

Chapter 4:

Retention

Strategies to ensure more women are not only recruited, but also retained, in non-traditional roles

The mining, construction and utilities industries have struggled to not only attract women to apply for jobs, they have also had challenges in retaining the women who have chosen to work with them. Retaining engaged and motivated employees is vital to an organisation's sustainability, particularly those organisations that are experiencing difficulty filling key positions.

Retention programs focus on the relationship between leaders and their employees. Pay equity, benefits, employee recognition and employee assistance programs are all part of an organisation's strategy to engage and retain employees. Improved retention reduces turnover and costs and increases job performance and productivity.

Many organisations in male-dominated industries implement retention strategies that include the participation of the CEO and senior leaders. These strategies create a working environment that meets the needs of all employees, both men and women, enabling them to contribute to business outcomes and achieve their career potential.



Leading organisations are using retention strategies to:

- Ensure what is discussed and offered to candidates during the recruitment process is maintained at all stages of employment and career development.
- Change the organisation's culture to embed diversity and flexibility in all aspects of the organisation, and as an ongoing commitment to the entire workforce – not just 'special treatment' for women.

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

1. Workplace culture that is inclusive and embraces diversity:

- **Lead from the top** with the CEO and senior leaders supporting the clearly articulated vision for gender diversity and increasing the number of women in non-traditional roles.
- **Communicate the business case and strategy for gender diversity** to all employees within the organisation.
- **Build awareness and provide training** about stereotypes and unconscious bias.
- **Engage senior leaders as role models** for work-life effectiveness and valuing results over face-time and long hours.
- **Promote internal reward and recognition programs** for leaders and role models of gender diversity.
- **Participate and sponsor industry awards and gender equality awards** to display commitment to gender equality.
- **Promote the gender diversity of the team in client bids**, acknowledging the competitive advantage this brings relative to other suppliers.

2. Working environment that meets the needs of all employees:

- **Survey employees and seek feedback** on what employees value within the workplace.
- **Provide a physical working environment that caters for both men and women** including uniforms, equipment and facilities.
- **Monitor and ensure pay equity for both fixed and variable pay**, and under all types of wage-setting mechanisms, and make the review process and results transparent to all employees.
- **Implement policies that foster an inclusive workplace**, including an integrated carer's strategy and paid parental leave.
- **Embed and mainstream flexible work practices** that take into account the needs of individual employees balanced with business objectives.
- **Promote and display zero tolerance for sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination.**

3. Ongoing support for employees and families:

- **Provide on-site and off-site support for employees** including, EEO representatives and access to an Employee Assistance Program.
- **Provide support for families of employees** including, online support, site visits, family days and inclusion in social events.
- **Implement a 'keep in touch' program** for employees who go on extended leave.

1. Workplace culture that is inclusive and embraces diversity

Retention strategies are important because they help create a positive work environment and strengthen an employee's commitment to the organisation. Employees who enjoy what they do and the atmosphere in which they work are more likely to remain engaged with their job and to stay with the organisation. This results in improved organisational performance, including increased productivity.

Leading organisations in male-dominated industries use retention strategies to create a workplace culture that is inclusive and embraces diversity. These strategies:

- Are usually led from the top by the CEO and senior leaders who act as role models for demonstrating inclusive behaviours.
- Recognise and reward leaders who actively implement retention strategies and act as 'champions' for diversity.
- Include training all leaders to recognise and address stereotypes and unconscious bias.



Retention strategies help create a positive and inclusive work environment and strengthen employees' commitment to the organisation.

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

Lead from the top

It is important that the CEO and senior leaders proactively support a clearly articulated vision for gender diversity and the strategies to increase women in non-traditional roles. They must be advocates within the organisation and support gender diversity externally by participating in public forums and conferences.

Communicate the business case and strategy for gender diversity

Leading organisations generate buy-in for the business case for gender diversity among all employees. They acknowledge there is a cost when women are underrepresented in their organisation, and that there are tremendous rewards to be gained by focusing on creating a gender-diverse and inclusive organisation. There is a strong correlation between workplace diversity and business performance.

Build awareness and provide training

Leading organisations make training about stereotypes and unconscious bias mandatory for all leaders. Training is designed to equip leaders with the skills to recognise and understand their own biases and to take steps to overcome them.

This training is integrated into the broader diversity strategy and aims to change mindsets and behaviours that will drive specific actions to counteract bias.

