

Female Talent: Acquisition and Management

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Abstract

There are some factors that are common among women who have been successful in their profession. While it is true that many of these factors are also needed for men in the Job, Women experience their career journey differently due to differences in the way in which they are socialized, the roles they play, often unconscious bias held by both men and women, and the still prevalent masculine cultures of many organizations. This paper will introduce the key points relevant to retain female talent and harnessing the power of them. It explicitly talks about the strategies for finding and keeping female talent, and to advancing women in the workplace. This paper solidly explains the solutions, norms, and practices of attracting and retaining female talent. It ensures women to attain better representation in leadership roles.

Keywords: Female talent, Sourcing, Developing, Maintaining and Retaining Female Talent, Mentoring program, Career progression, Diversity, Mentors, Reverse mentoring, Buddy system, Company culture, Work-life balance, Promoting leadership.

Introduction

Women often have a sense that they are outside of the mainstream but do not understand the problems impacting their career journey. If they had clarity on the barriers they face, they would be in a better position to overcome them. Gender diversity programs are all about addressing an uneven playing field that is not providing equal career development opportunities for all. It is important to realize that this uneven playing field is not created consciously or out of malice or overt discrimination. Efforts should be undertaken to ensure that women are visible in organization practice committees, industry trade associations, business development campaigns, and strategic client assignments. Diverse approaches to leadership, business development, career-life integration and career navigation is an effective strategy to support and nurture the aspirations of emerging female leaders.

SOURCING FEMALE TALENT

Mindset matters. A lot. Globally, 30% of women said that employers do too little to treat women equally in the workplace. In a survey of professional women, more than one in five women reported personal experience of gender discrimination when applying or interviewing for a job. Additionally, the global study suggested that there is a significant disconnect between the views of women and employers on the barriers to hiring more women. (Moritz & Karve, 2017).

Gather data about the current situation

Although all companies may already have an inkling that your organization could be doing more to support female talent, gathering accurate data about the current situation can help secure necessary support and buy-in for your plans. Doing your research will give you a clear starting point to work from. It will also provide you with the evidence you need to build a strong business case to help your organization support and retain female talent. Once you've got some basic quantitative data, the next step is to supplement this with information gathered directly from your employees about their experiences. (Scott, 2016).

Get senior management buy-in

The senior team in your organisation must be committed to supporting female talent in the right way. This is about demonstrating genuine support, and 'walking the talk' wherever possible. Tone at the top is important, therefore your organisation's board, top leaders and senior management team should be actively involved with, committed to, and accountable for gender diversity. (Scott, 2016).

Reverse mentoring

Shifting from the traditional top-down approach, businesses can facilitate cross-generational understanding and give entry level talent a voice through reverse mentoring, where fresh eyes help senior executives. By equipping business leaders with a more diverse perspective, the reverse mentoring model allows companies to build a more collaborative culture and become more effective in engaging and advancing the career growth of high caliber, emerging talent. (Kimmorley, 2017).

Invest in talent based on aspiration, not just track record performance

Businesses can yield stronger results for their teams and bottom-lines by re-evaluating their attitude and approach to hiring. The bias to evaluate and identify 'talent' based predominantly on track record performance is problematic and leads to companies missing out on quality potential. The talent mapping process should focus on the talent's aspiration, potential and ambition, as to not discount those who haven't had the opportunity to establish a solid track record yet. (Kimmorley, 2017).

Understand How Female Talent Looks for New Job Opportunities

If you think that women and men look for work in the same way, think again. Our research suggests that women are more likely to use job reviews and rely on personal relationships to find employer information as well as secure new jobs. They are less likely than men to use certain mainstream recruiting sites, which makes female talent more difficult to reach. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Broadcast Your Benefits, Culture & Policies

Most employees value transparency, but there are certain benefits and cultural issues in particular that are stigmatizing to ask about. Therefore, don't make women choose between getting information about things like work flexibility and maternity leave and having to face the potential stigma of simply asking. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Examine Your Pay Practices

Women in the workplace tell us they are very aware of and concerned about the gender pay gap. Even if you cannot commit to a full-fledged compensation audit across your entire firm, you should set practices into place that encourage consistent compensation across job titles. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Female-Friendly Job Adverts

women aren't attracted to the same job adverts as men; employers will do better by avoiding stereotypically 'masculine' language (e.g. competitive, assertive) and including lexis that is more appealing to women (e.g. collaborative, team-based). It's also worth promoting at this early stage that your company provides equal pay and to mention any diversity policies or diversity and inclusivity initiatives you have in place. (Dawson, 2018).

