

# Fuelling Gender Diversity

Unlocking the impact of the  
next generation workplace



**WOMEN'S**  
NETWORK FORUM

EST. 2014





**BAGSHOT PARK**

---

For a number of years now, I have been helping others to drive forward the need and awareness of the positive impact of having a gender diverse workforce. The Women's Network Forum, which I chair, was set up in 2014 as a cross-industry group made up of senior representatives whose responsibility it is to champion and promote their organisation's gender balance and equality issues. Through sharing best practice and exploring particular issues, we work to find solutions and support each other in our quest for a better and more equal workplace.

Recently, we asked our partner companies to establish how the landscape is changing for young employees and how organisations need to adapt to working with the new, and often challenging, expectations of the next generation workforce. Amongst the many discoveries, one of our principal highlights was how many of the issues that historically have been seen as "women's" issues are now also issues for attracting and retaining talent from both genders.

What is clear is that companies need to work hard to harness and foster the next generation to drive the change that is so desperately needed. We have shared with you some practical examples of how our member companies are creating a meaningful impact on the issue of gender diversity to guide and inspire you in fuelling this transformation.

I hope this report is a useful tool to anyone who reads it and helps encourage organisations to do everything they can to accelerate opportunity for all.

HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO  
Chair, Women's Network Forum

---

## About this report

---

The 2018 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report estimates that it will be another 202 years before we achieve gender parity in economic opportunity around the world - a mere 2.5% improvement since the inception of the report in 2006\*. This glacial pace appears remarkable at a time of such disruption in the workplace. The next generation is redefining expectations in everything from working patterns, communication styles, career paths and values. Can they also redefine the journey and pace to gender parity at work?

**The Women's Network Forum (WNF)**, chaired by HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO, is a unique network of cross-industry leaders whose goal is the advancement of gender balance and equality by influencing business leaders, inspiring the next generation and sharing best practice.

With our passion for progress, the WNF decided to explore the topic of changing behaviours in the next generation at work and the impact this might have on gender diversity. We partnered with Dr Eliza Filby, an historian of contemporary values and generations, to conduct focus groups with 16-35 year old female and male participants to explore attitudes across the age cohorts on careers, parenthood and networking. What emerged was a meaningful shift in the landscape. Many issues that have historically been seen as "women's" issues - such as parental leave, corporate returners and flexible working - are now issues for attracting and retaining talent from both genders. And the next generation of women show a willingness to seize and create opportunities like no generation before – in their own way.



What is clear is that the paradigm is shifting. There should be no doubt that companies need to create career paths that support diversity, flexibility, family and life journeys if they want to attract and retain the best of the next generation's female and male talent. Case studies in this report highlight some of the best practices and learnings from across our member companies to address and harness these trends.

We hope this report inspires industries and companies to adapt early to these next generation workplace trends to not only secure the pick of future talent, but in doing so, to also fuel a transformation towards gender parity in our lifetime, not in 202 years.

\* World Economic Forum: The Global Gender Gap Report 2018. Full report available to download at: [www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018](http://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018)

---

# Behaviours of the next generation work force

---

*Dr Eliza Filby, historian of contemporary values and generations.*

---

By 2025, as they enter their forties, become parents and achieve positions of power, Millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce.



We hear much about disruption these days. The truth is that the greatest disruption is coming from people and not algorithms. Changing methods, values and behaviours are reshaping how employees see their future careers, their working week and the 9 to 5. Companies have, of course, done a great deal over the last decade integrating Millennials into the workplace and accommodating their priorities and values with the introduction of volunteer days, sabbaticals and flexible working practices etc., but as Millennials move into the next life stage - into managerial positions and parenthood - companies need to know how their expectations are changing too.

