

## More women in industry and commerce - this is what attractive employers do



**Authors:**

Edel Karlsson Håål, Mia Liljestränd, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise  
Karin Myrén, Karin Myrén Media

**Cover Photo:**

Daniel Roos

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## Foreword



**The search for skills is a highly topical issue for most companies. Those covered in the consultancy firm PWC's latest CEO survey state that one of the greatest challenges is attracting a workforce with the right skills. The percentage of CEOs who see the availability of key skills as the biggest business threat has reached an alarming 77 percent, up from 63 percent in 2014.**

In the race for talent, it is of great importance to attract staff from as wide a group as possible. Companies that focus too narrowly on the backgrounds and experiences of their co-workers risk missing out on the best skills and on those employees who can contribute the most.

The importance of working with diversity in companies and other undertakings is well known. An essential part of this is gender equality, i.e. not limiting yourself to just thinking about half the population. This is why the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise focuses on gender equality as a way to promote diversity. In this report, we primarily want to highlight the importance of men and women having equal opportunities in the labour market.

But achieving gender equality does not merely depend on employers. The efforts and priorities made by employees are also influenced by prevalent norms and values concerning work and family life. So, in order to achieve the objectives for gender equality in society at large, more parties need to contribute with their different perspectives. Here we are focusing on how companies can work at being attractive employers for both women and men.

It is not always easy to apply a meritocratic approach, yet it is crucial in order to obtain the best skills. One may even ask what skills are, and which skills are relevant for a particular company. The important point is to see the skills and qualifications of each and every individual, rather than focusing on the group to which the individual is perceived to belong, and also possibly identifying your own hidden expectations about which characteristics a person must possess in order to also be perceived as having a particular skill set.

**Meritocracy** (from the Latin *meritus*, merit, and *kratein*, to rule) is a movement, ideology or societal system where talent, education and training, and the result of that education and training combined with performance during a person's career are the dominating factors for promotion. Aptitude and talent, knowledge gained, and actual proficiency and accomplishments acquired in working life are merits that are crucial for an individual to attain professional, social and political advancement in a meritocracy. Social origin and class should not be relevant. Nor should acts of friendship, peer pressure or the accommodation of prevailing but clearly faulty consensus views be able to influence a person's career in a meritocracy.

Being able to recruit, develop and retain the best employees requires a well thought-out work process. This report provides guidance and tips as to how companies can work at being attractive employers securing the best possible skills. With input from representatives from industry and commerce, we have identified four focus areas:

- Recruitment
- Skills development
- Corporate culture, work organisation and management
- Gender-neutral wage setting

We hope to provide inspiration and concrete advice to companies working with gender equality and diversity, while, at the same time, showing that even though some people may feel that the pace of change is too slow, a lot of work is being done and progress is being made. This progress is a source of impetus for further change.

**Carina Lindfelt**

Department Head, Labour Market and Negotiation Services,  
Confederation of Swedish Enterprise

Those who participated and contributed with their experiences to this report are:



**Anna-Lena Bohm**  
Uniguide



**Helena Bonnevie**  
Akers Friskola



**Annika Brismar**  
Distriktstandvården



**Emma Claesson**  
ÅF



**Sofia Dehre**  
NCC



**Ulrica Ernbo**  
Inter IKEA Systems Service



**Sofia Gedeon**  
KPMG



**Peter Larsson**  
Swedish Association of  
Graduate Engineers



**Stefan Lindbäck**  
Lindbäcks Bygg



**Louise-Marie Matti**  
LKAB



**David Morgenstern**  
Ericsson



**Margareta Söder**  
Ambea



**Johanna Wiberg**  
Ports of Stockholm



**Amelie von Zweigbergk**  
Association of Swedish  
Engineering Industries

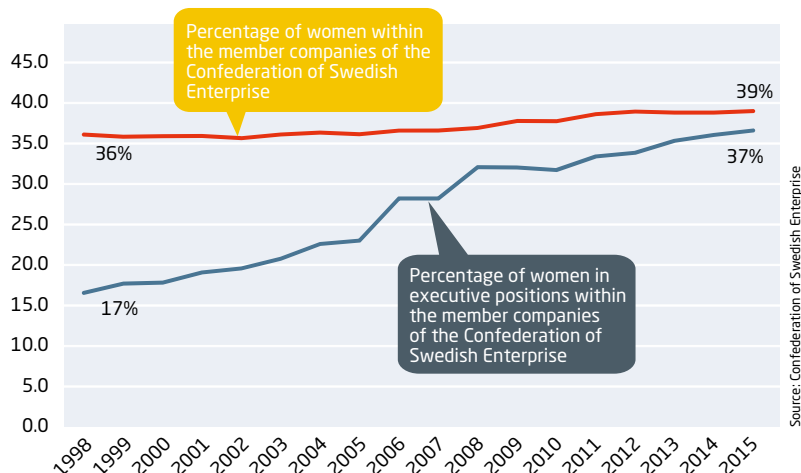
## Women and men in industry and commerce

The private sector represent the biggest labour market for Swedish women. In 2015, 1.1 million women worked in industry and commerce, which is a larger number of women than are currently employed in the Swedish public sector.

