrastructure, societal and development projects such as those funded by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or World Bank. It ensures that the male and female users, residents, employees and stakeholders are considered equally and that the benefits of the projects are available and distributed to all.

In the UK the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public authorities in England and Wales to consider how the services they commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. Improving female participation and access to skills and well-paid jobs is a key tenet of this economic and social well-being. More needs to be done to raise awareness of this requirement, as it is a powerful driver for change, and to ensure the inclusion of more women in the sector's flagship projects such as the Olympic Park project.

Mark Robinson, Scape Group Chief Executive, said a radical rethink by government could unlock over £14bn for regional supply chains, including £3.4bn for the construction industry. Scape, whose framework partners include Balfour Beatty, Kier, Willmott Dixon, Carillion, Wates and Lendlease, called for the rethink in its response to the Government's January 2017 Green Paper, *Building Our Industrial Strategy*. It is calling for a clearer definition of social value with a focus on local spend and local employment and training. Public sector projects over £10m should be targeted to deliver at least 20% social value.

One example of a major infrastructure project that has been considered 'stunningly successful' in its incorporation of employment and training opportunities for equality groups is the Vancouver Island Highway Project (VIHP) in the Canadian province of British Columbia (Griffin Cohen and Braid, 2000). At its peak, the proportion of women working on the project reached around 9% of the workforce (compared to less than 0.5% of female unionised construction workers in British Columbia in 1990). These are the most powerful and relevant case studies for evaluating the improvement of the participation of women in major projects.

If this approach was implemented on major capital investment projects such as HS2, local supply chains and economies could benefit by up to £11.2bn over the lifetime of the project, while the Government's Road Investment Strategy could mean over £2.3bn in social value and local spend which in turn could improve the involvement and employment of women.

'The leaky pipeline'

As identified in many of the reports in the 'Programme activity in the major projects environment' section the challenges of improving gender balance in major projects is of course exacerbated by the extreme male-dominated environment, perceived image and culture of the sector, and the shortage of the appropriately qualified female candidates in the pipeline.

This review of the research has also identified a number of studies that demonstrate that women leave STEM roles and roles within male-dominated environments at a higher rate than women do from other highly qualified or professional roles. This obviously impacts major projects as project schedules and performance can be at risk when key staff are lost.

A US study shows that women in STEM occupations are significantly more likely to leave their occupational field than professional women, especially early in their career, while few women in either group leave jobs to exit the labour force. Family factors cannot account for the differential loss of STEM workers compared to other professional workers. Few differences in job characteristics emerge either, so these cannot account for the disproportionate loss of STEM workers. What does emerge is that investments and job rewards that generally stimulate field commitment, such as advanced training and high job satisfaction, fail to build commitment among women in STEM.

The large residual unexplained difference in moves out of field between STEM and professional women eludes explanation by family factors and simple job characteristics like earnings or work hours. Even work-life amenities such as flexible scheduling and telecommuting matter little in accounting for the lower retention rates of STEM workers. The authors propose that the retention deficit in STEM may be due to the attitudes and expectations of co-workers and supervisors who hold more traditional beliefs about the competencies of women in these rapidly changing fields.

'The leaky pipeline'

In analysis of the male-female 'persistence gap,' it was found that it was almost entirely due to dissatisfaction with pay and promotion prospects, not family constraints or workplace inflexibility. While work-family factors did play an important role in women's exits from engineering, they played a substantively similar role in women's exits from other careers. Whilst the study did not dismiss the importance of workplace culture, long weekly work hours, and inflexible schedules, it was felt these factors have been overrated relative to pay and promotion issues among women in explaining the gender gap in retention.

Specifically relevant for the construction sector is Hart and Roberts' (2011) research on losses in female employment, which indicates that the UK science and engineering sectors 'lose' (i.e. leavers from the workforce) their female workforce at a much higher rate than other sectors. They suggest that a major contributing factor to this loss is the lack of part-time work opportunities, which is at its most extreme in the engineering sector.

This phenomenon does seem to be specific to STEM environments, as in the McKinsey *Women in the Workplace 2017* report they found that in the 222 (non-STEM specific) companies that they studied women are **not** leaving their companies at higher rates than men, and very few were planning to leave the workforce to focus on family. Compared with men of the same race and ethnicity, women were leaving their companies at similar rates.

This suggests that the culture of male-dominated (STEM) organisations is a significant factor in the disproportionate departure of women from these careers.

Areas for further work

This report suggests a number of areas for possible future investigation by the Major Projects Association and its members.

These include:

- An evaluation of online toolkits or good practice guides that are effective.
- The opportunity created by supplier diversity forums to share good practice and enhance inclusive culture could be investigated further.
- The development of cross-organisational mentoring and returnship schemes.
- Further exploration of gender mainstreaming in major international development projects and how it might be applied to good effect in UK projects.
- Establish a gender balance maturity model to support individual organisations, supply chains and cross-sectoral initiatives.

Further reading

Throughout the text we have created hyperlinks to reports that we have referenced.

To learn more about the Major Projects Association Gender Balance Initiative follow this link.

The Association has produced a number of reports on the topic of Gender Balance. You can find them via this link.

This is one of many reports produced by the Major Projects Association which you can find via this link.

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