

Break biases, advocate for the underrepresented, create a more equal world

By [Linda Saunder](#)

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Over the last two years the global pandemic has radically shifted the way we work and live. The disproportionate impact of the health crisis has also made more visible the reality of social injustices and inequalities. Creating an environment in which all employees can thrive is all the more important given the rise of new barriers faced by women in the workforce. According to McKinsey, 1 in 4 considered downshifting or even abandoning their careers as a result of increased domestic responsibilities.



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Hard times reveal true character and true culture. For better workplaces and a more equitable society, all business leaders have a responsibility to empower women to further their careers. This includes redefining what equality truly means to them.

An equal workplace is one that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive, where difference is celebrated and women can move ahead free of deliberate and unconscious barriers.

Creating more balance, increased productivity, and deeper equality starts with a commitment to equal pay for equal work. By implementing inclusive business practices, processes to tackle biased businesses and open doors to others, businesses can be powerful platforms for social change and further equality for all.

Re-imagining hiring systems and ways of working

It's no secret that workplaces with greater diversity tend to be more innovative and successful. Taking action to ensure equal access begins with re-imagining our hiring systems.

Embedding a diversity recruiting team, implementing a more equitable referral process, and creating insiders programmes connecting candidates to current employees are just some examples of how companies can open up opportunities for women. Introducing company-wide bias training and inclusive hiring practices for managers and recruiters can help reduce bias throughout the hiring process.



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It's important that businesses learn from the pandemic to create workplaces that inspire balance and equality. In an all-digital work-from-anywhere world, businesses have an even greater responsibility to create an equal and inclusive environment that translates both in-office and virtually.

Recognising employees' different roles and situations, and helped by collaborative technologies, they can explore what's possible in terms of flexible working arrangements. Some prefer to come to the office every day, others might not need to be office-based at all.

Facilitating an environment that better suits employees' needs and new working habits, businesses can shape the future of the office to be a greater place for human connection and a hub for collaboration.

Focus on experience, and skills

Representation does not hinge on hiring alone — companies must focus on experience. To be inclusive means everyone must feel supported, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Tackling bias can't be a one-and-done exercise, but rather a continuous journey. Business leaders need to give employees — especially managers — the tools they need to recognise and address bias, foster belonging, create access, and advocate for others.

By listening to employees, research and data insights, companies can take steps to improve the experience of women. Strategies can also include initiatives and tailored training to address microaggressions, embrace inclusive language and inclusive promotions practices.



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The greatest challenge to advancing gender equality in the workplace, particularly in the technology industry, is addressing women's under-representation in emerging roles, such as cloud computing, engineering and data, and AI.

With a focus on improving skills and reskilling, workforce strategies must ensure that women are better equipped to take advantage of the opportunities that the digital economy offers. This includes creating intentional career pathways for women to get into and succeed in the technology, wherever they are in their journey.

To help make gender stereotypes a thing of the past and build a workplace that looks like society, women need to be represented at every level, particularly on corporate boards and C-Suite positions. Supporting women at all stages of their careers, investing in leadership development and mentorship programmes and inclusive promotions processes, will bring more women to the decision-making table and inspire more to rise from the ranks.

Taking action together

Companies cannot be alone in this work — together, we must collaborate with governments, our partners, customers, ecosystem, our industry, and our communities to drive equality for everyone.

The time for action is now to use our platforms to break biases, advocate for and open doors to underrepresented talent, to create a more equal world.

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