Firstly, Millennials have been conditioned to view themselves as consumers in the employment market with a myriad of options. They see their working life more like a multi-stage journey, with twists and turns, rather than a traditional linear path upwards. This will not change as they get older. Secondly, Millennials realise that they will have a very different work life than their parents' generation who enjoyed the benefits (and pitfalls) of a fixed three-stage life structure: education-employment-retirement. Due to longer life expectancy and automation, it may be that Millennials will have to work until their mid-seventies or eighties. They know this, and are happy to do this, but only in a purposeful career. They fully expect (and are planning) to work for multiple companies, potentially run their own businesses or have more than one career.

In addition to this, we are witnessing a significant shift in how people view their work and what they expect of their company. The smartphone has merged work and life, which means that no employee is ever fully 'switched off'. And yet it has also primed Millennials for greater fluidity and integration between their work and life. They want to work for companies that understand them as individuals and reflect the world as they see it.

Changing cultural values are therefore important too. We are in the throes of a fourth wave of feminism which is prompting women (and men) to think about gender, language and behaviour in nuanced and subtle ways that an older generation might not appreciate. Moreover, the current debate over the categorisation of gender may precipitate a wider questioning of the point and purpose of women's networks in the workplace by the Millennial generation just as the debate over intersectionality is questioning groupings such as Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME). The Diversity and Inclusion agenda will need a complete overhaul.

---

# As Millennials mature, what will be the key areas of concern in the future?

---

- Intimacy of SME, opportunities of multi-national corporations

Millennials recognise the pros and cons of working in a small or big corporation. In the future, they will demand the intimacy, personalisation, democratic and familial atmosphere of a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) combined with the opportunities for learning, foreign travel, role models and promotional opportunities associated with multinational. They want both.

- Bespoke flexibility

As has been predicted by Andrew Scott and Lynda Gratton, authors of the *The 100 Year Life\**, the next generation will see their careers in a much more dynamic and fluid way and will expect (and indeed will want) to move in and out of corporate careers, SMEs, self-employment and running their own companies. Their ambition will be to work for companies and on projects that help them on that journey, businesses that recognise and appreciate their individual and unique skills, ambitions and values as well as their family pressures and responsibilities.

- Democratic, agile companies

It may sound trite but the impact that social media has had on communication has profound implications for the workplace. When you have the potential to tweet the President of the United States, why not email the CEO?

Millennials have been groomed for a democratic workplace and although forum-like discussion is encouraged now more than ever, many feel a distinct divide between being able to articulate ideas and being allowed to implement them. An agile business that welcomes ideas, moves people around and works on a project by project basis rather than fixed departments and hierarchical communications is how Millennials envisage work being done.

- Workspace

Millennials are increasingly conscious of how their data is being used and will not welcome big data monitoring at work, even if the company claims that it will make for a cleaner, greener, more productive workplace. They want work to be a place of creativity, well being and productivity rather than Big Brother.

- Education

Millennials recognise that automation will mean that upskilling and retraining will be a core part of sustaining a sixty-year working life. Millennials are trained learners and will come to expect companies to offer them multiple avenues in which to develop not just their skills but their interests. Bespoke training may be the only way to achieve this.

- Shared parental leave +

Given Millennials will be working for a lot longer than previous generations, maternity/paternity leave is perceived as a relatively short segment of their working life. Millennials (both mothers and fathers) will want to experience the early stages of parenthood in its fullness unlike previous generations.

Both parents will push for maximum leave and will also expect a bespoke flexible deal upon returning to work (likewise childcare options). As shared parental leave becomes normalised, it could be that those employees who decide not to have children or those who have other caring responsibilities, such as an elderly parent or grandchildren, will expect equal treatment as the parents in the company.

\* Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott (2016) *The 100 Year Life: Living and working in an age of longevity*, Bloomsbury

# The next generation is shifting the landscape for gender diversity. Organisations need to adapt to harness these opportunities and drive gender parity

*By Michelle Owen, Women's Network Forum member and Managing Director, Deutsche Bank Wealth Management*

With the shifting behaviours of the next generation come pivotal changes in the landscape of gender diversity.