Engage senior leaders as role models

Many organisations highlight successful senior women in non-traditional roles and publically recognise them as role models for more junior women and men.

Leading organisations also profile and highlight senior leaders who act as role models for their values and behaviours. These leaders value work-life effectiveness and results over face-time and long hours.

Promote internal reward and recognition programs

In addition to profiling employees, leading organisations hold internal awards for male employees or teams who have shown leadership in supporting women in non-traditional roles or who have been 'champions' of diversity and flexibility.

These awards receive greater recognition and internal support when they are sponsored and delivered by the CEOs, and are the focus of an internal media campaign.

Participate and sponsor industry awards and gender equality awards

Some organisations promote their participation and success in awards at the individual and organisational level. These awards can be specifically related to gender or the industry more broadly.

An example of organisational award is the 'EOWA Employer of Choice for Women' (now WGEA). Individual awards for women may be internal to the organisation or industry, such as 'Professional Engineer of the Year' or 'Apprentice of the Year'.

Sponsorship of an award or an awards program enhances the organisation's profile in gender equality. It also gives the organisation the opportunity to showcase their own actions and accomplishments in their gender equality strategy.

Promote the gender diversity of the team in client bids

Leading organisations are active in promoting gender diversity on their project teams when they lodge a proposal to an external client. They acknowledge the advantage gender diversity brings relative to other suppliers.

By ensuring they have diverse teams in their proposal, these organisations are also anticipating the increasing focus that many corporates are placing on supplier diversity.

Some good industry examples include:

- **David Peever, Managing Director, Rio Tinto Australia**, is a 'Male Champion of Change'. The Male Champions of Change are leaders of large Australian organisations committed to driving cultural change to increase the number of women in decision making roles. They act as public advocates and have commissioned research and practical resources to assist organisations identify what has work to achieve gender equality.

http://humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/publication/mcc/chapter_7_MCC2011_charter.html

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- **Andrew Stevens, CEO of IBM**, regularly addresses corporate forums and conferences on the benefits of gender diversity. He is also an active participant in the Male Champions of Change Program. 'Creating culture change requires very conscious focus and drive with leadership targets. It's not easy; you have to start yesterday, and you need to deal with the mathematics of it and say, 'How do I get the impact I need, and at the levels I need?'
- The **Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force** recommended (recommendation 4) that all Commanding Officers are accountable for a healthy organisational culture, being regularly available to engage directly with members and taking any corrective action as required. This includes effective management of alleged incidents of sexual harassment, discrimination and unacceptable behaviour, managing flexible work arrangements and involvement in mentoring and sponsoring members.

<http://defencereview.humanrights.gov.au/>

Share your views...

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

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



2. Working environment that meets the needs of all employees



An inclusive and safe working environment benefits all employees. For male-dominated industries this means having a physical working environment that is gender inclusive and meets the needs of a diverse workforce. It also means implementing policies, like flexible work practices, that acknowledge that all employees, both women and men, have commitments outside of work that need to be accommodated.

Leading organisations:

- Seek feedback from their employees on what engages them and retains them within the organisation.
- Provide a physical work environment, uniforms and safety equipment that cater for all employees.
- 'Mainstream' flexibility so all employees, regardless of the reason, have access to the flexibility they require to balance business outcomes with other commitments.

Working environments that are inclusive, safe and flexible benefit all employees, both men and women.

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

Survey employees and seek feedback

It is important to obtain feedback from employees about how engaged they are with the organisation and how they perceive the organisation's performance against specific strategies, including gender diversity.

Many organisations seek feedback from both men and women, formally and informally, through employee surveys and online forums. Most importantly, these organisations take action to address the feedback and communicate to employees what action they have taken.

Provide a physical working environment that caters for both men and women

Most organisations now recognise the need to ensure that the working environment is safe for all employees. They provide adequate levels of safe work practices and provide security at on-site facilities.

There is also commitment to maintain appropriate accommodation and facilities to a reasonable standard. Most organisations also provide male and female uniforms and facilities.

Monitor and ensure pay equity for both fixed and variable pay

Many organisations state they are focused on achieving pay equity for men and women. Leading organisations focus on both fixed and variable pay and conduct pay equity audits at all levels of the organisation. They report on the pay review process, within the organisation and externally, and are transparent with the results of the review. Most importantly, organisations take action to address any perceived and real inequity.

Implement policies that foster an inclusive culture

Leading organisations develop and implement policies that are inclusive and are available to both male and female employees.

