

HOW TO BUILD A FEMALE LEADER

GLOBAL LEARNINGS FROM
CHAMPIONS OF EQUALITY



RetailWeek
CONNECT



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 **speakap**

HOW TO SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE GENDER INEQUALITY

Women are still at a disadvantage in the workplace, so what can retailers do to create an environment where everyone – regardless of gender – can fulfil their career aspirations?

The fact that there are more Davids and Steves than women heading up FTSE 100 companies should alarm businesses up and down the land.

While there are a number of social and economic barriers to equality in the workplace – including division of childcare – company culture, policies and behaviours can also hold women back.

But this isn't just an issue for women. Accenture research finds that, in cultures where women succeed, so do men. In short, a high-performing diverse workforce is a win-win for everybody. A business needs myriad perspectives to thrive and think differently.

Creating a culture of equality unlocks a woman's potential, but doing so is easier said than done – especially without a substantial learning and development budget.

Be Inspired's mission since March 2016 has been clear: to promote gender balance at all levels across retail and to encourage women to fulfil their career aspirations. The culture that retail businesses create plays an integral part in this journey.

In this inaugural Be Inspired report, we'll highlight how businesses globally are creating environments that allow women to progress, including the policies and behaviours that have been proven to influence advancement, effect change, and help leaders define and implement diversity strategies that can make a tangible difference.

Uncovering the key drivers of a workplace culture where everyone can advance and thrive, this report will examine:

- The factors that create a positive, unbiased company culture
- How companies championing equality have turned rhetoric into action
- What truly motivates staff across all levels of retail

This report will show that building a workplace that attracts, retains and motivates the very best female talent doesn't require a large budget; it simply requires creativity, communication, passion and an understanding of what has a positive impact on employee productivity.





Be Inspired is Retail Week's programme of free monthly workshops and an annual conference, which aims to help address the problem of gender inequality in retail. Our 60 Be Inspired ambassadors and diversity champions inspire women at all levels

across the sector to develop their retail and leadership skills, whatever their career aspirations.

For more information on Be Inspired, our ambassadors and our workshops, visit beinspired.retail-week.com

To attend our events, please email tiffany.gumbrell@retail-week.com



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RETAIL WEEK FOREWORD



CHARLOTTE HARDIE
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

When Retail Week launched Be Inspired in early 2016, few could have anticipated the watershed year for gender diversity just around the corner. In the past 12 months especially, the dial has unquestionably shifted in terms of how we employ, write about, treat, refer to, depict and perceive women.

Gender equality has been catapulted to the fore in the legal landscape with the introduction of the gender pay gap regulations. It's cleaned up Hollywood's act following the Weinstein revelations and given women the confidence to speak up through the #MeToo movement. And it's meant empowerment for millions of women in Saudi Arabia who were finally granted the right to drive.

Against this backdrop, there has never been a more pressing time for employers to reassess their company culture and approach to gender diversity. But equally, if you layer on the pressure of digital transformation, the pace of change, the fight for market share, rising costs and an ever-demanding customer, it can be easy to lose momentum on tackling inclusion amid boardroom conversations about business priorities.

Effecting real change, though, is not as Herculean, time-consuming or expensive

as it might sound. In our inaugural Be Inspired report, we focus on practical, straightforward ways for retailers to develop their pools of talented future female leaders.

A factor behind many of the barriers to women reaching their career potential is a lack of confidence. Encouraging the creation of and participation in networks, for instance, can open people's eyes to the opportunities available.

Mentorship – while talked about often – is rarely deployed diligently or systematically enough to achieve its true potential, and yet done well it can inject much-needed self-belief through the support it can offer. On a more everyday level, simple recognition and acknowledgement can transform the way women feel about themselves in the workplace and their view of what is possible.

The launch of Be Inspired was timely and fortuitous, but its growth to date is because of the practical ways in which it seeks to help women fulfil their career aspirations by celebrating bold leadership, fuelling connections and empowering women with the skills they need to be the very best versions of themselves.