Tailor Your Interviews

Research has shown that whilst men are more likely to overstate their experience and capabilities, women will understate theirs. With this in mind, your candidate interviews should focus on evidence and proof of abilities and you should pay special attention to previous references over candidate's own self-promotion. Where possible, you should also enlist at least one female staff member into the interview process, to help to understand female candidates as much as possible and to highlight that your organisation already has women at senior level. (Dawson, 2018).

Start Internal Mentoring And Leadership Programmes

Mentors do not have to be females in senior positions, or the schemes be just for women – this initiative can prove beneficial in helping any young person to progress, and even started as early as school or undergraduate level. This is a valuable way of talent spotting and will ensure all employees are pushed toward the right types of projects, challenges and opportunities which allow them to flourish. (Dawson, 2018).

Introduce External Networking and Mentoring

It's important for businesses to promote their engagement in current issues. Countless non-profit organisations and networks exist with the sole purpose of inspiring female leadership, holding conferences and events that businesses can attend and employees

can engage with. Networking with high profile women, either in a specific business sector or more generally, can be all the inspiration female staff need. (Dawson, 2018).

Share your career opportunity policies

Women consistently report being shut out of "old boys" networks and thereby missing out on key networking opportunities. Make mentoring and sponsorship programs available so that women have the same opportunities for promotion as men. (Writer, 2018).

Create a united front. Your recruiting team, your interviewers and each member of your HR program should all be taught that recruiting, hiring, and retaining women is an extremely important goal for your company. Get to know your team members. Make sure that they each share this vision. (Charlton, 2012).

Spread your recruiting net. To find many qualified female applicants, focus your recruiting efforts on places where women are easily reached. Research local women's organizations and women's employment websites. Look into job boards and career fairs at women's colleges. These efforts won't exclude men from applying or from being selected, but they will result in a higher number of female applicants. (Charlton, 2012).

Create a female-friendly benefits program. What is your company's maternity leave policy? Do your benefits cover family planning, prenatal care or gynecological exams? When a company offers benefits packages that more fully support women, it's easier to find qualified applicants during the recruiting process. Female-friendly benefits also help keep valued employees where you want them – at your company. (Charlton, 2012).

Focus on advancement.

In a recent study, one of the top reasons that experienced female professionals cited for changing jobs was a lack of advancement and opportunity. Women today expect more from their career than any previous generation. Companies that establish formal career progression plans will have better luck at attracting and keeping female employees--and in turn they will be motivated and committed and loyal. (Daskal, n.d).

DEVELOPING FEMALE TALENT

Start a formal mentoring program. People tend to network and develop mentorships with people of their own gender. If men have more opportunity for leadership roles and they network with other men, men will continue to dominate leadership roles. Women, who have mentors with less clout and are sponsored significantly less than men, need access to mentors and sponsors of both genders. (Loehr, 2017).

Focus on career progression. Women today expect more from their careers than any previous generation. Among the women we surveyed, female millennials (born 1980-1995) and women just starting out in their careers said career advancement was the most attractive trait in an employer. The least attractive was lack of opportunities. Most experienced female professionals who had recently changed employers cited that as the top reason they left their jobs. Companies that establish formal career progression plans will have better luck at attracting employees and keeping them motivated and committed. (Moritz & Karve, 2017).

Revisit people policies. All companies could benefit from taking a hard look at their policies and assessing which ones meet the needs of female employees. These could include leadership opportunities, professional development, global mobility, flexibility and career progression. Proactive organizations will make sure programmes are updated and new ones put into place. There are many of them: 28% of employers have already adopted a formal returner programme, and a further 25% are currently exploring this opportunity. (Moritz & Karve, 2017).

