



**BRILLIANT**  
*women*

# HOW TO UNLOCK POTENTIAL AND CREATE A TALENTED PIPELINE OF SENIOR WOMEN LEADERS

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FINDINGS FROM A 2019 RESEARCH STUDY

- IN COLLABORATION WITH -  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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In 2018 she set up 'Turn the Key', a coaching and mentoring practice, where she found many highly competent but unfulfilled women clients. Jackie responded by founding 'BRILLIANT Women' where she developed a series of initiatives and programmes for professional women who want to get ahead. She is a passionate advocate of women in business, an Ambassador for WiHTL (Women in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure), volunteer mentor for the 'Plan B' mentoring programme and can be heard at speaking events advocating for women.

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## PREFACE



Ensuring equality across the workforce is an issue which needs to be addressed in many sectors. Hospitality can be no exception and the work of ensuring we have better representation for women and minorities at all levels must not be delayed. We cannot, however, hope to achieve meaningful success unless we understand the scale of the problem and plan accordingly. This report gauges the scale and scope of the challenge, identify a roadmap for change and highlight areas where we may already be doing good work.

Examining the work currently being undertaken, it is clear that there are certainly reasons to be hopeful. We are seeing examples of businesses employing exciting and innovative ideas to empower women to succeed. Tailored approaches to schedules and career paths are helping more women achieve more than ever in hospitality.

Unfortunately, these tactics are not being employed across the board and there are too many businesses not rising to the challenge. The report shows a lack of diversity in many businesses, exacerbated by bad habits, inflexibility and too much deference to the status quo.

Perhaps the biggest problem is a shortage of women in senior positions in the sector. Barriers around things such as hours or accessibility continue to close doors for women and hospitality must raise its game.

We should not despair, though, as there is plenty of good work upon which to build. This report identifies seven critical success factors by which we can begin to break the bad habits and shift the goalposts back to a position of fairness.

The lack of female representation at senior levels is widespread and the country, as a whole, must do better. Hospitality must also play its part and work harder. With resources such as this we have a means, and no excuse, to make this change.

### UKHOSPITALITY

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive



# A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION



I loved my career in hospitality, moving fast through the nitty-gritty of operations I found my executive years were less of a 'career ladder' and more of a 'Jungle Gym' - to borrow from Sheryl Sandberg. It was this insight that I've worked with in my coaching business, which is where I am now. I found myself working with a lot of women who felt frustrated, misunderstood and overlooked. They were delivering stretching results, but their careers were stalling while the men around them were flying high.

I wanted to know why this was happening so often. I wanted to do something about it, especially as for me the conditions had felt pretty favourable. Of course, I'd had my own challenges to overcome along the way, many of which I didn't share but I'd always felt I'd been successful. This research helped me understand it's about rewiring our thinking, challenging our unintended bias and accepting that advantage blindness can't be wished away or dealt with solely through formal programmes.

**Women are gaining the confidence and ambition to succeed, I liken it to a second coming, grabbing all they've learned and deciding enough is enough, pushing for the recognition they deserve - seeking promotion is their next phase of their career.** And if we can crack it for women so we'll be well on the way to levelling the playing field for every group currently not being given the chances they deserve.

Lastly, I (along with my co-author John) want to thank the following who have made this work possible - Kate Nicholls at UKHospitality, Chris Nichols at GameShift, GRIN, Fleet Street Communication, Nick Bish and Jackie Burn at Punch Pub Co.

Jackie Moody-McNamara



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The crazy thing is the rollercoaster and trauma helped me have passion and drive at work. The frustration and upset I've overcome. I've put my heart and soul into the business, and nobody has noticed... I didn't have an army of people lobbying and pushing for me, I did it on my own. I was calm and strong, when you put so much in you deserve something back.

Award Winning, Operations Manager

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Business is rapidly changing. Females are seeking different experiences. Look through a different lens and pubs are becoming much more about families. We need to focus more on the end user, the consumer and if 50% of consumers are women, how can we cater for them if they're not represented?

Thoughts from an interviewee



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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... if we are really honest, an uncomfortable truth that lurks in the background when our industry comes together to celebrate or network – the room tends to be dominated by middle-aged white men.

Simon Longbottom, CEO Stonegate Pub Company (Morning Advertiser 7th October 2019)

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This is not about fixing the women. Yes, there are things women can do to help themselves, and the same applies to any traditionally disadvantaged group, but this is about changing the balance of power for the good of the industry and its customers. This starts by taking an honest look in the mirror and seeing how things really are – not how people wish they were.

Part of this honest look is for those who benefit from the way things are currently run to see how the game is tilted in their favour, not an easy thing to do when most of us want to believe that our achievements are solely down to our own effort and abilities<sup>(1)</sup>. Not that we want to overly-focus on the negative, for any sustainable change to take place we advocate the need for companies to look at where they are already bringing about a positive difference<sup>(2)</sup> in the experience of women – nearly everywhere has some green shoots that can be encouraged.

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I don't care what I'm called, I want to be paid the same, have a voice, flexibility and trust.



”

**From the 32 interviews with both women and men Jackie and John carried out, they identified seven themes that stood out - barriers for the hospitality industry to overcome:**

- ◆ There's a boys' club
- ◆ Stereotypes are alive
- ◆ Women undervalue and can disappear themselves
- ◆ Having kids derails careers
- ◆ Macho, kneejerk leadership keeps the status quo going
- ◆ Boards need to tackle fears of positive discrimination
- ◆ People need to believe the business case for gender, and other, diversity at senior levels

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**Also identified from the thematic analysis were seven areas to work on (or Critical Success Factors):**

- ◆ Silence endorses the status quo
- ◆ Seek out the unintended bias
- ◆ "If you can't see me, you can't be me"
- ◆ Level the playing field
- ◆ Don't treat family life as unexpected noise
- ◆ Value 'softer' leadership skills
- ◆ Make it matter and learn as you go

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**The business challenges that stand out:**

- ◆ A lack of diversity is alive in many workplaces
- ◆ There are green shoots all over the place
- ◆ There is a relative shortage of women holding senior roles
- ◆ There are a limited number of women, especially from the field, feeding the promotional pipeline



## BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH



In Jackie's experience of the industry, as a successful Director and a coach to a number of ambitious women, she has been struck by how persistently under-represented women are at the most senior levels - careers seem to stall on a regular basis, even for those picked out as stars at annual awards ceremonies. In John's work as a researcher into speaking truth to power<sup>(3)</sup>, the data points towards persistent patterns that result in women being relatively silenced compared to men and through this silence becoming invisible<sup>(4)</sup>.

Women continue to find themselves disproportionately at risk of being disappeared when it comes to getting ahead. Meanwhile the gender pay gap is, as Pilita Clark reported in the FT: 'large, persistent and glaring' while the steps people have been taking to close it '[are] often useless<sup>(5)</sup>, observations that apply to organizations across the board and not just in the hospitality sector. The ambition of this research was to understand better why steps to date have been so ineffective, by getting under the skin of what really helps and hinders women as they try to advance their careers. This meant getting into the fine detail of people's actual experiences, getting into the emotional heft that lies behind the well-known headlines and data.

Between August and October 2019 they carried out 32 confidential interviews with many rising stars from across the hospitality industry, with insights from over

35 businesses - they talked to both men and women to see how experiences did and didn't differ across the gender divide (a divide which according to John's latest research 100% of 115 people at Board and ExCo levels hardly ever or never are influenced by! A seemingly unlikely state of affairs)<sup>(6)</sup>. **The framing questions people were asked at the start of their interviews were:**

- 1 What's the business case for having more women at senior levels in the hospitality industry?
- 2 What are the things that enable women to move up the ranks?
- 3 What are the things that get in the way?