2018 has signalled the end of the way things were. Together, let's build on that.



There has never been a more pressing time for employers to reassess their company culture and approach to diversity



RETAIL WEEK CONNECT: HOW TO BUILD A FEMALE LEADER

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VIEWPOINTS



JILL ROSS

MANAGING DIRECTOR – RETAIL, ACCENTURE

As strong believers in inclusion and diversity in the workplace, we are proud to support Retail Week's Be Inspired campaign as headline partner. It's exciting to see how this initiative to address gender diversity in the retail industry has gained significant momentum since its relatively recent inception.

Accenture is committed to ensuring every employee has a full sense of belonging within the organisation. This support starts with our chairman and chief executive, Pierre Nanterme: "Diversity makes our business stronger and more innovative and, most importantly, it makes the world a better place."

For gender specifically, we believe the future workforce is an equal one. We have set targets – such as gender balance by 2025 – and we are taking proactive steps to attract, retain, advance and sponsor women.

For retailers, in addition to driving a culture of equality outlined in our *Getting to Equal 2018* research, we believe there are three steps to greater inclusion and diversity to benefit employees, customers and the business.

Firstly – talent. Measure employee representation at every level of the organisation and then introduce recruitment strategies to encourage greater diversity for the long term.

Secondly – broaden decision-makers. Celebrate and embrace the contribution that a diverse workforce makes to the business and decision-making across the enterprise.

Thirdly – focus on local differences. Understand the diversity of the customer base in different markets and position the brand accordingly, in its messaging as well as its product selection.

Embracing these values is a crucial element of building a business with a clear sense of purpose. In a world where shoppers look for authenticity, integrity and transparency, this has never been more important.



GUY CHISWICK

MANAGING DIRECTOR – UK & IRELAND, SPEAKAP

Speakap was developed based on the belief that informed, empowered employees – who feel heard and valued – create engaged workforces and great places to work.

Just as the research in this report shows that in organisations where women succeed, men succeed more too, there are now reams of research – including our own, conducted with clients such as Rituals, Ikea and G-Star RAW – showing retailers that create an environment of transparency, responsibility, engagement and communication also perform better financially.

As ardent as we are about creating an inclusive and engaged workforce, we

are just as passionate about the role technology can play. While technology alone can't create a diverse and inspiring company culture, it can be used to scale and communicate that culture in a faster, more connected way.

Imagine the young, part-time sales assistant getting updates, or even direct recognition, via video from the female managing director of her employer – as regularly happens at one of our UK retail clients. That's unshakable evidence that she can aspire to hold positions as lofty and as varied as her male colleagues.

Let's be honest, few businesses couldn't be improved through some consistent

gender equality training, which can be delivered remotely through regular, informal moments of micro-learning.

Technology can provide a protected space where all people – from sales assistants to chief executives – feel safe to communicate with their HR departments, to discuss or report those still-too-common issues that need to be eradicated from workplaces.

We hold the hope that, in future, the need for such championing of equality is diminished by positive changes sweeping through all organisations – and we're confident that retailers will be at the vanguard of this change.



CHAPTER I

CULTIVATING A BALANCE

Accenture research highlights the positive impact – for both genders – created by a culture of equality in the workplace.

It may be 2018, but women still do not progress in the workplace at the same pace as men. That's a fact. Analysis from Cranfield University shows that in the FTSE 250 there are now only 30 women in full-time executive roles – down from 38 last year – amounting to just 6.4% of the total. From this 30, just six are chief executives.

Speaking to Retail Week, Accenture managing director Jill Ross says: “A focus on inclusion and diversity has become a business imperative. Retailers that are not embracing inclusion and diversity may be missing out on opportunities to recruit the best people, as well as customer engagement and spend. A diverse employee base brings a broader set of wisdom and ideas, which makes for a more innovative workforce.”

While it may not be possible to quantify workplace culture, we do have the ability to measure the factors that contribute to a diverse and unbiased working environment.

