

**40:40:20**

# For gender balance

Interrupting bias in your talent processes



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Unless we actively and intentionally include women, the system will unintentionally exclude them.

Elizabeth Broderick AO Founder, Male Champions of Change

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Male Champions of Change have always asked '50:50, if not why not?' to help us uncover systemic and entrenched biases in policies and processes that have inhibited the advancement of women.

While 50:50 overall is the aim, a make-up of **40%** women and **40%** men, with **20%** open, will also deliver real benefits.

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# 40:40:20 for gender balance

## Interrupting bias in your talent processes

Male Champions of Change aim to achieve gender equality and accelerate the advancement of more women into leadership positions. We strive for gender balance – 40:40:20 (40% men, 40% women and 20% open) – at all levels of our organisations. This commitment is grounded in a core belief: to attract, recruit, retain and promote the best candidates, and to reap the diversity dividend, we must tap into the full talent pool.

'Targets with teeth' are essential to deliver results. But even with targets we risk missing out on the best candidates unless we understand and remove the biases that may be hidden in the way we recruit and develop talent.

In 2016, Chief Executive Women and Male Champions of Change released *In the Eye of the Beholder: Avoiding the Merit Trap*. This outlined how biases can influence the way merit is understood and applied.

'Merit' is often defined by the status quo. It also reinforces the status quo. *In the Eye of the Beholder* showed that adhering to an un-interrogated idea of merit offers limited opportunity for us to examine biases. It also reinforces the idea that gender inequality is only about supply side problems rather than demand-related issues too.

As a result, organisations miss out on the best talent and fish in an ever-diminishing pool of candidates – one that fails to reflect the community our organisations serve. If we continue to define 'merit' as people 'like us' who have done what we did, we will get more of the same. *In the Eye of the Beholder* offered examples of efforts to counter this and deliver something much closer to real meritocracy.

This toolkit goes a step further, breaking down the touchpoints in recruitment and promotion processes where bias might influence – from identifying talent in our organisations, drafting job descriptions, to offering a role – and identifying what we can do to interrupt bias when attracting, recruiting and retaining the best candidates.

The Property Male Champions of Change led the development of this toolkit, working with members from across our coalition. The toolkit details lessons learnt from in-depth reviews of our recruitment, promotion and talent processes and feedback from people in member organisations. It offers examples of high-impact actions that others can try, especially when recruiting and promoting talent, and during talent development.

We continue to evolve our approaches as we trial new ideas, test new approaches and learn from experience. We thank the many talented women and men in our organisations who have contributed to this work and continue to inspire us to do better.

# Gender balance improves performance

## Gender balance and inclusion improves business results



Firms with at least one woman in the C-suite generated **\$44 million more** economic

value when the company focuses on innovation.<sup>1</sup>



Global analysis of 2,400 companies found that those with at least one woman board member had consistently superior share price

performance, **4 percentage points higher return on equity** and **4 percentage points higher net income growth.**<sup>2</sup>



A study by McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile for gender diverse executive teams were **21% more likely to experience above-average profitability.**<sup>3</sup> The study also found that high-performing executive teams had more women in

revenue-generating roles. This is significant as women are generally underrepresented in line roles.<sup>4</sup> The findings also indicate that companies with low representation of women and other diverse groups were **29% more likely to underperform on profitability.**

<sup>1</sup> Dezso, C L and Ross, D G, 'Does female representation in top management improve firm performance? A panel data investigation', Strategic Management Journal, vol 33, pp. 1072-1089, 2012 (accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Credit Suisse, Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance, 2012, <https://www.credit-suisse.com/corporate/en/articles/media-releases/42035-201207.html> (accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>3</sup> McKinsey & Company, Delivering Through Diversity, 2018, [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Delivering%20through%20diversity/Delivering-through-diversity\\_full-report.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Delivering%20through%20diversity/Delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx) (accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>4</sup> McKinsey & Company, Women in the workplace, 2016, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Women%20in%20the%20Workplace%202016/Women-in-the-Workplace-2016.ashx> (accessed 30 September 2019).

## Gender balance and inclusion improves team performance

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Adding women to all-male teams increases group intelligence and performance.<sup>6</sup>

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Team collaboration and commitment improve by around 50%.<sup>7</sup>

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## Gender balance and inclusion improves individual performance<sup>5</sup>

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Increase in performance against goals

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Greater retention

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Lift in discretionary effort

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<sup>5</sup> CEB, Creating Competitive Advantage Through Workforce Diversity, 2012, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/texasports\\_com/documents/2014/11/24/corporate\\_leadership\\_council\\_report.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/texasports_com/documents/2014/11/24/corporate_leadership_council_report.pdf); Gartner, Diversity and Inclusion Build High-Performance Teams, 2019 <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/diversity-and-inclusion-build-high-performance-teams/> (both accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi, & Malone, Evidence for a collective intelligence factor in the performance of human groups, *Science* 330(6004):686-8, October 2010, <http://www.chabris.com/Woolley2010a.pdf>. (accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Gartner, Drive Results Through Workforce Diversity, 2012, <https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/trends/workforce-diversity> (accessed 13 November 2019).

# What is stopping us from achieving gender balance

## Reflect on your use of merit

*In the Eye of the Beholder: Avoiding the Merit Trap* illustrated how unconscious biases can creep into our talent processes. Research demonstrates that gender biases are nearly always present in employment decisions, subtly influencing our assessments about who is the 'right' or 'best' person for the job.<sup>8</sup>

Check your assumptions and ensure your selection processes identify and mitigate biases which block objectivity.

Just stating that **'I always appoint the best person for the job'** is not enough.

**'I always appoint the best person for the job'**

### Check who you are appointing

- Is your preferred candidate just like you?
- Do those who are different from the mainstream get different opportunities, pay and promotions from their cohort?
- Is the impact of bias, assumptions and stereotypes in talent processes unexamined?
- Does your organisation struggle to retain diverse recruits?

### Check your idea of the 'best' candidate

- Are you labelling candidates with different styles, skills and experiences as risky or a poor fit with the team?
- Are you regularly dismissing otherwise suitable candidates because they aren't seen as the 'right cultural fit' or as having a familiar leadership and communication style?
- Are you neglecting to consider the impact of each candidate on the performance of the team they will join?

### Check the job description

- Are the criteria based on past requirements and a description of the incumbent rather than future strategic needs?
- Are requirements for senior roles heavy on specialist or technical expertise and light on transferable and leadership skills?
- Is your pipeline falling short on diverse candidates?

**If you answered 'yes', then your assumptions may be getting in the way of an outcome based on merit.**

<sup>8</sup> For further research and information see: Foley, M, Cooper, R and Mosseri, S Gender equitable recruitment and promotion: Leading practice guide, WGEA Commissioned Research Paper, The Australian Women's Working Futures (AWWF) Project, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 2019; Williams, J and Mihaylo, S 'How the best bosses interrupt bias on their team', Harvard Business Review, 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams> (accessed 13 November 2019).

## Consider how bias may be impacting your decision

We all have biases. And we all consciously or unconsciously apply those biases to all aspects of our lives, including our decisions around talent, recruitment and promotion. Bias can take many forms:

### Common biases that impact decision making

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- **Affinity bias** is a tendency to favour people who are like us, resulting in homogenous teams and groupthink
  - **Confirmation bias** happens when we seek to confirm our beliefs, preferences or judgements, ignoring contradictory evidence
  - **Halo effect** occurs when we like someone and therefore are biased to think everything about that person is good
  - **Social and groupthink bias** is the propensity to agree with the majority or someone more senior to us to maintain harmony.
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**Studies have shown that providing managers with diversity training, education and feedback on their biases are** the least effective methods to improve levels of diversity. Why? Because most biases occur unconsciously and have multiple causes.<sup>9</sup>

To effectively combat bias in talent processes requires systematic interruption of bias at each stage of the talent pipeline. Systematic interruption involves reflection and accountability at each stage of recruitment and promotion processes. It also means embedding expectations and rewards for these behaviours within organisational systems.

This toolkit highlights opportunities to interrupt bias at critical points in your talent processes to improve women's representation at all levels of leadership and organisational performance.

<sup>9</sup> Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly, Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies, 2006, [https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/cfawis/Dobbin\\_best\\_practices.pdf](https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/cfawis/Dobbin_best_practices.pdf) (accessed 30 September 2019).