The percentage of women in the private sector has remained constant at just below 40 percent for a considerable period of time. Simultaneously, the percentage of women in executive positions is increasing rapidly. While there are excellent opportunities for career progression in industry and commerce, there is also a great demand for women in positions that do not involve managerial responsibilities, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors and occupations. The same applies to female-dominated businesses like healthcare, the school system and social care, where an increase in male engagement would be desirable.

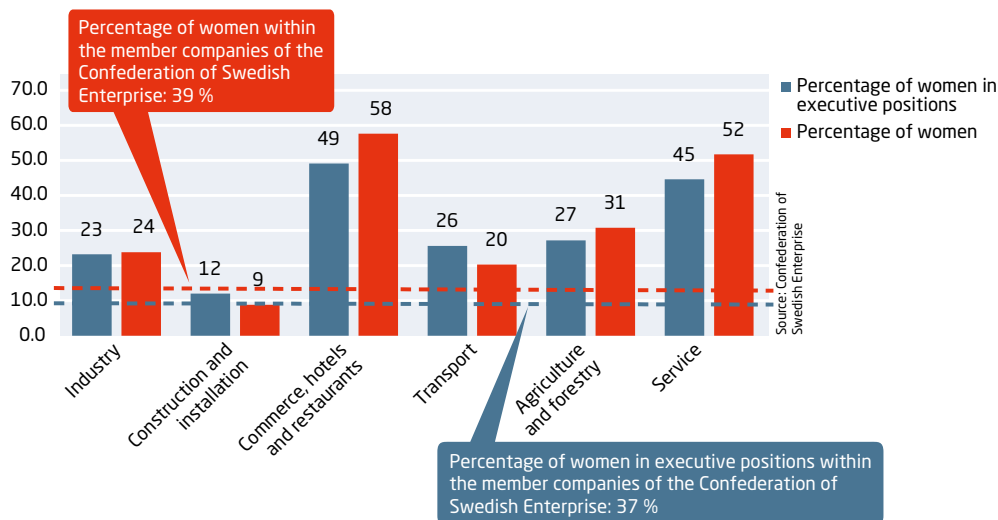
The number of women in executive positions is increasing rapidly

**Diagram 1. The percentage of women and the percentage of women in executive positions within the member companies of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise 1998-2015.**



Construction and transport stand out

**Diagram 2. Percentage of women and percentage of women in executive positions per sector within the member companies of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise 1998–2015.**



Statistics show that in general, the greater the number of women in a particular sector, the greater the number of women in executive positions in the same sector. It is interesting to note that two sectors with a low proportion of women – construction and installation, and the transport sector – still have a higher percentage of women in executive positions.

# The gender divide in the labour market begins in the school system

Today, there is great awareness that gender balanced workplaces help businesses develop. Enabling boys and girls to make choices in terms of education, training and occupations that break gender stereotypical norms therefore makes a valuable contribution towards an important societal change. Even though many companies are working hard at broadening their recruitment base, there are certain sectors that find this more difficult than others. Furthermore, few vocational programmes at upper secondary school level manage to attract both girls and boys. Healthcare and personal care, building and craft are examples of programmes where there is great gender imbalance.

Johanna Wiberg, HR Specialist, Ports of Stockholm:

"We can work as hard as we can with organisational structures and affirmative action, but at the end of the day, there also has to be a good recruitment base. We can try to be a nice place to work, where we are open and welcoming, but before reaching that point there is still much to be done about there being people with the right training and experience applying for the job. That kind of change takes time.

It is not fair to argue that companies should fix the whole gender equality issue because when we employ a person, they have already gone through the school system and been influenced by so many other things in their lives. If anything significant is to happen, a lot has to be done at different levels of society. It is all about how things are at pre-school and in the school system, and how parents raise their children".

## The significance of study and vocational guidance

Changing young people's views on occupational choices has to be done at an early stage. Initiatives in the school system are important, yet greater awareness among parents is also required to avoid limiting children's potential, self-image and choice of occupation. This is where the career advice and vocational guidance that schools provide play an important role. By allowing for repeated contact with working life throughout the course of children's schooling, and by using the surrounding world as a resource in education, the school system can create a better environment for conscious choices.

## Facilitate changes of occupation

Vocational choices that do not follow established expectations in terms of gender are easier to make later in life, after a person has worked for a few years. It is therefore important to facilitate retraining and reskilling so that people can change their occupation during the course of their working life. This is an area where higher vocational education and adult education are very important. Increased access to vocational education for adults is essential if we are to achieve a more gender-equal labour market. The alternative risks creating unwanted lock-in effects.

## Role models provide inspiration

Another way of stimulating non-traditional occupational choices is to work with role models. Vocational teachers have an important role to play in this, but so do people working in the related industries as well. Values and attitudes are expressed in the context of meetings between people, and if the students do not identify with the culture of a programme or a workplace, there is a considerable risk that they will not stay.

Per Larsson, Head of Social Policy, Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers:

"We are beginning to see female role models in executive positions in companies, and we are in the middle of a societal change that is unstoppable. But when it comes to the debate, people easily fall back into their entrenched positions, losing sight of the essentials and of the changes that are actually happening. I believe that in order for us to take further steps ahead, the main thing is to have women as role models and increased collaboration between the school system, industry and commerce, and society at large. I am a great believer in enabling young people to try different things, for instance, through the 'Technology Leap' (Tekniksprånget)."