In its *Getting to Equal 2018* research, Accenture, Be Inspired's headline partner, surveyed more than 22,000 working men and women with a university education in 34 countries to understand the workplace and personal factors helping women to advance at work.

Out of more than 200 factors, the study identified 40 that influence advancement, including 14 that can strongly act as catalysts for positive cultural change.

In companies where these 40 factors are most common, women are four times

14 FACTORS THAT DRIVE WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT AT WORK

BOLD LEADERSHIP

- Gender diversity is a priority for management
- A diversity target or goal is shared outside the organisation
- The organisation clearly states gender pay gap goals and ambitions

COMPREHENSIVE ACTION

- Progress has been made in attracting, retaining and progressing women
- The company has a women's network
- The company's women's network is open to men
- Men are encouraged to take paternity leave

AN EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT

- Employees have never been asked to change their appearance to conform to company culture
- Employees have the freedom to be creative and innovative
- Virtual/remote working is widely available and is common practice
- The organisation provides training to keep its employees' skills relevant
- Employees can avoid overseas or long-distance travel via virtual meetings
- Employees can work from home on a day when they have a personal commitment
- Employees are comfortable reporting sex discrimination/sexual harassment incidents to the company

Source: *Getting to Equal 2018*, Accenture

more likely to reach senior manager and director levels, the research found. If all companies created these more inclusive cultural environments, the results would be astonishing.

For example, globally, for every 100 male managers, there could be up to 84 female managers – compared with the current ratio of 100 to 34.

But it's not just women who would benefit from this cultural change. In workplaces in which these 40 factors are most common, men are 23% more likely to advance to manager level and beyond, and more than twice (118%) as likely to rise to senior manager/director level and beyond.

With a culture of equality unlocking the potential of talent across the board, leaders need to focus on the policies they have in place and the actions they are taking to create an environment that empowers all staff in the workplace.

Named as the top-ranking company in the Thomson Reuters Diversity & Inclusion Index, Accenture's own commitment to inclusion and diversity starts at the top and extends across every dimension of the company, according to Ross. "We embrace our rich diversity, which is about our employees sharing core values, while bringing their own unique skills and experiences," she says.

"We believe that diversity makes companies smarter and more innovative and, as a consequence, a magnet for the very best talent – people with the best skills and expertise who feel empowered to contribute as their authentic selves."

IF WOMEN WORKED IN ENVIRONMENTS WITH A CULTURE OF EQUALITY...



Source: *Getting to Equal 2018*, Accenture

CHAPTER 2

LESSONS FROM OUTSIDE RETAIL



An inclusive, motivational workplace does not happen organically. So what is required to make it a reality?

The businesses with cultures that allow women to thrive have carefully cultivated this environment by holding themselves to bold targets, implementing policies that effect real change and introducing networks that offer real support.

Sky and Sodexo are two such companies. Both are ranked in *The Times'* Top 50 Employers for Women 2018 – an accolade awarded by gender equality experts at corporate social responsibility charity Business in the Community. We speak to diversity champions from both businesses to uncover the secrets of their success.

CASE STUDY 1

SETTING AMBITIOUS TARGETS IN LEADERSHIP



Sky's Women in Home Service is a paid training programme for up to 1,000 aspiring engineers

Sky has set itself ambitious diversity targets. The TV and internet provider wants a 50:50 gender-balanced leadership team by 2020 (the figure is currently at nearly 40%, rising from around 30% in 2016) and aims to increase the number of women working in its tech team to 30% in the same timeframe.

To hit these targets, the business has started by getting the foundations right, according to Sky UK and Ireland chief operating officer Chris Stylianou. "For example, we're levelling the playing field with 50:50 shortlists for all leadership positions and we've reviewed our job descriptions to make sure they appeal to both men and women," he says.

Sky has introduced a range of initiatives to improve gender diversity, starting with Women in Leadership, which was launched in 2014 and offers sponsorship, mentoring and development programmes for women.

Following the success of this programme, Sky has taken what Stylianou describes as a "longer-term approach" with its new Women into Leadership scheme, which focuses on female middle managers.