Lead by example. Of all the women we surveyed, 67% said they considered positive role models when deciding to accept a position with an employer, rising to 76% for women at the start of their careers. Leaders have a vital role to play, by creating the right tone at the top, inspiring other women and helping them to reach their full potential. A diversified leadership team is

important, as is an inclusive workplace culture that brings everyone to the table. This means that conversations about inclusion should be carried out by men as well as women, and all senior employees should be strongly encouraged to mentor and build trusting relationships with people who don't look like them. (Moritz & Karve, 2017).

Create new opportunities. In a time of unprecedented business change, it's not enough to rely on what's always been done. Companies need to think differently about how to create new opportunities for women who aspire to lead. One possibility: Rather than wait for a man to step down from the company's board of directors in order to add a woman, increase the total number of board seats to accommodate a new female director. (Doughtie, 2017).

Measure progress. Companies can track various inclusion and diversity-specific key performance indicators, such as talent acquisition, attrition, career progression, and leadership and account team composition. Leadership can review this information to help senior leaders and their direct reports set goals that will move the high-performing women they have identified by name forward. These business leaders can be given relevant metrics specific to their business units, location or function. Companies can also provide feedback at the individual level to reinforce high performance. (Doughtie, 2017).

Invest in the future. Millennials represent the most educated generation of women in history. They are very socially conscious and consider a company's purpose and commitment to corporate citizenship as top priorities. Connecting with this generation of talented women requires understanding their values, communicating the company's purpose, and engaging them in the company's social mission. (Doughtie, 2017).

Increase accountability for gender diversity

Setting gender diversity targets, and making leaders and managers across your organisation accountable for recruiting, developing and promoting women are proven ways of improving gender diversity. To succeed, this approach needs strong commitment from an organisation's leadership. Managers across all levels and regions were asked to regularly report on the diversity of their talent. They must also show the specific steps they are taking to develop employees. (Scott, 2016).

Develop mentoring programs for women

Having a good mentor can help aspiring leaders (both male and female) to the next level in their careers. However, mentoring has been shown to be especially important for women because they often have difficulty building social capital at work.

Prioritize Gender Diversity, Particularly Among Management

Fairygodboss data proves — perhaps unsurprisingly — that there is a clear correlation between women's job satisfaction and diverse management teams. In other words, diverse management ranks are essential to showing that a company takes gender equality seriously. So take some time to consider whether your management team composition reflects your culture and priorities. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Lead the Way with Bold Steps

Companies are making real change by demanding greater diversity from their vendors, performing compensation audits and engaging in unconscious bias training for hiring managers. Your leadership stance on gender diversity issues can make a difference — not just to your own employees, but to your employer brand. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Reexamine outdated policies.

Every organization should revisit and reassess their policies and see if they meet everyone's needs, especially women. Do your policies support leadership advancement, professional development, work flexibility, and career progression? Well-crafted policies that put employees first will help you attract all top talent--women and men. (Daskal, n.d).

Reevaluate common biases.

Everyone has biases. Most of them are unconscious, even in the most well-intentioned people, but they still have a way of playing out in our everyday experiences and events. Working women especially have often faced challenges grounded in these biases, challenges that sometimes result in major roadblocks for advancement and development. The best way forward is to talk about it,

even if the topic is difficult and makes people uncomfortable. Feedback and learning and growing in this area are imperative to keeping the best and most talented people of any sex. (Daskal, n.d).

MAINTAINING FEMALE TALENT

Institute flexible work arrangements. Fear of negative career consequences, manager skepticism, excessive workload and a “face time” culture are among the barriers that prevent employees from adopting flexible work arrangements.

Set standards for both genders and give managers the training they need to be comfortable managing flextime workers. (Loehr, 2017).

