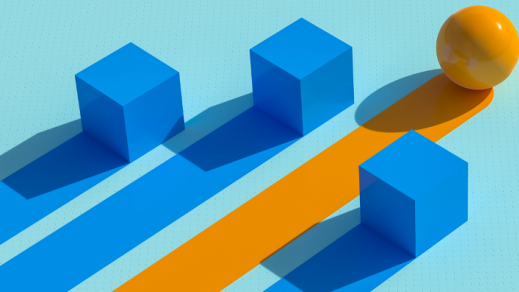


The Overlooked



Background

Gender parity is stalling at best and at worst going backwards. In the UK alone, ECC's research indicates that, across the banking, legal and FTSE 350 sectors, 20,000 women need to be promoted to achieve parity. But given attrition challenges, employees' new expectations and outdated talent models, more than fishing in one pool of 'typical' or 'traditional talent' is needed. Organisations must look beyond to other previously untapped pools of talent. Women with the skill, experience and ambition for senior leadership have not disappeared from your business. They are still there but stuck or overlooked by criteria used to identify and promote internal talent. To learn more about why segmenting your workforce of women by alternative talent pools is important and why it is essential to build a plan to engage these women, watch 'Where have all the senior women gone'.

By reimagining talent as the four different pools ECC has identified through their research, you can take steps to harness their potential. These are The Boundaried Workers, The Overlooked, The Just Leavers and The Lost Leaders. Here we explain **The Overlooked**.

Who are The Overlooked?

Whilst this group is not just women, gendered work roles, biased definitions of leadership, and penalties for age are all contributing factors to women often being overlooked. Women are three times more likely to return to lower-paid positions after a career break for children and fail to progress from these sticky floor roles as quickly as they male counterparts. At the same time, there is a loyalty penalty for those who stay with their employer. Later in their career, there is a further penalty as 39% of employers are less likely to recruit people over 50 and even fewer organisations at 35% are prepared to retrain staff over that age.



Talent models are not built for women and they are frequently downgraded in their leadership potential, despite being considered high work performers. Research has repeatedly evidenced this phenomenon, and one of the most extensive studies of 29,000 managers showed that women are 33% more likely than men to have the highest performance ratings – and simultaneously the lowest ratings for future leadership potential.

This is partly because criteria for evaluating leadership potential and opportunities are inherently biased towards male traits, such as the 'take-charge' behaviours described by Geraldine Gallacher in her chapter on the Double-Bind Dilemma in 'Coaching Women: Changing the System not the Person'. It is also because women are held to a higher standard than men and for example, at C- suite are judged by men's performance in the top 90th percentile of male executive leaders.

What should organisations be doing to support and galvanise their Overlooked workers?

If you start by acknowledging there are talented individuals that you have probably missed, you can begin to action plan how to realise this opportunity. This considerable pool of potential talent could help your organisation progress in gender equity if identified and harnessed. Understanding this segment of workers will help you and your leaders broaden their perspectives when they are identifying talent for development, stretch opportunities and progression.

Actions

1. If you manage a team, think about your organisation's talent models and how you understand potential. Should you be doing more to recognise those individuals who don't seem to be progressing? Have you considered that it may be because of the model rather than the individual? Are you at risk of losing older women?
2. DEI, talent and HR people consider how to unlock the potential in this significant talent pool and how to equip your Overlooked workers and their managers. Read ECC's resources:
 - A summary of “Potential” and the Gender Promotion Gap by MIT Sloan, because change will start by understanding the bias in your talent systems.
 - A summary of ‘Why Men Still Get More Promotions Than Women’ by Ibarra, Carter & Silva, because it throws light on the significant role in Sponsorship in helping women progress
 - Develop inclusive leaders and give managers the tools and awareness to make the most of all team members.
3. If you are ready to take the next step and embed a plan for positive change for your organisation then download ECC's free Gender Assessment Planner. This evidence-based assessment tool will help organisations to develop and implement a tailored plan for progress in gender parity.