The gives Sky's future female leaders access to networking opportunities and

sponsorship. Those who complete the programme receive a formal degree-level-equivalent leadership qualification.

Targeting female candidates

The traditionally male-dominated area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) has been a huge focus area for Sky, which has schemes including Women in Home Service and Get into Tech.

Women in Home Service is a paid training programme for up to 1,000 women interested in becoming an engineer at Sky.

Stylianou says: "It is important that our Home Service engineers are as diverse and inclusive as the customers and communities we serve."

Sky's Get into Tech scheme, a free evening and weekend training course for women who are considering a career in technology, is open to anyone, regardless of prior experience. Those who complete the course can apply for roles in the Sky Software Academy.

Stylianou believes Get into Tech has been a "huge success" and has helped to diversify Sky's tech team. "For the first time this year, we had a 50:50 balance of men and women in our Software Academy intake, up from 6% female representation just three years ago," he says.

ACTION POINTS FOR RETAILERS

- Set bold targets – and make them public too.
- Get the foundations right by implementing 50:50 shortlists for all leadership positions and ensuring job descriptions appeal to both men and women.
- Have extra focus on traditionally male-dominated areas, such as technology, engineering or the supply chain.

CASE STUDY 2

PROMOTING EQUALITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE



The Sodexo Women's International Forum for talent is dedicated to promoting women's advancement

For Sodexo, one of the world's largest multinational corporations, the cultivation of diversity and inclusion on a global scale is no mean feat.

With 420,000 employees representing 130 nationalities in 80 countries, the foodservice giant's promise to improve quality of life for people is not only relevant to its customers, but to its staff as well.

The international behemoth has set itself highly ambitious diversity targets over the years, which have propelled huge successes across the business. Between 2008 and 2017, the proportion of female group senior leaders at Sodexo almost doubled, rising from 17% to 32%, and women now make up 50% of the board of directors.

The Sodexo Women's International Forum for talent (SWIFt), an advisory board dedicated to promoting women's advancement, is the cornerstone of its gender strategy, says head of diversity and inclusion Megan Horsburgh.

SWIFt, which brings together 34 senior leaders across 17 countries, has four main objectives:

1. To reach a target of 40% female leaders by 2025.
2. To increase the number of women in operations.
3. To create a culture of inclusion.
4. To serve as role models and advocates for gender diversity.

The programme provides women with support to identify their own strengths and encourages them to consider and set out practical next steps on how they can move towards their career goals.

Building a support network

In 2011, Sodexo founded a gender balance employee network group in the UK and Ireland – Women Work – which is made up of both men and women to champion the issue.

The group organises development and networking opportunities for members, such as access to senior leaders and skills workshops with industry experts.

Women Work also creates blogs and podcasts from interviews with women and men in senior leadership positions to inspire staff. There is a particular focus on profiling people in 'non-traditional' careers to try to bust some myths around certain roles.

Security recruitment is an area in which Sodexo has had some success. The proportion of females in such positions has increased from 10% in 2012 to 17.5% today. "There's clearly still more to do, but the numbers are certainly moving in the right direction," says Horsburgh.

Another focus for Sodexo has been encouraging women back to work after maternity leave, providing a Working Parents group, which offers advice to those with childcare responsibilities, and offering a return-to-work bonus in recognition of this

being a period of increased childcare costs. Flexible working is also encouraged through its Flexibility Optimizes Work initiative, which helps all employees, including working parents, to achieve a valuable work-life balance.

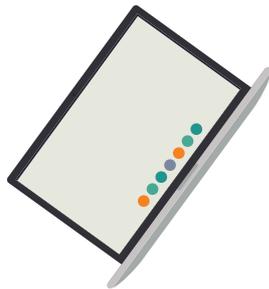
ACTION POINTS FOR RETAILERS

- Build a team or advisory board dedicated to promoting women's advancement within your business.
- Create a gender network that organises development and networking opportunities for members, such as access to senior leaders or skills workshops with industry experts.
- Implement flexible working to allow all employees to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT MOTIVATES ME

We hear from the Be Inspired community about the behaviours, policies and support networks that make them feel empowered at work.