Function as a results-only work environment (ROWE), and create formal compensation policies with clear criteria. ROWE-type policies can help with turnover caused by work-life conflict, one of which is family burdens. The traditional solution to work-life challenges is the decision to have women stay home. This reinforces gender inequality, and subtly disadvantages women, particularly mothers. Judging women by the quality of their work rather than whether or not they are physically present can increase retention. (Loehr, 2017).

Diversity should be baked in and shared. The good news is that 76% of employers have incorporated diversity and inclusion in their employer brands. Among companies with more than 10,000 employees, 88% report having done so. But talking about diversity is no longer enough. Demonstrable progress – such as an inclusive workplace culture and high levels of collaboration, feedback and care – is increasingly important to women when deciding where to work. Over half of the women (56%) who took part in our global study said they looked to see if an organization had made progress in that department when deciding whether to work there. And 61% of them reported looking at the diversity of an employer’s leadership team as well. (Moritz & Karve, 2017).

Encourage mentors and sponsorships. Mentors and sponsors are beneficial for personal and career growth. Companies can encourage women — indeed, all employees — to find mentors and sponsors to help them develop their skills and build their career paths. Mentors can help employees think about their career growth, while sponsors can actually help make it happen. (Doughtie, 2017).

Provide a network of support. Companies can create advisory boards to enhance career opportunities for women and drive local and national initiatives that support, advance, retain and reward women. KPMG’s Network of Women, for example, drives our Women’s Advisory Board’s national programs at the local level, including activities focused on mentoring, networking, relationship building, leadership and skills development. (Doughtie, 2017).

Promote flexible working - for everyone!

If you can offer your employees flexible working arrangements, your organization will be better placed to retain valuable skilled talent (both male and female), and create a balanced workforce. You could investigate a range of alternatives to full-time working such as: working part-time offering early/late starting and finishing times investigating whether roles can be fulfilled by job-sharing arrangements introducing flexi-time allowing people to work from home or in alternative locations. (Scott, 2016).

Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring, also called reciprocal mentoring, is an outstanding example of how to create visibility of up-and-coming female leaders to top executives, as well as expose female leaders to the most strategic work at the company. While the method is informal, it helps break down some of the unconscious bias, while creating visibility for female talent whom the male leaders might not otherwise interact with. (Stuckey, n.d).

Transparent and collaborative career mapping

Development plans, stretch assignments, promotions, and networking opportunities are equal for men and women who have been rated with similar capabilities. This structure removes the chances of women not being aware of opportunities for their development at higher levels, and it creates visibility to top leadership. Since this development program starts when they are hired, women are an equal partner in opting in or out for additional advancement for their career track. Annual reviews are used

by the Talent Development team to ensure women are recognized by leadership and for selection in highly visible programs. (Stuckey, n.d).

Create specific learning and development opportunities

It is important at the early stage of careers that emerging talents are given the opportunity to build a broader business perspective, beyond what they have access and exposure to day-to-day in the workplace. This includes gaining access to both internal and external executives, as well as peer-to-peer networking opportunities. (Kimmorley, 2017).

Create a “board” with early-mid career constituents

Businesses can create the equivalent of an executive board but with emerging talent, and put pending business decisions to both the “real” board and the younger board. The value of this sort of initiative is in comparing the decisions and outcomes reached by both and learning about the different considerations. (Kimmorley, 2017).

Create opportunities that expose young talent to the executives of the business

Senior leaders can create opportunities to have emerging talent shadow executives for a day, to gain exposure to a higher level of the business. This not only gives younger talent valuable insights into the management levels of a company, but it also significantly builds their confidence levels. (Kimmorley, 2017).