# BARRIERS TO OVERCOME FOR WOMEN IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY



## THEMES THAT STOOD OUT - BARRIERS TO OVERCOME



There's a rich mix of dimensions in play, some of them visible and some not - it's a subtle game often seen through the lens of discrimination rather than the brute reality of social power and legitimised normality. It persists because of the interplay of personal and social narratives; the beliefs individuals hold about themselves and people collectively hold about the world around them. It persists because there is a gap between what is said and what is done, with people - especially those in senior positions - either going through the motions or believing that because something is formally promoted it must have been translated into action. Laura Jones' work at the Global Institute for Women's Leadership summarises this well<sup>(7)</sup>.

It also persists through the belief that by policing and outlawing certain states of mind, those states of mind cease to exist - rather than resulting in a world where everybody is doing, in the words of Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey a second unpaid job of 'let's pretend'<sup>(8)</sup>, where men and women go through the theatre of business rather than its reality<sup>(9)</sup>. Lastly family life continues to be seen as side-issue in people's lives, something that gets in the way of the efficient running of business rather than something that businesses should build themselves around. In many ways this has gone backwards in the last few decades, with firms such as Goldman Sachs now paying for women to fix their desire for fertility by harvesting their eggs<sup>(10)</sup>, rather than thinking in terms of creches and flexible working.

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My boss is a modern leader, challenging older people in the company, but receives conflict from the dinosaurs. He's people focused, keeps it simple - best performing part of the company.

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Women are seen as more organised, I'm frequently asked to take the minutes, I want to be useful so I do them, I know I probably shouldn't.

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FROM THE INTERVIEWS JACKIE AND JOHN CARRIED OUT, THEY IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING SEVEN THEMES THAT STOOD OUT AS BARRIERS TO OVERCOME FOR WOMEN IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY:



#### 1 THERE'S A BOYS' CLUB

'Certain people surround themselves with people who are like them'



#### 5 MACHO, KNEEJERK LEADERSHIP KEEPS THE STATUS QUO GOING...

'At the senior level it's a chimps tea party, competition between the boys'



#### 2 STEREOTYPES ARE ALIVE... WOMEN ARE FREQUENTLY UNDERVALUED AND UNDERMINED...

'Among my own management team it felt like I was an after-thought, the one who did the female tasks'



#### 6 BOARDS NEED TO WALK THE TALK... AND TACKLE FEARS OF POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION...

'I see lots of signing up to diversity charters on social media, but on the ground nothing changes'



#### 3 WOMEN UNDERVALUE AND CAN DISAPPEAR THEMSELVES...

'I was lucky in my career... ok, maybe not lucky, I worked hard'



#### 7 PEOPLE NEED TO BELIEVE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER, AND OTHER, DIVERSITY AT SENIOR LEVELS...

'I don't know if there's a business case for better representation for women and others at senior levels'



#### 4 HAVING KIDS DERAILS CAREERS EVEN WITH A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER/ FAMILY...

'Invariably there's a 10-year period where family can "get in the way" from 28 to 38, where the best jobs come up and you can be overlooked'



## THERE'S A BOYS' CLUB

People recruit in their own image and give greater weight to the opinions of those who fit most easily with their world

view. Even when they know that they should - for business, legal and ethical reasons - be seeking out people who know the world differently the responsibility for fitting in is seen as resting with the outsider, the one who is different<sup>(11)</sup>. Given the male dominated history of much of the leadership of the industry, this results in men being recruited and when women are taken on-board they often feel they have to become an honorary man, or as one of the quotes puts it, 'a man with tits'.

The consequence of this is that women invest their discretionary energy in putting on this mask of being one of the boys' club, rather than being able to focus on bringing their distinctive strengths and attributes to the table. This investment in fitting in, rather than making a distinctive contribution, is of course not just restricted to women. The interviewees also highlighted the role that social class and educational background play in determining who gets let into the club, what the rules of the club are - and most significantly,

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They think the same, even dress the same... every time a job comes up, one of them will have got it before I can apply... blocks off normal succession planning... There's lots of reasons why people don't get ahead... racism, sexism, ageism... and class... Certain people surround themselves with people who are like them... They don't even recognise it exists... men get men, they don't get women... so I became a man with tits!...

”

what the right way of talking about things is within the club. Habits and patterns of communication, which are without a shadow of doubt soaked in gender and in the UK in social class, are very effective forms of managing who does and doesn't get let into the inner circles of an organization.

Within the industry, with its history of meeting for a drink after work, playing golf at the weekends and with many senior leaders in traditional domestic relationships, where their partner stays at home and takes care of everything to do with children and the home, their knowledge of how life could be different is limited. Their exposure to the consequences of a heavily gendered division of labour is limited and they remain blind to the barriers they are creating through how they do work. There were a number of examples of appointments being made at executive and Board level where roles were not advertised and people appointed from the 'Boys Club', ensuring that outsiders didn't even get the chance to 'put their hat in the ring'.

Because this is the only world they know the 'boys club', a phrase used by a number of the interviewees, becomes invisible to its members - something that is so present and taken for granted, it becomes invisible and taken as normal, the way things are. A fish, as the cliché goes, is the last to know about the existence of water.

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There's certainly no queuing for the lady's toilets at our conferences.

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We recently undertook a survey of operation managers, identifying the average profile was white, male and aged 52. Biggest challenge: you fish from the same pond.

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## STEREOTYPES ARE ALIVE... WOMEN ARE FREQUENTLY UNDERVALUED AND UNDERMINED

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*Thirteen years of delivering very good results doesn't help... on top of my day job I'm involved with eight additional projects, last week my boss said: "What are you doing to raise your profile?"... Among my own management team it felt like I was an after-thought, the one who did the female tasks... Women are not seen as a flight risk, they are risk averse, especially the breadwinners... My CEO turns me into his Mum when he's pissed... I was paid less for doing the same job as a man, even though I had much more experience.*

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As Cambridge University's Mary Beard has observed<sup>(12)</sup>, the negative representation of women is a deep-seated cultural phenomenon that cannot simply be wished away, men and women are - as the Historian Theodore Zeldin has noted<sup>(13)</sup> - only just beginning to learn how to talk together. There is also a tradition of amplifying the differences between men and women and rooting them in hard-wired biological rather than social experience, continuing the tradition of disappearing how social power creates differences of experience<sup>(14)</sup> i.e. Men and women's experience is 'natural' and 'objective' rather than a function of how people go about creating social reality.

The women we spoke to were all ambitious and had delivered bottom line performance according to the rules of the business game - and yet their achievements get over-looked because there is another game being played, one that rewards socially approved of behaviours such as going to the pub or playing golf at the expense of doing their bit on the home front. We remain stuck in a world where Professor Higgins' plea from My Fair Lady remains largely unchallenged, why indeed can't a woman be more like a man? The idea that men and women are together creating patterns of disadvantage and discrimination gets lost, with women

being encouraged to 'lean in'<sup>(15)</sup> while men need to do nothing because they have been absented from their role in creating the world we live in.

This pressure on women to 'fix' themselves played out across many of the women interviewees, with women being particularly mindful of how they needed to dress, speak and behave if they were to be seen as acceptable. In one case an interviewee told how she had been advised to change her appearance and the way she spoke if she wanted to be taken seriously.