# Recruitment and promotion

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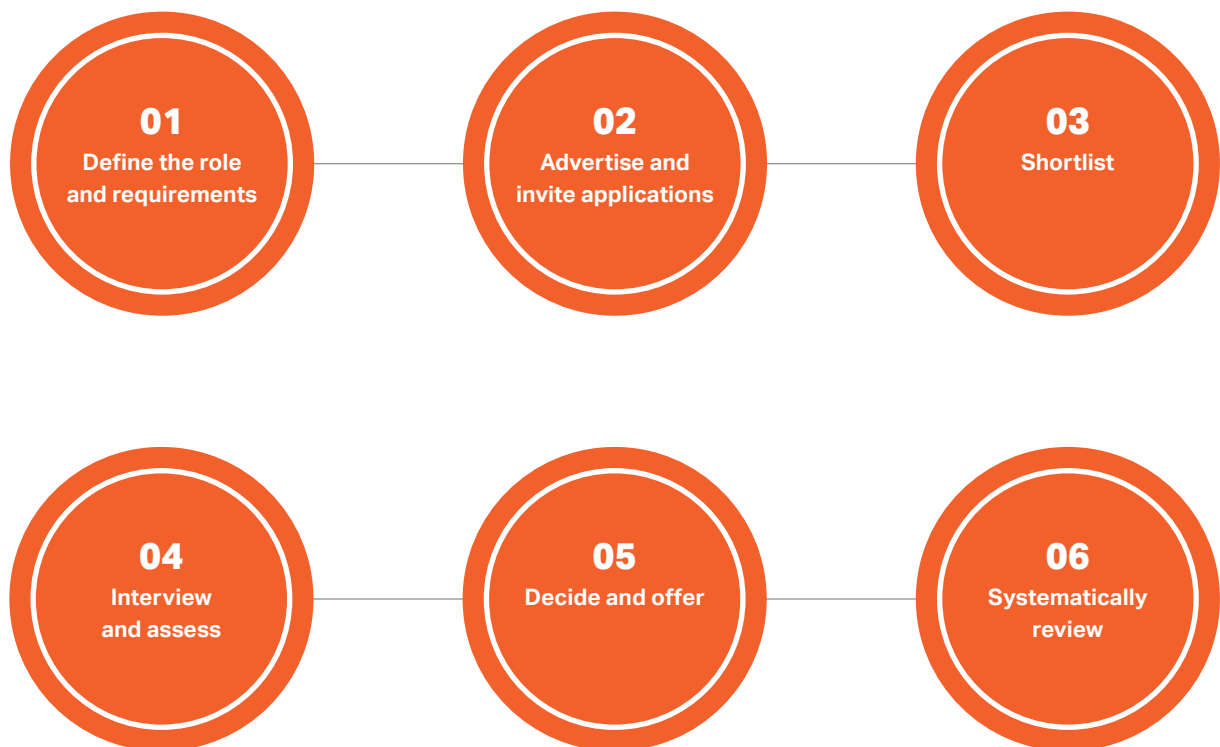


# Test your thinking at all stages in your recruitment and promotion processes

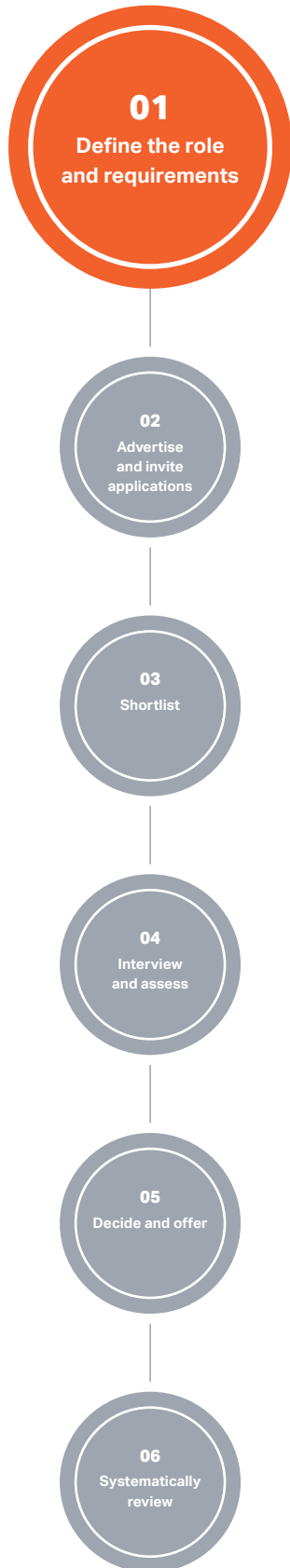
There are opportunities to identify, attract and recruit the best people from the most diverse talent pool throughout the recruitment and promotion process.

This can be achieved by providing internal resources to help source diverse candidates (such as a budget to outsource recruitment or provide interim backfill), making allowances for slower processes, and rewarding innovative appointments.

Following are insights into potential gaps in current processes and opportunities for organisations to strengthen their approaches at each point of the recruitment and promotion cycle.



# 1 Define the role and requirements



## What we heard from our people...



*I think we tend to put out job ads without really thinking hard about the role and what is required. We look at who did it last and then we just look for the same thing.*



*Most job advertisements are written for a full-time role and then adjusted afterwards, rather than designed with flexibility as the starting point.*



*There is an overreliance on experience, rather than skills and capabilities. Hiring the most experienced operator is seen as synonymous with 'hiring the best person for the job'. Leaders often aim to hire candidates who will 'hit the ground running' and assume the best way to enable this is by hiring someone who has done a very similar role previously. This creates a focus on experience rather than competencies.*



*There can be an overly narrow focus on technical skills but in fact most roles require a much broader skill set.*



*There is often a lot of pressure to fill a role quickly given the pressure on a team with no backfill, so we tend not to think critically about the future needs of the role or how we can tap into the most diverse talent.*



## Bias interrupters

Design jobs based on future needs rather than what was required in the past

Clearly define the core capabilities required to have potential in the role and the organisation more broadly

Focus on the desired impact/ outcome of the role, not just the skills and experience that you think are needed

Design the job in a way which enables flexible working

Consider a range of skills, attributes and learnings from a variety of experiences and pathways

Use 'Gender Decoder' or 'Textio' software to remove gender bias in job advertisements and job descriptions






Consider requesting gender-blind applications

Up-skill line leaders to remove bias and focus on core competencies in job design

Engage individual hiring managers to help them understand that pure technical experience shouldn't be the only screen for possible candidates.



## Actions for leaders

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 Personally engage in the development of job descriptions for your top team, defining future-focused requirements, including capabilities linked to potential
- 
 Challenge your team to rewrite job descriptions regularly and 'de-construct' requirements
- 
 Actively debunk traditional notions of 'merit' by highlighting the diversity of skills and backgrounds of candidates or new hires and by celebrating the success of diverse teams
- 
 Demonstrate that you hire for potential and future capability requirements, not just experience, and ask the same of your teams
- 
 Recognise and reward those in your team who hire diverse talent and build diverse teams.

# Examples

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## Investa

Hiring managers in a particular area were very specific about requirements for previous experience. This was limiting the talent. To address this, hiring managers were actively encouraged to keep experience requirements broad and be open minded to candidates from a range of backgrounds and experience sets which would equip them with the right capabilities for a role. This has 'widened the net' of both women and men included in the recruitment process.

**Impact |** Achieving gender balance on recruitment shortlists has been far easier since adopting this approach. It has also resulted in the appointment of some individuals from non-traditional career paths, bringing diversity of experience into the organisation. Importantly, the number of women in facilities management roles, a heavily male-dominated functional area, has more than doubled since introducing this approach, with an increase from 6.3% to 13.3% over the past 12 months.

**Lessons learnt |** Onboarding individuals from outside the industry is often harder and requires more focused effort. Supporting managers as they onboard is key to ensuring they remain open minded to these candidates in the future.

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## Stockland

Stockland reviewed role descriptions in the 'development' job family. It uncovered the use of jargon that may deter candidates (such as using the phrase 'medium density' instead of 'townhouse'). Role descriptions were reviewed and loaded into Textio for readability review and assessment of masculine and feminine language.

**Impact |** The readability and inclusiveness of the role description improved from 48% to 98%.

**Lessons learnt |** Challenge managers to review job descriptions rather than just recycle. Colleagues from different areas of the organisations can 'stress test' job descriptions to ensure they are inclusive.

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## Transdev

A technical license requirement was a significant barrier to entry for new drivers. A bus driver applicant previously needed to hold either an MR or HR license, for example.

To address this, Transdev launched the 'Journey Maker Academy' which offers funding for the licensing program while training new hires on the skills needed to be a bus driver.

In addition to dismantling the licensing barrier, Transdev redesigned role descriptions to focus on the provision of positive customer experiences rather than technical requirements.

**Impact |** As a result of the introduction of this program in the Melbourne business, applications from women interested in becoming bus drivers doubled to 24% and the number of women hired doubled to 14%. The Journey Maker Academy is a practice that has been in place in Perth for three years and a women-only version is run quarterly. Due to the popularity of the role and career opportunities, women now make up 35% of drivers in Perth.