## Employer organisations' own initiatives

Employer organisations are making considerable efforts together with their member companies to showcase their sectors and to broaden the recruitment base. Here are some examples.

- The Heating, Ventilation and Plumbing Industry (VVS) Training Board has developed the "HVP Compass" based on the core values "open, curious, proud".
- The Swedish Construction Federation (Sveriges Byggindustrier) does strategic work on its own and together with Swedish Building Workers' Union (Byggnads) concerning gender equality and diversity issues in the construction industry.
- The Association of Swedish Engineering Industries (Teknikföretagen) is doing extensive work at all levels of training to encourage young people, especially girls, to apply for jobs in engineering and technology. This work is being done in collaboration with other stakeholders in the form of outreach programmes, web-sites, films, reports, blogs and the Teknikcollege network of competence centres.
- Next Up is an initiative in the IT and telecommunications industry designed to attract more young people, especially girls, to a future in the IT sector.
- The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have joined forces with the government in organising occupational competitions through Worldskills Sweden. Skilled young people up to the age of 24 years compete nationally and internationally in individual occupational categories. The winners make up "Worldskills Sweden". The team and previous team members constitute important ambassadors for their occupations and industries.

For further information see:

[www.worldskills.se](http://www.worldskills.se)

[www.vvsyn.se/vardegrund/](http://www.vvsyn.se/vardegrund/)

[www.sverigesbyggindustrier.se/mangfald](http://www.sverigesbyggindustrier.se/mangfald)

[www.teknikforetagen.se/sv/branschfragor/kompetensforsorjning](http://www.teknikforetagen.se/sv/branschfragor/kompetensforsorjning)

[www.universeum.se/skola/next-up](http://www.universeum.se/skola/next-up)

**Amelie von Zweigbergk, Head of Department for Industrial Development,  
Association of Swedish Engineering Industries:**

"The technology industry's enormous problems with access to skills have contributed to the issue of gender equality coming even higher up on the companies' agenda. The employer organisation Association of Swedish Engineering Industries (Teknikföretagen) has undertaken a number of initiatives in recent years to support its member companies. One of the most successful is 'Therese tries out technology', a programme with a young blogger that has been viewed by over two million people. Nearly half of those who saw the first episode were 13-17 years old.

Therese navigates many of the obstacles that parents and career guidance do not manage to overcome. This is because she talks to young people in a way that is not perceived as "top-down". She is someone young people listen to.

I think that we should be respectful in terms of how difficult it is for parents and siblings to have these discussions. When a person is choosing which upper secondary school to attend, they are at the worst possible age for making non-traditional decisions. Ages 15 to 16 is a time when people are in the middle of handling gender identification issues and they definitely want to avoid being different. And that is when you get to choose which upper secondary school to attend. It takes a lot, as a female person, to take the plunge and choose the engineering and technology programmes.

Something that is often pointed out as a reason for girls not choosing technology is that, to a greater extent than boys, their perception is that they are bad at mathematics - despite the fact that they generally get better grades. It is something that is part of girls' self-image. They have higher demands on themselves.

A girl who has a C in mathematics thinks that she is not very good at it and that she should not apply for a programme that involves a lot of mathematics. A boy, on the other hand, perceives himself as being pretty good if he gets a C in mathematics, and has no problem applying for that sort of programme. Boys often have a greater belief in their own abilities. The whole problem of anxiety about maths is something we must do something about, even though there are no quick-fix solutions. Everything points to the fact that norms must change as early as in the pre-school systems.

The more women that come into the technology industry, the more young girls will apply to do engineering and technology courses at upper secondary school and at university. But it is a slow process. It is a huge challenge for everyone to try to get more women to choose occupations in the technology industry. Otherwise the industry faces really tough problems with access to skills and negative prospects for our creative companies."



# Four focus areas for attracting the best skills

Companies have plenty of knowledge and experience as to how to become more attractive as employers. In particular, it is about working on recruitment, skills development, corporate culture, work organisation and management, and gender-neutral wage setting. The next section provides a collection of knowledge in these areas including tips based on statistics, research and, in particular, practical experience of what actually works.

## Recruitment

### Similar or different

The recruitment of new staff already having or being capable of developing the skills that are needed is crucial to a company's success. What makes an employer interesting? It may vary, of course, depending on who you are and what stage of your life you are at.

David Morgenstern, Director of Talent Management at Ericsson, IT & Cloud Products:

"Two things are absolutely crucial if we are to reach our gender equality objectives. One is to be an attractive employer so that new female graduates see Ericsson as a really good place to work. The other is to ensure that the women will want to stay. It is about ensuring that men and women have equal opportunities, that they can achieve career progression on the same basis, have the same chances in selection situations and that they really can reach the top positions."

Companies only recruiting people with the same backgrounds and experience risk obtaining poorer skills sets than those working towards diversity of backgrounds and experience. Conscious decisions are required in order to achieve greater diversity, especially when recruiting.

Peter Larsson, Head of Social Policy, Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers:

"There is an enormous need to widen the recruitment base for graduate engineers, and if you are looking for smartness and talent, it is extremely important to avoid drawing demarcation lines that create exclusions. That is why there is such a strong pitch for the recruitment of women in companies. These days women are better at studying, get better results and therefore have a greater variety of choices."