Elsewhere unquestioned hyper-masculinity and its associated social behaviours go unchecked, with the few women who do attend specialist events and conferences on occasion being invited to "throw [their] room keys in the bowl", sustaining cultural norms that are intimidating and unsavoury for women (and others) as a minority group in such a setting. Sadly, but unsurprisingly, men and women who are on the edge of the group in such contexts, bystanders, are experienced as laughing about and endorsing such behaviours, even if they don't initiate them.

At Board level women were perceived to carry out stereotypical roles, their skill in organising the men and keeping them on track being noteworthy. These opinions came from both men and women and were valued, gendered qualities.

In a sign that transparency can make a difference, and that there is some positive movement in this area, just under 20% of the women interviewed reported that they had received larger than expected pay rises in recent years. When asked what lay behind this, they attributed this to the influence of public reporting around the 'Gender Pay Gap'.





## WOMEN UNDERVALUE AND CAN DISAPPEAR THEMSELVES

Men from John's background are socialised into having a confident voice, at having an expectation that they should put themselves forward. Self-belief has become an over-played and gendered quality and when women do try and play it, they face a learnt form of discriminatory judgement. In the famous Heidi/Howard case study<sup>(16)</sup>, the same CV is given a male and female identity with sadly predictable results. Approved of male assertiveness can easily become disapproved of female bossiness - judgements that are applied by both men and women! Sheryl Sandberg tells the story in compelling fashion in a 2010 TED talk<sup>(17)</sup>.

Women have to walk a tightrope that men don't when it comes to putting themselves forward! In Jackie's coaching work she repeatedly finds that women absent themselves from consideration by not putting themselves forward, even in contexts where there should be a good chance of a decision being made on the basis of competence rather than gender fit. In Anne Huff's work she speaks to how easy it is for women to fall into the relatively invisible role of becoming the wife of the corporation, taking care of the men and the problems they create as they crash around the workplace<sup>(18)</sup>.

New first hand testimony is also about to hit the streets, exploring what it means to be labelled a 'clever girl'<sup>(19)</sup> - which builds on some capable women's experience, as told to John, of carrying the label of being a 'good girl', someone who doesn't rock the boat, and how some women find themselves falling into the self-effacing trap that comes with such a label. Women also become skilled at 'putting up and shutting up', blocking out experiences of discrimination and instead simply seeing what is going on as normal and the way the world is. In one case, Jackie was told how one woman had never been on the receiving end of any gender-based discrimination - then as the conversation continued this woman spoke of being the butt of pejorative name calling, being told that she had only received her promotion to fill a "quota" and numerous other incidences that would commonly be classed as discriminatory.

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Women are brought up to be perfectionists... I used to ignore jobs when I could “only” do 80% of the job description... there's a job I could not do 100% and I've been advised, it's now a time served requirement... Women lack role models, people who understand what's achievable... no one tells you how to package yourself... you need to be told you can do it by people who look like you... I was lucky in my career... okay, maybe not lucky, I worked hard and had to prove myself... Two CEOs spotted me and promoted me on performance.

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I was recently asked what made me exceptional and had a real internal struggle with this. My assumption was that everyone has the same desire to succeed, will do the same job and I'm not exceptional. What I realised during this process was that I am exceptional.

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## HAVING KIDS DERAILS CAREERS EVEN WITH A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER/FAMILY

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Invariably there's a ten-year period where family can "get in the way" from 28 to 38, where the best jobs come up and you can be overlooked... The company doesn't promote flexibility, too complicated... I thought having children would be a distraction and it was... not convinced I'd have got ahead if I'd had to bring up kids... A male took extended paternity leave, why would he do that? Must be something wrong with him... If you work from home you're seen as lazy... women employees need to be able to have open conversations about where the critical points in the day are for them.

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John is currently conducting a related piece of research into the experience of returning mothers, trying to catch their actual thoughts and feelings as they return to the workplace<sup>(20)</sup>.

A lack of transparency, in the case of Mums not wanting to be honest about the pinch points in their day and the boundaries they want to set, and untested assumptions business leaders hold are emerging as themes.

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In the case of one returning mother John summarised her experience as follows:

*Workplace conversations about returning parents, usually mothers, tend to focus on the negatives. As one old school HR Director put it to one Mum: 'I know you won't be focused'. What this mother discovered was that they were focused as never before: 'I do my full-time job in three and a half days... what did I used to do before!'*

”

Returning to work was assumed to be a distraction but for one mother the decision to choose to go back to work made her even more focused on the value of her work because now it was an active choice she was making, over and above the care for her highly dependent child. Meanwhile a lot of parents at work are having to deal with the same business rigidity that is displayed in the 'freeze your eggs' attitude already referred to:

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*Years of competency matrices and talent management programmes means people get 'placed in a box'. What doesn't get seen is how having children gives people 'a core of personal resilience I didn't know I had' and opens their eyes to worlds they've never seen before, which can result in a profound re-orientation: 'I've moved away from "me" to a "wider world" focus... away from me as the centre of everything'.*

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At the same time as much of the business world is making claims for purpose and more relationally informed leadership<sup>(21)</sup>, the practice is to penalise those who are being exposed to experiences that will give them these capacities in a far richer way than can be achieved through study or workshops.



There is a persistent pattern of resistance in women to discuss family matters openly at work as they were afraid they'd be judged, seen to be less capable or dedicated. Some interviewees told Jackie how they would change how they spoke about things, when they knew there would be both men and women in the room - not wanting to be as open as they'd like to be about the challenges they faced as working mothers juggling the demands of home and career. They also spoke of the frustration of being deeply patronised when they returned to work after a break, with one award winning interviewee of ten year's standing in a role being challenged, when she returned to the self-same role, that: "You do know this is a very demanding job?"

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When I first told my boss I was pregnant I felt awful, I feared they would sack me, would I lose my job? Will my job still be there? There's another human to care for and you want to have a career and you don't know the effect it will have on your career.

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To pursue my career, I've needed to move geographically. I don't have any children and to be honest, I don't see how I could have had children and developed my career. I feel if I had a family five years ago, I would've been perceived differently. If I got engaged people would've been asking, when are you getting married and starting a family?

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## MACHO, KNEEJERK LEADERSHIP KEEPS THE STATUS QUO GOING

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*'My CEO discounts my own years of experience on business - which are more than his! He's more interested in his own experience... The men tend to have a style of management, my way or the highway... the business frequently made kneejerk reactions with short term appointments... There's no insight into why we're a male dominated company... at the senior level it's a chimps' tea party, competition between the boys... The moral compass gets lost in day-to-day business... they don't look at people as assets until disaster strikes'*

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The need to embrace a more mature, grown-up, approach to leadership is well understood<sup>(22)</sup> although not as practised as modish management theories would suggest. At the launch of Erik de Haan and Anthony Kasozi's book in 2014<sup>(23)</sup>, it was suggested by the panel of organizational experts, led by Professor Dennis Tourish, that modern organizations had more in common with medieval courts than with any other type of organizational form. People dance to the whim of the King not the matrix.

Much modern leadership practice is also at odds with what has been identified as a better alternative - in the sense of delivering long term, sustainable growth. The insights of Jim Collins and Jerry Porras<sup>(24)</sup> have not gone out of fashion. In organizations that are more content with short term snap decisions, who love the drama of the deal and the crisis, there will be little tolerance for the relative calm that comes from steady, strategic, considered choices - and the business value such cool thinking delivers.

