



Welcome,

In this edition of The Xplorer we look at diversity and how it impacts our working lives.

Diversity in the workplace can be of enormous benefit to companies - rather than a hindrance that needs to be managed. Companies which are made up of people representing the full pool of talent are in a better position than their more homogenous peers. Leadership teams drawn from across nationalities, genders and professional backgrounds are beneficial to an organisation's performance.

Diversity is particularly close to our hearts at Xplore, so we'll be giving you some of our perspective as well as facts from recently reported sources.

The Xplore Team

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EMBEDDING DIVERSITY

Why is it after so many years focusing on diversity and gender diversity in particular, we have seen so little progress especially in Australia? In fact we are moving backwards. I do not believe that there is an intentional glass ceiling however, I do believe that it is still much more difficult for women, people of different cultural backgrounds and those with a disability to ascend the organisational hierarchy.

We have to apply focus in three areas: giving senior executives the conscious awareness of the factors that make workplaces 'exclusive' rather than 'inclusive' and following this up with KPI's to drive performance; building metrics and targets and reporting to the staff and externally on progress to achieve these; continuing to give women support to provide the confidence to challenge the status quo and reach their potential.

At Xplore, since our founding in 2002, we have focused most of our time on providing women with the skills to have the confidence to seek

the career and life that they aspire to. It is with great delight that I see many of these women now taking more senior roles without losing their authenticity. We have worked with women in many major organisations such as CBA, Deloitte, and KPMG to support their gender diversity initiatives. However, a number of other organisations including GHD, Centrelink and Amex have incorporated our programs with mixed groups to build bridges between the genders. This provides a new approach provided the groups include roughly even numbers of men and women.

We also offer programs for executives on embedding inclusive culture in their teams. What does an inclusive culture look like and why is it important? An inclusive culture is one where people of diverse styles can flourish and make a difference and teams seek diverse members to become more effective. Inclusive teams and organisations will provide support not only for gender diversity but also diversity of cultural background.



At a recent lunch Dr Katie Spearritt, founder of Diversity Partners, spoke about the challenge of building conscious awareness within leaders to understand what factors make team members feel excluded. It has been shown that leaders who have experienced 'exclusion' at some time in their own lives are better equipped to lead in an 'inclusive' way.



EMBEDDING DIVERSITY (continued)

She spoke of asking each person to consider a time when they were excluded at some stage in their lives. This may have been a change in school, a change in family circumstance, any one of a number of things. I remember vividly my family's one-year stay in the UK where I arrived mid-year for the first year of high school. I really didn't fit in and found my time there most challenging and on my return to Australia a year later, I was not placed with in a class with my previous friends as I had not studied Latin. This led to a drop in confidence and poor performance for the remainder of my high school years.

Women may be affected by assumptions made by others without asking if this is true. A recent example I heard was a woman not offered a place in a leadership program because she had just returned from maternity leave. With the best of intentions that leader made assumptions about her availability. In this case, the woman was keen to take up her career where she had left off and would have taken the place on the program. By not offering the place, she slipped back in terms of this key program that her peers had been offered and her confidence was shaken.

Here are some other assumptions that may lead to the exclusion of women. So often these are subconscious assumptions that lead to decisions that affect the success of women:

- 'I know she has a young family and therefore won't to travel or won't be prepared to relocate'.
- She never asks about promotion and remuneration. I guess she is happy with the role and remuneration she has.

- When I say she has done a great job she always says it was nothing. I guess it just wasn't as difficult as I thought.
- We are taking clients to the football and she won't be interested.
- We are having a group lunch today but she seems too busy to come
- She is not committed to her job as she goes early to pick up the children from day care.
- She has been working on that project but I have no idea how it is going – I better check in case it is not on track.
- I know she only works three days a week so she couldn't work on this project.
- I can't take her out for a coffee or mentor this talented young woman, as people will talk about me.
- She is getting older and is probably looking to retire.
- She has been out of the workplace for a few years after having children, I guess it will take time to be productive again. Really it's just too hard.
- We need to make some retrenchments. Let's just remove all the contractors and part-timers.
- She is likely to have children in the next few years so really it is not worth investing in her.
- She is lucky that we gave her a part-time position.
- She has a husband with a good job, money really isn't important to her.
- It's easier talking to the other men they have similar interests.