### Thinking long-term

When it comes to recruitment, a natural starting point is the company's current requirements of a particular skills set. Equally, strategic long-term thinking is needed in order to be able to identify when and how skills requirements change over time, so that you avoid getting stuck recruiting the same old skills. Companies that see recruitment as an opportunity to ask themselves where the company and the market are heading stand to gain a great deal. "Do we need new skills, and – if we do – what skills do we need, or can our existing staff undergo training?"

Louise-Marie Matti, Project Manager for Diversity at LKAB:

"We emphasise the fact that gender equality and diversity mean that we achieve greater profitability. The input we get comes from different perspectives, which creates better opportunities for innovation and development. In addition, being an attractive employer is a matter of survival. We must be attractive to future generations as well, and if we manage to appeal to new groups, it increases our credibility.

Currently, 17 per cent in executive positions are women. Our group management has a new strategy for social sustainability, which includes an objective that by 2021 one in four in executive positions should be a woman."

### Set objectives

Some companies working towards increasing diversity set objectives for the proportion of women to men, which they then use when starting their recruitment process. Those using recruitment consultants often require at least one candidate from each gender to be presented.

**Anna-Lena Bohm, CEO Uniguide:**

"It started with me not being able to deal with all recruitment on my own, so management had to take over. Since I wanted to be sure that they would work along similar lines and would not risk their own values creeping in, we brought in anonymised applications.

Without them I am convinced that we would exclude potential employees at the initial process of elimination on the basis of personal assessments of CVs or cover letters. For us, the CV is often not particularly important. There are other things that determine who fits into our business - how people manage their skills and the degree to which they are willing to learn and take an active part.

This way, we at least take a step away from people's own values and look at things at another level.

Everyone has experienced different things in life. Ten per cent of our staff would certainly not have come to work here if we had not had anonymised applications. For instance, we have some young girls with neuropsychiatric disorders. They are fantastically good at their jobs and I do not think they would have made it to us if we had not thought outside the box.

Taking on new types of people adds a new dimension and creates greater understanding of the fact that we are all different. Yet, it is not something we do to be nice! It is incredibly rewarding for the whole organisation, and in addition to making recruitment more successful, we win both in terms of time and the pace of the whole process.

We have changed our view of skills in such a way that attitude, social skills and personal attributes are now valued higher. We have tried to do away completely with insisting on particular requirements in terms of education, training and experience as being essential. Significantly fewer girls apply for jobs specifying a lot of essential requirements that they cannot meet. Men, on the other hand, do apply because they think, 'I can meet some of them and the rest I will learn'. There is a lot that people can learn with a little support and help."



Sofia Gedeon, Director of Strategy and Recruiting, KPMG:

"A year ago, the percentage of women at partner level was under 20 per cent and we set the objective that by 2020 one in three partners should be women. As of 2016, we were up to 22 per cent women at partner level. Gender equality is a part of our business plan and we have guidelines and objectives for recruitment at all levels in order to achieve a greater balance all the way throughout the firm.

In order to get more women into executive positions we advertise managerial jobs early, we encourage women to apply, and our policy is to have at least one candidate of each gender. This means that we are forced to find more names than the obvious ones, and even if a female applicant does not get that particular job, we still manage to identify future senior executives and can help them to develop more quickly."

#### Tips

- Assess whether the image of the company needs to change in order to attract more people who have the skills you want to recruit.
- Regard occasions when you have to recruit as an opportunity for regeneration. Do not be afraid to think outside the box. Dare to think differently.
- Specify precisely what you are looking for. Set up a clear job specification and follow it throughout the whole recruitment process. This will ensure that candidates are assessed against the requirements for the job and not according to someone's gut feeling.
- Ensure that the content of the job description is set out to appeal to everyone. Rephrase descriptions or advertisements if the wording is limiting or excludes certain groups.
- Consider using anonymised applications as a way of eliminating the risk of assessments based on unconscious prejudices.

## Skills development

### The need for constant change

To recruit the right skills once is not enough. Skills are a perishable product that needs to be developed all the time, and digitalisation accelerates that development further. It is always business requirements that govern skills issues in companies, and the opportunity for skills development is often stated as the most important factor when a job applicant is weighing up different employers. In order to be a generally attractive employer, it is important that the requirement and opportunities for skills development are provided to all on the same basis.

Emma Claesson, Director of Communications and HR at ÅF:

"The essence of our approach to the supply and development of talent is a totally gender-neutral and transparent career model. There is a clear template for how we assess our employees' skills and performance, hence keeping managers from inventing their own criteria.

Good core values and a good corporate culture are important factors for everyone and we must be able to prove that everyone working for us has the same opportunity to develop. New generations almost take gender equality for granted and expect all employees to get good career and skills development. That is why it is so important that what we say is genuine."

### Fair development

Skills development is a shared responsibility between the employee and the company. It is essential that the person who wants development and career progression shows their commitment. And, when planning skills development and the next step in the

person's career, a capable manager will take the employee's work results and contribution to the company's objectives as a starting point and not only see the person who is self-confident.

