

Chapter 5:

Development

Strategies to ensure women have access to both formal and on-the-job development required for career paths in non-traditional roles

Increasingly, organisations in the mining, construction and utilities industries are recognising that the training and career development of women is instrumental to achieving their gender diversity strategies.

These organisations are testing the assumptions about women's performance and their commitment to their careers. Instead of assuming that women will be more likely to leave than their male peers, they are investing the same focus on ongoing career development for women.

These organisations provide 'on-the-job' development for technical skills and just as importantly, leading organisations are focused on relationship-based development including mentoring, sponsorship and networking. Their senior leaders are also actively involved in the development activities, highlighting development as imperative to achieving business outcomes.



Leading organisations are using development strategies to:

- Implement a transparent and merit based approach to all talent processes including promotion and succession.
- Ensure women are accessing the development required to reach their career potential within the organisation, including in non-traditional roles.

The following key points provide examples of development strategies used in male-dominated industries in Australia and internationally.

1. Senior leaders who are engaged in development of women:

- **Ensure senior leaders participate in the skills and career development process** to reinforce the priority of development of women within the organisation and the benefits of including women.
- **Engage senior leaders as role models for skills and career development of women** and profile their career paths, particularly senior women in non-traditional roles.
- **Offer mentoring programs for women and reverse mentoring for senior men** to be mentored by junior women.
- **Implement a formal sponsorship program** that matches senior male leaders in the organisation with high-potential women.

2. Development that promotes the career advancement of women:

- **Offer informal and formal opportunities for women to network** with other women within the organisation and include men within these networks.
- **Provide time and resources to participate in and host external networking groups.** Integrate women clients into events to increase the networks of women within the industry.
- **Offer structured leadership development programs** focusing on required leadership capabilities.
- **Encourage opportunities for women to move to non-obvious career paths** by providing re-training in non-traditional roles.
- **Offer flexibility in the time and location of training** to make it accessible to employees.
- **Provide support to partners** to facilitate employee participation in training programs out of hours and in different locations.

3. Merit based and inclusive talent process:

- **Monitor the composition of talent teams** and ensure they are gender diverse and include women from non-traditional roles.
- **Train leaders engaged in the talent process to recognise stereotypes and unconscious bias** about the sort of work women can do and their potential for success in male-dominated roles.
- **Create a process that acts to challenge decision making** during discussions about talent to uncover bias and stereotypes.
- **Set targets to ensure women are participating equally** in on-the-job development, including special projects and senior 'acting' opportunities.
- **Monitor advancement and fall-offs of women's representation in development** and take action when required to ensure meritocracy.

1. Senior leaders who are engaged in development



Participation of senior leaders in development activities for women sets the ‘tone from the top’ and reinforces the priority of skills and career development of women within the organisation. Leading organisations ensure senior leaders participate and sponsor development activities and actively promote the importance of development for women in male-dominated industries.

Senior leaders in these organisations act as sponsors, mentors and advocates for the development of women. They act as powerful career accelerators for women in non-traditional roles by providing visibility, expanding networks and actively advocating for opportunities for the women they are sponsoring.

Senior leaders in leading organisations:

- Model desired behaviours around inclusiveness and their dedication to developing and advancing women.
- Mentor women and share their personal career highlights and the development they have undertaken to be successful in non-traditional roles.
- Sponsor women to ensure their achievements are recognised and they are visible across the organisation.

Senior leaders must participate and sponsor development activities and must actively promote the importance of development for women in male-dominated industries

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to develop women in non-traditional roles:

Ensure senior leaders participate in the development process for women

Participation of senior leaders in development activities reinforces the priority of development of women within the organisation.

Leading organisations ensure senior leaders sponsor and actively participate in development activities. They promote, within the organisation and externally, the benefits of including women in the development process and they talk about the specific actions they have taken to develop and promote women within their teams.

Engage senior leaders as role models

Research shows that men pay attention to what other men in their organisation do.¹

Leading organisations provide specific examples of how senior males in the organisation should act and the inclusive behaviours they should demonstrate. These leaders then model the desired behaviours around inclusiveness and their dedication to developing and advancing women.

It is also important that women who are in senior roles in male-dominated industries talk about their career paths and the development they have undertaken to achieve career success. They should be role models and inspire younger women to understand the opportunities and career paths that are available to them.

Offer mentoring programs for women and reverse mentoring for senior men

Many organisations also encourage senior leaders to mentor and sponsor women.

Formal, matched mentoring programs are important for women in non-traditional roles as they:

- Build relationships and trust.
- Encourage honest feedback and forthright discussion of career opportunities.
- Enhance mentees' understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences.