What stands out is habits of hubris in senior people, used to seeing the world in their accustomed fashion and behaving in ways they see fit. As John's research into speaking truth to power consistently highlights,

senior people are often deaf to hearing perspectives that don't fit with their established world view - and so they are told only what they can bear to hear, as Alastair Darling wrote of his experience of speaking truth to power with then Prime Minister Gordon Brown<sup>(25)</sup>. This habit of hubris, well known to Philosophers and Psychologists, has been the subject of study by The Daedalus Trust (now under the aegis of the Maudsley Philosophy Group) since 2011. Macho leadership is a particular expression of the hubris that comes from believing the way things are currently done is the best way they can possibly be done.

There were also many examples where interviewees were asked to compromise their professional and personal standards, for the sake of continuing with established custom and practice. The women reported how they in particular seemed to have more difficulty accommodating and working with the requests to cut-corners or go-along with unethical business practice. The result of this was that they found themselves being seen as 'not a team player', and 'uncommercial'. As one CEO put it bluntly to Jackie: "Women are just not very commercial".

Within the world of macho leadership it is therefore unsurprising that there was little valuing of empathy in the workplace, macho leaders are not 'human leaders', as it was described to Jackie. This habit and belief resulted in what many interviewees described as an explicit request that they put their feelings and issues from home "into a box and leave them [there]". The workplace, in the eyes of the macho leader, is "not a place for [such things]". Across the board what played out was the experience of a lack of interest by senior leaders in how people felt, and no understanding of what the needs of employees were in terms of empathy, unless they fell over and the wheels came off the bus!

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I was interviewed by a man and then by a woman, he didn't see my potential, didn't dig deep enough and explore my passion. This drove me, I grew through the process and then when a woman interviewed me, she saw my passion and offered me my promotion.

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## BOARDS NEED TO WALK THE TALK... AND TACKLE THE FEARS OF POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION

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I see lots of signing up to diversity chapters on social media, but on the ground nothing changes... the Board talks a good talk, but little happens in practice... Until the CEO takes it seriously, return [to work] programmes won't be taken seriously... it's not a KPI for senior people... When I hear about the [negative] experience of BAME staff, it makes me even more determined to change the culture... but there's no support... As a late thirties white male I fear being done down by positive discrimination... want diversity to be transparent and fair.

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How those in positions of power and authority behave is of the utmost importance. The grand statement and the public endorsement is a necessary, but not sufficient, piece of executive behaviour. What people need to see is how the Board and the senior leadership behave in their day-to-day interaction with staff and in the ordinary decisions that have a direct impact on who gets ahead.

In current work John is involved with in a Police force in the north of the country, the Chief Constable has highlighted, for instance, the necessity of senior leaders having small conversations with staff if they are then going to be able to have the big ones. Changing culture happens in building up these webs of ordinary connection<sup>(26)</sup>, so that senior leaders have a felt understanding of how women and other disadvantaged groups do and don't get undermined.

And this is all about power. Ben Fuchs, who writes widely about advantage blindness<sup>(27)</sup>, imagines power as the magnet underneath the table, around which all formal change programmes and initiatives align themselves - much like the iron filings experiment many of us will have done in our school days, it's the magnet that determines the pattern not the iron filings. You can introduce as many innovative processes and policies as you like, you can send every one away on unconscious bias training, but if the basic patterns of who gets heard and who gets ahead stay untouched then everything will stay the same. Walking the talk means changing how power gets exercised, because organizational life takes place within a world of power and politics<sup>(28)</sup>.

There was a sense that well-intentioned messages got lost as they passed down the organizational hierarchy and espoused policies were not followed. As a result, the warm words around promoting diversity made little impact on the ground, with people implementing them with varying degrees of enthusiasm and seriousness, resulting in widespread inconsistency of their application. The findings followed the widely reported experience that people's experience of workplace reality is closely bound up with their experience of their immediate line manager. Where local line managers are given discretion to stay with what they know, the chances are that they'll continue to work with the comforting habits that are sustained by their own biases and beliefs. This of course then undermines the good intentions and improvements espoused by the senior leaders and the diversity charters they've signed up to.

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One of the women who didn't come back got a sense that if she went part time, her boss would have to take on some additional work and cover (for her), it would set a precedent, so it wasn't approved.

”



## PEOPLE NEED TO BELIEVE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER, AND OTHER, DIVERSITY AT SENIOR LEVELS

“

I don't know if there's a business case for better representation for women and others at senior levels... It's a no brainer! More than 50% of consumers are women... without women in place you get a very biased view from companies about what they think consumers want... Diverse teams talk more openly, rather than rushing decisions... Women are more reflective on issues, more thoughtful.

”

The temptation is to bombard people with data to change how they see the world, but work by people such as Robert Dilts reveals how ineffective this is<sup>(29)</sup>. He tells the story of a patient visiting a Doctor, the patient is convinced he's a corpse. After debate with the Doctor they agree on something that corpses can't do, in this case bleed. The Doctor takes a pin, pricks the patient's finger and a small dot of blood appears. The patient/corpse then observes that... what do you know! Corpses bleed. Data by and large simply gets incorporated into an existing world view rather than changing the underlying assumption.

Even within the high-flyers in the industry we spoke to, there was no unanimity as to the business case for having more women at senior levels. This is a matter of belief, not reason on its own. The work has to be at the level of personal beliefs and values, not purely argument. Attention has to be paid to why it makes

sense to people to see the world the way they do, what lies behind the belief that having more women at senior levels doesn't matter.

Given Mary Beard's work on deep-seated cultural assumptions about the relative worth of women already mentioned, it should not be surprising that many men (and women) are still attached to a world view that is fundamentally distrustful of women, especially women having power<sup>(30)</sup>! This is why it is so hard to convince many men of the business case for bringing women into the workplace, even though there is now an extensive body of work, from the hard-nosed world of management consultancy (e.g. McKinsey) through to the Hampton Alexander review of the 2008 financial crash, which demonstrates that the business case is there in spades, be it around quality of decision making, financial performance, governance or long-term strategic thinking.

Various articles also point to organisations adopting a 'One and done' approach, practising a policy of appointing one woman to the Board to ensure there were no more 'male Boards' in the FTSE 100 - 350, thus improving the 'status quo' sufficiently to reduce scrutiny.

“

When I left my business (for a promotion) they eventually asked me to come back, at a more senior level. They didn't value women as much as men and I believe they see men more as a flight risk and do more to retain them. Interestingly, when I did move business for progression, they too were not genuine, no career planning and key milestones

”

“

I want leaders/managers to see me as a human being, not a being, see me as a person and stop acting transactionally and start transforming.

”



# 7 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS



## WHAT CAN BE DONE - SEVEN CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (CSFS) TO DEVELOP A PIPELINE OF SENIOR WOMEN LEADERS



These seven CSFs address specific situations that we see arising from the themes that stood out as barriers to developing a pipeline of senior women leaders. There is also a specific view underpinning all these actions about the nature of change and how change happens in the workplace. This is informed by John's work with the Ashridge Doctorate in Organizational Change<sup>(31)</sup> and also by the insights of Dr Mark Cole - and his book on Radical Organizational Development which has already been referenced. This view downplays the importance of formal programmes and the idea that an organization's culture can be manipulated into a desired shape, instead much greater emphasis is placed on the pattern and habits of organizational conversation - who gets to talk to who about what and when.