Many issues that have been seen as “women’s” issues are now relevant for attracting and retaining talent from both genders. In addition, the preferences and behaviours of the next generation offer fresh opportunities to engage young talent - especially female talent – with this generation ready to “lean-in” more than any generation before.

If organisations can understand and harness the six key trends that emerged from our focus groups, they could work towards both moving the needle on gender parity and protecting their talent pools for the future.

1. Multi-Stage Careers
2. Shared Parenthood
3. Bespoke Flexible Working
4. Passion for Development
5. Desire for Impact
6. New Generation Networking



---

# 1. Multi-Stage Careers

---

Unlike previous generations, the next generation never expects to retire. Instead both men and women plan to ensure that they achieve their work and life priorities throughout their career. This multi-staged path will see them moving in and out of corporate careers, small companies, entrepreneurial ventures and self-employment over a life-long career with parenthood often triggering a new stage in the life-cycle for both men and women. This presents a new challenge to organisations trying to retain and reengage talent, a theme historically seen as a “women’s topic”.

*“I want to spend at least three years doing something amazing.”*

— Male, mid-20s

## Case study

At Macquarie Group we first launched our Returner Programme in 2016. We recognised the need to provide a clear entry point for those who had taken a career break and now want to enter a new stage of their career. Since then, we have welcomed four cohorts across all our revenue generating businesses and functional groups, evolving our approach each time. Participants are at all stages of their lives and have chosen to take a break from their original careers for a variety of reasons including child care, eldercare, further study and setting up new businesses. Each cohort has seen real world work experience for candidates placed in roles throughout the business, participating in both day to day activities and strategic projects, with a view to transitioning into potential long-term opportunities at the end of the Returner Programme.

We provide exposure to senior leaders, group coaching and 1:1 support and are high touch to enable us to adapt to the needs of each individual, providing bespoke support and a pathway to future roles. Embedding the participants within active teams also serves to raise awareness of a new pool of candidates to the business and demonstrates to our junior talents who are looking ahead that Macquarie takes a broad, multi-phase approach to providing career opportunities. As a result, participants have gone on to join us in permanent and contract roles, embracing flexible working practices and owning their long-term career at Macquarie.

*“The programme provides a platform to forge meaningful introductions across the Macquarie business. The effortless way you can network across the firm via activities, such as lunch with leaders, provides powerful access that isn’t always as accessible if you’ve come in as a lateral hire. This network is valuable for anyone, but is particularly good for someone returning to the industry to enable you to explore different opportunities. Macquarie provides the opportunity to grow and evolve your focus from the day you arrive. People are open and receptive to strike up a conversation and share their knowledge.”*

— Returner Programme participant

*“We recognise that those who have taken advantage of other learning experiences by stepping off a traditional career path can bring new skills and perspectives into our business. It is not just a ‘nice to have’ but a necessity to access a new pool of talent and continue to adapt and evolve to reflect our clients and the communities we support. The candidates we hire on our programme are high quality and make a business impact from day one.”*

— Paul Plewman,  
Head of Commodities and Global Markets, EMEA, Macquarie



---

## 2. Shared Parenthood

---

Shared parenthood is becoming increasingly important with both genders looking for ways to manage active parenthood alongside their careers. Many companies have started supporting shared-parenthood by introducing extended paternity leave packages. To date, behavioural hurdles have limited take-up, but the next generation are showing a growing willingness to embrace these opportunities, and in doing so, are reducing the relevance of gender in accommodating the needs of working parents.

*“Shared parental leave is testimony to how progressive your company is.”*

— Female, mid-20s

### Case study

Google UK introduced extended paternity leave packages a couple of years ago allowing new fathers to take three months of paid leave over a 12 month period. The cultural shift has been incredible, particularly with our next generation. Take up has been significant with an impressive number of fathers taking time to be an active parent. What makes this unique is the opportunity for fathers to take time off of varying lengths throughout the year, allowing them to work around their partners. The landslide in adoption has changed perceptions of active parenting for both genders.

