

JUMP Gender Equality Hub - Wrap-up report

How to engage men in gender equality (29th September 2015)

Introduction

The focus of the session was how to engage men in gender equality.

- Why is gender equality also relevant to men?
- What can you do to engage men? What are the do's and don'ts?
- What active role can men adopt on this issue?

These issues brought together 5 experts and 30 participants from 23 companies reflecting a diversity of industry sectors, experience and perspectives.

1. Welcome

85% of business leaders are men, which means that **gender equality issues are in men's hands**, according to recent research. This is why it is vital to engage men in bringing about change, explained **Isabella Lenarduzzi, JUMP** in the opening of the session.

Katrien Goossens, Global Diversity and Well-being Officer, Euroclear, welcomed the participants to Euroclear as the host of the session. She introduced Euroclear, a global organisation in the financial services sector. With 3,600 employees worldwide and headquarters in Brussels, it has a diverse employee base with some 85 nationalities. Overall this is split 50/50 between men and women but as in other companies, the higher up the organization, the fewer the women. The company's diversity focus was therefore initially on gender. With the CEO championing the efforts, they have defined a strategy at the group level that is being implemented locally with the support of a Diversity Council. Particular areas of focus are creating a better gender talent pipeline and developing a culture of inclusion.

2. Presentation – Axiom / JUMP Study “Do men really benefit from gender equality”

Marc Timmerman gave a brief overview of research conducted in 2015: ***Do Men Want Gender Equality at Work?*** The study highlights a blind spot in the gender equality debate and the need to break stereotyping and the 'them and us' scenario.

Gender equality has many male allies, the study finds: **72% of men find gender equality advantageous to men**. Amongst the advantages cited, the most important are: gender equality would imply less male stereotypes, better inter-generational leaders, it would lead to better company results and ensure better work-life balance.

But **63% of the men who responded had concerns about increased gender equality**: about gender quotas, about fewer career or promotion opportunities, about reduced visibility or exposure.

Resistance is based on a number of different drivers and contextual elements, that the study analyses, but there is a group of “passively resistant” men who could be turned towards more supportive behavior. Marc proposes multiple actions towards the male population, ranging from increased awareness and dialogue, explanations on competitive concerns (gender quota, promotion processes, etc), search for more male and female role models, increased gender mix in teams, etc.

(cf. detailed results in PPT)

3. Reflections

Jean-Pierre Bodson, European Investment Bank explained that the bank is what he calls an ‘old Europe’ institution with an associated culture (including mainly ‘suited and booted’ males). Like Euroclear, they have a diverse environment with 40 nationalities all based in their headquarters in Luxembourg. He feels that employees are “lost and don’t feel an association with the identity of the bank”. The challenge is to break the stereotyping that exists and create an environment where employees can understand the value of diversity and the benefits of working together. To do this they need to engage the men.

Jean-Pierre uses the way he dresses (male skirt) to create an authentic and unusual way to create conversations “it should not be about impressions on seeing me, but on impression I have made at the end of a conversation”. He is a strong believer in the need to embrace diversity, and his goal is to create more togetherness. He explained that under the Juncker plan, the bank will be recruiting some 600-700 people. This presents a challenge and an opportunity to create the right balance. Even though they have the desire and the tools, he acknowledges it will take time. He also stressed the need for role models.

This brought many reactions from the audience. In response to a question about whether women and men react differently to his way of dressing, he acknowledged that women are more accepting probably because they are more understanding of authenticity.

Another participant noted that diversity goes deeper than what is visible and questioned the approach of accentuating the visible aspects of diversity (for instance education, upbringing, religion etc are not necessarily visible, yet they are dimensions of diversity).

Fellow panellist, Stéphane Reboud, Dell, said that it was important to welcome differences, as they can be very enriching. He also indicated the need to create a safe environment where people can be

open and honest, even around subjects that are seen as taboo. In such environments, differences can then be “disclosed and shown”.