It sees change as an existing property of all social systems and not something that can be introduced - it also promotes the idea that to inquire into the existing state of affairs is to change it<sup>(32)</sup>, challenging the notion that change starts with some form of 'objective' diagnosis and instead is an ongoing activity in which the simple act of inquiry has the potential to shift the status quo. Changing culture is therefore a more modest and ordinary activity, less dramatic than formally mandated change programmes, but containing within it the possibility that something real might actually happen.

In practice this means that you start by paying close attention to what is actually going on, looking at how decisions actually get made (rather than how the rule

book says they should be made). It means noticing who gets invited into what meetings and who doesn't, whose voice gets heard and whose doesn't. At its best it focuses on those moments when things went better than usual, rather than worse, when women got a fairer crack of the whip - and then seeing how that experience can be made more of. Working in this way is a much better way of overcoming people's fears or beliefs that things can't change around here.

This close attention to workplace reality can then be built on by a motivated group from within the organization going out and exploring what is being done in other industries (e.g. in terms of introducing flexible, family friendly working or equal pay) and then sharing what they have learnt - this is a much more effective way of bringing in external experience than having third parties produce reports on what's theoretically possible. This is the practice referred to as Appreciative Inquiry<sup>(2)</sup>.

“

It's a human piece, people of all races, every opinion, balance, ying to every yang - diverse leadership - not to create clones, different people and different nuggets out there.

”



THE SEVEN AREAS TO WORK ON - IDEALLY IN THE WAY WE DESCRIBE - THAT WE SEE ARISING FROM OUR ANALYSIS OF THE INDUSTRY, AND THEIR ASSOCIATED ACTIONS, ARE:



**SILENCE ENDORSES THE STATUS QUO**

Accept and work with bias while showing something different



**DON'T TREAT FAMILY LIFE AS UNEXPECTED NOISE**

Work with the reality of people's lives in the round



**SEEK OUT THE UNINTENDED BIAS**

Boards must look in the mirror and see their advantage blindness



**VALUE 'SOFTER' LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

Make being a leader attractive to women



**"IF YOU CAN'T SEE ME, YOU CAN'T BE ME"...**

Make the vision real



**MAKE IT MATTER AND LEARN AS YOU GO**

Create short and long-term diversity goals



**LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD**

Coach, mentor and develop people so they can get to the top in different ways



## SILENCE ENDORSES THE STATUS QUO

Accept and work with bias while showing something different

“

Senior roles came up in the business, I was told not to apply as I'd not been in my role for long enough - it was a time served issue. I felt deflated... but I didn't challenge it... The CFO could see it, it compromised his values too, but he was willing to accept the compromise and I wasn't, I challenged it and as a result, I left the business... I've now developed my own approach to my career, I've made it clear what I'm looking for and won promotion, the feedback from the MD is that he likes my clarity...

”

Speaking up, as John's research alongside Megan Reitz highlights, can be difficult and feel risky - which is why so many people stayed silent on the Weinstein situation in Hollywood. Everybody knows, but no one says anything. Weinstein is an extreme example of harassment in action, most of our workplaces are fortunately not so toxic. Becoming overly punitive, calling out for 'zero tolerance', while sounding dramatic will tend to drive habits and ingrained assumptions under the carpet.

What is needed are steps that make things that have been previously undiscussable, discussable - in a way that doesn't evoke shame and defensive routines (people after all don't like to be made to feel foolish). John and Megan's research shows that feeling foolish and making others feel foolish are the two top reasons people don't speak up.

In addition, some firms need to look at how they use various forms of compromise agreements (such as Non-Disclosure Agreements) - a number of the people who we interviewed have indicated confidentially that they were asked to sign agreements of this type, in situations where their firms can at best be said to have behaved less than ethically. Women complying with fears and pressures about what will happen to them if they don't go along with this game. At the same time as women silence themselves to avoid stalling their careers, men are facilitated in avoiding the consequences of their actions - being allowed to resign and their behaviour towards the women we interviewed going undocumented.

## THREE STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN THAT WILL HELP BREAK THE SILENCE ARE FOR:

- 1** Sector-wide bodies that represent or influence the hospitality industry to model gender and other diversity within their own organization, in the materials they send out and events they organize. In the short term this could include making sure that women, in the first place, are properly represented in the material sent out for conferences - it is striking how much promotional matter is dominated by images of men, with women largely represented in passive and/or secretarial roles. More effort and attention needs to be made to change the impressions sustained by the reaching for the standard image - the women doing the leadership roles, out there in the field, are there. Go and find them!
- 2** Sector standards to be publicised and promoted. Giving people a sense of what they should aim for, what good looks like, will help get a conversation going, help people have a context in which they can talk about what is and isn't going on within their organisations. Framing and legitimising a conversation about how bias is inevitable and what you can do about it helps. In particular identifying what people do when they catch themselves being biased, how they recover from the unintentional consequences of behaving in a way that shuts some groups down.
- 3** Multiple initiatives need to be catalogued and co-ordinated. There are currently various initiatives being rolled out at an organization specific and pan-sector level and the first requirement is for there to be an understanding of what already exists. This cataloguing will draw out what is being done at Board and Operational levels and help identify what gaps exist, what can be done to avoid re-inventing the wheel and what would be a useful level of co-ordination to avoid people being deluged with duplicate demands. This will require collaboration between the Boards of specific companies and the Sector Bodies.



### THE TRUTH FRAMEWORK

**In terms of a useful, non-prescriptive framework John and Megan's TRUTH framework identifies what to pay attention to if you want to overcome silence in your organisation<sup>(33)</sup>:**



#### TRUST

in your opinion and the opinion of others



#### RISK

of speaking up or of being spoken up to



#### UNDERSTANDING

of the politics, games and agendas



#### TITLES

that get put on you and you put on others



#### HOW

to choose the right words, right time, right place



We need leaders to move from the unconscious to the conscious mind. They need to give people permission to recognise their triggers and emotions so they can grapple with them.





## SEEK OUT THE UNINTENDED BIAS...

**Boards must look in the mirror and see their advantage blindness**

“

I've worked with organisations where at Board level, they just do not meet basic human values and no-one calls it out... I describe it as a “glass wall” not a “glass ceiling”... the men play golf, go out drinking together and you're just not part of the scene where business is done... When I walk into the exec, it's all bravado, lads busy tapping each other on the back - they don't look at people as assets until disaster strikes... I asked myself “Do I stop trying to get into the Boardroom?” Then in a conversation with a Director, I told him “I want to be a Director” and he said, surprised “Really?” He didn't know. He then asked me “How do I get more BDM's like you who work hard and make me look good?” That did it for me, I was going to have a last push.

”

In Ben Fuchs work he tells the story of a senior corporate executive discovering for the first time that their professional success, which they'd certainly worked hard for, was also a matter of being the 'right' gender, class and ethnicity - combined with being the 'right' height (tall), having the 'right' accent, going to the

'right' university and having the 'right' domestic arrangements (a non-working partner who could take care of all things social and domestic as they moved around the world). The discovery is uncomfortable, but over time he came to terms with how he had been helped by social advantages that were hidden to him. This use and abuse of social rank is explored in more depth by Robert Fuller<sup>(34)</sup>.

As has been shown in the work of John and Megan Reitz, this lack of awareness of social advantages co-exists with an over-confidence in how well senior people listen to people more junior to them or from a different social grouping. In order to do something about this, Boards need to avoid putting the responsibility for addressing gender disadvantages onto the shoulders of women - this is something men and women need to do together, with men taking active steps to lean out as much as women lean in.