The Be Inspired community is made up of thousands of women from more than 250 retail brands. Their learning and development needs may vary, but one key factor driving their progression remains the same – a feeling of being supported and empowered at work.

From branch manager to chief executive, our community represents retail at its best – a diverse group of ambitious individuals, passionate about the industry they're part of and determined to progress within it.

Speaking to women across a range of companies, disciplines and levels, we asked them to tell us about the policies, management and support networks that have made them feel motivated at work and helped them to achieve their career goals.



SARINA CHUDASAMA

**CUSTOMER JOURNEY EXPERIENCE EXECUTIVE
HOLLAND & BARRETT**

For Sarina Chudasama, having a mentor and support within Holland & Barrett has made her feel valued and helped her progression.

“Peer networks help too,” she says. “Particularly at the beginning of a career, it’s comforting to have support from those at the same level as you.” She says networking in a social environment helps her “understand the culture better and truly feel supported”.

Recognition, no matter how small, motivates Chudasama at work. “It doesn’t have to be big, but even

a small thank-you card from your team can make you feel valued.”

However, she also points out that Holland & Barrett celebrates success on a company-wide level with regular awards and recognition ceremonies.

An open-door policy also appeals to Chudasama, as it does to many millennial workers. “At Holland & Barrett, you can go to any department and chat to them.

The board of directors has an open-door policy, so you can walk in and discuss a whole range of topics.”

**“Even a small thank-you card
can make you feel valued”**



KIRSTY PITCHER

**DIRECTOR OF HR – RETAIL & OPTICIANS
BOOTS UK AND REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

In almost 10 years of working at Jaguar Land Rover, Kirsty Pitcher was one of only a small minority of female leaders.

“I was given some brilliant opportunities to develop and championed our women in leadership agenda there,” she says. “But Boots is different. We employ many women in our stores, and I feel the senior leadership team is more representative of our customer base.”

Pitcher says she feels valued at work when people acknowledge the impact she’s having and the contribution she makes.

“Just knowing I am being appreciated can make a huge difference to how I feel about the place I work. I think the

environment here is one that suits me perfectly – I feel trusted and able to give trust to my team.”

Pitcher says the flexibility Boots offers sets it apart from other businesses. “We offer so many part-time opportunities that it makes it easy for people to work around their personal commitments, such as childcare, study or looking after ageing relatives.

“I have a five-year-old daughter and her happiness is critical to me being able to do well at work. It’s my choice to work full time, and yet I know I have flexibility when it matters – I won’t miss a school sports day.

“I’m a firm believer that if your life outside work is settled, you’ll be more able to enjoy your job and focus on the work in hand.”

“If life outside work is settled you’ll be more able to enjoy your job”



MADEE JUNAID

**TRAINEE PROJECT MANAGER
MORRISONS**

Madee Junaid works in Morrisons’ technology department, where she helps to deliver infrastructure projects. Technology is an area in which women are still under-represented and Junaid says that Morrisons’ initiatives, such as its Women in Technology community, have helped her.

“We have a Women in Technology community, which I attend and get an insight into the different projects people are working on,” she says. “We discuss challenges that stop us from succeeding in certain aspects of our career.

“We also learn about colleagues’ career stories, including learning how they got to where they are,

the hurdles they had to overcome and what advice they would give others. I find that really helpful.”

Support from colleagues, both her mentor at Morrisons and other more senior workmates, has helped Junaid with career progression at the grocer, where she was promoted just over a year after joining.

“A number of senior colleagues have offered to coach me for interviews, help me build my confidence, offered me advice during difficult situations and pushed me to seek out opportunities. I don’t believe I would have got to where I am now in my career without the time and effort others have given me.”