*“Since we introduced ‘baby bonding’ at Google, the take up by our next generation of fathers has been phenomenal. It’s having a noticeably positive impact on supporting all our employees in being active parents with the goal of driving gender parity in our workplace.”*

— Ronan Harris, CEO, Google UK

### Case study

**Aviva: Equal Parental Leave.** In November 2017, Aviva introduced a groundbreaking group-wide policy to offer equal parental leave to all employees at the arrival of a child, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or how they become parents (birth, adoption or surrogacy). The initiative was designed to remove barriers to career progression, putting women and men on the same footing.

The take up of the policy has been fantastic and the figures speak for themselves. Internationally in the first 10 months, more than 700 employees took parental leave, including around 300 men.

In the UK, 500 UK employees used the policy during this time, of which almost half were men. Here Aviva workers can take up to 12 months away from work when they become parents, including six months at full basic pay. Virtually all Aviva UK dads (95%) took longer than two weeks - the typical entitlement of statutory paid paternity leave - taking 21 weeks on average.

This tells us that fathers are keen to take a break from their careers and spend time with their families, if financial barriers are removed.

*“If we are serious about levelling the playing field, we need to challenge models where men and women are not able to make the same choices. If the only option for parents is for the woman to take on the role of main childcare provider, and at the same time she wants to forge a career, she needs to work twice as hard just to stand still. Talent and ambition are gender-neutral, so it’s vital that businesses develop family-friendly policies that recognise this.”*

— Sarah Morris, Chief People Officer, Aviva





### 3. Bespoke Flexible Working

The next generation has grown up with 24-hour work connectivity – mobile phones, Blackberry apps, remote access – and they readily blur the boundaries between work and leisure. Both genders want and expect to have bespoke flexible working arrangements that are tailored to them and go beyond the lip-service paid to part-time working and working from home arrangements. Again, flexible working is no longer a gender issue for attracting and retaining talent, and organisations need to adapt.

*“If I become a father I think flexible working is something I would prioritise in an employer.”*

— Male, mid-20s

#### Case study

**EY: Flexible Working** In 2012, we introduced an ambitious change programme at EY to institutionalise flexible working. We recognised early that this was critical to keeping EY amongst the employers of choice particularly for the next generation. This multi-year journey requires technology upgrades, behavioural training, change leadership, office space conversion and constant measuring and promotion. However, after five years, we have a wealth of genuinely bespoke approaches to flexible working:

- Working seamlessly from any global office or home
- Working two days at EY and three at a tech start-up
- Working six months on, six months off with flexible pay arrangements spread over the full year or working periods only
- Employees working school term times only

57% of employees report that they were attracted to join EY or stayed with EY due to flexible working, and 92% report that flexible working is a key motivator.





---

## 4. Passion For Development

---

The next generation has a huge desire for training and self-development. This provides a real opportunity to invest in talent development, particularly female talent, to close the gender gap. However, many companies struggle to find the right balance between providing women extra support without being patronising.

### Case study

**Deutsche Bank: Developing female talent.** We went through a number of evolutions over the past decade with talent and female talent programmes. We think we've got it right. We have added a Women Global Leaders module to our flagship talent development programme. This module is focused on providing extra support to female participants only, in the areas that have been well researched as barriers to women climbing the corporate ladder. Topics include a study on female leaders and leadership style, presence and impact, effective internal and external networking, and strategic career planning. Success rates have been impressive with 100% retention of women participants after 12 months, and 23% promoted to Managing Director. We've managed to achieve the best of both worlds by not segregating or patronising women, whilst still recognising where specific insights can make a real difference when progressing in an industry with gender imbalance.