Some organisations also offer 'reverse' or 'reciprocal' mentoring where a senior male is mentored by junior women. This provides an investment in the junior women and enables them to get more visibility across the organisation. For the senior male leader, it increases their understanding of the experiences women face within the organisation. It also enables them to meet talented women and accelerates their knowledge of the importance of gender diversity and inclusion.

Some organisations overseas have implemented mentoring circles, where one or two senior women (and men) mentor a group of junior women. Mentoring circle meetings can focus on specific career development topics, eg how to engage external stakeholders, or can be more focused on specific issues faced by women in non-traditional roles, eg how to influence as the only woman in a team.

Implement a formal sponsorship program

Some organisations recognise that senior leaders must be sponsors in addition to mentors. Sponsorship is about ensuring that individual women are recognised and that they are visible across the organisation. This ensures that influential leaders can be advocates for women's advancement and career development.

A structured sponsorship program matches senior males in the organisation with high potential women. Successful sponsorship and advocacy occurs throughout the year, not just at promotion time.

Some good industry examples include:

- **AGL** has an annual ‘Diversity Big Day Out’ conference for employees. ‘The most recent one was titled ‘Gender equity – it’s everyone’s business’. It aimed to enrol men as advocates for women in the workplace. The conferences are an opportunity for the senior leaders of AGL, including CEO Michael Fraser and his executive team, to share their career stories and personal commitment to gender diversity.’
<http://www.agl.com.au/about-agl/media-centre/article-list/2012/mar/agl-wins-major-award-for-women-friendly-workplace>
- A **construction company** holds an annual women’s roundtable. Senior executives from across the organisation attend and meet with female employees. The women talk about their experiences and discuss systemic issues that need to be resolved. This helps the company to assess and refresh its gender diversity strategy and to develop and implement inclusive policies.
- The same **construction company** has ‘Diversity Champions’ in each geographic area. These Champions are senior leaders and as advocates they organise and sponsor gender-related initiatives and events.
- When senior leaders from an **energy company** visit a regional site they schedule a meeting with women who are in non-traditional roles. The meetings are designed to ‘check in’ with the women and to discuss business and career development issues.

Examples from industry networks:

- The **National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)** has established a CEO Shadow Program called ‘Women in Civil Construction’. The aim of the program is to demystify the role of the CEO by enabling women to spend a day observing the activities of a senior decision maker in the industry. Participants are also part of an ongoing peer mentoring program that meets quarterly to guide career goals.
<http://www.nawic.com.au/index.cfm?MenuID=160>
- **NAWIC** also offers a mentoring program for women. The program is to ‘inspire others to continually strive for higher levels of performance through creative and strategic methods that are always focused to achieving the intended goals.’ The program is open to all member of NAWIC.
<http://www.nawic.com.au/index.cfm?MenuID=37>
- The **Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)** has launched an e-mentoring program aimed at women working in the resource, allied and construction industries. Both men and women mentor women. ‘The E-mentoring Program utilises special software allowing participants to communicate through chat, Skype or other electronic means. This keeps participants in touch when based in remote areas.’
<http://www.amma.org.au/library/submissions/34-imported-content/library-news-bulletin/1756-awra-e-mentoring-expressions-of-interest-open>

Share your views...

Share your views on which development strategies have worked, and which ones haven’t. We also hope you will share any other ideas you have to develop women in these industries.

Please click on the hard hat to go to the discussion area of the toolkit.



2. Development that promotes the career advancement of women



Leading organisations in male-dominated industries are addressing the assumption that a woman will be more likely than her male peer to leave the organisation.

Operating on the assumption that women are more likely to leave the organisations creates a cycle where managers invest less in the development of women because they assume they are less committed. Unfortunately, this can then increase the likelihood that women will become dissatisfied and leave to seek other lines of work.

Leading organisations recognise that informal networks play an extremely important role in the career development of both men and women. They recognise that women in male-dominated industries have less access to these networks and thus fewer sponsors and mentors and less visibility across the organisation.

Development of women in leading organisations:

- Addresses the fact that women have less access to networking opportunities.
- Is offered at flexible times and locations so more women can actively participate.

Leading organisations are investing the same commitment to the ongoing career development of women as they do for men.

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to develop women to non-traditional roles:

Offer informal and formal opportunities for women to network

Some women describe the culture in male-dominated industries as lonely and many are conscious of being the only woman on-site or in a team. Networking can, in part, address this isolation.

