

## How to strike a gender balance in the workplace

**Author: Lindah Mavengere . June 2020**

Many workplaces have seen challenges in the way issues of gender equality have been handled. On average, women receive lower salaries, are less likely to be promoted, and have less representation in top-level positions (ILO/95/22). The rise of affirmative action, which is the implementation of policies that support previously disadvantaged demographic groups, has been an improvement in terms of discrimination policies. However, there remains a challenge in organizations that have chosen to remain largely conservative.

In one study of 5 medium-sized United States and international companies, it was found that on average, C-level positions were highly populated by men. Entry-level positions were found to have a 45 % representation of women and 55 % for men (Huang et. al., 2019). The study also aimed to answer the question, “Do women get fewer promotions and lower salaries due to poor performance, or due to bias?” In the study, it was found that men and women were equally likely to meet their goals in the workplace, but men got more positive evaluations than women.

In an analysis of the evaluations, it was found that women were evaluating their female counterparts and men equally, while 70% of male evaluators provided higher evaluations for men than women (Huang et. al., 2019). In more senior-level positions, 75 % of the evaluators gave more positive reviews to men than women. There was a disregard for performance results in the male evaluators as compared to the female evaluators. Female evaluators took a more objective evaluation stance, based on performance indicators, while the male evaluators were more subjective, attributing superior performance to their male counterparts by virtue of their gender.

### **Achieving gender balance in the workplace**

#### **Recognize gender biases**

The first step to achieving a gender balance is to recognize that gender biases exist in your organization. It is important to look back within on your policies, and assess whether they favor everyone or only benefit one gender. By doing this, you will be able to address the issues your organization is facing from a knowledgeable point of view.

#### **Create an inclusive and collaborative culture**

An inclusive culture is important for any gender balance to work. Some degree of gender balance may be prevalent in different business units however the whole organization needs to have a degree of inclusion and collaboration. Inclusion allows every organizational unit to experience gender balance as something unique and healthy, it also ensures that minorities integrate fully into unit-specific teams. A collaborative culture, therefore, ensures the organization is working in accordance with its objectives

and is working well to achieve them.

### **Achieve a balance in all roles**

As mentioned earlier, most senior roles are occupied by men, and women are found occupying support staff positions. Most organizations have normalized the status quo where men are found occupying senior-level positions. This creates biases whereby roles are filled based on gender and not qualifications. It is hence important to normalize balancing the staff occupying roles in the organization. Recruitment should be merit-based and not based on the gender of a candidate.

Achieving the gender balance in organizations is still a huge challenge however it is achievable. Organizations should look back on their policies and ensure that they foster inclusiveness for all employees. Roles in organizations should be filled based on the capabilities of candidates and not on their gender.

### **References**

<https://learnblue.org/blog/2020/05/12/women-work-striking-the-gender-balance/>

<https://alumnimagazine.insead.edu/why-gender-balance-matters-and-how-to-achieve-it/>

[https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_008091/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_008091/lang--en/index.htm)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2019>

*Lindah Mavengere is a Business Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, a business management and human resources consulting firm.*

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindah-mavengere-552b32b2/>

**Phone:** +263 242 481946-48/481950

**Mobile:** +263 717 988 319

**Email:** [lindah@ipcconsultants.com](mailto:lindah@ipcconsultants.com)

**Main Website:** [www.ipcconsultants.com](http://www.ipcconsultants.com)

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/How-To-Strike-A-Gender-Balance-In-The-Workplace>