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**Tapping All Our Talents Review 2018: Women in STEM  
Business  
Business, Industry & Entrepreneurship Roundtable  
18 May 2018, 10.30 – 12.30**

**Note of Meeting**

**Roundtable Participants**

Scott Kerr, Partner, Harper Macleod  
Rosie Macrae, Human Resources, SSE  
Clare Martin, Entrepreneurship Content Curator, RBS  
Cris Martinez, HR Manager, Torness, EDF  
Scott Reid-Skinner, Scottish Enterprise

**Working Group Members:**

Dr Allan Colquhoun, University Liaison and Emerging Technologies Manager,  
Leonardo.  
David Watt, Executive Director, Institute of Directors Scotland.

**Secretariat**

Morven Chisholm, RSE Fellowship Manager

**Discussion Topics**

Gender Pay Gap / Flexible Working / Parental Leave

- In terms of gender pay gap reporting, it would be useful is to identify the top 10 factors that drive change and ask employers to state specifically how they would/do address these.
- Noted that some people do not understand the difference between pay equality and the gender pay gap.
- Suggested that good practice would be to bring people in at the same salary at the start, and then for the salary to change depending on progression, area of specialism etc. However, some employers start people off on different rates (and these typically tend to be in gendered roles).
- Women tend to undertake more part-time work than men, and this can be considered less valuable than full-time roles, particularly if work has to be done on a particular day, or to a particular time scale.
- Recognition that roles with bonuses are more likely to be filled by men.
- There continues to be a stigma around flexible working. While it is becoming more prevalent, at the current rate of progress it will take years before there is a significant change.

- Rewards need to be based on merit, but there are different views of what merit is. The work should be achievable for all during standard working hours.
- Perceptions of flexible working in STEM industries is a real issue. Need different criteria of value/merit for part-time workers. Need men and those in senior roles to take part-time work to normalise it. Also need to promote the benefits of part-time working.
- It was also noted that there are not enough women in STEM industries in technical roles, as opposed to HR and marketing, for example.
- While changing policies and laws is relatively straightforward, shifting societal views is by comparison much more difficult.
- Very low take-up of shared parental leave. There is stigma attached to it, and fear that it will have a negative impact on progression opportunities.
- Difficult to change culture within an organisation. Organisations can also be reluctant to adopt more positive action measures.
- When there is talk about targets for women, it can create the perception that someone was offered the job only because they are female. It is more useful if the focus is on getting women to apply and ensuring that it is a fair selection process ('join the queue, not skip the queue').
- What are the barriers to getting women in to more technical jobs? Is it stereotypes? Culture? – Availability and cost of childcare is an issue. Many part-time workers still need to pay for full-time childcare because of the lack of flexibility in the system. Therefore, it is often not financially viable to work part-time.
- 'Working Differently' is a new focus. No fixed desks, intentionally not enough desks for everyone, flexibility available for everyone as it is required and guidance for managers on how to implement it. Important to get senior people to tell the story about it working for them. Future graduates will not want or expect to work 9-5 five days a week. There is a need to change culture and prepare people for the future world of work.
- Disruptive technologies have allowed flexibility. Opportunities for change and different patterns of working. If flexibility is not available in traditional employment, there are other opportunities opening up.
- SMEs represent most of the STEM employment in Scotland, and part-time and flexible working can be more challenging for these employers. On the flip side, smaller companies tend to have a more

local workforce and know their staff better, which can create more trustful relationship between employer and employee.

- Brexit has the potential to change the way we think, because we may be facing real skills shortages.
- Need to focus on skills rather than 'a career' in future, to create well-rounded employees.
- Important not to lose sight of lifelong learning and enabling people of all ages to upskill. This can help address skills gaps.

Very few CEOs of private business are women. Why are more women not getting to the very top?

- It is changing, but it is a long game.
- It was noted that for senior roles, 1/10 applicants are female, 1/10 successful candidates are female. These tend to be in corporate (rather than technical) roles.
- Most women who have succeeded have been pushed to do so, rather than have pushed themselves. Women need to have the confidence to put themselves forward.
- Women are expected to deliver in business, but are expected to do so in a 'feminine' way.
- Women in very senior role are seen as aggressive, while men are seen as assertive.
- Women do question if they are good enough, and if they can cope with the scrutiny.
- Engineering is still perceived as very physical and therefore not for women.
- Difficult to change the attitude of middle management who have been in the industry for ~30 years. Need to bring in new talent to challenge this.
- Try to get across the message that difference leads to debate, which ultimately leads to better business decisions.
- Would welcome more shadowing opportunities for women in STEM industries.
- People are increasingly choosing employers, not the other way around.

- It is becoming more common for people to apply for a job with the expectation of part-time or flexible working. Job adverts need to change to reflect this and make this the norm.

## School Education / Careers Guidance

- Need careers guidance from Primary and need to include the parents in this. Guidance needs to be realistic and needs to open up opportunities rather than limit them.
- Also, need to look at the world of work in 10-20 years' time, rather than focus on current requirements.
- Schools are focusing on exam results because that is how success is measured.
- Classroom teaching needs to prepare pupils for the world of work.
- Need to strengthen connections between the curriculum and the workplace, including between industries and teachers.
- While there are lots of useful small-scale initiatives, the lack of evaluation makes it difficult to determine where resources should be targeted to achieve scalability.
- Need a joined-up approach. Corporates are very focused on their own activities, need to work together, and work with schools.
- Work with local Chambers of Commerce could be useful. This could include making connections with Developing the Young Workforce.
- Focus needs to be on skills development in schools and in the future.
- School system risks narrowing opportunities rather than opening them up. Need to be bolder in recognising the multitude of further study and career pathways.
- Pressure in secondary to do particular gendered subjects. Parents, peers and teachers are key influencers.
- Children are conditioned by gendered toys.
- Need to talk about what excites you, and then link that back to skills and subjects.

## Recruitment / Employment / Skills

- Are you doing what is right for your business, or what you want to be seen to be doing? Companies are keen to focus on the business case for equality actions, rather than doing it because they have to. Recognition that business delivery will be improved with greater diversity.
- Recognition that until gender stereotyping has been addressed that there is probably a need for targets. Suggestion that it is better to think in terms of 'ambition' rather than targets.
- Could companies write to customers about skills, employment opportunities etc? Companies are restricted in what they can contact their customers about.
- Reference was made to Severn Trent work on working with schools and recruiting young people in to STEM roles. Similarly, reference was made to Entrepreneurial Spark that has sought to break-down traditional recruitment processes and are more centred on the person as opposed to their qualifications.
- It was noted that recruitment criteria can be gendered and can be a barrier to women getting in to senior roles. Auditing of job adverts can be helpful in this regard.
- Need training, including in unconscious bias, for hiring managers.

## Role of Professional Bodies and Trade Unions?

- Reference to the work of the Institute of Physics and the Law Society of Scotland on addressing gender stereotyping.
- Professional bodies and trade unions are well placed to facilitate discussions around different work practices.

## Final Comments

- Recognition of the multi-faceted nature of gender equality which includes education, society and culture. Need to understand more fully the problems and effective means of addressing them.
- While the focus of this piece of RSE work is on gender equality in STEM, there is a need to consider inclusivity in the round, including other underrepresented groups. Need to bring everyone along with us and highlight that equality is good for everyone.

- While government policy can be off-putting, other actions, including campaigns can be more powerful to change perceptions.