Jean-Pierre gave examples of welcoming differences: they have a meditation room, a neutral place that is open to everyone of all faiths. In addition, the cafeteria caters for different requirements. “There are lots of things you can do to facilitate an understanding of diversity and not make things feel “inappropriately different’.”

Patric Jean, film director and author “Les hommes veulent-ils l’égalité?” talked about the views and findings he has shared in his book. He referenced a statistic shared by Marc in opening that 72% of men say that they “see advantages” in gender equality. He challenged whether they act in ways that actually support what they say... While there is a definite lack of women in senior roles in companies despite the research that links women and performance, Patric feels that there are too many factors involved to be able to make these links truly causal.

“Women in business are useful because women bring a different perspective”, is commonly heard and stated, yet he suggests that this reinforces stereotyping because it assumes that the concept of ‘women’ has been predefined - which he believes is a dangerous hypothesis.

He then talked about how men perceive the issues around gender equality. They are more likely to feel that they will “suffer” from efforts for more equality because they have been in a situation of “assumed privilege” for as long as history itself, therefore this “conditioning” is ingrained in how they feel and act. He used an example of the gender pay gap. If companies want to close this (without spending more), are they doing to ask men to reduce their salaries? Men are looking at what they are likely to lose through gender equality rather than the benefits. Are they really going to give up a promotion for a woman? Men have a lot to lose when they feel that their current dominance is legitimate (let alone biological).

He argues the same on the domestic front. Will men really give up their free time to do more domestic chores? Finally, he argues against those who challenge “positive discrimination for women” when in fact there has been positive discrimination for men for years...

He suggests a different way to frame the topic. Why is this movement happening now? “It is not because women are more intelligent now than they were previously. It is that there are more catalysts for this change now – capitalism, revolutions, politics – and also the increasing influence of men who want to see their daughters treated fairly”. Change is now inevitable and irreversible even if it will be slow.

Companies are in their own cycles of evolution, or “emergence” as he calls it. They are taking small but significant steps such as not arranging meetings later than 18.00.

But it’s important to be realistic. Individuals don’t necessarily think they are behaving inappropriately. But if they are threatened they will react. Hence the ‘why me, us, now?’ syndrome.

On a positive note, some men are beginning to see themselves differently. They are able to admit that prior thinking was wrong because now they understand the reality. They are the ones who can encourage others.

Stéphane Reboud, Dell and ambassador for Men Advocating Real Change (MARC), has been with Dell for 12 years. It is a global organisation with 42 different nationalities and 18 languages. He is based in Montpellier with over 1,000 people with a focus on EMEA, which means 140 countries.

Dell have been focussing on Diversity & Inclusion already for 7-8 years. This includes programmes for career development, acceleration programmes, women's networks (including 2,500 people). In looking at what other companies do, they considered they had "ticked all the boxes" yet they realised that momentum was slowing so needed to re-energise.

Together with three other Executive Directors, he was asked by the EMEA President to attend a training provided by Catalyst on **Men Advocating Real Change (MARC)**. They decided to introduce MARC into Dell – 18 months ago.

As Marc shared, a man needs to go through his own process of understanding diversity as a journey. "Everyone will have different starting point, or different triggers. These are influenced by many factors such as personal beliefs and values, culture, upbringing, etc." Each of the Directors had their own 'aha' moment during the training. Dell has now created a programme to engage with male colleagues - which includes women to provide fact-based day-to-day examples.

He stressed the need to think inclusion and not just diversity – and to ensure that diversity is more than just gender. "Inclusion means being part of things, experiencing equal treatment." He believes there is still too much emphasis on women fighting negativity towards men, which creates an adversarial atmosphere. Introducing quotas exacerbates this and creates resistance, whereas the goal should be to create positive energy and avoid situations of conflict.

He shared an anecdote about a pilot course with 20 people from the Leadership Team, 5 of whom were women. The biggest learning was nothing to do with gender. It was that the group was predominantly English speaking and that being a native English speaker was seen as discriminatory.