*"Female talent development requires a considered approach. How do you support women without generalising or patronising? It's exciting to watch the journey that our talented women go through at Deutsche Bank with our Acceleration Programme. The women-only module has been well-researched to focus on the areas where women can face challenges in the finance industry. Given the focus on levelling the playing field, women embrace this opportunity and move seamlessly into the mainstream programme with a nicely established support network."*

— Michelle Owen, Women's Network Forum member and Managing Director, Deutsche Bank Wealth Management

*"I haven't been on a training programme in three years. You have to be proactive and push it. Companies won't remind you."*

— Male, mid-20s

### Case study

**Marks and Spencer** focus on developing the pipeline of women ready to move into its most senior roles. This involves cross business mentoring programmes and leadership and coaching for mid-senior women in areas where we see the gender balance tip in favour of men. Topics include imposter syndrome, self-limiting beliefs, growth mindset, being politically savvy and strategic networking.

For our most senior high potential women, we provide career coaching and enhanced learning opportunities to give them exposure to operating at board level.

At M&S, through employability programmes, we provide training and work experience to women and men from disadvantaged groups – including young people, those with disabilities and health conditions, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and single parents. Last year we supported nearly 3000 people in this way. We also work with our suppliers and franchise partners to offer key skills and encourage entrepreneurship to marginalised groups, which most often are women. Last year we supported nearly 800 people overseas through these sorts of programmes.

We support women in our supply chains by improving livelihoods, environment and wellbeing. In partnership with an NGO we have provided leadership training to over 45,000 people in nine countries. This tackles gender equality by empowering both women and men to make changes in their communities.

M&S was the first business to sign an agreement with Department for International Development (DFID) on their flagship programme, Work Opportunities for Women, and we are actively involved in industry wide projects that aim to unlock the full potential of women working in global supply chains through workplace-based interventions on health, financial inclusion, and gender equality.



---

## 5. Desire For Impact

---

Members of the next generation are hugely motivated by having their ideas heard and implemented. They want to seize opportunities, be assertive and have an impact. To respond to this, many organisations are overhauling their internal engagement approaches and providing the next generation with a voice straight to the top. To support progress on diversity of all types, it is critical that the voices heard represent all employees.

### Case study

At, **Unilever**, building a truly inclusive environment to enable a diverse workforce to thrive is a key priority. At the heart of the Inclusion challenge is Unconscious Bias which leads to stereotyping – treating someone as though they are not an individual but merely a member of a group. This affects everyone and common stereotypes are those related to gender, race, age, nationality, sexual orientation and disability. Stereotypes pervade advertising and the workplace, and research shows that they hold people back from contributing.

We have invested deeply in minimising stereotypes at Unilever with #Unstereotype. This translates to breaking limiting stereotypes in how we portray consumers in our advertising, and in the workplace we are unstereotyping our culture and our key processes related to recruitment, development and progression of our employees to ensure fairness. We have specially designed programmes and initiatives to embed an organisation-wide understanding of the topic.

A specially designed “Unstereotype Bootcamp” for senior leadership teams, learning programmes for the whole organisation, and celebrating colleagues who take non-stereotypical actions (such as appointing women to lead factories in remote areas, LGBTQ+ employees in customer facing roles, fathers taking the lead on parental leave) are just some of the many ways in which we are building a workplace where everyone feels free to bring their authentic selves to work every day, free from the limiting power of stereotypes.

*“We are on a journey to achieve an ‘unstereotyped’ workplace inside and outside our company. But we can’t do it alone. We are calling for a conscious effort from individuals, governments and businesses to step up, root out and challenge the stereotypes that feed inequality and halt progress.”*

— Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever 2009 – 2018



---

## 6. New Generation Networking

---

The next generation has networking in its DNA and approaches professional networks with a preference for connecting and learning from peers, rather than seasoned mentors.