Peter Larsson, Head of Social Policy, Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers:

"Gender equality is an issue of doing the right thing, which companies are assumed to work on. The graduate engineer profession is still a male preserve but we are getting an unexpectedly positive response in certain quarters. For example, taking parental leave is extremely high among male graduate engineers compared with other groups. Many are in relationships where both parties are keen to have a good professional life as well as career progression, and there is an awareness that it must be possible to have equal treatment both at work and in the rest of people's lives."

### Career opportunities and people's own drive

When a group of researchers asked top executives about the most important factors in their career development, the responses came from two perspectives. One was that they were given the opportunity early on in their career to assume responsibility, accept challenges and show their worth. The other was about their own inner drive and dedication, as well as having practical opportunities and being able to fit them into their life and family situation.

**David Morgenstern, Director of Talent Management at Ericsson, IT & Cloud Products:**

"I am a great believer that meritocracy should cut across the organisation. Talent, potential and sharp brains are evenly distributed across the population and you are just as likely to find them in men as in women. So a more even distribution means that we have a greater chance of finding really good skills. The pure business reason for this is that we will never get the best of the best if we do not have as even a distribution as possible.

If we can match the right person with the right background to the right training or work, we have come a long way. When the selection process is objective and skills-based, the percentage of strong final candidates and the percentage of women go up. If we leave it up to each executive to choose, we will have a fairly lopsided selection because it is easy to be influenced by preconceived ideas about who is best suited to do a job. Recruiting executives tend to choose someone who is like them. Often this is an unconscious way of trying to reduce the risk of a recruitment failure. It is human to choose someone who is like you - you tend to think that that must work.

A good way is to use mentoring to pair men and women together. When senior male executives get to know capable younger women, they will be more inclined to employ them in the future. It goes much further in breaking down barriers and leading to actual change than just raising awareness. The change of attitude is palpable and influences decision-making, and that is what we want to achieve.

We are always striving towards having more women in executive positions. When we make nominations to our talent pools and leadership programmes, we try to ensure that there is a somewhat higher percentage of women. Men and women on parental leave are also part of the process. We do not put employees' development on hold when they have children."



Sofia Dehre, Head of Production Development at NCC:

"I have made it as far as I have as a result of hard work. I worked in the concrete industry for many years and as a relatively lone woman in a male-dominated industry, I received a great deal of attention. That is fine when things are going well, but rather less so when I have failed in some respect. In addition, I was lucky in choosing the right managers who opted to put their faith in me early on, so that I had the chance to show what I could do. Leadership is totally crucial."

### Expensive to lose skills

When someone leaves, there is a loss of skills for the company and there is a cost attached to that. That is why it is important to be aware of the fact that development opportunities and individual recognition can be critical to whether an employee will stay.

#### Tips

- Ensure that you have a functioning model for matching the company's skills needs with each employee's strengths, interests and ideas for development.
- Determine what should influence employees' opportunities for skills and career development so that everyone is on a level playing field.
- Clarify the company's skills needs to management and staff so that everybody knows the position.
- Consider instituting a mentor programme whereby different types of employees have the opportunity to get to know and learn from one another. This will broaden the networks of both parties and increase their acceptance.
- Identify the company's talents who aspire to and are deemed to have the ability to fill future management positions and ensure that this group includes people of different backgrounds and with different skills. This is how the next generation of management can feature diversity.

## Corporate culture, work organisation and management

The culture governs who will do well

A company's corporate culture is formed by the people who work in the organisation. Since the corporate culture has a bearing on who will do well in the company, it is an essential factor to take into consideration when recruiting. A change in the culture can be what broadens the recruitment base and attracts people from different backgrounds and with new experience to offer.

Margareta Sööder, HR Director at Ambea:

"Unfortunately, it is really difficult to attract men to elderly care. It is essential to showcase that jobs in elderly care are important, advanced and fun, and not just a temporary stopgap to another occupation. We must create workplaces that constitute a positive environment where employees feel they are part of things and can influence the approach and direction taken. We also need to get better at making the best use of skills and putting in place systems for career development that attract people to further training."

### 30 per cent critical mass

The work involved in changing prevailing norms, attitudes and values takes time and requires both will and persistence. Equally, the process can be quicker if a large enough proportion of people come into the business. Research shows that real change

only occurs when a minority group reaches a level of at least 30 per cent. Appointing one or two people thus only works for small groups. It is only when a change is supported by enough people that the prevailing jargon, way of working and corporate culture is affected. If things stay the same despite efforts to achieve change, there is a considerable risk that people from the minority group will leave.

Sofia Dehre, Head of Production Development at NCC:

"You need more role models so that more women see that it is possible to work in the construction industry and have stimulating and fun work tasks, and that career progression is possible. If there are only a few girls, do not spread them around the organisation - rather make sure you put them together. It will be more fun for them then."

### Explain changes

If work to change a company's corporate culture is to succeed, it must be initiated by the company's management and be firmly anchored. Even so, management being united in wanting change is no guarantee of success. Employees who do not want to co-operate with a process of change may develop strategies that obstruct the intended change, both actively and passively. The most important thing in all change management is to describe clearly why change is necessary. Often management focuses on what is to be done and how, but places too little focus on explaining the reasons why.