“

The business frequently made knee-jerk reactions with short-term appointments... suffering from tunnel vision

”



## SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES BOARDS NEED TO TAKE ARE:

- ✓ **Identify who the Board do and don't listen to and why** - accepting that the Board will be over-estimating its capacity to hear different points of view. Expose the Board to the experience of groups that are not often heard, engaging with them in an unfamiliar fashion. For each Board this will be a specific activity, depending on their blindspots and how far they are willing to go as a first step.
- ✓ **Pay special attention to how members of the Board are recruited and how they may well be recruiting in their own image** - Even if people that come on board look different, it often turns out that they think the same way and the Board is recruiting for cognitive homogeneity. This will show up in similarity of educational and life experience, as well as how they spend time outside of work.
- ✓ **Pay attention to how people from different backgrounds are integrated into the Board** - the psychological game can easily result in people who have the potential to be different hiding that unique capacity in order to be accepted... it is more the responsibility of the incumbents to adapt to the newcomer than vice versa. Explicitly contracting with each other and making sure that people receive the support they need is essential.
- ✓ **Identify those social labels that give people an advantage in the company that have nothing to do with professional competence** - This can be anything from accent, to height, to type of degree, to whether or not someone has a non-working partner at home. Every firm will have its own unique list.
- ✓ **Create a sustained commitment from Board members to go out and about within the company** - it is more important that senior people demonstrate real curiosity about what is going on at all levels - rather than have deputations come and visit them. One CEO of a London Council manned the reception desk for two hours, every week, for year after year because he wanted to feel what it was like to engage with local residents for real.



**"IF YOU CAN'T  
SEE ME, YOU  
CAN'T BE ME"...**

**Make the vision real**

“

I felt I was overlooked until I left the business, I had to do something to be noticed, there were no interviews or taps on the shoulder for me... UKH Awards was the catalyst of my career, the process of completing the application form really made me capture my achievements and qualities... It just never occurred to me that I was anything other than normal and what other people saw as exceptional, I just saw as the day job... I had to fight tooth and nail for my promotion, I had to fight to get in the room and I am pushing the boundaries... We have a very successful Board member who is a woman, she had to fight for her place on the Board.

”

As the great management and leadership guru Beyonce puts it, 'If you can't see me, you can't be me'. In her case it was explaining why it was so important that young women of colour could see her performing, why she took to the stage even when she really was not well enough to do so. Role models really matter.

Much as many pioneers who break through the barriers of disadvantage through a combination of guts and luck, making it normal means finding ways to normalise progression and so widening the pipeline of ambitious and capable people able to try out for and make it to the higher levels of organizational life. There is a wealth of experience to draw on from those who have led social movements, getting ignored and under-represented groups to have an accepted and normalised social presence. Simon Fanshawe, the co-founder of Stonewall in the UK and a leading gay rights activist from times when discrimination was overt and unpleasant, now runs a company called **Diversity by Design**, which supports companies seeking to recruit more diversely in terms of gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

### IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC STEPS ORGANISATIONS CAN TAKE TO ACHIEVE A VISIBLE PRESENCE OF WOMEN AT SENIOR LEVELS:



**Bring in women, from outside the company if necessary, at senior levels who can serve as role models for other women.** Once these women are in position they need to be celebrated publicly, so that people inside and outside the organisation can see that things are changing. Of particular weight is bringing in senior women beyond the role of HR, which can often be interpreted as being the limit of a woman's ambition. Every organisation will know which roles are seen as being of the greatest weight and prestige.



**Identify and celebrate career flexibility** - rather than focusing on the standard approved routes people have taken in order to achieve a senior position, invite and support people to create pathways that work for them and then shout about them when they deliver senior women in post. In order to deliver a diverse range of people to the top, a diverse range of career pathways are required. Those who design standard pathways will often be unintentionally ignorant of the consequences of approved approaches in delivering a very specific set of people. If you want to promote for heterogeneity, you need a heterogeneity of approaches for getting there.



**Identify and celebrate women succeeding at Operational and Executive levels** - the pipeline for talent requires people to not only see examples at the top of the tree, but at all the key staging posts. If people don't talk about the women who are on their way to the top then they stay invisible - growing the visibility of women in posts at all stages of their career will in turn help recruit women in from other sectors, who might otherwise think that the sector is without relevance to women keen to get started in a professional, long term career.



**Expose women to diverse career experiences** - careers can grow in unusual ways and developing a breadth of experience will always serve someone well in the long term. Women can be encouraged to step outside of the restrictions of a particular business culture by seeking out opportunities to grow in other firms - demonstrating how to take advantage of transferable skills to grow their experience and so allow them to overcome the restrictions that may exist within a firm's traditional fixed view of the promotional ladder.

“

Men have bigger voices, I have confidence, but men seem to use more words, people hear their voice, they talk more and say more, so they are viewed as being more successful. They take up the air space and don't listen to others and are not so open, they're just more dominant.

”



## LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD...

**Coach, mentor and develop people so they can get to the top in different ways**

“

You were always judged on your last set of performance results, rather than any potential or skill base you possessed... no leadership training, succession planning and no practical opportunities to manage people... Leadership is about engaging with the whole person and not just a fragment... If it wasn't for the UKH awards not sure I'd have been supported... The leaders in my career were very important, they had a mentoring style, they were supportive and their intentions were positive... It's really important to have an outside perspective, to feel safe that you won't be judged.

”

As has been assumed throughout this paper, organizations are not flat - and simply saying they are, or acting as if they are, simply reinforces the unequal status quo. To support those who are actively handicapped when it comes to taking part in the corporate race requires steps to be taken to offset the existing inequality.

While the recent Kings College London work raises questions over the direct usefulness of coaching and mentoring, it stood out as important in a number of our interviews and from Jackie's experience as a coach. Given the variability of the quality of coaching and mentoring it is not that much of a surprise that at the level of the whole it doesn't stand out - at the level of the individual, being skilfully and judiciously supported can be useful and those we spoke to who had received this type of support said it had contributed to their career progress.

IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC SUPPORT THAT CAN BE GIVEN THE FOCUS NEEDS TO BE, IN OUR JUDGEMENT, ON FOUR AREAS:



**Board sponsorship of a 'diversity of stars' shows the Board means it.** Boards and Executive Committees need to co-ordinate who and how they sponsor people, thinking in terms of how they create valuable diversity in their choices. For senior leaders who have come up the route of homogeneous selection and promotion this will present a challenge in itself, as they face up to difference for one of the few times in their professional lives!



**Career planning needs to start early** for those who know that they are likely to have to make career influencing decisions around things like having children or taking care of vulnerable adults in their world. Jackie's experience is that people and businesses leave this planning too late, assuming that somehow things will work out even though people know that they are for instance planning for/hoping for motherhood at some point. Sharing ideas and tips about what works from those who've done it really helps.



**Learning how to be seen and heard is a specific challenge for many women.** Learnt behaviours too often mean women are modest or assume that being good at their job will speak for itself. In John's work he works closely with an expert voice coach who specialises in teaching women how they can improve the physical qualities of their speaking voice. Meanwhile Jackie prompts a number of the women she coaches to do what their male colleagues do without thinking, taking any opportunity to be seen and heard in influential forums. Understanding the politics of organisational life has to be done (and all organisations have politics!) and then you have to work out how best to engage with it if you want to progress.