**Lessons learnt |** Through the car license upgrade program, Journey Maker Academy, Transdev has attracted, recruited and onboarded more women and culturally diverse people who may have never considered transport as a career option. Transdev says the Journey Maker Academy new hires are more engaged and boast lower attrition rates than their experienced bus driver or truck driver colleagues. Transdev has also introduced a cultural change initiative to educate managers on the requirement to expand the talent pool, address their own biases and increase their leadership skills.

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## Viva Energy Australia

A significant barrier to entry for Geelong refinery operators was the assumption that these roles needed to be performed on a full-time, 24/7 shift roster and that a trades qualification was required.

Viva Energy dismantled the full-time barrier and advertised roles as part-time. The advertising campaign

and recruitment process highlighted the ability people would have to manage commitments outside of work as well as Viva Energy's leading parental leave benefits and above market superannuation. Plus, Viva Energy challenged the traditional competence requirements by using behaviours not qualifications as a priority in recruitment.

**Impact |** As a result, in 2019, Viva Energy moved from no part-time operators to fourteen part-time operators, all of whom are female. The part-time operators are having a positive impact on the culture, bringing different thinking and questioning long-held assumptions. Viva Energy now has plans to grow the number of part-time operators. This will include the commencement of a transition to retirement program where older operators have the option of moving to part-time before retiring.

**Lessons learnt |** Recruiting the part-time operators in a group has provided them with a great source of support. Asking the existing workforce to invite family members to apply for the part-time roles helped build support for the approach early on. Flipping thinking from the rigid qualifications to the behaviours operators need for success has enabled Viva Energy to recruit, train and retain competent part-time females. Viva Energy has needed to invest time and effort to ensure the induction, training and shift patterns are tailored to part-time operators to enable these operators to meet all of the requirements to become fully qualified.

## Independent Hospital Pricing Authority

IHPA was recruiting for data analysts within a team with no gender diversity. All analysts were male, and each recruitment round attracted almost exclusively male applicants.

After undertaking professional development to create and maintain 'growth mindsets', the hiring manager decided to incorporate this as an assessment criterion in the recruitment process. The goal was to attract a broader range of applicants by focussing on their willingness to face challenges and learn new skills through reflection and feedback, rather than on established technical skills. Targeting growth mindset as part of the recruitment process meant changing the position description, selection criteria, interview questions and selection process to focus less on existing technical expertise and more on ability and willingness to learn.

**Impact |** The following round of recruitment attracted more women applicants than men, and the majority were found to be suitable to undertake the role.

**Lessons learnt |** Recruiting to fit an existing STEM position, or even just focussing on a specific skill set, can inadvertently exacerbate gender bias in the pool of applicants. Refocussing the recruitment to attract those with an ability to learn, rather than those with existing knowledge in the field, can disrupt the status quo in recruitment outcomes.



## Recruitment brief

Require all hiring managers to complete a 'recruitment brief' that includes:

- What does success in the role look like? Consider the desired impact or outcome of the role.
- What are the future needs of the role? Consider anticipated change in the internal or external environment and skills needed to address this change.
- What qualifications/experience is required? Justify why each is necessary.
- What are the top five responsibilities of the current role?
- What are the top five most essential requirements for success in the role? Why?
- What is the Employee Value Proposition that will attract candidates to the role? Consider highlighting flexibility, office space, contribution to the community and more.

## 2 Advertise and invite applications



### What we heard from our people...



*Lots of roles are not advertised. You have to 'be in the know' or you miss out.*



*When roles are not advertised we miss out on tapping into the full talent pool and risk excluding women who are less likely to be part of the inner circles.*



*Men are more likely to get a tap on the shoulder for a role or opportunity.*



*By advertising through the same professional channels and through 'referral' networks we are always tapping into the same talent pool.*



## Bias interrupters

Develop and execute a segmented employment brand aimed at target populations (such as women and other diverse groups)

Make nomination/application processes transparent and open to all that apply

Review internal succession plans for gender balance

Work closely with talent teams to ensure internal talent is identified

Identify key female talent within your organisation and encourage them to apply (including any employees on parental leave)

Resist 'referral cultures' that might unconsciously result in homogenous teams. Where employees are encouraged to make referrals, ensure there is rigour in the process (for example, requiring detailed information about when the referee worked with the referred candidate and why they are recommending them for the role) to encourage referral of diverse candidates

Write job ads to be gender-inclusive and welcoming to all

Avoid reference to 'years of experience' and focus instead on skills required

Get creative about where to source applicants (other sectors, candidates on career breaks, candidates in other areas of the business)

Explicitly advertise roles as being able to be done flexibly to encourage a diversity of candidates

Advertise in a variety of forums (e.g. different industry sites or on websites aimed at specific groups such as older people, flexible workers or parents returning from parental leave)

Consider a gender-specific recruitment round to boost numbers where persistently low recruitment of a particular gender is occurring

Invite potential recruits into your workplace so they can experience the working environment, meet future colleagues, and discuss any questions or concerns about an advertised role

Introduce opt-out (rather than opt-in) recruitment practices for internal candidates so that the internal talent pool is considered for promotions.



## Actions for leaders



Ask line managers what they have done to identify a pool of candidates that is gender-balanced, including where they have looked and who they have encouraged to apply



Ensure the organisation is tapping into diverse referrals and networks



Ensure all jobs are advertised internally and externally to encourage a wide pool of candidates.

# Examples

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## BASF

BASF introduced a new approach to 'proactive sourcing' which includes mapping potential female talent using channels such as LinkedIn and SEEK Talent Search, coupled with database searches from previous female candidates. This helped BASF to significantly increase the number of women interviewed and appointed, including two to senior STEM roles.

For every role advertised, BASF appoints a diversity and inclusion ambassador, who assists the hiring manager define the job role and design the advertisement to appeal to both men and women and focus on competencies and potential rather than just industry experience. Ambassadors also strongly encourage hiring managers to achieve gender balanced shortlists and interviews and challenge them to let the process guide the outcome.

**Impact |** The organisation is committed and understands that a proactive change in approach to sourcing is right for the business. It has created larger talent pools and resulted in the placement of women into roles that were traditionally performed by men. Hiring managers are starting to change their focus from 'experience' to 'potential'. In 2018, BASF saw a positive shift in the ratio of women recruited into the organisation, increasing by 2% (from 23% to 25%). This is the first increase in 10 years.

**Lessons learnt |** Educating hiring managers about the benefits of diverse and inclusive teams has been a critical success factor for BASF's new recruitment and selection processes. Prior to each recruitment assignment, it is mandatory for hiring managers to receive unconscious bias interview training and to appoint diversity and inclusion ambassadors. This has helped to change the traditional 'like-for-like' mentality of hiring managers. Further, success stories of female hires throughout 2018 into non-traditional positions has encouraged hiring managers to be more open minded. As a result, the external gender hiring ratio for 2018 was 50:50 and met the organisation's hiring target. The key lessons are:

- Active leadership and support from senior management is key to create change in hiring

processes and outcomes

- Proactive sourcing of female candidates can address unbalanced application pools and lead to balanced shortlists
- An authentic employee value proposition must be communicated to engage female candidates
- Re-advertising the role with slightly different wording did not change the gender ratio of applicants.

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## Transdev

Transdev developed a new employee value proposition (EVP), branded Journey Makers. The EVP features culturally and gender diverse employees, shares personal stories on why people joined Transdev and what they love about working in the transport industry.

To encourage a broader talent pool, Transdev regularly opens its depots and stations to the general public, inviting prospective new recruits to experience the environment, meet the team and ask any questions about working in the industry and at Transdev.

**Impact |** With the introduction of the Journey Maker EVP, the Transdev brand has grown significantly with operational applicants, graduates, senior level and executive talent. Transdev regularly sees increased engagement through social media channels, specifically LinkedIn. This EVP has continued to attract people who had not previously considered a career in public transport to the industry and Transdev. Applications from, and placements of, women and diverse candidates have increased by 10% since the implementation of the new EVP. Transdev also measures engagement with the EVP by asking employees if they consider themselves a Journey Maker; the most recent result revealed 75% positive responses.

**Lessons learnt |** An EVP must be the 'voice of the people' and highlight the diversity of staff. Authenticity in EVP communications is imperative, and the brand must resonate with the team for it to be received well externally.

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## Australian National University (ANU)

To address a significant gender imbalance in the field of mathematics at ANU, an academic position was advertised with only women candidates eligible to apply. This process was conducted in tandem with a separate recruitment process that was open to all applicants. Both roles were advertised to an international audience, and staff members were asked to approach qualified female candidates to encourage their participation in the process.