Louise-Marie Matti, Project Manager for Diversity at LKAB:

"We have concentrated hard on explaining why LKAB works towards achieving diversity. That it is because we want to, and not only because we have to. It is only then that the staff understand how important it is. It may feel a bit dry and boring, but I believe in explaining using hard facts backed up by research and statistics. In practical terms."

### Expectations and prejudices

People are often unaware of their own conceptions and prejudices. There needs to be an awareness of these things when you work towards achieving a more gender-balanced workplace. Ideas linked to gender are often stereotypical. "Women make more caring managers." "Men take more risks." "Men are more result-orientated and women more relationship-orientated." In fact, the variations between individuals in the same group are generally much greater than the differences between the groups.

### See every employee individually

On average, women take more parental leave and leave for occasional care of children than men do. These are facts. Yet this does not mean that the employees of a particular company, or a particular individual, will behave in accordance with this average. Therefore, when decisions are made, the solution is to see each and every employee individually, and not as part of a group.

Sofia Gedeon, Director of Strategy and Recruiting, KPMG:

"We have a corporate culture whereby we see every individual and ask 'What does your career mean to you? What is work/life balance?' It is not a case of one-size-fits-all. We have several career paths and there are different ways of gearing up and gearing down, working in a way and to the extent that suits the individual person."

It is not just important for women - it is important for men as well. We see a shift in values among our younger employees, about gender equality and being able to work part-time or take parental leave for a longer period of time without losing momentum or position. It helps us to retain more women, but it also means we retain more men as well."

## Different views on the organisation of work

The way work and business activities are organised in an industry or a company often has historical roots. Occupations that used to be female-dominated feature women's values and norms and male-dominated ones feature those of men.

Part-time work is more common in female-dominated occupations, while long shifts are more common in male-dominated ones. Women tend to prefer compensatory time for working extra hours, whereas men tend to prefer financial compensation. When new employees enter a business with different values, norms and requirements, this often results in the way of working being called into question. When this is taken into account in a constructive manner, it may result in improvements for all, including the outcome for the business.

## Flexibility creates new opportunities

Every business is unique. This is evidenced both by how work is organised in terms of time and space, and by the content of the work. Some jobs can only be done in the workplace and at fixed times. In other cases, the link to a particular place may be less significant and work tasks can be performed at any time. The requirements of the business set the framework within which the wishes and needs of the employees may be accommodated. Each business can create its own solutions to ensure that no group is excluded. There are tools for communication, supervision and reporting that can make work less linked to a particular time or place. There is massive potential for a development that may create opportunities for many people, not least for those who need to combine work with flexibility in their family lives.

Johanna Wiberg, HR Specialist, Ports of Stockholm:

"Everyone who works for us, both men and women, should feel that it is possible to combine their jobs with having small children. We schedule meetings between 9 am and 3 pm to facilitate picking up children from preschool, you can work from home if needed and we supplement the parental benefits.

We are anxious to ensure that employees on parental leave continue to feel as though they are a part of the company. This applies to everything from being invited to the Christmas party to having wage reviews and performance appraisals. Even if you are away for a few months, it should be easy to slot back into your career. Nobody should feel as though they have lost out while on leave, but rather that we have a joint plan for the future."

## Practical changes

Changes that are inclusive can be quite practical and simple. An example might be to ensure that work clothes are suitable and available in all sizes. Another might be to make work stations and tools fit different heights and physical capabilities. Yet another might be to schedule meetings within a particular time span so that they do not clash with the leaving and picking up of children at preschool, or to enable remote participation.

Sofia Dehre, Head of Production Development at NCC:

"It is still rare to find construction trailers providing privacy for people to change into work clothing. A lone girl will often have to change at home, in the toilet or in her office after having taped up the door window for privacy. To order a construction trailer for just one lone girl is no fun either, and does not exactly create a feeling of inclusion. But now NCC is partaking in the production of a trailer where everyone can change in the privacy of their own small individual cubicle, in order to facilitate diversity among the workforce. There can be all sorts of reasons besides gender for people wanting to change in private. There are plenty of practical things like this that we can identify and improve so as to create an inclusive environment."

## Focusing on a career is a challenge for young families

Research on top executives shows that those who reach top levels start their executive careers early in life at a time often coinciding with the starting of a family. This is an area where employers that want to recruit young or prospective parents may complement the publicly provided services with different kinds of support assisting in solving the work/family puzzle. This might take the form of yet further services or flexible work arrangements.

## The significance of leadership - the manager sets the tone

All activities bear the hallmark of the person or people in charge. Executive teams in a company are of crucial importance to the development of corporate culture and the broadening of the recruitment base. Unless all the executives support the proposed strategy, it will not be effective.

### **Stefan Lindbäck, CEO Lindbäcks Bygg:**

"Our customers are a mixed group and we must also be mixed. Making the decision that half of the people we recruit to our new factory should be women was an easy one, and it turned out to be easier than I expected to put the decision into practice. When everyone understands the reasons behind a decision, achieving change is quite easy.

Above all, we need good brains, and if we are going to get enough capable men and women, we must ensure that we provide the right physical environment. Since women usually have somewhat less muscular strength, we are structuring production in our new factory so that it is possible to work with a little less muscular strength. The effect will be that we will attract more women and at the same time, men will be able to work in the construction industry for longer since there will be less wear and tear on their bodies.