“I wouldn’t have got to where I am now without the time and effort others have given me”



BECKY IDEH

**FINANCE GRADUATE
JARDINE MOTORS GROUP**

During Becky Ideh’s apprenticeship at Be Inspired partner Jardine Motors Group she worked across the business, which helped her decide what she wanted from her career.

She had her heart set on becoming an accountant. “I didn’t have a degree, so I didn’t think it would be possible, but the company said they would make it work,” she says.

Ideh is now two years into her chartered accountancy degree – studying in the evenings and at weekends – which is funded by Jardine, and works as a divisional accounts assistant, where she develops her finance skills.

She commends the Jardine HR team, which helps people at all

levels to map out their career. Jardine has an online system on which employees can enter the role they aspire to hold and then a map is created for how they can get there.

Working within the motor industry has confounded her expectations: “The motor industry can be seen as quite archaic, but as a young black woman I’ve felt very supported.”

Ideh was paired with a mentor who followed a similar career path to her and she has a “fantastic, supportive manager”, who challenges her and gives her constructive criticism.

“My manager respected that I knew where I wanted to go. He embraced it and helped me channel it in the right way.”

“The motor industry can be seen as archaic, but as a young black woman I’ve felt very supported”



TINA MITCHELL

**DIVISIONAL MANAGING DIRECTOR
THE CO-OP FOOD**

Tina Mitchell has risen to the top in retail and now leads a sizeable team at Be Inspired partner The Co-op, which she is determined to get the best out of.

“I believe that treating your team as individuals is critical. Understanding what motivates people, and empowering and giving them purpose, is a key to unlocking the significant potential that they have,” she says.

“Listening and acting on what you hear is vital. Many of our innovative new technologies have been developed with, and by, colleagues.”

Mitchell, who was a finalist this year in the Barclaycard Everywoman in Retail Awards, which shine a spotlight on role

models in the sector, says this creates a culture where everyone is “seen, heard and recognised”.

The Co-op has an active women’s network, Aspire, that seeks to encourage women across the business to support, mentor and inspire one another and champions internal progression. Mitchell says networks like this have helped her own career progression.

“I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to be part of something similar with a previous employer – it really helped me to grow my confidence and realise that self-belief could be the biggest barrier to fulfilling potential.

“Programmes such as this, along with some excellent mentors, have enabled me to grow as a leader.”

“Programmes such as Aspire have enabled me to grow as a leader”

CHAPTER 4

AN AUDIENCE WITH KAREN HUBBARD, CEO OF CARD FACTORY

Card Factory's chief executive talks to Retail Week about the barriers she has overcome throughout her career and offers advice on how retailers can create environments in which women thrive.

When you meet Card Factory boss Karen Hubbard, one of the few female FTSE 250 chief executives, it's hard not to be impressed. Slick, confident and incisive, she knows how to work a room.

However, Hubbard admits that she experiences the same self-doubt that holds many women back from securing the top positions at work.

"I've got the same voice in my head that other women have that says, 'You're not quite good enough, you haven't quite ticked off everything on the job description,'" she says.

In fact, Hubbard says her lack of confidence about being ready for the next role was the biggest barrier she has had to overcome.

"In my early career, I spent a long time in each of the roles I held, wanting to perfect the role and myself at that level. Many of the male leaders around me moved every two years and kept progressing up the organisation. I still felt that I hadn't 'finished my development' or that there was more I wanted to achieve in that role.

"I do see this quite regularly in talented females in retail, saying that they are not ready and in many cases missing out when actually they just need a push or a challenge."

And that is what has helped Hubbard to progress in her career: bosses who insisted she was ready for a promotion.

Hubbard, who hails from Australia, first rose through the ranks of BP's retail division. She spent almost 20 years at the oil giant, advancing to convenience retail director. From there, she moved to Asda where, during a five-year stint, she held various executive director roles leading stores, property and multichannel, and operations for its supermarkets – a huge role at the UK's third biggest grocer.

After a short spell as chief operating officer at value giant B&M, Hubbard joined Card Factory in 2016 to take her first chief executive position.