He then talked about the three phases of the diversity journey at Dell:

- "Let's face it" – education and explaining things as they are
- "Accept it"- understand your values, history and making it yours. Learning to respect others in a natural way (not faking it, but it's ok to show that you may be uncomfortable in a specific situation)
- "Take action" – eg, I am a competent male, what can I do to make a difference?

He reminded participants of his own challenge as a Frenchman in a very dominant Dell culture (HQ based in Austin, TX very strong founder/CEO) and yet through a combination of focused programs, time, along with real and authentic conversations, the tipping point will come for everyone.

Marie-Christine Mahéas, co-author of “Mixité, quand les hommes s’engagent” is an engineer and has worked in operational roles in large multinational organizations throughout her career. She has focused on gender balance matters for 10 years with a more specific emphasis on men in the last 5 years.

She said that gender equality has traditionally been seen as a women’s issue and as something that is impossible or very difficult to achieve. Things are now changing. She feels it is important to tackle the issue in a new way. “Men need to be involved. There’s little point in women talking to other women about the issue without the men.” With this enlightened thinking, as Chair of PWN France, they started organizing ‘Engaging with Men’ events (bring a boss, colleague, husband...). The topics were business-focused but left quite open to see where the conversation went – they included power, money, stereotyping, biases, and authority. She realised that men were supportive but they were also concerned about losing face in front of other men.

She said it is not only an ethical issue, but a business issue. A recent study at Sodexo proved that mixed teams (ie, not more than 60% of either gender) are more productive, with greater client retention and employee satisfaction.

The subject needs to be reframed into a ‘complex change management problem’. “That makes it a leadership issue and one where men and women have to engage together.”

The book that she coordinated, “Mixité: quand les hommes s’engagent” shares her own experiences and conversations she has had with a range of CEOs and leaders, offering a practical way forward with a toolbox that can help others break down the barriers to men’s engagement.

4. Panel discussion

A lively discussion followed and covered a range of topics:

Lessons learned on engaging men:

- Consider this as a journey and as something more than diversity – inclusion is essential. It is about making the mix work together not just having the mix.
- Explain the rationale behind what you are doing; take the emotion out of the discussion.
- Find male role models – and coach them in the role you want them to play, but let them be authentic (they cannot change overnight either...).
- Broaden the conversation to Diversity & Inclusion and the future. Consider that in 10 years we will manage differently because of mix of cultures, nationalities, religions and ages in the workplace, along with the impact of digital and social media. The former parameters of power and tradition are being changed forever.
- CEO and leaders need to step up and walk the talk – being actively present in the discussions (or events) can be a powerful symbol.

How to deal with active resistance?

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- Offer training on awareness about bias and stereotyping – the more self-aware people become the better the basis for understanding and change
- Don't focus only on women – be fair and equal with men – consider cross-mentoring
- Reframe the notion of success in a work environment – success does not equal power which would have been a traditional perspective
- Use appropriate language (non-confrontational) and humour (if appropriate)
- Be fact-based (performance ratings, salaries), share stories (make it real), encourage conversations (one at a time, listen, we are all on a journey).

The role of women's networks

- Often seen as a good place to start yet it might be worth expanding that view and being more inclusive from the beginning. When men are involved, the conversation changes and this can be more reflective of the reality.

Over-coming the feeling of 'them and us'

- Move the focus beyond equality. Diversity adds great value in life and should in business too.
- Allow people to be authentic, it is important to understand their emotional state in order to have a meaningful conversation – e.g., fear of letting go of power, or of having been 'wrong' for years etc.

Making progress

- If you compare to change management.... what is more credible to male middle class managers? Women talking about diversity or a mixed group talking about a much broader scope in way that is part of a mainstream business discussion, such as leadership, performance, etc.? Integrate into these policies and practices rather than having as something separate.
- It is complex change management – that's really it! Focus on changing the culture. That can create more positive energy (although it will also be seen as harder...)
- Move beyond HR in order for the efforts to be fully credible. Don't make diversity a separate entity... it has to be mainstream. Make it part of your mission.

The participants then spent some time discussing in more depth in three breakout groups:

- How to fight the resistance
- How to increase the number of sponsors
- How to affect the fence sitters.