For us, it is not gender equality that is actually the most important thing, but rather how we as a company formulate values and principles, what visions and strategic objectives we set, how we get there, what challenges we focus on and what that means for the employees. We will become a more stable and robust company as a result of having more women working for us. If we continue down the old male-dominated track, there will be too many one-sided conversations around the water cooler and people's workstations.

If we really create a better balance, everyone will be forced to think differently and become more humble. There will be a completely different atmosphere. At the same time, we do not want to employ women just to boost the atmosphere - that would be wrong. There has to be the right conditions so that women who join feel comfortable, and not as though they belong to a separate group. There should be no need to ask for a separate changing room - there should be one from the start. The same applies to working clothes that suit female shapes.

The first woman in a workplace must have the extra drive to get there, but as soon as there are several women, it will not be a big deal either for us as employers or for those who are employed. "You are a great person - you are welcome here."

There are certainly people who work for us who are sceptical and think that things are fine as they are. But that is what those sorts of people say about most things when we make changes to procedures and to the ways we work - it does not only apply to when we take on more women."



Emma Claesson, Director of Communications and HR at ÅF:

“Having a more gender-balanced company means increased competitiveness. For the management group this goes without saying. It is business-critical since our business concept is based on people. We do not sell any products – we sell human capital, and we look for the best with the right skills so as to be able to deliver to our clients. We are growing – we need the right people working for us in order to build up our business dealings, and we know that both men and women have those skills.”

In a process of change, support, training and other types of initiatives in the management group must be brought in early. For owners wanting to change a company’s corporate culture, the recruitment of executives and managers is a good strategic juncture at which to start the process of change. The higher the level for which a recruitment is made, the more significant it is.

Sofia Gedeon, Director of Strategy and Recruiting, KPMG:

“What it takes to succeed is leadership and role models. If change is to be implemented, management must practise what it preaches. For the last three years our CEO has been a key figure, showing a personal commitment to the issue. That trickles down through the organisation to great effect. He has also monitored the executives to ensure they live up to the values and objectives that have been established.”

Companies wanting to appeal to new employees who have different backgrounds and experiences from those already in the company are not going to succeed unless the executives support the changes that need to occur.

Margareta Sööder, HR Director at Ambea:

“We can have legislation and regulations about salary surveys to increase gender equality, but ultimately it is out in businesses that decisions are taken. The local management is crucial as to how things work out in practice.”

### Tips

- Work with your own organisation to create an inclusive workplace. When it is time to recruit, be more prepared to contemplate taking on someone who is different compared to the rest of the group.
- If you want to start a process of change, ask an external person for help in describing your company’s corporate culture. Self-examination can be difficult.
- Management must understand why diversity is essential and positive – that it benefits business.
- Involve managers and employees in change management. The person who becomes involved and engaged takes more responsibility for the changes than the person who is only given information about the changes. Ensure that you include gender equality in all procedures of everyday operations so that it does not become an issue with a life of its own outside those procedures.
- Discuss career issues and the company’s skills priorities in performance appraisals so that employees can make informed and conscious choices.
- Explore whether the way the work is structured or whether certain types of support can help employees to better organise their careers and family lives.
- Have a positive attitude towards parental leave. Career progression must be possible also for the person who is away, and it is important for those on leave to retain their connections to their jobs.
- There is no one solution that suits all, but having several different solutions available creates opportunities for both employees and companies.

## Gender-neutral wage setting

Gender is not a basis for salaries

Equal pay means that salaries are set on the basis of gender-neutral criteria and assessments. Nowadays, all collective agreements are gender-neutral. Earlier disparities, where certain agreements gave women lower wages and pension age, have long since been removed. Pay criteria in central and local collective agreements are also neutral with regard to gender.

Ulrica Ernbo, HR Manager, Inter IKEA Systems Service:

"We can not recruit and retain the employees we need without equal pay. If we do not have the right employees, we would in the end not be able to provide the right service to our clients and partners."

The disparities are steadily decreasing

Official salary statistics produced by the Swedish National Mediation Office show that the pay disparity for full-time work between women and men was 12.5 per cent in 2015. After "weighting adjustment" to take into account differences in occupation, industry sectors, education and training, age and working hours, a difference of 4.6 per cent remains, which cannot be statistically explained.

Looked at over time, the disparities are decreasing slowly but steadily. Between 2005 and 2015, the pay disparity between the genders decreased by 2.2 percentage points. Analyses have shown that the main reason for the disparities is the gender divide in the labour market. A more even distribution of women and men in different occupations and industries would result in a greater balance as the gender divide in the labour market would then decrease.

Annika Brismar, Operations Manager, Distriktstandvården (Hospital & Health Care):

"In the context of pay, we do not think about whether we have a man or a woman in front of us, but rather if this is an employee who delivers a service to our patients - that is what we assess. Men's and women's pay has never been an issue for us because it has never been felt to be a problem."