Ensure Your Company is Promoting Women Fairly

According to Fairygodboss members, unequal promotion is the top area in which they observe gender inequity in their organizations. Some of the reasons behind this concern are expressed as unequal access to sponsors, unfair evaluation standards, and “boys’ club” mentality among leadership. Be self-conscious about whether these things are happening at your firm and address these practices. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Encourage Mentorship & Sponsorship of Women

Women consistently report less access to senior leadership. Consider formal programs or other options to build an infrastructure to support, mentor and sponsor women at your company. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Engage Men as Allies & Draw them Into the Conversation

Although most men support gender diversity in the workplace, they are often unaware of bias or discrimination when it takes place. More direct and honest conversations between men and their female peers and direct reports can lead to greater sensitivity and more effective partnership. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Ensuring that everyone has a voice: Something that may hold women back is not having the confidence to speak up. In certain situations, some people (not just women) may not feel comfortable sharing their ideas, no matter how good they may be. This could mean they are sat on a solution to a problem, or something that no one else has thought of which could really make an impact on your business. The most important thing here is making sure these people are not only heard but also listened to. (Edgoose, 2018).

Assigning a mentor to women: mentors can offer another level of support for women which can be invaluable to their development and progression at work. In addition to the support they offer, a mentor will coach and give much needed advice to these women, meaning they are better equipped to progress and offer more to the business. (Edgoose, 2018).

Take sexual harassment seriously. When you treat sexual harassment and gender discrimination with the seriousness these matters deserve, you create a positive environment for the working women in your company. A zero-tolerance policy will make retaining female employees easier, and when word gets out that your company isn’t afraid to stand up for its female workers, more women will respond to your job openings. (Charlton, 2012).

Put women in positions of power. There’s a big difference between a board full of female executives and a Mad Men-esque typing pool. When women are represented in the highest levels of your company, other talented women will notice. Recruiting star female candidates then becomes much easier – but don’t be surprised if highly qualified women approach the company on their own, too. The mentoring that new hires can expect to receive from female execs is another huge draw. (Charlton, 2012).

Equalize pay. The sad news is that women are still making less than men; the wage gap remains a reality around the world. On average, women would need to work more than 80 additional days a year to catch up to what men are earning. Make sure pay equality is practiced within your organization, and support a policy of transparency. (Daskal, n.d).

Create a culture of inclusiveness and diversity.

Many women feel they are often dismissed or ignored in the workplace. When women feel like outsiders, when their talents are overlooked and their voices not heard, they will most likely leave. Building an inclusive workplace means creating the kind of culture that supports all employees for who they are and what they are capable of doing. It means creating an organizational environment that values diversity not just for the sake of appearances but for the competitive edge that comes with access to multiple perspectives. (Daskal, n.d).

Support network

Women need a support network at work, one she can count on and be herself without being judged. She is not very good at just reaching out to people and forming her own network because she is often not as vocal. She wants to succeed but she doesn't want to be seen in a negative light by asking for what she needs and wants, being rational, achievement-oriented or ambitious as opposed to how women are stereotypically meant to behave, friendly, sensitive and appreciative. She is relationship focused with strong interpersonal skills and collaboration skills and having a support network where she can leverage these skills will really help her shine. (Nyo, 2018).

Coaching

It is true that women have a lot of limiting beliefs and perceived barriers. One of the main barriers or beliefs that has a negative impact on having a gender equality in workplace is that she doesn't realise that she can have both—family & career. She is worried that if she gets promoted to a senior role, she will be expected to work longer hours and she might not be able to with her family as much. The same worry exists for getting paid more, and this is one reason why there is a gender pay gap. She fears that she won't be able to juggle both and become a disappointment to either her work or her family. (Nyo, 2018).

Recognition

Regular recognition and praise means her work is being recognised, and when they are specific and not a general comment like "You're doing well!" or "Fantastic work!", it means the other person has really noticed and appreciates the value that she brings to the organisation. She also sees promotion as a recognition and acknowledgment of her work instead of fast-tracking her career and getting a corner office. In general, the feeling of being valued is more important to her than the feeling of winning. (Nyo, 2018).

RETAINING FEMALE TALENT

Encouraging self care

Multinational Oil Company Chevron offers full-fitness and self-care facilities onsite at their global locations. Employees have the opportunity to take care of themselves by working out during the day and getting massages or facials without having to leave their worksite. This enables women to find balance and stay healthy. (Stuckey, n.d).