*“They talk about issues they faced in the 70s and it’s not relevant to me. I want a network that addresses my needs, talks my language and doesn’t reduce gender disparities to stereotypes.”*

— Female, mid-20s

### Case study

100 Women in Finance has run networks for young women in the finance industry since 2008. Initially, these networks were managed by senior women, but they quickly evolved into nine peer-led NextGen Groups in financial centres around the world, all built on a foundation of shared experiences and interests. Today, our NextGen offering addresses career planning, communication and negotiation, and peer support for keeping one’s career on track while raising a young family. Our NextGen members also find ways to make a positive impact on the generation following them, for example, by volunteering their time with the UK’s Maths4Girls programme or by mentoring disadvantaged girls in the Cayman Islands via GirlForce100.

*“We believe that the most significant benefit of 100 Women in Finance’s NextGen network is the early cultivation of strong industry relationships – built on friendship, and external to one’s place of employment – that sustain and enrich long careers of professional advancement and deep satisfaction.”*

— Amanda Pullinger, CEO, 100 Women in Finance



---

## How is your organisation embracing the next generation's behaviours to accelerate gender diversity?

---

### Multi-stage careers

Does your company support:

- Returner programmes attracting back female and male talent?
- Diverse candidate pools and open-minded CV screening, placing wider value on lateral experience?
- Gender neutral job descriptions that focus on capabilities rather than prescriptive views on experience?
- Diverse hiring panels with a blend of career history and experience?
- Support for career breaks of many shapes and sizes – sabbaticals, carer breaks, secondments away, parental leave?
- Bridging programmes to support parallel career moves?
- Part-time roles allowing employees time to explore passions inside and outside firms?

### Shared parenthood

Does your company support:

- Balanced paternity and maternity policies?
- Coaching for both paternity and maternity leavers and managers?
- Flexible roles to support active parenthood – part-time, remote working, flexible hours?
- Parent-friendly culture, including reduced focus on face time and recognition for caring commitments?
- High visibility of paternity and maternity role models?

### Bespoke flexible working

Does your company foster:

- Flexible working policies including part-time, remote location, reduced or flexible hours, job share, holiday/term-time?
- A culture that proactively encourages flexible working – potentially mandated for periods to encourage adoption?
- Working practices that accommodate flexible workers e.g. sensitively scheduled meetings, remote joining options?
- Quality data and regular feedback to embed cultural shift?

### Passion for development

Does your organisation provide:

- Development programmes that accommodate the needs of both women and men – whether separate or combined?
- Equal mentorship and sponsorship opportunities?
- Access to female as well as male role models – even if this requires reaching externally?
- Gender balance screening when providing key development opportunities, e.g. board seats, Profit and Loss (P&L) roles?

### Desire for impact

Does your organisation have:

- Upward communication channels that foster diverse contributions from women as well as men?
- Reverse mentoring schemes which ensure both female and male voices are heard by senior leadership?
- Junior boards with equal female and male participation?
- A culture that fosters diversity and creates an environment that encourages female and male participation in equal measures?
- Actively promoted role models to be champions of change?

### Next generation networking

Does your organisation facilitate:

- Opportunity for the next generation to create their own, gender-balanced networks that focus on their priorities?
- Communication channels and events facilitating peer-to-peer engagement?

---

## Our Partners

---

100 Women in Finance  
Aviva  
BP  
BT  
CBRE  
Deutsche Bank  
Duke of Edinburgh's Award  
EY  
Google  
HSBC  
Halma  
Linklaters  
London First  
London Stock Exchange  
Macquarie  
Marks & Spencer  
Mitie  
Ogilvy  
Shell  
The Royal Household  
Travis Perkins  
Unilever

---

## Co-authors

---



**Michelle Owen**

*Women's Network Forum member  
and Managing Director,  
Deutsche Bank Wealth Management*



**Dr Eliza Filby**

*Historian of contemporary  
values and generations*

The Women's Network Forum thanks the contributing WNF companies and their next generation talent and Dr Eliza Filby for her collaboration.



**WOMEN'S**  
NETWORK FORUM  
EST. 2014

This report has been published  
by the Women's Network Forum



in partnership with  
Deutsche Bank

Copyright © 2019 Women's Network Forum