PROGRESSION AND PROMOTION

Think Business, Think Equality

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VACANCIES

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is for small and medium businesses who want to improve gender diversity in their workplace. It accompanies the *Think Business, Think Equality* online self-assessment tool. The free online tool enables you to assess your current employment practice, and provides tailored advice and guidance on how your business can benefit from gender diversity.

Delivering workplace equality makes good business sense. Having fair and flexible working practices allows you to attract and retain the best talent, reduce recruitment and training costs, and makes your business more productive, more innovative, and more profitable.

This guidance provides information and advice on progression and promotion.There is a checklist on page 13 which suggests actions that businesses should undertake to improve their equalities practice around progression and promotion.

The Think Business, Think Equality online tool is available at:

www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk

LEGAL DISCLAIMER
While every effort has been made to ensure that the explanations given here are accurate, only the courts or tribunals can give authoritative interpretations of the law.

THE 'GLASS CEILING'

Women tend to work in more junior roles than men across all occupational sectors, and are likely to be found concentrated in the lower grades of most organisations. The invisible barrier that prevents women from progressing to senior levels, despite seemingly fair recruitment and promotion procedures, is called the 'glass ceiling'.

The glass ceiling prevents women from reaching senior management level and boardroom positions. Women can also be discouraged from applying for promoted posts for a number of other reasons, including:

- A culture of presenteeism which wrongly equates long hours with excellence;
- The presence of so-called 'old boys networks' which leave women without access to informal mentoring opportunities that men have;
- A perceived lack of work-life balance at senior levels;
- A lack of senior female role models; and
- Recruitment and selection processes that lack transparency.

Employers sometimes find that they have two glass ceilings: one below senior management, and one above senior administration workers.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Women are more likely to have caring responsibilities, and a lack of flexibility in the workplace means that they often find it difficult to combine work with family and caring responsibilities. Jobs at management level are often perceived as needing to be full-time, and job sharing or part-time working at these levels is often seen as inappropriate. This tends to be based on a perception that managers should be available to work long hours, which is not always the case. Attitudes such as these can mean existing staff who have the right talent, skills and commitment are seen as unsuitable for promotion.

While both women and men with caring responsibilities are likely to be motivated by the opportunity to work flexibly, there is mounting evidence that all kinds of people see flexible working as a positive benefit. In 2014 the right to request flexible working was extended to cover all employees.

Benefits such as flexible working can be a factor in retaining loyal and reliable staff in any organisation, regardless of size. Setting up flexible working has little or no cost, and can benefit your organisation by making it accessible by customers for more hours every day.

To find out more about the business benefits take the

FLEXIBLE WORKING **test at** www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk

AUGUST

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RECRUITMENT

Setting qualification requirements for jobs

While you may need staff to have particular skills, experience or qualifications to do a job, you must ensure that your requirements can be objectively justified. This means that you can demonstrate that the requirements you list in job advertisements, person specifications and job descriptions are essential for the demands of the post.

For example, requiring applicants to have recent experience might exclude women who have had a career break to raise children, or who are currently on maternity leave. By requiring applicants to have obtained certain skills in a similar environment, employers might be excluding people who have gained equally valuable skills in volunteering or in the home environment.

By considering alternative or equivalent qualifications and/or experience as acceptable criteria for vacancies, you can recruit from the widest possible talent pool.

To find out how to make your recruitment process more inclusive, take the WORKPLACE CULTURE **test at** www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Why invest in training and development?

The most successful organisations make the best use of their most valuable resource - their people. Managing people in a way that enables and encourages them to reach their full potential benefits not only them but also the business.

Attracting and retaining skilled people is a key challenge for business. By developing effective training opportunities for staff, smaller businesses may find it easier to retain skilled staff, while benefiting from improved morale and increased productivity and innovation.

Supporting staff to study for a work-related, formal qualification can be beneficial for businesses, and also demonstrates a commitment to staff. There is a range of ways to support staff which could include making a financial contribution, granting paid or unpaid time off to study or to attend classes, and agreeing for them to work flexibly so that they can study at the same time.

Networking and mentoring

Many women find it challenging to access informal work networks, particularly those that are based on after work socialising. Networking events that organised stereotypically male activities such as golf or football can exclude women. By supporting female staff to participate in women-only networks, you can help to build cross-company relationships, emphasise that your business values difference, and help drive cultural change within your own workplace.

Case study

Women in Renewable Energy Scotland (WiRES) is a professional, peer support network for women working in the renewable energy sector. It provides a forum for women working in a range of roles and industries across the sector, and organises networking events, site visits, and professional development sessions for members. WiRES also runs a mentoring programme.

Mentoring

The under-representation of women in senior positions means that there are often few visible role models for women at the start of their career. For many women, mentoring provides the ideal space to learn from someone who understands the particular challenges faced by women in the workplace. For example, how to balance their career and family life effectively, or how to develop a career plan.

Mentoring is a personal development tool and is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers. It is a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. A structured formal programme would usually provide training and guidance for both potential mentors and mentees to ensure expectations are realistic and achievable. Mentoring can also be a more informal arrangement between senior and junior colleagues. It is a valuable way to help people develop and progress within a company.

LOWER TURNOVER & COSTS

STAFF MOTIVATION

PRODUCTIVITY

Presenteeism

There is overwhelming evidence that a long hours culture, or 'presenteesim' can be harmful to both staff and productivity. Many women perceive that promoted posts will require a significant increase in hours spent at the office, which can be challenging for staff with caring responsibilities and therefore acts as a disincentive. Introducing flexible working can help staff work smarter rather than longer.