The buddy system

Deloitte makes diversity and gender equality an important aspect of training. The company matches senior leaders (mostly male) to rising female talent for one to two years. The objectives are to build confidence, create visibility of talent internally, and provide access to stretch assignments. What makes Deloitte's program successful is that the company measures the results of the coaching efforts and holds each coach accountable for the success of his assigned leader in developing new capabilities and expansions of networks. (Stuckey, n.d).

Flexible work schedules

Global health care company Roche has a unique flexible work program, offering employees 12 days of remote work per quarter, which comes to 48 days a year. If an employee needs to stay home to be with kids or sick parents or to focus on a specific project, the company trusts that they will still get their work done. (Stuckey, n.d).

Unique family support

Pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly offers after school programs beyond day care so children can attend science camps, math sessions, and other activities in the evening. These innovative programs enable employees with families to retain demanding positions without the worry of leaving children at home, which helps to reduce the choice women often must make between family and work. As women continue their upward trajectory in business, they have yet to be fully appreciated for the unique qualities and abilities they bring to the workplace. To keep women in the workplace, companies must continue to evolve their employee benefits to meet their needs. (Stuckey, n.d).

Improve Your Maternity & Parental Leave policies

Women with young children have the lowest labor force participation rates. To increase the likelihood that mid-level women of childbearing age return to and stay with your company after maternity leave, consider improving your benefits. Make sure you understand how your company's leave policies compare to competitors'. Fairygodboss has crowdsourced a maternity leave database that helps not only female job-seekers, but also companies looking to be competitive with their benefits. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Formalize Flexibility & Work-Life Balance Policies

The manager-dependent "mother-may-I" approach to flexibility works for some...until it doesn't. Examine whether there is a good reason not to have a formal and transparent flexibility policy, even if there have to be differences between departments. A well-articulated flexibility policy can be a real asset to employers looking to recruit the best talent interested in clarity about whether they can achieve the work-life balance they want. (Direct employer association guest, 2017).

Flexible working practices: Flexible working has been shown to help all employees, not just women or those with children. The rigid 9-5 is fast becoming unusual, with demands on more and more of us to be contactable outside office hours and technology making this possible, flexible working can work to both the employers and employees advantage. It does however make 'switching off' from work much harder and this needs to be taken into consideration. (Edgoose, 2018).

Part-time work offering the potential for working part time can be beneficial to your existing employees, particularly those returning to work from maternity leave. Allowing the balance that they need between home life and a full-time job with a happy medium that can work well for both parties. (Edgoose, 2018).

Provide professional opportunities for promotion: promotions to leadership or senior roles should be done on merit of skill, not length of service. The mentality of length of service promotion can sometimes prevent women progressing in business. If for instance they have had some time out of work to have a baby, while their male counter parts haven't, these women are then at a disadvantage which they'll never be able to overcome. By promoting on an individual's skills, it allows a much more level playing field for all potential successors. (Edgoose, 2018).

Incentivize Joint Paternity Leave

What most companies do not realise, is that maternity leave can be split 50-50 between mother and father. Most parents are eligible for Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP), which means the care of the child does not have to be taken just by the female, or one parent on their own, and can be split into different blocks and shared by both parties. (Dawson, 2018).

Allow Employees More Flexibility

Flexibility - in both work hours and locations - is highly valued. Knowing that a company will permit employees to work from home at short notice, or to take their hours around their home life, is a major factor considered by females undergoing career

moves, as many women are their children's primary caregiver. Although attracting more female talent is important, new initiatives don't have to be female orientated. Changes like this can benefit your company as a whole. (Dawson, 2018).

Conclusion

Women experience their career journey different due to differences in the way in which they are socialized. The roles in society that women often play, unconscious bias in business held by both men, and women, and the still prevalent masculine cultures of many organizations. Best practice of gender diversity programs are about addressing an uneven playing field that is not providing equal career development opportunities for all. The uneven job is not intentional and is often invisible. It is important to realize that this uneven place is not created consciously, or out of malice, or overt discrimination. Therefore Constant efforts must be taken to fill the gap and strategies be framed to encourage female talent.

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