Examples of these policies include carer's leave and paid parental leave. Although more female employees may currently utilise these policies, it is important they are available to both men and women. It is also important to ensure men are equally encouraged to access these policies so they are not perceived to be a special benefit for women only.

Embed and mainstream flexible work practices

Leading organisations are recognising that flexibility needs to be embedded across all aspects of the organisation and mainstreamed in all roles, taking into account the needs of individual employees balanced with business objectives. Flexibility can be on a permanent basis. However, it is also important to offer flexibility for irregular events, such as caring responsibilities (not just childcare) and medical appointments.

These organisations recognised that promotional opportunities should be available for employees who work flexibly and that performance reviews must focus on outcomes, not hours worked. They are also encouraging male employees to work flexibly so it is not perceived to be a benefit solely for working mothers.

In the context of fly-in, fly-out workers (FIFO) some organisations give employees a choice of roster length. In addition, they accommodate requests for short-term roster changes to meet personal needs, including medical appointments and school events. Finally, they review annual rotations for FIFO to ensure employees do not miss special events, such as Christmas, in consecutive years.

Promote and display zero tolerance for sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination

Many organisations now have zero tolerance of discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace. They also provide ongoing education about behavioural expectations and information about what behaviour is acceptable and not. Finally, these organisations have effective processes that enable the safe reporting of discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.

Some good industry examples include:

- An **energy company** conducts an annual diversity survey, with a particular focus on gender, to assess how the organisation is delivering and performing against the gender diversity strategy and related activities.
- A **construction company** has included diversity questions in the employee survey. The aim is to track employee perceptions against a number of criteria and to assess if there is a significant difference between men and women. The data is recognised as important for contributing to the business case for change.
- **Sinclair Knight Merz** is ‘dedicated to continuous improvement, awareness and adaption of its Flexible Work Practices Policy.’ This policy provides flexible work hours, place of work and work environment.
<http://www.globalskm.com/About-SKM/Diversity/>
- **Origin Energy** has an equal pay for equal work policy. ‘The Company policy is to deliver equal pay for equal work. During its annual salary review processes it employs a number of checks and balances to maintain an average variation between genders across all grades within plus or minus two per cent with evenly distributed fluctuations. Analysis is also undertaken of point-of-hire salary decisions to eliminate potential gaps arising in hiring decision.’
<http://reports.originenergy.com.au/shareholder/board-and-governance/>
- At a **mining company**, women on parental leave are given an average pay increase so that when they return to work they are not financially disadvantaged.
- A **mining company** is shortening its FIFO shifts to 3 days so it can assist women with family responsibilities.
- A **construction company** is changing shifts from 6 days a week to 5 days a week and is launching a formalised flexibility program, including a keeping in touch initiative and a ‘working parents’ toolkit.
- Another **construction company** takes a ‘life transition’ approach to work-life balance. They provide support to employees to take a long-term holistic view of their life and to assess where their career fits within their broader responsibilities.

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- The **Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force** recommended (recommendation 14) a number of initiatives to support mainstreaming flexibility. This includes reviewing job design, statements of duty and team work allocation to identify those positions where full time work is the only sensible model. All other roles should be identified as potentially available in flexible work arrangements. The recommendation also includes training and educating managers on available tools and how to manage requests for flexibility effectively.
<http://defencereview.humanrights.gov.au/>
- A **finance/insurance sector organisation** led by a **Male Champion of Change** has an internal culture which is committed to flexibility, with over 40% of employees stating they work flexibly. Their approach is supported by a communications program aimed at breaking down flexibility ‘myths’. The campaign uses video and written case studies about employees and leaders working flexibly or managing flexible teams. The organisation also offers targeted learning for managers to work through perceived barriers for providing flexibility, supported by a range of tools and resources on their intranet. These include a 5-step process for managers and employees to use when discussing a specific request for flexibility.

- Another **organisation** led by a **Male Champion of Change** is promoting an understanding of ‘diversity maths’, an inclusive, productivity based meritocracy that supports alternative work styles, including flexibility. Diversity maths includes goals being described as key behaviours, not just desired end result (eg support for men on a flexible work arrangement). Goals are tracked on a diversity report which is shared with managers and includes the number of flexible workers and the results of surveys around support for work-life balance.
- Engineering and consulting firm **Arup**, an Employer of Choice for Women, actively works to attract, recruit and retain women with strategies that include the Parental Leave Handbook, a readily accessible toolkit for parents going on parental leave.