Many organisations acknowledge that informal networks also play an extremely important role in career advancement, but women have less access to these networks. This means they have fewer sponsors and mentors and less visibility for development and career opportunities. It is therefore important to facilitate networking opportunities with women within the organisation.

Provide time and resources to participate and host external networking groups

It is also important to offer female employees the opportunity to network with women externally, both within the industry and other industries. This can also be achieved by inviting female clients and customers to internal events.

Offer structured leadership development programs

While there is debate on whether there should be development programs for women only, it is agreed that women should have equal access to the broader development curriculum. Some organisations are also providing development for women focusing on specific skills such as influencing and networking in an all-male team.

Many organisations offer 'on-the-job' development. This gives women opportunities to demonstrate their expertise at, for example, internal meetings, key presentations and other external events with clients and customers.

Encourage opportunities for women to move to non-obvious career paths

It is important to increase the exposure of women to high-profile work that tests stereotypes and assumptions and demonstrates women's performance in non-traditional roles.

The objective is to accelerate the development of women early in their careers to prepare high-potential individuals for senior leadership positions in male-dominated industries.

Leading organisations overseas identify 'non-obvious' cross-business development opportunities for high performing women and offer supporting measures such as mentoring and technology support.

Offer flexibility in the time and location of training

Many organisations recognise the need to make training accessible to all employees. This may include offering training at different times and locations to suit other commitments that employees may have outside of work. These needs may include caring responsibilities for family members who have a disability or are frail due to age.

Provide support to partners and children

Many high-potential women decline opportunities to undertake development interstate or internationally due to the negative impact of relocation on their partner's career. This excludes many women from critical development required for advancement to senior leadership and leads to an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Some organisations consider providing additional support to talented female employees who may have to relocate to undertake development or to advance their careers. Support can include care, financial assistance and career advice.

Some good industry examples include:

- **Essential Energy** established a 'Women@work' network in 2009. 'The Network was established to focus on providing opportunities, promoting awareness and assisting women to access information and events. The Network provides career and personal development, support and guidance by leveraging existing programs to support our women.'
<http://www.essentialenergy.com.au/content/womenwork>
- Another **energy company** is conducting development sessions on mental health, relationship management and conflict negotiation for female employees.
- **Alcoa's** Women's Network is a global initiative which provides women with mentoring, development opportunities and networking activities. The network is highlighted as an employee benefit for employees in Australia.
http://www.alcoa.com/australia/en/info_page/employee_benefits.asp
- A **construction company** is trying to encourage women to move into project management and operations management instead of leaving to become full time parents. They are conducting an in-house development program which is underpinned by six months of mentoring and greater access to networks and relationships.
- The same **construction company** has implemented a career mapping initiative which broadens the view of what a career is and provides employees with information of the different paths that are available within the organisation. The career mapping is supported by the required development activity.
- Another **construction company** actively provides broader networking with women from other male-dominated industries. This recognises the benefits of meeting other women to share experiences and strategies to be successful in non-traditional roles.
- **Schlumberger**, a French oilfield services company, developed a succession planning process focused on identifying higher-risk, 'non-obvious', development moves for high-potential leaders, both male and female. The objective is to accelerate the development of leaders early in their careers to prepare high-potential individuals for senior leadership positions with global multi-business responsibilities. By exposing female executives to multiple different functions, geographies, and aspects of the business they have created a continual, mobile female leadership pipeline with multidimensional skills.

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- Engineering company **Aurecon** includes the ASPIRE program as part of its Aurecon Women Achieving Women diversity initiative. ASPIRE 'has been designed to assist female employees in gaining the necessary skills and confidence that will assist with empowering them to take charge of their careers, and provides the platform to meet with colleagues, network, and exchange ideas, information and experiences.'
<http://www.aurecongroup.com/en/careers/why-aurecon/diversity.aspx>

Examples of industry networks:

- The **Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AMMA)**, supported by the National Resource Sector Workforce Strategy, is delivering the industry's dedicated virtual mentoring program, connecting experienced professionals with women in the earlier stages of their careers.
<http://www.amma.org.au/awra/awra-e-mentoring>

- **Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT)** is a non-profit incorporated organisation which began in 2009 to provide a support network for tradeswomen, apprentices and women who wish to enter the trades. SALT's main aim is to extend the base of women who will consider the trades as a career choice. 'We provide our membership with monthly meetings in Wollongong and Sydney, Facebook and Twitter connections, emails relating to tradeswomen initiatives and news. We also support and provide contacts plus information to women seeking work in the trades.'