Neutral assessments

A company wanting to be attractive to all as an employer sets employee salaries gender-neutrally and on the basis of criteria agreed in central pay agreements or at the company level. The criteria and how they should be met must be neutral with regard to gender. Everyone has expectations about gender, regardless of whether they want to or not. This is why there is a risk that results are assessed differently depending on who has produced them. This puts huge pressure on the pay-setting executives. They need to be aware and knowledgeable about the criteria and how assessments are to be made in order to be neutral and not influenced by things such as an employee's gender. A conscientious pay policy involves the company not paying anyone more or less for any other reason than that which can be attributed to skills, performance or other specified criteria.

Helena Bonnevie, CEO, Akers Friskola:

"Our point of departure is the individual and how well he or she performs. We do not even consider gender when it comes to salaries - they are gender-neutral. For us the gender issue is about having a balanced organisation."

## Expected and actual salary

The Swedish National Mediation Office 2016 report on “Pay disparities between women and men” contains an analysis of how salary expectations can influence actual salary. The report shows that female students at eight institutions of higher education in Sweden consistently had, on average, lower expectations as to the salary they might command after graduation than their male colleagues. The difference in 2012 was 8.6 per cent.

The next phase looked at the salaries they then went on to earn after graduation. The outcome shows a clear covariance between expected and actual salary. Women had both lower expectations and lower salaries. The average disparity in salary amounted to 8.8 per cent. The question the employers of the new graduates should ask themselves is whether this difference follows from the salary criteria within their companies. Similarly, they should also ponder the weight attributed to the individual’s conduct at times of salary negotiations and how much the company allows itself to be influenced by the individual’s salary demands as compared to the company’s salary structure.

## Salary according to expected performance

In certain situations, companies want to set an employee’s salary based on the expected potential of the individual, i.e. the salary is based on an expectation of future high performance and not on past performance. This frequently happens when recruiting “up-and-coming junior management”. This type of salary setting involves a risk for the company and from the point of view of gender equality it is important that – if it is to be used at all – it is applied in the same way to all employees, regardless of gender.

## Working hours and salary

Part-time work is unevenly distributed between women and men in the Swedish labour market; men work an average of five hours per week more than women. Certain female-dominated occupations have a long tradition of part-time work and have developed work structures that can easily accommodate requests from employees to work part-time. In some businesses, working hours can even be reduced but still maintained to be “full-time”. In other businesses, staff are extensively required to work overtime but this is never compensated specifically, it being included in the agreed monthly salary instead. Such differences in pay culture between businesses result in considerable differences in actual hours worked, but they are not considered in the official salary statistics that are the basis for pay comparisons between women and men in the labour market. The reason for this is that only salaries are compared – not the actual amount of hours worked.

Sofia Gedeon, Director of Strategy and Recruiting, KPMG:

“In the past, we used to largely reward the amount of hours worked. The more hours people worked, the bigger their bonuses. Now we tend to emphasise the quality of delivery instead. What counts, and what the employee is paid for, is doing the right things and working efficiently and intelligently – not working long hours.”

### Tips

- Ensure that pay-setting executives have knowledge about how gender-neutral salaries are set.
- Have a common basis for assessing performance or work results, and make sure it is observed by all executives.
- Review employment conditions and benefits to check that they are equally appealing to all employees, women and men. For instance, is a company car on offer but not domestic services, or extra holidays but not flexible working hours?
- Be clear about the company's view as to how employees' different choices and priorities are deemed to affect career and salary progressions. Help the employees to make conscious choices.

# Platform for competencies and gender equality

The access to skills and competencies is one of the major challenges that companies face. In order to develop their businesses and stay competitive in the global and digitalised commercial sectors, Swedish companies need the right and the best skills and competencies. Competencies are held by both women and men, and the clear trend is that women obtain better grades in school and higher levels of education than men. This means that women's work and business commitments are important competitive advantages.

Research also shows that workplaces where both men and women work achieve better business results and build better workplace communities. It is thus well established that striving for diversity in staffing and recruitment leads to positive business results.

The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise holds the following positions with respect to greater work life equality:

- Being able to recruit, develop and retain the best competencies is crucial for competitiveness and business results. Companies want to be attractive employers to both women and men, and they strive towards working life equality where men and women enjoy the same conditions, opportunities, and responsibilities for their work and careers.
- Rules and compensation systems that apply to work and life outside of work are to be gender neutral. We support the right for all to shape their lives and make choices based on their own responsibilities without political interference. Norms and values prevailing in a society impact on individual choices and produce different results. Choices leading to the highest possible returns on the aggregate competencies in society and working life are to be encouraged.
- The prerequisites and conditions for working life development and career pursuits are to be equal for both men and women. The demands employers place on their employees and the opportunities they offer are to be gender neutral and based on operative needs.
- Working life equality requires equality in life outside of work. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise strives to highlight the consequences of various choices and how these impact on career development, salary progression as well as on other conditions.
- Wages are to be based on gender neutral criteria and assessments. This does not necessarily mean that all women and men have the same pay, yet their levels of pay are never to be affected by gender but are to be based on objective assessments of performances and skills.
- A long term, sustainable effort to achieve gender equality and diversity in company boards of directors rests on the assumption that company owners determine the composition and competences of board members and that they also appoint them. The composition of company boards is not to be regulated by legislation.

**[www.svensktnaringsliv.se](http://www.svensktnaringsliv.se)**

Storgatan 19, 114 82 Stockholm

Telefon 08-553 430 00