Her two years at the helm have certainly been eventful. At a time when many on the high street are looking to shed shops, Hubbard has led aggressive store expansion

“If you want your business to be successful, diversity is a key element – leaders need to take responsibility for creating diverse teams”



at the greetings card retailer. It has been opening 50 stores a year and plans to grow its current portfolio from 940 to 1,200 shops.

While Card Factory has been something of a success story, however, it has not been entirely immune to the challenges of the high street. Despite selling more cards and serving more customers, rising sourcing and wage costs ate into profits in its last financial year. But Hubbard seems more than ready to embrace a challenge.

Leading by example

Creating a good place to work has always been a priority for Hubbard, who is determined to make sure people “get the opportunity to be the very best they can be” at Card Factory. “We have talent discussions and challenge each leader to identify our future leaders,” she says.

And Hubbard is passionate that this cohort of future leaders is a diverse one. “If you want your business to be successful, then diversity is a key element of this – and all leaders in the organisation, whatever their level, need to own the diversity

agenda and take responsibility for creating diverse teams.”

As one of a small group of women leading big business – she is among just six female chief executives in the FTSE 250 – Hubbard is determined to make this pool bigger.

She believes the onus is on employers to make sure women are not overlooked. This means pushing forward talented women to give presentations and attend events, but also reviewing the number of promotions made, the number of women who are viewed as top talent and the length of time that women remain in roles.

Hubbard says that, when recruiting, it is important that there is a balanced representation of men and women for the role in question. “When they say there are no women, dig deeper, even if they are not right for this role – we need to ensure they are on the radar,” she says.

“Look out for talented individuals, whatever their gender, who tell you that they are not ready and validate whether or not development is needed – or a dose of confidence.”

Like Hubbard, those who are given opportunities and strive to overcome their self-doubt can rise to the very top of retail.

Role models needed

One of the biggest obstacles to women progressing in retail is a lack of strong female role models, Hubbard believes.

“Many of the iconic retail brands have been led by awe-inspiring big male characters who are in the public domain: Sir Terry Leahy, Sir Philip Green, Lord Rose, Andy Bond, Justin King, Mike Coupe, Lord Price – all brilliant leaders, but of course all males,” she says.

However, this is changing and, as more women break through the glass ceiling, more strong role models are being created, she says.

Hubbard herself is now one of these role models and is doing everything she can to inspire the women around her. While at Asda, she chaired the grocer’s Women in Leadership initiative and she also served on parent company Walmart’s Women in Leadership Council.

She also recently helped launch York St John University’s The Business Of... series of public talks with a speech entitled ‘Business – a Man’s World?’, which dispelled the myth that the business world is designed solely for men.

Hubbard is also an active ambassador for Retail Week’s Be Inspired campaign.

“I do believe what Retail Week is doing with Be Inspired will be replicated by others,” she says. “It is great to see women and men working together and creating some unique approaches and opportunities to ensure we see more female leaders.”



BE INSPIRED PLEDGE



A COMMITMENT TO GENDER BALANCE ACROSS RETAIL



Since Be Inspired's inception, Retail Week has pledged its commitment as a business to build a more balanced and fair industry. This is your chance to do the same. The Be Inspired pledge reflects our aspiration to see gender balance at all levels across retail. By signing up to the Be Inspired pledge, you are outlining your commitment to helping develop retail's future female leaders.

I promise to promote gender diversity and inclusion in the retail sector by...

-  Taking responsibility and accountability for diversity and inclusion within my business
-  Creating a culture that promotes work-life balance while nurturing career aspirations
-  Recognising and acknowledging the hard work delivered by the women within my business, regardless of seniority
-  Supporting the progression of women into senior roles within my business and increasing the career development opportunities available to them
-  Enhancing visibility of senior women within my business and providing access to these senior women for all colleagues
-  Setting clear diversity targets on which I will provide progress updates in 12 months' time to support the transparency and accountability needed to drive change

Signed _____

Share your pledge on Twitter and LinkedIn using #RWBelnspired

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