Case study

Michelle and Jim work in the sales team of a telecommunications company. Michelle has worked there for five years, and Jim started 18 months ago. Michelle has to leave the office at 4.45pm to pick up her son from nursery. Stan, the sales director, is usually in the office until after 7.00pm. During the last few months, Michelle has noticed that Jim has been staying on late at work as well.

Stan announces at the next team meeting that a new team leader role to head up the sales team has been created, and Jim has been appointed. Michelle is shocked to hear the news as she has more experience and a better sales record than Jim. She decides to confront Stan to ask whether she had been considered for the role. Stan says he knows she has a lot of pressures on her time with looking after her son and thought it might be too much for her. Stan said Jim had proved himself over the past few months by staying late and helping him out with the sales strategy.

LOWER TURNOVER & COSTS
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Michelle is frustrated and feels that although Jim might be good in the new role, it was unfair not to give her a chance as well. Michelle feels the decision was based on Stan's perception of commitment to the company. Michelle leaves to work at a competitor company which operates a flexible working environment.

On-the-job training

Companies with skilled, trained staff have a much better chance of succeeding in business. Training or development does not necessarily involve sending an employee to an off-site event or course.

Examples of alternatives to formal training:
- Buddying an employee with a colleague to ensure necessary support in the early stages of their development so they can build confidence while new skills are learned.
- Guidelines, online modules or instruction handbooks are useful tools for learning on a flexible basis.
- Line managers have a key role in coaching staff and helping them learn the necessary skills for the job.

What to consider when developing training for staff

When providing training opportunities, it is important to make sure that the opportunities are available to all staff.

- Training, development and qualification opportunities must be open to all, including those who work part-time, job share, or work flexibly.
- Schedule training and learning events, and team meetings to ensure that everyone who wants to attend can.
- Avoid holding training events or team building opportunities after work hours or at weekends, wherever possible. Staff with caring responsibilities may find these difficult to attend.
- If a training event conflicts with a staff member's caring arrangements, consider:
  - rescheduling the event;
  - adjusting the staff member's hours;
  - paying the childcare or other care cost; or
  - provide payment or time off in lieu for any extra hours required to attend training.

Flexible learning can benefit all staff but particularly those working part-time, the majority of whom are women, or staff on maternity leave.

Open University courses, distance learning or online learning, are options which enable training to be undertaken flexibly. Pressures on budgets can mean that online training is a good option for smaller businesses. Allowing staff the time and resources to complete online training during working hours means that all staff will be able to participate.

Part-time, low paid women are often the group of workers least likely to be offered training opportunities in the workplace, but they are also the most likely to be working below their

LOWER TURNOVER & COSTS

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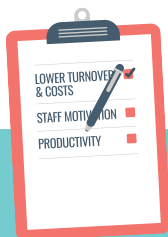
skills level. It makes good business sense to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to develop and utilise their skills.

Staff development initiatives

Monitoring applications for those applying for promoted posts will help you to identify if specific groups of people are under-represented. Asking staff why they did or didn't apply for a promotion can also help reveal whether there any particular issues for groups of staff.

Examples of staff development initiatives include:
- Job shadowing.
- Being able to work flexibly at all levels and in all jobs, wherever practicable.
- Development opportunities, such as project working, for female as well as male staff.

There may be limited opportunities for promotion within your business, but opportunities for development can motivate staff to improve performance in existing jobs. Encouraging staff to keep up to date with advances in technology or new developments within an industry will benefit the organisation as well as the individuals concerned.

Staff on maternity leave

Employers are entitled to make reasonable contact with staff during maternity leave. This might be to discuss arrangements for their return to work, or to provide an update on significant changes to the workplace.

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Women on maternity leave can, by agreement, work for up to 10 days without bringing their leave to an end or affecting their maternity pay. These are called 'Keeping in Touch' days. KiT days are designed to let women keep in touch with their employer, and the days can be used for any work-related activity including training or attendance at meetings or conferences. Working for part of a day counts as one day's work and businesses must be aware that any such work only takes place with the agreement of both parties.

LOWER TURNOVER
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PROGRESSION AND PROMOTION CHECKLIST

Recruiting for senior posts	
Women are supported to apply for senior jobs within the business.	
When criteria are set for jobs, alternative qualifications and sources of experience are also considered.	
Where it has been identified that a particular group is under-represented, positive action measures around targeted recruitment are considered.	
Staff on maternity leave are informed of job vacancies.	
Record keeping	
Records on staff progression are kept, including data on applications and interviews, and are broken down by gender.	
Training and development	
Training opportunities are available to full-time and part-time staff.	
Training sessions are held during working hours	
Training sessions are held at accessible locations.	

Development opportunities are not restricted to particular groups of staff.	
Female staff are supported to participate in mentoring programmes.	
Female staff are supported to participate in women's professional networks.	
Where it has been identified that a particular group is under-represented, positive action measures around targeted training are considered.	
Staff are consulted on why they did or did not apply for a promoted post.	
Staff on maternity leave are kept up to date about training and development opportunities.	
Qualifications	
Staff are supported to undertake study for qualifications related to their work.	

GLOSSARY

Equality

Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration – recognising the diversity of different groups.

Gender

Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and women. For example, historically, gender role stereotyping would suggest that women should look after children at home while men go to work in the formal labour market.

The 'glass ceiling'

Describes the invisible barrier that prevents women from progressing to senior roles, despite seemingly fair recruitment and progression practices.

Presenteeism

Describes a long hours culture which sees staff routinely working late. This can have a negative impact on women's progression as women are more likely to be unable to work longer hours because of caring responsibilities.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Close the Gap
www.closethegap.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Acas
www.acas.org.uk

Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.