**Impact |** Both recruitment processes were successful. The process gave ANU an opportunity to engage with excellent talent in mathematics research, including outstanding women scholars. It helped raise the profile of the university's commitment to gender equity in STEM disciplines, and reinforced ANU's determination to change its culture. Similar recruitment processes are being considered in other parts of the university.

**Lessons learnt |** It was critical to the success of the project, and to positive staff engagement, that ANU explained the importance of proactively pursuing gender equity. It was also essential that ANU planned and implemented an effective induction for staff recruited through these processes. The university also acknowledged feedback from some female academics that indicated women-only recruitment rounds could act as a deterrent to some women who wished to compete for and win jobs in processes open to all applicants.

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## Australian Federal Police (AFP)

To address the issue of low representation of women in leadership positions, the AFP trialled the introduction of de-identified recruitment rounds which removed all reference to gender and age for targeted leadership positions.

**Impact |** In 2015, women held almost a quarter (24.1%) of the executive positions, with 65 women holding substantive EL positions and 15 women holding substantive SES roles.

The percentage of women in leadership positions has increased by 31.3% from 2015 to 2019, with 105 women holding substantive EL positions (78 EL and 27 SES).

In 2019, women hold over one third of leadership positions in the AFP (33.6%).

**Lessons learnt |** The percentage of women rated as suitable increased by an average 6.4% in de-identified processes compared to an average 2.1% for similar identified processes. Reviewing processes and taking active steps to remove any perceived biases provided both an increased number of women applying for promotion rounds, as well as an increase in women being found successful throughout the promotion process.

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## Hanson

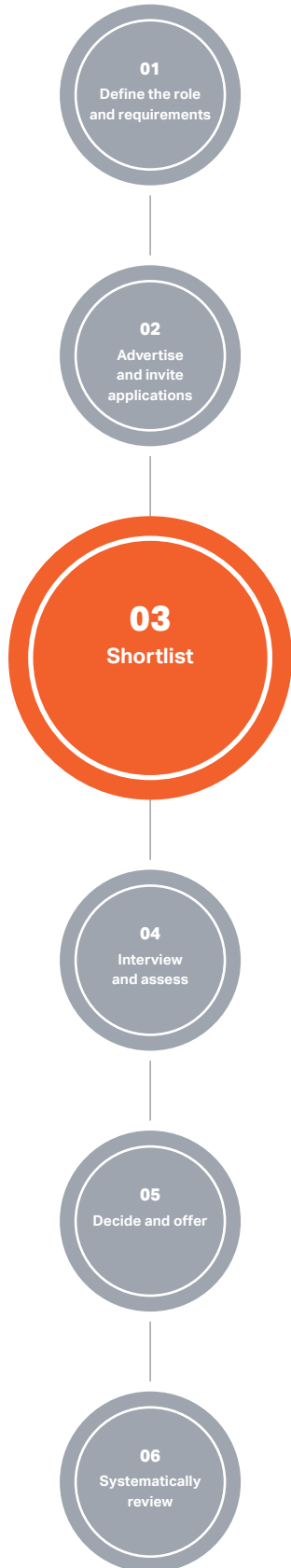
Holding a truck licence is mandatory for concrete mixer drivers but can be a barrier to expanding the talent pool, particularly for women. Hanson partnered with an registered training organisation to offer successful applicants training to secure a truck licence, thereby expanding the traditional talent pool, particularly for women.

**Impact |** While usually Hanson receives no female applicants for driver vacancies, as a result of this initiative Hanson short-listed 30 female candidates for eight positions. Appointing female drivers has had a positive impact on the work environment and customer interactions. Hanson has been able to attract, develop and retain a group of people who are energised to start their careers as professional drivers. The company has also been able to instil high standards from day one, prevent the development of any bad habits and put their trucks on the road with confidence.

**Lessons learnt |** Widespread dissemination of the advertisement through social media was a crucial aspect of the recruitment attraction process, as women without a heavy vehicle drivers license are not looking for heavy driving jobs.

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# 3 Shortlist



## What we heard from our people...



*Sometimes we see a drop off in the representation of women on the shortlist compared to the application pool. We need to intervene to question the hiring manager and surface any unconscious bias or tendency to fall back on 'old way of doing things'.*



*People are more likely to 'take a risk' on a man than a woman. Hiring managers are not ready to take a punt on women without the experience, but they do that with men. You need to 'prove' that they can take a risk on you and you will succeed before they let you do it. You have to jump through more hoops.*



*External recruiters need to be given very clear instructions or you don't get gender-balanced shortlists.*



## Bias interrupters

Develop a gender-balanced shortlist, including external recruiter nominations, before moving to interview

Experiment with anonymised shortlists for external candidates where appropriate

Consider the diversity of the whole team, and how the candidate can improve the range of skills, backgrounds and perspectives within the whole team

Brief or train internal and external recruitment partners and hiring managers to raise awareness of bias and expectations for gender-balanced shortlists

Consider including a 'wild card' candidate on every shortlist (e.g. a candidate that seems outside the scope but may bring different experience/perspectives to the role).



To stay competitive over time, we need access to the best people and a range of capabilities. If we are only tapping into 50% of the talent pool, we are clearly putting the performance and sustainability of our organisations at risk.

**Carol Schwartz AO** Non-Executive Director  
Convenor, Property Male Champions of Change



## Actions for leaders



Get across the data on gender balance on shortlists – don't assume that this opportunity for inclusion is "set and forget"



Set clear expectations on gender-balanced shortlists before reviewing a shortlist to choose candidates for interview



Review your talent pipeline and personally review shortlists, asking '50:50, if not, why not?'



Actively promote and celebrate the benefits of gender diversity – diverse leadership and teams are central to improved performance.

# Examples

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## Investa

When engaging with external recruitment partners, Investa ensures alignment with a 50:50 gender target on shortlists. Additionally, Investa has worked with partners to specifically target women into its facilities roles (a typically male dominated area of the business).

**Impact |** These actions have more than doubled the number of women in facilities management roles in the last year increasing the percentage of women from 6.25% to 13.33%. Investa has also set a target to reach 25% female composition of this functional area by 2024 as part of its Gender Diversity Strategy & Action Plan.

**Lessons learnt |** Traditional 'feeder' roles into these male dominated professionals are also often male dominated. Encouraging recruiters to look outside the typical talent pools into other sectors and segments can identify a wider range of candidates.

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## Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)

ASIO introduced a 40:40:20 gender ratio requirement when shortlisting for promotion to leadership roles in 2016. If this was not possible, each panel needed to articulate why this had not occurred.

**Impact |** The requirement made panels re-think their approach to assessment and challenged unconscious bias. In recruitment rounds where the 40:40:20 ratio was achieved, it resulted in improved gender balance of the selection outcomes. For example, where the ratio was achieved, women made up 51% of shortlists, 50% of candidates deemed suitable and 45% of appointments. This compares to 40%, 42% and 40% respectively where the ratio was not achieved.

This in turn has resulted in ASIO improving its gender balance by 2.2% at executive leadership levels (now 38.5% female) and 3.6% at senior executive levels (now 39.4% female).

**Lessons learnt |** Shortlisting outcomes can quickly become unbalanced if the ratio requirement is not continuously monitored and enforced. The Director-General recently re-committed ASIO to this initiative following a decline in the ratio and a resulting gender imbalance in selection outcomes.

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Interrupting gender bias at all points in our talent processes takes deliberate action. If we want the best candidates and the best team and organisational results, then we need to invest in systems and processes that will ensure a broad talent pool is considered in every recruitment and promotion decision. It won't just happen on its own.

**Jonathan Callaghan** Chief Executive Officer, Investa Property Group

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### Lendlease

Lendlease tracks gender balance at each stage of the recruitment process enabling intervention when issues arise – such as a drop off in percentage of women candidates when comparing applications to shortlists.

**Impact |** This approach, in addition to trend reporting, identifies issues at any stage of an individual recruitment process.

**Lessons learnt |** Managers often need support and guidance to understand and address any unconscious bias that impacts the selection of candidates.

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### Mirvac

Mirvac has built the need for diverse shortlists into contracts with its panel of recruitment agencies.

**Impact |** Recruitment agencies know Mirvac's expectation on gender-balanced shortlists and search broader than experience if required. Internally sourced roles also have the same requirement for gender balanced shortlists for senior roles. As a result there has been a 5% increase in the number of women in senior management positions over the last two years

**Lessons learnt |** Encouraging recruitment agencies, Mirvac's internal recruitment team and hiring managers to all request a gender balanced shortlist has brought the concept front of mind for all involved.

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“

The value of gender balanced representation in organisations and on boards is now widely accepted. We now need robust and consistent talent processes in place so that our diversity goals are achieved and translated into genuine competitive advantage.

