



WorkJuggle

THE F WORD_



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The Business Case for Diversity

Some people need facts and figures before they begin to engage with anything. So let's get that bit out of the way at the very start.

According to the 2018 McKinsey Report Diversity Matters, their research found that gender diverse companies were 15% more likely to outperform their competition, whilst ethnically & racially diverse companies were 35% more likely to outperform.

Let's look at that figure again; **15-35% more likely to outperform**. If there was a pill that you could take which would make your performance 15-35% better than your competition don't you think it would be handed out every day in the canteen?

And let's take a look at Credit Suisse .
Their findings were;

"The average return on equity of companies with at least one woman on the board between 2006-2012 was 16% compared with 12% for firms without female board representation"

That is a 4% increase on return on equity.. Again if there was a magic pill that could guarantee that kind of return Venture Capitalists would be swigging it down with their morning orange juice.

Apart from the bald statistics there is more.



“She’s Back” the new book by Lisa Unwin & Deb Khan, has listed out common sense reasons why having more women in business deliver such critical results;

Representing the customer base.

Over 75% of consumer decisions are made by women. Mimicking the customer & client base allows you to design products and services that appeal to customers and sell faster.

The brain drain costs.

Companies spend a fortune hiring & training brilliant female graduate only to see them walk out of the door 7 or 8 years down the line.

Being held to account.

Increased transparency through social media means people can take a proper look at companies, what they do and who works there. A lack of senior women can make younger women think twice.

The loss of invaluable social & intellectual capital.

Women take with them many years of deep trusted relationships & experience when they leave.



A lack of diversity of thought.

The people long serving in an organisation with a similar background have a tendency to think and act the same - there is a danger of groupthink.

A danger of looking neolithic.

All men at the top? It's old fashioned, odd and not reflective of modern working environments or society.

You're fishing in a limited pool.

Evidence proves there is a huge untapped pool of untapped talent out there.

The future is all about flexibility & collaboration.

Technology is increasingly impacting how we work. Succeeding in a connected world requires agility, communication, flexibility & collaboration.

Why Ireland is different

Only kidding, of course Ireland isn't any different. The benefits as illustrated above are the same however the structural challenges women face in Ireland are unique. Wait I hear you saying, isn't this all about choice? As in women making a personal decision for their families?

That is certainly how it can be presented as mid to senior level women slope off in ones and twos. There is never a mass exodus just a sudden realisation that all those bright and ambitious female graduates recruited ten or fifteen years ago have not made it to the top of the ladder.



And then of course, it is presented as “lack of a talent pipeline”. Pipeline is a nice structural sounding word which makes the speaker feel informed and yet removed enough from the problem to be required to do anything about it. Of course they would love to have more women in senior roles however there is a “lack of a pipeline” so their hands are tied.

This is echoed by Timewise in the UK, who state that there is a perception that it is a choice to prioritise children over paid work. In actual fact, it is due to a lack of valuable alternatives. This attitude positions the gender pay gap as a fact of life and releases employers from responsibility for changing it.

According to the Irish CSO (2016 Census) more women than men are likely to have a third level qualification (55.1% versus 42.9%). So strictly speaking women are the most highly educated part of the population. That is part of why we are different.

However, and this is in part where the difficulties start, working parents in Ireland also face the highest child care costs in Europe. According to the OECD, in Europe it averages out at about 12% of a family's income but in Ireland it is as high as 35%. That and the gender pay gap; An OECD survey also reported a gender pay gap of 16% in 2015, ranking Ireland 25th out of 33 countries in their Women in Work Index. The gender pay gap has actually increased in recent years, now 6.5% greater than in 2012.



Diversity & Inclusion has just come on most companies radars. The EY Diversity & Inclusion report asked 153 Irish organisations drawn from a range of indigenous Irish organisations and global companies of every size and sector;

“What do you typically spend your Diversity & Inclusion budget on?”

For 77.1% of them the answer was events followed by training at 52.1% and sponsorship at 42%. Whilst events are an important part of signalling a cultural change or highlighting new thinking it could be argued that there is no point having banner events if the will to change is not matched on the ground.

Additionally, some two thirds (66.7%) believe they are “doing what it takes to improve Diversity & Inclusion”. Given the World Economic Forum’s 2017 report that it will take another 217 years to achieve gender parity globally, this may be somewhat disconnected from reality.

The F Word

So what do women want? That age old question. Well luckily, we have a few answers. The nice people over at She’s Back did a survey of over 1,300 women which ran for 8 weeks. The average age of the women who responded was 41 and they had on average twelve years experience before taking a break. 68% were at team leader level or above before taking a break, 57% were middle managers and above and as predicted, most left before reaching the levels at which they could be considered potential candidates for Executive Board level. The results of the survey are not hugely surprising;

85% took a break for family related reasons. These include an inability to juggle work and family, the cost of childcare and employers being unreceptive to flexibility and part-time working.

The same number, 85% said they wanted to return to work, either immediately or at some point in the future and by far the largest proportion, 55%, wanted to return now.

The biggest barrier to returning? The lack of flexibility in the workforce. It is important to point out that flexibility means different things to different people. For some people it can mean working three days a week, for others it is simply being able to work from home one day a week.

In nearly all cases of the She's Back survey women stated they just need to be trusted;

“Trust in me to get the job done and to arrange my work around my family.”

So many workplace norms are structurally incompatible with family life and until we start dismantling these norms, and replacing with flexible-friendly ones, female progression and gender parity will remain elusive.

The Case for Change

It is very simple, it is like Henry Ford said; “If you always do what you have always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.”

The traditional recruitment model does not work when companies are trying to recruit diversity.

Again, according to the 2018 EY Diversity & Inclusion report, despite the universal acceptance that ‘having a diverse and inclusive workplace contributes to talent acquisition and retention’, just 24.3% of Irish companies survey have a specific programme to recruit diverse candidates as part of hiring practices and under a third (32.7%) have a programme to develop diverse leadership into the future.

At WorkJuggle we believe there needs to be a proactive approach to embracing diversity and inclusion at the hiring stage. This would start with the job specification, follow by



sourcing and carry right through to the interview process. A truly open and inclusive hiring process would welcome questions around flexibility and workplace norms rather than treating flexibility as some kind of shameful secret, only handing it out on a case by case basis to those already part of the organisation. Organisations openly advertising flexibility will set themselves apart from the competition. In terms of closing the gender pay gap, there is a need to redesign job roles with flexibility at its core and ensure career progression on a part time basis is not only acceptable but aspirational.



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At WorkJuggle we connect highly skilled professionals to flexible, remote or contract roles. Our candidates are either working in a senior role currently and looking for more flexibility or have been out of the workforce for a period of time and looking to make a successful return. We love our candidates and we think they are the best :)

If you are interested to hear more then contact Ciara: Ciara@workjuggle.com or check out www.workjuggle.com