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3. Ongoing support for employees and families



A key retention strategy is to not only provide support to employees, but also to support family members. This is particularly important for the families of employees who work in remote locations or who have relocated to undertake a new role.

Organisations must consider the support employees and families would most value. This support can include:

- Emotional and psychological support.
- Structural support, including relocation assistance (including for regional/remote localities, particularly settling-in assistance for partners and children) and access to communication technology.
- Social support, including access to clubs and site visits.
- Workplace strategies that assist employees with balancing work and family such as integrated carer's strategies.

Retention strategies should focus not only on employees, but also the families of employees.

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

Provide on-site and off-site support

Many organisations provide support for employees both at the work location and off-site. This support includes access to an EEO representative who may provide information on the policies and programs available to employees.

Support may also include access to an Employee Assistance Program with skilled counsellors who focus on providing emotional and psychological support to employees.

Provide support for families of employees

Many organisations have strategies for supporting the families of their employees and the communities in which they are located.

This can include:

- Family site visits
- Support for the partner and children to settle in to a new community
- Social clubs for adults and children
- Company newsletters which may include a children's section
- Facilities and policies so children are able to be at work with their parent if needed (eg child is sick)
- Family Assistance Programs that are similar to the Employee Assistance Programs
- Integrated carer's strategies.

Integrated carers strategies can include time and leave arrangements, work relocation, job redesign, care related services and financial assistance. Return to work arrangements and programs will also assist those coming out of carer responsibilities to re-enter the workforce.

Leading organisations also provide the opportunity for couples to be on the same roster pattern, even if they are employed by different organisations or work at different sites.

Support can also be ad hoc. For example, these organisations provide the opportunity to attend significant family or personal events as a means of maintaining and improving family and other personal relationships.

Where employees are working remotely, organisations are enhancing the provision of communication technology, such as greater mobile phone access and web-based video conferencing, to enable employees to keep in contact with their family on a regular and accessible basis.

Implement a 'keep in touch' program

Leading organisations are developing 'keep in touch' programs for employees who go on extended leave. This may include parental leave, sick leave or long service leave.

The programs are designed to keep employees connected with the organisation through their choice of meetings, phone calls or emails. The aim is to get updated on recent developments within the team and the organisation, continue to remain connected to fellow employees and experience a smooth return to work.

Some good industry examples include:

- When women are due to return from parental leave, an **energy company** meets with them to discuss their career aspirations and potential roles. No assumptions are made about what role they may or may not be able to do as a new parent. Non-traditional roles are discussed along with other opportunities.
- A **construction company** provides employees with a program (provided by an external party) that is focused on carers returning to the workforce. The aim of the program is to help employees and leaders understand the caring requirements and what this may mean for their work objectives and their role.

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- **Alcoa, USA** developed a life Work/Life Blend Guide. The guide was developed by the Alcoa Women's Network and includes strategies to help employees to meet personal and family needs balanced with work responsibilities.
http://www.alcoa.com/global/en/careers/whats_it_like_env.asp

Examples from industry associations:

- **Queensland Resources Council:**
 - » Offers employee assistance programs which provide confidential, professional and free counselling services.
 - » Conducts audits of on-site facilities for women including accommodation, change facilities, breast-feeding facilities and toilets in operational areas.
 - » Provides support for community childcare facilities.
 - » Provides family rooms where employees can look after a child or elderly relative while still being available for on-site meetings and teleconferences.
 - » Ensures the appointment of an EEO representative at individual sites.
<http://www.qrc.org.au/>

Newsletters for women in male-dominated industries provide a good forum to share experiences and provide information about careers and challenges. Examples include:

- **WIMnet (Women in Mining Network)** produces newsletters for their members that contain information on recent events, industry news, and career development opportunities.
<http://www.ausimm.com.au/content/default.aspx?id=236>
- The **Women in Energy network (USA)** produces biannual newsletters for its members. These contain information about developments in the energy industry as well as profiles/stories of members and information on career and personal development.
<http://www.womensenergynetwork.org/?nd=newsletters>

Other resources:

- **Dial an Angel** 'proudly support and service many FIFO and their families and can provide personal assistant or concierge services to keep your home running smoothly while you are away.'
<http://www.dialanangel.com/>
- The **Australian Human Rights Commission** has written an Integrated Carers Strategy toolkit to help stakeholders manage workloads with personal carer responsibilities.
<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/investing-care-recognising-and-valuing-those-who-care>

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