Another concern expressed by women is that of 'being heard'. An idea may be put forward in a

meeting, gain no traction and then be restated by someone else and gains support. Why does this happen? Research shows we subconsciously assume that lower voices have more authority and therefore perhaps better ideas. Women also often make suggestions with a preface of 'perhaps an idea might be', 'another option to consider is....'. These are inclusive statements but often are interpreted as lacking the conviction that the suggestion is valuable.

Often we make assumptions based on stereotypes. For example, a senior woman joined a board of a large company and the chairman came up at the beginning of the first meeting and asked if she would take notes. She was experienced enough to feel comfortable saying "I can't this time as I have hurt my hand but will happily take my turn". Too often the assumption is made that women will take notes, get coffee or arrange the meetings. When such an assumption is made it is difficult for young women to position themselves as a leader.

In Australia, 22% of women say they have been sexually harassed at work and many people of different cultural backgrounds experience racism on a regular basis. Businesswomen should not have to tolerate innuendo, comments about their clothing or physical attributes – comments that would not be made to a man in the same position. Business women are not 'dear', 'love', 'chics' – they are there to work and to be treated as businesswomen.

So what can we do to change the subconscious bias that is so prevalent in our workplace today, and bring it to the conscious level so that senior managers are aware of the bias they may bring?



EMBEDDING DIVERSITY (continued)

1. Get real feedback from those around you at work. This may require an external consultant to gain the trust of those in your team so that the feedback is authentic.

2. Go to the Harvard website and test your gender bias. I feel sure you will be surprised – I was!

3. Take the time to consider times when you have felt excluded – what factors impacted your feelings? Ask others about situations in which they have found themselves excluded. Listen to them and seek to understand their perspectives.

4. Take time and effort to collect metrics within the organisation and review them over time:

- Where are the women in your organisation?
- What percentage of women were promoted at each level each year – was that in line with the percentage in the pool?
- Who is in your talent pool?
- Does this reflect your gender mix – if not, why not?
- Is remuneration equal for equal work including bonuses and other components of the total package

5. Set targets and measure progress against them:

- Are some areas of the organisation not achieving targets?
- What is happening in that subculture?
- Do particular members of your team need to have their biases articulated and addressed?

We all have a set of beliefs to the workplace. It is like an 'iceberg' and for most of us, like all icebergs, we have only a conscious awareness of a small percentage of the iceberg. Until we really understand the beliefs we have brought there is little chance of us achieving the inclusive cultures and the success of females and other diverse members of our organisation that I know many CEO's and executive teams would like to achieve.

Australia now sits far behind the majority of the western world in our ability to offer inclusive workplaces. We need to address these challenges head on to be the country that can operate effectively in a global market. If we can take our leaders to a level of 'conscious competence' from 'unconscious incompetence' we will have the opportunity to change our workplaces to places that encourage and embrace diversity.

To find out more about Xplore's Diversity program call Diana Ryall on 02 9660 4526 or email office@xplore.net.au.

Don't forget to check out Xplore's full range of Programs and Workshops to assist you and/or your organisation to achieve success.

GUEST ARTICLE



Visual Leadership by Helen Robinett, Image Quest

When we talk about leadership we use words such as charismatic, visionary, risk-taker, smart operator to describe a good leader. But what about our physical characteristics? How much of leadership is accomplished through visual means? [Read Image Quest's guest article to find out more.](#)

Helen Robinett, Director and Image Advisor at Image Quest, is one of only five image professionals in Australia to achieve the designation of Certified Image Professional through the Association of Image Consultants International and has recently published a book on Personal Branding, *Apprentice to Business Ace*.

In the next edition of The Xplorer...

We will be covering "The Success of Women".

Feel free to send us your recommendations of topics to discuss thexplorer@xplore.net.au.



PIPELINE TO THE TOP JOBS STILL A PIPEDREAM FOR WOMEN

Recently the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) released the findings of a survey that highlights the continuing issue of women being unrepresented in boards of ASX200 organisations.