**Learn from overcoming gender discrimination to address other discriminations** - the risk is that people may shy away from addressing the situation for women, because it may lead to other forms of discrimination going unaddressed. A strong case needs to be made that by focusing on the experience of women, so a firm will develop its capacity for collective self-awareness and so become sensitised to all its forms of unintended discrimination and patterns of unearned advantage.



My boss is a modern leader, challenging older people in the company, but receives conflict from the dinosaurs. He's people focused, keeps it simple - best performing part of the company.



## DON'T TREAT FAMILY LIFE AS UNEXPECTED NOISE...

**Work with the reality of people's lives in the round**



We do have flexible working... we take the situation on a case-by-case basis... If women had a family it could have halted their careers, it's far more balanced now. Meetings finish earlier, the golfing and drinking is optional and we don't have many stopovers... After my career break I returned to the same role and pay... too often my peers and friends have to take a reduction in salary and responsibility... I chose to work stupid hours, you decide what to prioritise and accept you have to compromise and make choices. I sense that men don't have to make the same difficult choices as frequently as women do... Flexibility is not promoted or advertised... I kick started my career when I received flexibility, I can now put in 40, 50, 60 hours a week... remote work, get both worlds right.



Workplaces need to see family life as normal rather than as something that arrives as a storm out of a clear blue sky. Nearly everyone will experience family upheaval of some sort over their career - children get born, parents age, relationships sometimes wither and die. In John's research into front line staff at a Hospice<sup>(35)</sup>, working with this reality was essential if the care teams were able to support both their patients and themselves - this work foregrounded the importance of collective or team resilience over individual resilience.

When organisations legitimise the discussion of and adaption to family circumstance, they increase the ability of people to flex and support each other; they also allow people to make public plans for the future which they might otherwise feel they have to keep secret, making scheduling and career management reactive rather than proactive.

TO MAKE THIS A REALITY, ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO ADDRESS CERTAIN DEFINING ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HOW PEOPLE ARE AND HOW WORK NEEDS TO HAPPEN:



**People need to be trusted to do things differently** - this means giving people a sense of agency to take responsibility for going about things in a way that is still professional, but can be adapted to fit with their wider context. Given the developments in technology in the last 20 to 30 years, there is a huge capacity for people to configure their work to fit with other priorities. The challenge is for managers, especially, to develop sufficient trust in others - most work places seem still to be stuck in the days before mobile technology and an attitude that people will swing the lead unless closely scrutinised.



**The focus needs to shift to outputs, rather than presenteeism and standardised process** - technology has become a two-edged sword. It has made it possible for people to work where and when they want, but it has also resulted in people being on call where and when others want them to be. Managing the boundaries between home and work has become highly problematic, with an assumption being that a committed employee is always available and present to the needs of the workplace. Even in firms that know this and want to contain it, it is not unusual to come across senior leaders sending out messages at all hours which carries within it the implicit message that this is the way to succeed.



**It needs to become safe for people to have honest conversations about families and the assumptions they hold about working parents** - the more transparent people can be about their family situation and aspirations,

so it becomes possible for firms to plan proactively and also for people to be honest about the assumptions they hold about working parents, especially when it comes to commitment and capacity. Without transparency and honesty people have to keep their ambitions and priorities a secret - and so people pretend to be honest, while getting on with their life in the shadows, which feels like a dreadful waste of human energy.

“

When it comes to family, it can also be difficult for men, there was a period when I pretended I didn't have kids, denied I had them because you were patronised in front of your colleagues. If you had ever said you needed to leave for a family reason you then got asked in a patronising way “are you ok for that finish time?”

”

“

There was a lack of any understanding how a family worked. I'd have the phone on mute as I dropped the children off and listening at the same time. You'd be expected to drop everything, starting the day under water and never quite recover, it was so disabling.

”



## VALUE 'SOFTER' LEADERSHIP SKILLS...

Make being a leader attractive to women

“

We need a more collaborative approach, more understanding of people, without people the business is nothing, just a load of buildings... I'm like a money-making machine, it takes excessive trauma to gain any support and then everyone is all over you. But day-to-day you're advised to compartmentalise, put it away... Get under the water line, open the road blocks and help people pull out of parenting guilt, body image problems, self-belief issues... recognise them as people, not disposable and [don't look to] control them.

”

As explored in the research John carried out with Megan Reitz and Colin Williams, published in 2016, there is a growing realisation that many of the traditional 'masculine' leadership virtues are being called into question. The privileging of assertion and self-confidence result in poorly thought through plans and actions - the qualities of dialogue advocated by people such as Bill Isaacs<sup>(56)</sup> get lost, because the relational revolution has not taken root<sup>(57)</sup>. Men trained to focus on individual combat remain unreconstructed when it comes to building up rich, reciprocal relationships with their colleagues.

Women are much more likely to be good (because of historic, socialised roles) at those skills that enable rich inquiry embedded as they are in relational sensitivities and attention, an essential requirement when engaging with a world that is widely experienced as uncertain and unpredictable. What is needed in order to create the necessary 'psychological safety' - to use Amy Edmondson's term<sup>(38)</sup> - and so enable meaningful organisational learning is to recruit into senior post those who:



**Embrace more diverse thinking and are able to engage with different approaches to knowing** - within the Mental Health & Justice project currently being sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, it is striking that Neuroscientists, Anthropologists, Art Therapists, Lawyers and Psychologists are finding ways to engage and work with each other despite coming from completely different truth traditions. The hospitality sector has a much less challenging set of diversity of thought to work with!





**Demonstrate high degrees of emotional intelligence and competence** - Daniel Goleman's work on the subject came out in 1995<sup>(39)</sup> and it still has yet to gain traction in many areas of business and organizational life. Driven people, especially with good IQs, are impatient and want to develop their EQ rather like new skills get downloaded to people in the film *The Matrix*. EQ doesn't work like that. It's a slow knowledge that comes with some major challenges for how people see themselves and others. In Megan Reitz's Doctoral work<sup>(40)</sup>, inspired by Martin Buber, this plays out in a fundamental challenge to whether or not you are able to see people as of inherent value (an I-Thou orientation) or as things to be used in the service of your goal (an I-It form of relating).



**Are less invested in demonstrating self-confidence and are comfortable with collective sense making** - the Big I-Am continues to be a popular trope of leadership and can be seen playing out in the mainstream media with regular appeals for 'strong leadership', usually a shorthand for directive and 'masculine', and in the extent to which charismatic individuals are courted and feted on TV shows from *The Apprentice* to *Dragons Den*. The mood music of senior leadership has stayed resolutely old-fashioned while the challenges organisations face will increasingly depend on skills of collaboration and collective resilience in the face of uncertainty.



**Are comfortable being different and accepting difference in others** - people who have been experienced as 'other' in the eyes of the mainstream, have a natural advantage when it comes to being aware of how people who are outside the established world view get silenced. Without the creative engagement with difference, organizations are destined to stay the same and so fail to evolve and stay in contact with a changing external world.

“

As a man in hospitality I can see men and women have different levels of emotional intelligence. As a whole I notice the older men are not as emotionally intelligent, they talk a lot. I find I work better and have closer relationships with those who have feelings, emotions and show vulnerability, are open and honest about their character flaws. We are strong men and enjoy better conversations.

”

“

We [men] find women are far more understanding, big picture, have more empathy, are better organised, structured and perform, learning complex businesses. They are more efficient and effective, identifiable as managers, retain staff and attract more loyalty. An important factor for us is their approach to due diligence and we worry less about EHO visits.