<http://www.saltaustralia.org/>

- The **WIMnet** aims to promote the attraction and retention of women in the mining industry and to encourage membership and active participation of women in activities. Membership is open to all members of The Australian Minerals Institute, both women and men.

<http://www.ausimm.com.au/content/default.aspx?id=236>

- The **Women in Energy Network** in the USA produces quarterly 'Empowering Women in Energy' newsletters focusing on chapter activities and profiling initiatives. 'Founded in 1994, the Women's Energy Network of Houston is non-profit group that brings together professional women of achievement in the energy industry and fosters their advancement by creating a network of energy contacts.'

<http://www.womensenergynetwork.org/?nd=home>

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3. Merit based and inclusive talent process



The talent process and discussions are where decisions are made about the performance and potential of employees. They often determine who has access to promotions and development opportunities and are a key decision point in the success of an employee's career journey.

Leading organisations are ensuring there is more rigour and transparency in their talent processes to ensure they are focused on merit, and that they are not subjective and based on personal decisions on whom is the 'best fit'. They are ensuring there is diversity amongst the employees engaged in the talent discussion and they are training both leaders and Human Resources employees to recognise stereotypes and potential bias in their discussions. These organisations are also tracking the performance of women at each stage of the talent cycle to understand the advancement and fall-offs of women's representation in development and the talent pipeline.

Leaders involved in the talent process will be most effective if they:

- Adhere to a talent process focused on meritocracy.
- Recognise and challenge any stereotypes or bias they have about female candidates, the work they should do and their potential for success in a male-dominated industry.

The talent process must be rigorous, transparent and open to a challenger process which uncovers gender bias and gender stereotypes.

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to develop women to non-traditional roles:

Monitor the composition of talent teams

Talent discussions generally involve representatives from Human Resources and line management. It is important to ensure the team is gender diverse and includes women from non-traditional roles.

This diversity will increase the likelihood of balanced and objective assessment during talent discussions.

Train leaders engaged in the talent process to recognise stereotypes and unconscious bias

As with employees involved in recruitment, it is equally important to train leaders involved in the talent process to recognise potential stereotypes and unconscious biases. These biases can emerge during the talent discussions which focus on the aspirations and potential of individual employees.

Leading organisations ensure there is training to address the myths about the sort of work women can do and the ability of women to be successful in non-traditional roles. They ensure that promotions and talent outcomes are based on a talent framework which uses fair and grounded criteria, instead of a reliance on informal judgments of 'fit'.

Create a process that acts to challenge decision making

Leading organisations inject extra scrutiny during critical talent discussions about promotions and development. This is called a 'challenger process'. This process is important for decision making during talent discussions to uncover potential bias and stereotypes.

A senior manager plays the role of the 'challenger' and asks probing questions about what is discussed. The aim is to reduce the potential for unconscious stereotyping and to ensure that women get their fair share of opportunities to be tested and trusted.

Set targets to ensure women are participating equally

Organisations understand it is important to have women participate in formal on-the-job development including special projects and senior 'acting' opportunities.

Some organisations have set targets that focus on merit-based development and advancement. They hold leaders accountable for ensuring that a number of women participate in formal development activities and relationship based activities, including mentoring and sponsorship.

Monitor advancement and fall-offs of women's representation in development

Many organisations monitor the representation of women at all points in the talent process to ensure there is meritocracy.

They examine representation, promotion, and engagement levels of women at all stages of the talent process. Importantly, they take action to address any inequality and to ensure women's representation in development activities.

Some good industry examples include:

- A **mining company** is committed to increasing female participation in their Accelerated Leadership Development Program by setting a target that at least 40% of the participants must be women.
- An **energy company** has a talent management process which aims to have women on the succession plans for all critical roles. If no women are 'ready now' for the role, they identify women who would be ready in 1-3 or 3-5 years and ensure they receive the required work experiences and development opportunities to make a successful transition to the role.
- A **construction company** conducts a 'one-up conversation' with all women regarding career, talent and succession. Women meet with their Line Manager's Manager to discuss their career aspirations and development plan. This increases the profile of women at senior levels of the organisation and ensures there is not a reliance on a single manager for development and advocacy.

Examples from other male-dominated industries:

- **IBM's** succession planning process ensures they have a minimum of one woman identified for each executive role.

<http://www-07.ibm.com/employment/au/diversity/women.html>

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1 J Prime, C Moss-Racusin and H Foust-Cummings, *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: Stacking the Deck for Success*, Catalyst (2009). At <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/engaging-men-gender-initiatives-stacking-deck-success> (viewed 6 February 2013).