**John Mulcahy** Independent Non-Executive Chair, Mirvac

## 4 Interview and assess



### What we heard from our people...



*It is important the selection panel is on the same page during interviews or you can get very uneven assessment of candidates.*



*I have seen hiring managers start off an interview with conversations about rugby or 'mates' they have in common with the candidate. The same thing doesn't happen with women.*



*When managers hire from a gut feeling or a sense that they are the 'right fit for the job' there is a risk of just perpetuating the hiring of 'more of the same' and missing out on great diverse talent.*



*Seeking a 'cultural fit' can often mean that people recruit in their own image.*



### Bias interrupters

Structure interviews with agreed criteria, questions and score weights; apply the same process for all candidates

Prepare interview questions that enable applicants to demonstrate potential (rather than just experience) and additional skills or perspectives they can bring to the role, team and organisation

Consider interview panel composition for diversity and gender-balance, section or departmental diversity and/or external perspective

Ensure the panel has a clear brief on expectations for gender-balance and skills/potential required for the role

Train interviewers to uncover non-technical merit objectively instead of relying on gut instinct or 'fit' (e.g. behavioural interviewing to measure skills, attributes and capabilities linked to potential or an assessment of learning agility to assess capacity to apply diverse experiences in new situations)

Call out bias and question assumptions during assessment discussions






Consider requiring the selection team to provide a written justification for each candidate to ensure their decision aligns with criteria

Emphasise a culture add or values-alignment, rather than culture fit, valuing diverse thinking rather than someone who will fit into existing patterns or ways of thinking

Ask candidates to share what they think they can bring to a role beyond the requirements set out in the job description.



### Actions for leaders

- 
 Personally invest time to prepare for, conduct and debrief after interviews and sign off on critical roles at CEO-2 and CEO-3 that typically feed into succession planning
- 
 Participate in selection panels for key leadership appointments, acknowledge and interrupt personal biases and call out behaviours and decisions that are inconsistent with building a diverse team
- 
 Make the decision to have gender balanced panels, with external advisors, as appropriate
- 
 Mandate interview training and recruitment process compliance for your leadership team
- 
 Explore recruitment outcomes and their contribution to diversity objectives during routine performance discussions – use these discussions to help determine discretionary incentive payments.

# Examples

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## Colliers International

Senior members of the recruitment team actively question leaders' hiring decisions during the recruitment process to remove potential for bias. For example, the recruitment team recently supported a leader to hire an individual very different to themselves, focusing on the technical capabilities and the different perspective they could add rather than focusing on their perception of 'team fit'.

**Impact |** This has disrupted the traditional way of recruiting talent and creates dialogue to help educate leaders.

**Lessons learnt |** Challenging leaders can debunk assumptions that are made in a recruitment experience and enhance company innovation.

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## Charter Hall

Charter Hall requires gender balanced panels for all recruitment processes.

**Impact |** Because there is more diverse feedback, the process has resulted in more balanced and robust insights of the candidates. In FY19, 53.8% of employees awarded promotions were women, and 62.0% of new hires were female. This is an increase from the figures in FY16 where 48.5% of employees awarded promotions were women and 55% of new hires were female.

**Lessons learnt |** Having gender balanced panels should not be tokenistic. Take the time to consider the constitution of these panels (e.g. gender, management level, areas of expertise) to get the most value out of the process for the candidate and the interviewees.

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## Mirvac

Mirvac provides training to all new leaders on the importance of diverse thinking in recruitment decisions. Mirvac has also developed a bespoke leadership assessment tool for candidates to complete to help demonstrate the benefit of potential and not just the experience outlined in a resume.

**Impact |** The tool helps identify potential and fit for the role, and highlights alignment of style to the organisation's values. Since introducing the tool managers will often not make a recruitment decision until they have put candidates through the leadership assessment to help determine potential for the role.

**Lessons learnt |** The tool was originally developed for people in leadership roles. However, given its success, it is now used for technical/niche roles or certain non-people leadership roles.

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## Stockland

Stockland requires gender-balanced panels and shortlists for all recruitment processes.

**Impact |** Since introducing balanced panels and shortlists in 2017/18 results have improved:

- Graduates: 50% in 2016/17 to 75% in 2018/19 \*
- Overall recruitment: 58% in 2016/17 to 62% in 2018/19
- Promotions: 62% in 2016/17 to 65% in 2018/19

\*The over-representation of female graduates was to increase the pipeline in job families in which women were underrepresented.

**Lessons learnt |** Establishing recruitment guidelines, such as requiring two interviewers and two interviews, reduces the risk of a lack of diversity of views or approach during selection processes. It is important to balance the efficiency of process as it may lead to too many interviews.

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## Scentre Group

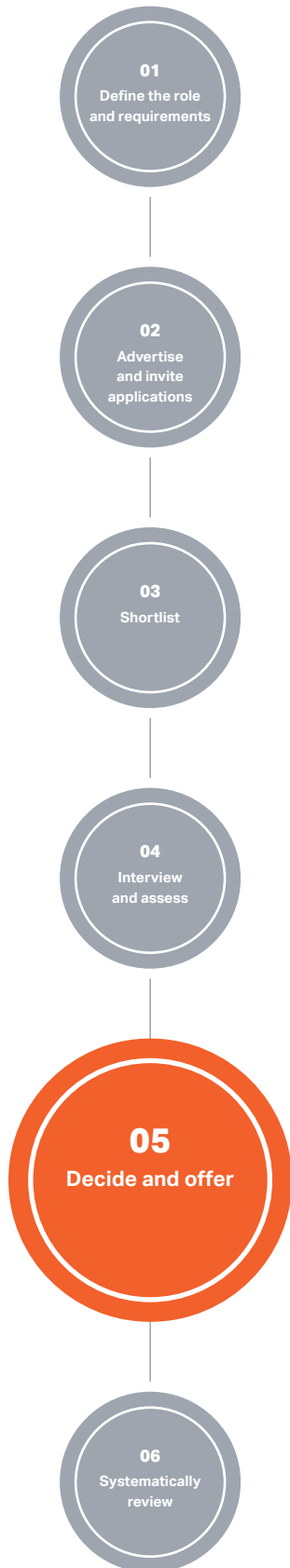
Scentre Group appoints 'diverse assessors' (individuals or panels) to challenge the interview and shortlisting process.

**Impact |** Diverse hiring panels mean that no one person has decision-making authority in the hiring and promotion of talent. This has helped address unconscious bias. Diverse panels also demonstrate to the candidate the breadth of leaders and business functions across the organisation. The diversity of the panel has allowed for richer questioning and has challenged the mindset of the hiring manager. As a result, in 2019 Scentre Group has seen women rise to 55% of all hires. The overall population of women has grown to 55%, with women now representing 43% of all managers. In addition, the promotion rate of talented women has risen from 38% in 2017 to 59% in 2019. Diverse hiring and promotion panels have allowed leaders to share their personal stories about their experience at Scentre Group – demonstrating different pathways to career development and progression.

**Lessons learnt |** All candidates, even if not successful for the role, feel the organisation embraces diversity and inclusion as they meet a diverse group of leaders. This has helped to position Scentre Group as an organisation that promotes diversity including gender-balance in non-traditional male/female roles. It is important to offer clear assessment criteria up front so the panel members understand the role and the interview for each candidate is consistent. Panel members have become advocates for the incoming talent – an unintended benefit which can support their onboarding.

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## 5 Decide and offer



### What we heard from our people...



*When it comes down to it, hiring managers will want to fall back on what is familiar and what seems 'safe' despite how well a candidate has done through the process. So, it is important to question and challenge managers' decisions right up to the end.*



*Managers need to balance remuneration budgets and the gender pay gap issue. Due to historical differences in pay between men and women, often senior women moving into a new organisation are paid less than male colleagues. Managers need to look beyond saving on the remuneration budget and focus on achieving gender pay equity at every new appointment.*



*The pay gap can start at appointment. For example, someone may be rewarded for greater industry experience when their potential is equal to others in the team.*



## Bias interrupters

Align your hiring decisions with overall gender balance objectives

Consider a gender-balanced panel or third party to review hiring decisions for key roles (e.g. two-up manager, head of HR)

Review pay offerings to eliminate like-for-like gender pay gaps in the salary offered to the candidate

Keep track of strong candidates uncovered during each recruitment process; stay connected with them and consider them for future roles.





“

Advancing gender equality requires a systematic and disciplined approach, built on listening to people’s experiences, implementing processes with purpose, and regular inspection of metrics and decisions to ensure they are fair and equitable.

**Matt Comyn** CEO, Commonwealth Bank



## Actions for leaders

-  Personally sign off on appointments one and two levels down, asking ‘50:50, if not, why not?’ and then acting on the responses received
-  Challenge decisions that are inconsistent with building a diverse team
-  Personally champion gender pay parity and make transparent efforts to identify and close any gaps
-  When announcing appointments, highlight the diversity of skills, background and experience all appointees bring to the team and organisation.