”





## MAKE IT MATTER AND LEARN AS YOU GO

Create short and long-term diversity goals

“

We currently have a healthy pipeline of female deputies and general managers... We don't want to lose quality people, we look at the person, we have flexibility and we apply it... Diversity & Inclusion is seen as another initiative, it will change but it's like manoeuvring an oil tanker - looked on by the bystanders and doubters... It's early stages, monkey see, monkey do, we have a long way to go to achieve mind-set changes... We have recruited someone to work part time in the field, but to train, you have to attend full time!

”

In an early draft of this paper we wrote of the need to measure - playing into the cliché of 'what gets measured, gets managed'. This cliché is however being increasingly held up as a dangerous piece of misinformation. As Alison Reynolds and David Lewis recently commented<sup>(41)</sup>, we have fallen into the tyranny of the tangible - which means we have lost our capacity to value those aspects of working life which are not readily amenable to direct observation, such as loyalty, ambition, collegiality and friendship. Naïve behaviouralism takes hold and becomes a substitute for exploring and paying attention to the headwaters of our thinking - as David Bohm would recommend<sup>(42)</sup>; measurement becomes a lousy master instead of a useful tool.

At the same time we live in a world that values measurement and having goals can make a difference, if they have significance to the lives of those who have the power and authority to shape their achievement and they are motivated by achieving the goals for real

and not simply gaming the numbers to hit their targets for the year. Assuming that there is good intention behind the setting of goals for diversity the following actions stand out as being a priority:

- ✓ **Tackle the gender pay gap proactively not reactively** - as was observed in the film Jerry Maguire, when you want to know what's really going on 'Show me the money'. The pay gap has persisted for decades since it became a matter of law and is closing at a glacial rate. If an organization wants to stand out when it comes to gender, getting on the front foot here will make it an outstanding exemplar!
- ✓ **Track and learn from goals being met and not met** - the point of setting goals from an organizational development perspective, rather than simply a personal bonus one, is to learn. This means being interested and curious in when goals aren't reached as much as when they are. An example of how not to do it comes from one of the Big Banks, where a senior executive hired some consultants in order to demonstrate that he had launched an initiative to address, in this case, the Corporate Social Responsibility targets he had been set for the year. One set of consultants recruited to do this walked away once they learnt their purpose was to deliver on the executive's bonus criteria rather than make any meaningful difference.
- ✓ **Review the impact of meeting diversity goals on business performance** - every organization is different, and it is only in the lived experience of a specific company that people will really begin to believe in the business value of diversity. Up until that point, for those who are minded to, any external evidence will be seen as not applicable to their reality. Experience will, in the end, convince more readily than argument.

“

I could have achieved a promotion earlier, pushed for it if I had the confidence. I blame myself. I should have pushed for more.

”



## IN CONCLUSION AND WHAT NEXT



THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS STAND OUT FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND FROM THE DESK RESEARCH CARRIED OUT BY JACKIE:

- ◆ **A lack of diversity is alive in many workplaces.** Where it is most persistent it is connected to unexamined and unchallenged habits of mind which sustain the status quo, preserve inflexible working practices and don't question why women don't get ahead.
- ◆ **There are green shoots all over the place.** What is not lacking are examples of innovative practice being put in place that allow for people (especially women) to step outside the straitjacket of taken-for-granted, one size fits all, career paths, work schedules and ways of doing things. Not all businesses, however, are making the same effort and the gaps between them are plain to see.
- ◆ **There is a relative shortage of women holding senior roles.** This shortage can be especially seen in the lack of women holding a broad range of posts, from the field as well as from central functions. Working conditions around hours and ability to travel (for example) may well continue to be a barrier for women who, even at senior levels, often own the management of family and home life.
- ◆ **There are a limited number of women, especially from the field, feeding the promotional pipeline.** While there are some notable exceptions, there are large areas of

the industry where there are simply not enough women coming through the ranks to deliver the numbers that will achieve a good gender mix. It is also noticeable that there are fewer women coming up through the operations route.

In terms of next steps, the main need is to broaden and deepen the research and connect it more strongly to a recommended set of actions. This report is largely based on a snapshot of 32 formal interviews, interweaved with tens of informal conversations and material from related fields of research. What we would want to do is to lead some in-depth inquiries into:

- ✔ The actual practice of firms, the experiments they've tried and what they've learnt from what's worked, what hasn't and what happened that wasn't expected to.
- ✔ A broader range of individual experiences, of both men and women, and their subjective realities of what it really takes to get ahead.
- ✔ The specific dynamics of male/female relationships in the workplace, up and down and across the different hierarchies... and how these create and limit the opportunities for gender and other diversity.

Our ambition is to work with organisations interested in doing something that makes a useful difference in the area of gender (and related) diversity - and report back at the end of 2020.



# FINAL INTERVIEWEE THOUGHTS

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The directors are so bogged down with buying and selling... There's a lack of leadership in the business, never mind a human touch.

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Women have less ego to deal with than men and are better communicators. For that reason we actively recruit. Conversely, I see some businesses not recruiting women in case they start a family, this could be an industry problem.

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Some men don't know how to handle women, sometimes I only need some time with my manager, to be heard, not all men are willing to give you this. Our needs are different, men get to the point and are very direct, women are better at building rapport and developing relationships.

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My partner had a very big impact, I actively looked for someone who wanted to be in a partnership. I look after me more, feel I'm coming into a new third phase. The second career phase was all about self-preservation and compromise – time is my time. Women don't naturally talk about the challenges, they just get on with it, see it as part of their job. I am now quite open, higher level of confidence, comfortable in my own skin.

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When you have kids, you realise before, you were quite selfish. I was more understanding of others needs when I had my own kids, with a successful partner, you have to carve up the work and at times, couldn't be as flexible as work required, this was difficult.

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If I wanted a promotion, I had to park personal issues. People are not interested.

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I've won national awards, delivered YOY growth, I don't rock the boat and when opportunities arose in the business, someone was brought in externally and I was never even considered.

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I felt lucky to return after a career break, I then found I overcompensated and felt the need to work harder and to do more. I have to tell myself, I can do this job and overcome my own impostor syndrome. I have a very strong inner confidence about my place in the world, I am successful, deliver results and still suffer from impostor syndrome.

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I would arrive at sports day huffing and puffing, but always managed to turn up, my children loved that I worked.

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[From a male interviewee]  
There's a lack of women in the pipeline, this is an issue. I think women outperform men, they are better organised. I've seen in two businesses where women try to get involved in the banter, but it's limited, like football - they don't really get involved or side tracked and are more focused. The guys are generally more childish and women are more grown up. The women I work with stand ahead of men.

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Women can be apologetic, one of my managers said "I am really sorry to tell you I'm pregnant," she felt she was letting me down I was just worried that she wouldn't come back and she was a really good manager. I found sincerity can drop (In managers) in the development of women when people know women are going on maternity leave.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



BRILLIANT Women is a learning arm of Turn The Key Ltd. It focuses on self-directed development that delivers engaging, practical and results focused career, leadership and performance solutions. It guides and supports clients to own a personalised programme with the intention of helping them become the very best they can be.

BRILLIANT Women's vision is to accelerate career progression and unlock the potential of individual clients, working collaboratively with businesses to achieve a pipeline of talented senior women. We combine independent research, proven methodologies and insights from leadership experiences to deliver bespoke learning programmes, coaching and mentoring services.

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