The 2010 EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership found that only 8.4% of board positions are filled by women, with only 8% holding key executive management positions. And there are only six female CEOs and five female chairs in the top 200 – barely any change from 2008.

It says Australia has the lowest percentages of women in the most senior positions, compared to New Zealand, Britain, Canada, US and South Africa.

EOWA Acting Director, Mairi Steele, says “the EOWA 2010 Census clearly shows nothing significant has occurred in Australian business culture to address the systemic inequity that continues to prevent talented and capable women from contributing at this high level.”

To download a copy of the full publication or key findings from the census [click here](#)

Read some of the press reports after the release of the census:

Women still locked out of management roles at work

Not enough being done to increase number of female executives: Report

Show and tell brings the heel to boardrooms

Despite the talk, the glass ceiling for women proves tough to crack

DO YOU REALLY KNOW THE STATE OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

In order to create strategic and long-term change with diversity initiatives, you must develop a long-range plan and be committed to following it to the desired outcomes.

Organisations often file diversity and inclusion strategies in the ‘too hard basket’. They want to steer away from potentially discriminating and tokenistic policies but don’t really know where to start creating a strategy to compliment their business needs. This is where a professional organisation such as Xplore can assist you.

The diversity audit is a measuring tool that helps you take a snapshot of your organisation’s service to diverse people in your community. It allows you to see where you are right now, set realistic, attainable goals for action, and then to identify and celebrate the progress made toward those goals.

The **Xplore Gender Diversity Audit** provides an organisation with a confidential internal perspective of how the organisation manages their women. It includes the views from the senior management and their female employees. It brings gender issues out in the open without individual managers or women being identified.

[Read more](#) about the Xplore Gender Diversity Audit.



For a confidential discussion on how Xplore could assist you with diversity strategies please contact Diana Ryall on 02 9660 4526 or email office@xplore.net.au.



HOW DO YOU CAN BECOME MORE DIVERSITY AWARE?



How aware of diversity are you? If you feel that you could be doing better, then follow our steps to becoming more diversity aware:

1. Build your own awareness

Build this awareness both about yourself and others. It is easy to notice what you perceive to be other people's faults - but noticing your own biases and assumptions takes self-awareness and courage.

2. Build your knowledge and understanding

Broaden your knowledge of different styles and other cultures - especially those that are represented within your workplace and customer base. Be curious. Ask questions that demonstrate your interest and willingness to learn (and not judge).

3. Practice and adapt new behaviours

Behaviour change takes practice - think of new sentences, mindsets, thoughts and skills that will help you to overcome your own biases.

4. Share your learnings with others

People learn through hearing other people's experiences. When you 'name' your own learning, it helps others to see what some of their own personal filters may be and how these impact their view of individuals and their world. Both individuals and organisations need to take the time to build skills and practice new behaviours that embrace difference and diversity. Our objective should be to see diversity as something that creates opportunity, interest and innovation.

Want to know more? **Xplore's Diversity Awareness seminar** can be tailored to your organisation and its needs. It is a challenging half-day experience for managers with practical exercises and tips to better understand the importance and challenge of engaging, supporting and leading a diverse team. [Read more.](#)

NETWORKING EVENTS



Fashion, Fillies and Dress for Success Sydney!

Don't have plans for Melbourne Cup yet? Bored with the usual office sweepstake? Why not make this year special and include a fundraising element and donate funds raised to Dress for Success Sydney, [download our fundraising factsheet](#) to find out how.



End of Year Christmas Celebration - with Jane Caro and The Curvettes

What a fabulously successful year we've had, and we want to celebrate it with you!

Date:

29 November 2010 (Monday)

Time:

6.30 for 7:00 p.m.

Venue:

Novotel Manly Pacific

Tickets:

\$100 per person, \$1,000 for table of ten – includes canapés followed by a two course dinner, great speaker and entertainment.

This is the highlight of our year so don't miss out, [click here](#) to order your tickets NOW!



Xplore for Success is a proud sponsor of Dress for Success Sydney