# Examples

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## Stockland

After recently hiring women to its executive committee, Stockland has proactively addressed potential questions that the appointments were made to achieve a quota. The managing director directly and proactively addressed concerns and misperceptions via Q&A sessions with employees. The sessions provided an open dialogue for employees to discuss gender equality and increased their understanding of the gender equality strategy. Employees were able to share diverse views in a constructive forum and could use the conversation and messages to cascade to their peers and teams to address backlash.

**Impact |** Stockland's engagement results since have shown a 2% increase in providing a working environment that is accepting of gender differences (94%).

**Lessons learnt |** Be prepared to pause, reflect and gather feedback from employees on how talent processes are tracking. Consider alternative avenues, such as staff engagement questions for anonymous feedback, to understand, anticipate and address potential backlash.

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## Boston Consulting Group (BCG)

All recruiting decisions are ratified by the director of human resources and the recruiting partner before any offers are made. Decision meetings begin with an overview of how current recruiting activity is tracking against diversity targets at every stage of the recruiting pipeline – including applications, shortlisting, interview rounds, through to offer and acceptance. This puts decisions in context, ensures the team is accountable for the targets set, and identifies any challenges in internal processes early – enabling the team to identify and apply necessary interventions.

**Impact |** This approach has ensured that BCG's aspirations for a gender-balanced workforce remain 'front and centre' in recruiting decisions. 25% of managing directors and partners are now women (target is 30% for 2020), with 41% of BCG's managing directors and partner promotions being women over the past five years. BCG exceeded its associate/consultant recruiting target of 45% women, achieving 50% women of new hires in 2019.

**Lessons learnt |** Prioritise gender diversity needs in every part of the process from the outset. Regularly re-examining the data is critical to identify shifting pain points and allowing the business to refocus its efforts.

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In 2018, we achieved a significant milestone in that every level of leadership from Manager through to our Executive Committee and Board had at least 40 per cent female representation. However, we can't become complacent. We are constantly reviewing our processes and looking at innovative ways to make Stockland a more inclusive place to work.

**Mark Steinert** Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Stockland

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## Colliers International

Colliers International's real estate management business holds itself accountable to the Colliers Career Pathways document. All positions are mapped to standard levels and pay ranges, and every hire is compared to peers to ensure salaries are commensurate for all males and females.

**Impact |** This ensures fairness and equity in the salary offered and limits the ability for stronger negotiators to elevate their pay outcome. Colliers' latest gender equity pay review demonstrates a 2.2% reduction in pay gap between females and males for their real estate management team compared with 2017. Specifically, facilities managers have a pay gap of just 0.2%, and property managers -0.4%.

**Lessons learnt |** Maintaining pay ranges can be challenging once the recruitment process is complete. It's best to be clear upfront on the range and expectations with all candidates.

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## Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA)

Overall, CBA has achieved gender pay parity on a like-for-like basis. However, CBA recognises that remaining vigilant is vital to maintaining momentum given research which shows that pay equity issues may occur at any point in the employee cycle including on hiring and on transfer or promotion to a new role.

To prevent any gender pay equity gaps occurring at the point of hire or promotion, CBA has invested in making leaders aware of the issue, and helping them in their decision-making with education and support tools. CBA has also provided just-in-time solutions to empower managers to make informed decisions at the appropriate juncture to minimise gender pay inequity. This approach builds awareness and commitment, and is incorporated into business-as-usual processes with the use of customised team dashboards.

CBA has developed the following tools to equip managers to avoid any potential gender pay bias during recruitment and promotion:

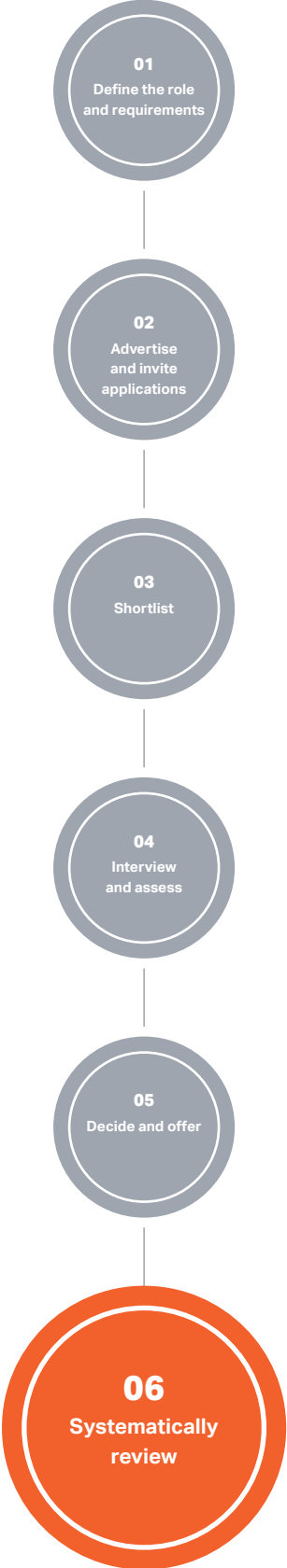
- **Pay Range Tool:** Supports human resources and recruitment by providing advice to aid remuneration decisions for new hires and people changing roles. The tool uses benchmarked market data, and highlights gender bias by displaying comparative ratios, and how they differ between men and women
- **Online 'People Insights' dashboard:** This self-service tool reports on overall pay gaps in teams and any like-for-like employee pay differences on a 12-month rolling basis
- **Leader guides:** To help minimise pay inequity, resources are available to leaders to raise awareness of bias in decision-making and explain the impact of the choices available.

**Impact |** Since introducing these tools, CBA has been able to close and maintain the like-for-like pay gap at a group level.

**Lessons learnt |** CBA maintain a proactive focus on pay equity, while continuing to monitor and address any issues throughout the year. Achieving and maintaining gender pay equity is complex, but a continuous and disciplined focus, consistent leadership tone and direct action will help maintain pay equity as one of its key diversity and inclusion goals.

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# 6 Systematically review



### What we heard from our people...



*Despite best intentions and lots of intervention, things can still go awry. We need to be continually reviewing our processes and systems.*



*Transparency is key. It builds confidence in our employees and it helps to hold everyone to account for the delivery.*



### Bias interrupters

Reflect on your hiring or promotion decisions: if the application of merit is looking too similar to the status quo, what questions does this raise?

Interrogate how performance is calibrated and amend any process that results in gender unequal outcomes; for example, ensure there are objective performance benchmarks

Track gender balance at every point of the recruitment process and ensure wide access to the data to drive continual reflections, review and accountability

Conduct exit interviews with staff leaving to surface their views on any systemic issues.







We've learned that attracting more women to our sector requires a complete rethink on how we define role requirements and how we market our organisation. By demonstrating that we value diversity, we have been able to significantly expand the pool of talent interested in careers with us.

**Scott Wyatt** Chief Executive Officer, Viva Energy Australia Pty Ltd



### Actions for leaders

- 
 Examine regular, granular pipeline reporting
- 
 Hold line leaders to account for achieving gender targets and include these as part of their KPIs
- 
 Establish group scorecards that include gender targets to drive group-wide aspiration and achievement
- 
 Regularly review the last 10 hires and 10 leavers to explore how bias has been effectively interrupted.

# Examples

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## Dexus

Referencing the Diversity Council of Australia's Words at Work Guide, Dexus has removed any bias from its end-to-end talent acquisition process following a review and update of candidate communications, hiring manager briefing templates and advertisements. Training was also developed to educate hiring managers on inclusive talent acquisition practices.

**Impact |** Since implementing these changes, Dexus has benefited from a wider pool of candidates and potential talent. Candidate satisfaction with the talent acquisition process has increased from 82% to 92%. Gender equity has been maintained with approximately 50% of all manager roles filled by men and 50% by women.

**Lessons learnt |** Non-inclusive language may have unintentionally narrowed the pool of candidates applying for and progressing through the talent acquisition process. Regular reviews of practices and processes across the employee lifecycle have assisted in identifying and removing potential biases and contributed to a more inclusive culture.

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## CBRE

CBRE's senior leadership team has a KPI mandate to ensure that at least 33% of internal promotions in professional and manager level positions or above are women.

**Impact |** This senior leader KPI was achieved in 2018 with some leaders exceeding the target in their business.

**Lessons learnt |** It is important to build upon success. CBRE will continue to include stretch targets to ensure diversity results significantly improve year on year.

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## Male Champions of Change

Many Male Champions of Change organisations have diversity dashboards that track the levers to reach women in leadership targets, including the percentage of women on shortlists and succession pipelines.

**Impact |** Quarterly tracking using the dashboard keeps gender diversity top-of-mind in all talent

decisions – from recruitment through to development, performance and promotion.

**Lessons learnt |** The data needs to be interrogated and discussed at executive and senior leadership levels on a regular basis to drive sustainable change.

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## Knight Frank

In 2016, Knight Frank introduced a gender diversity initiative, Property Women in Leadership, to increase female representation in leadership (partner) positions.

To support this objective, and based on feedback gathered from focus groups of almost 40 senior females across the organisation, Knight Frank implemented a new promotions framework in 2017 that aimed to:

- increase transparency and consistency
- link remuneration to both performance and potential
- ensure promotion on merit and interrupt bias
- improve gender balance at senior levels.

The key changes included:

- all people managers being given the opportunity to nominate their employees for promotion
- a formal nomination process for promotions, including justification and supporting documents,
- assessment against a consistent career matrix
- any remuneration changes linked to promotion considered as part of the remuneration review to ensure a pay equity lens is applied to all decisions.

**Impact |** In 2019, for the first time, the proportion of women promoted was higher than the proportion of women at Knight Frank at 45% (female population of 42%). This is compared to 32% female promotions in 2016 (female populations of 39%) prior to implementing this initiative. Further, Knight Frank is making good progress towards increasing women in leadership levels with an increase from 20% women at partner level in 2017, to 33% in 2019.

**Lessons learnt |** Bringing consistency and transparency to the promotions process has resulted in more gender-balanced outcomes.

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# 40:40:20 Recruitment and promotion checklist

Use this quick checklist to help remove any conscious and unconscious bias from your talent processes.

## Define the role and requirements

- Does your job description reflect the future needs of the role rather than what has been done in the past?
- Have you checked your job description to ensure you are not over-relying on years of experience over core capabilities and potential?
- Have you designed the role so it can be done flexibly?
- Have you reviewed the job description to ensure the language is inclusive?

## Advertise and invite applications

- Have you advertised on diverse forums to attract diverse talent (such as candidates from other industries and parents returning to work)?
- Have you noted that the role can be done flexibly?
- Have you ensured internal female talent and women on succession plans are encouraged to apply?

## Shortlist

- Do you have a gender-balanced shortlist?
- Have you considered how the candidate can improve the diversity of skills, backgrounds and perspectives within the whole team?

## Interview and assess

- Have you appointed a gender-balanced interview panel? Have you considered appointing a third-party to take part in the process and ratify hiring decisions (e.g. two-up manager or head of HR)?
- Does the panel have a clear brief on expectations for gender balance, skills and potential rather than just experience?
- Do your interview questions enable the applicant to demonstrate potential and any additional skills or perspectives that they can bring to the role, team and organisation?
- Are interviewers equipped to uncover non-technical merit objectively rather than relying on gut?
- Have you developed a structured process for conducting the interview with agreed criteria, questions and score weights?

## Decide and offer

- If the preferred candidate looks too much like the status quo, have you challenged the panel to justify their decision?
- Have you ensured there is no like-for-like pay gap in the salary offered?

## Systematically review

- Are you tracking the gender balance at every point in the recruitment process in real time?
- Are you holding hiring managers and recruiters accountable for diversity targets?

# Talent development

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# Identifying and developing talent

When identifying candidates, both within and outside organisations, and when developing internal talent, it is important to consider the following:

## Tackle the sponsorship gap

Sponsorship is career support that goes beyond mentoring. It is focused on advancement and rests on sponsors using their connections and influence to create opportunities for the sponsored party.<sup>10</sup> Research shows that women are over-mentored and under-sponsored. For example, men in the U.S. are 46% more likely than women to have a sponsor, while men in the UK are 25% more likely to have a sponsor.<sup>11</sup> Women are less likely to get 'hot jobs' that develop critical experience and predict advancement.

Furthermore, research shows that people sometimes choose to sponsor others who are similar to themselves and tend to be unaware of the unconscious privilege that might be at play. When leaders are expected to practice sponsorship, this is more likely to ensure that women do not miss out on opportunities because of the gender imbalance in leadership positions or because women are not part of a dominant group.



### What we heard

*"I had to really put myself out there to find a sponsor in such a male-dominated industry."*

*"Sponsorship can open doors like nothing else. Having someone to back you and put themselves out there for you can create opportunities that wouldn't come about otherwise."*

*"You can have all the skills but a sponsor can help you navigate the system, teach you how to read a room, and create connections and opportunities."*



### Possible interventions

- Set consistent expectations that senior leaders in the organisation will identify and sponsor high-potential women
- Encourage internal and external sponsorship, including sponsors from different business lines.



### Actions for leaders

- Personally and visibly sponsor women both within and outside the business
- Establish expectations for top teams to visibly sponsor women into their next role.

<sup>10</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Supporting careers: mentoring or sponsorship?, 2014, [https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2014-03-04\\_PP\\_Mentoring\\_or\\_sponsorship.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2014-03-04_PP_Mentoring_or_sponsorship.pdf); Hewlett, Sylvia Ann et al, Harvard Business Review, The Sponsor Effect: Breaking Through the Last Glass Ceiling, December 2010, <http://30percentclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The-Sponsor-Effect.pdf> (accessed 30 September 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Marcus, Bonnie, Forbes, Why Having A Sponsor Is Important For Women And How To Get One, April 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniemarcus/2015/04/06/why-having-a-sponsor-is-important-for-women-and-how-to-get-one/#4fc8352a45fe> (accessed 30 September 2019).

## Combat assumptions about career ambition and capability

Sometimes assumptions can be made about the career ambitions of both men and women. It can be a common assumption that new parents will want to ‘cruise’ for a while or that part-time workers don’t want the next big job. Some people may also need more encouragement and support to think about what is next, or to debunk misperceptions that specific technical skills or experiences are required for certain roles.



### What we heard

*“When you see who gets particular roles, it can reinforce the idea that you have to have a particular set of skills or be part of a certain clique to get the role.”*

*“In my previous role someone was brought in above me with no explanation. I was told that, given I’d just got engaged, wouldn’t I be better off managing an office tower if I was going to have babies.”*

*“In relation to work travel I hear: ‘Oh she could not do that, she has a baby’.”*



### Possible interventions

- Engage in active career planning and conversations to avoid assumptions and support women to get necessary experience and skills to achieve long-term career goals
- Ensure there are ‘real’ conversations about development plans so that employees are working on, and being supported to develop, the skills and competencies required to take the next step
- Champion transitions from support to line roles and across disciplines to provide talent with the foundational experiences often necessary for more senior roles
- Normalise flexible ways of working in performance and career planning discussions, documents and systems
- Consider men and women on parental leave for available roles.



### Actions for leaders

- Host or sponsor connection sessions with men and women on parental leave or other forms of long-term leave
- Institute regular talent review discussions among leaders to proactively identify diverse talent and match to future opportunities
- Use profiles and images of identified talent to challenge whether a diverse talent pipeline is being built.

## Be rigorous in succession planning

It is important to build rigour into succession planning to interrupt gender bias and to identify and develop a diverse portfolio of leaders. Research shows that even when objective leadership data exists, many organisations can still default to subjective or political succession, or recruitment and promotion decisions based on factors such as likability, sponsorship or tenure.<sup>12</sup>



### What we heard

*“There does not seem to be a process around succession planning – it feels like people are ear-marked for roles without really assessing who would be the best candidate.”*

*“It certainly seems like it is about who you know, not what you can do.”*



### Possible interventions

- Align succession planning processes with diversity and gender equality strategies
- Orient succession planning towards future needs and critical capabilities
- Establish a rigorous and transparent approach to succession planning that has objective criteria
- Ensure women and men are considered in succession planning for each key role
- If talent identified is not gender-balanced, then review for gender bias
- Consider individuals in other parts of the business as part of succession planning processes
- Offer talent the opportunity to rotate through different areas of the business to build the breadth of knowledge and skills often required in more senior roles.



### Actions for leaders

- Champion succession planning as a key management priority
- Make succession planning transparent with checks in place to ensure diverse candidates are considered.

<sup>12</sup> Deloitte, The holy grail of effective leadership succession planning, September 2018, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/leadership/effective-leadership-succession-planning.html> (accessed 30 September 2019).

# Supporting talent in senior roles or male-dominated teams

It is not enough to simply appoint a woman to a senior role in a traditionally male-dominated organisation or in a male-dominated part of the business and let her ‘sink or swim’.

Women working in male-dominated teams and industries can face a variety of challenges, including:

- Pervasive stereotypes, such as that of the ‘caring mother’ or the office housekeeper
- A view that women are outsiders and threaten the norm
- Fewer mentoring opportunities, which women report being important for their success
- Sexual harassment.<sup>13</sup>

We need to support all employees to succeed, particularly when they may be a minority in their new team. This includes ensuring readiness for new team members who are outside the status quo.

## Onboard and support for success



### What we heard

*“People outside the industry can get ‘eaten alive’ once they come into the organisation.”*

*“It is not enough to just appoint talented women and wait for them to sink or swim – particularly when we are appointing women from outside the industry. The organisation needs to back her and support her to succeed.”*



### Possible interventions

- Ensure that onboarding of candidates supports those from outside your industry to build knowledge and networks
- Use executive sponsorship or targeted training and development to accelerate capacity-building for new recruits from outside your industry
- Where possible hire women onto male dominated sites in small groups rather than individually, to ensure they are supported and do not feel isolated
- Prepare teams for new recruits who may not fit the mould – build understanding of the importance of diversity and the capability of the selected candidate.



### Actions for leaders

- Personally back senior women to succeed by providing ongoing support and sponsorship into their next role and actively responding to any backlash
- Establish an expectation of sponsorship practice for all leaders.

<sup>13</sup> Catalyst, Women in Male-Dominated Industries and Occupations: Quick Take, August 2018, [https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations/#footnote14\\_23rlik1](https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations/#footnote14_23rlik1) (accessed 30 September 2019).

## Facilitate inclusive networking



### What we heard

*“Networking is skewed towards males – after hours, beers, golf, rugby lunches.”*

*“It is hard for women to get involved in some networking events – they are inadvertently excluded.”*



### Possible interventions

- Develop and implement inclusive networking opportunities. Ensure networking opportunities take place during work hours and at locations that are inclusive of all.



### Actions for leaders

- Role model inclusive networking and call out all instances of exclusive or inappropriate networking.

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Too often we seek and celebrate diverse recruits, only to find our cultures are subtly geared to undermine people and perspectives that challenge our norms. If we want women to thrive and succeed – especially in traditionally male-dominated areas – we need to elevate the unique capabilities that they bring to our teams and create a cohort of diversity.

Brian Schmidt AC Vice-Chancellor, Australian National University

## Counter backlash



### What we heard

*“Some men receive the appointment of a woman, particularly to leadership roles or if she is from outside the industry, as a ‘target appointment’ and a threat to their promotion prospects.”*

*“I was told I only got the job because I was filling a quota.”*



### Possible interventions

- Clearly communicate the business case for gender equality and the strategic requirements for the business in the future
- Invite employee groups to play a role in developing and executing action plans to achieve gender equality
- Share the stories and experiences of women in the organisation or industry
- Demonstrate that the organisation is hiring for the skills required now and in the future: true merit-based appointment
- Directly address behaviours that reflect sexism, discrimination or harassment
- See *Backlash and Buy-In: Responding to the Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality* for examples of actions to address backlash.<sup>14</sup>



### Actions for leaders

- Ensure clear messaging around the appointments of senior women – the skills, capabilities and experience they bring to demonstrate how true merit underpinned each hiring decision
- Recognise and celebrate all leaders who build diverse and inclusive teams, emphasising that this is a core management capability.

<sup>14</sup> Chief Executive Women and Male Champions of Change, *Backlash & Buy-in: Responding to the challenges in achieving equality*, 2018, <https://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MCC-CEW-Backlash-and-Buy-in.pdf> (accessed 13 November 2019).



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## Dexus

When a role becomes vacant at Dexus, hiring managers are asked to consider the diversity of the requisite team, with a focus on competency over experience. This applies to roles across all levels of the business.

In 2015, Dexus recruited a new Chief Financial Officer. With the view to the diversity of skills across the executive team, the search for candidates was broadened to consider candidates from outside the property industry. Alison Harrop was hired to the role, bringing over 20 years of experience in finance-related roles across a range of companies including Australia Post, Westpac, Macquarie, Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank.

Dexus CEO and Executive Director, Darren Steinberg, recalls the hiring decision: “With significant property experience within the existing team, we needed a different perspective and experience to guide the business through its next growth phase. Alison brought both to the table – and this diversity of thought has been invaluable.”

Alison Harrop reflects on her transition to the property industry: “The most valuable expertise I brought is my knowledge about process, efficiencies and operational excellence. We are half-way through the first organisation-wide transformation, and I’ve been able to draw upon direct experience of having done it before – from start to finish.”

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“

When bringing in new talent, the risk we need to be aware of is hiring someone with the same background and skill set as the existing team. From personal experience, I know that having a team with diverse experience, skills and perspectives will drive the best outcomes for the business.

**Darren Steinberg** Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Dexus

# Actions for leaders

Following is a summary of actions leaders can take to interrupt gender bias your talent processes.

## Reflect

- Reflect on and challenge your own assumptions and biases at each point in the recruitment process. What assumptions are you making about the skills and experience required for a role? What assumptions are you making about the capacity and potential of a particular candidate?
- Consider your 'leadership shadow' on this issue. What are you saying? How are you acting? What are you prioritising? What are you measuring?

## Lead by example

- Demonstrate that you hire for potential and future capability requirements, not just experience, and ask the same of your teams
- Role model inclusive networking and call out instances of exclusive or inappropriate networking.

## Get directly involved

- Personally engage in the development of the job descriptions for your top team, defining future-focused requirements, including capabilities linked to potential
- Review your talent pipeline and personally review shortlists, asking '50:50, if not, why not?'
- Personally invest time to prepare for, conduct and debrief after interviews for your team and sign off on critical roles at CEO-2 and CEO-3 that typically feed into succession planning
- Participate in selection panels for key leader appointments, acknowledge and interrupt personal biases and call out behaviours and decisions that are inconsistent with building a diverse team
- Personally sign off on appointments one and two levels down, asking '50:50, if not, why not?' and then acting on the responses you receive
- Institute regular talent review discussions among leaders to proactively identify diverse talent and match to future opportunities.

## Champion change and support senior women

- Personally and visibly sponsor women both within and outside the business
- Personally back senior women to succeed by providing ongoing support and sponsorship into their next role and actively responding to backlash
- Host or sponsor connection sessions with men and women on parental or other forms of long-term leave
- Champion succession planning as a key management priority
- Make succession planning transparent with checks in place to ensure diverse candidates are considered.

## Challenge your team

- Challenge your team to rewrite job descriptions regularly and 'de-construct' requirements
- Ask line managers what they have done to identify a pool of candidates that is gender-balanced, including where they have looked and who they have encouraged to apply
- Ensure the organisation is tapping into diverse referrals and networks; discourage 'referral culture' that just results in 'more of the same'
- Challenge decisions that are inconsistent with building a diverse team
- Establish expectations for top teams to visibly sponsor women into their next roles

- Institute regular talent review discussions among leaders to proactively identify diverse talent and match to future opportunities
- Recognise and reward those in your team who hire diverse talent and build diverse teams.

### Communicate

- Actively debunk traditional notions of 'merit' by highlighting the diversity of skills and background of candidates or new hires and by celebrating the success of diverse teams
- Make your expectations on gender-balanced shortlists clear before you review a shortlist to choose candidates for interview
- Actively promote and celebrate the benefits of gender diversity – diverse leadership and teams are central to improved performance
- Personally champion gender pay parity and make transparent efforts to identify and close any gaps
- Highlight the diversity of skills, background and experience that all appointees bring to the team and organisation
- Use profiles and images of identified talent to challenge whether you are building a diverse talent pipeline
- Ensure clear messaging around the appointment of senior women – articulate the skills, capabilities and experience they bring to demonstrate how true merit underpinned each hiring decision
- Recognise and celebrate all leaders who build diverse and inclusive teams, emphasising that this is a core management capability.

### Put robust systems in place

- Ensure all jobs are advertised internally and externally to encourage a wide pool of candidates
- Appoint gender balanced panels, with external advisors, as appropriate
- Mandate interview training and recruitment process compliance for your leadership team
- Explore recruitment outcomes and their contribution to diversity objectives in routine performance discussions with your team – use these discussions to determine discretionary incentive payments.

### Set targets and hold your teams accountable

- Embed a 40:40:20 target at all stages of recruitment
- Hold line leaders to account for achieving gender targets and include these as part of their KPIs
- Establish group scorecards that include gender targets to drive group-wide aspiration and achievement.

### Review regularly

- Examine regular, granular pipeline reporting
- Make sure you're across the data on gender balance on shortlists – don't assume that this opportunity for inclusion is 'set and forget'
- Regularly review the last 10 hires and 10 leavers with a view to explore how bias has been effectively interrupted.

## **MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE**

### **About Male Champions of Change**

Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders. Male Champions of Change believe gender equality is one of the nation's most significant societal and economic issues. Established in 2010, by then Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership

[malechampionsofchange.com](http://malechampionsofchange.com)

Produced by AAP Studio

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