

Shifting Gears: How to close the gender gap to drive business performance

A practical guide to retaining and recruiting
more women in automotive

November 2023



Foreword



The lack of gender balance has long held back British industry and UK automotive has been no exception. With only 19.8% of the British automotive workforce female, we need to do everything to address this imbalance.

The benefits of gender diversity to any business have been proven time and again: improved productivity, success in recruitment, better decision making, innovation and creativity and, significantly, improved profitability. This, of itself, should be reason enough but there is also a broader motivation for doing so. If the UK automotive industry is to be successful at home and abroad, it must reflect the customers and society it serves.

This guide, developed by the Automotive Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workstream, is designed to drive positive change, to provide a range of practical steps that automotive companies seeking to improve their gender balance can implement.

Covering recruitment, retention, progression, culture and leadership, the guide sets out some of the actions automotive companies can undertake to break down barriers so that all women, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, neurodiversity, race, social mobility and sexual orientation, will be properly represented throughout the industry.

Businesses exist to deliver growth and profitability, to provide good, sustainable jobs and to create products and services that support and, hopefully, improve society. Addressing gender gaps – and other diversity inequalities - is an essential step towards success.

Mike Hawes

SMMT Chief Executive, and Chair of the Automotive Council UK Competitiveness and Business Environment Working Group



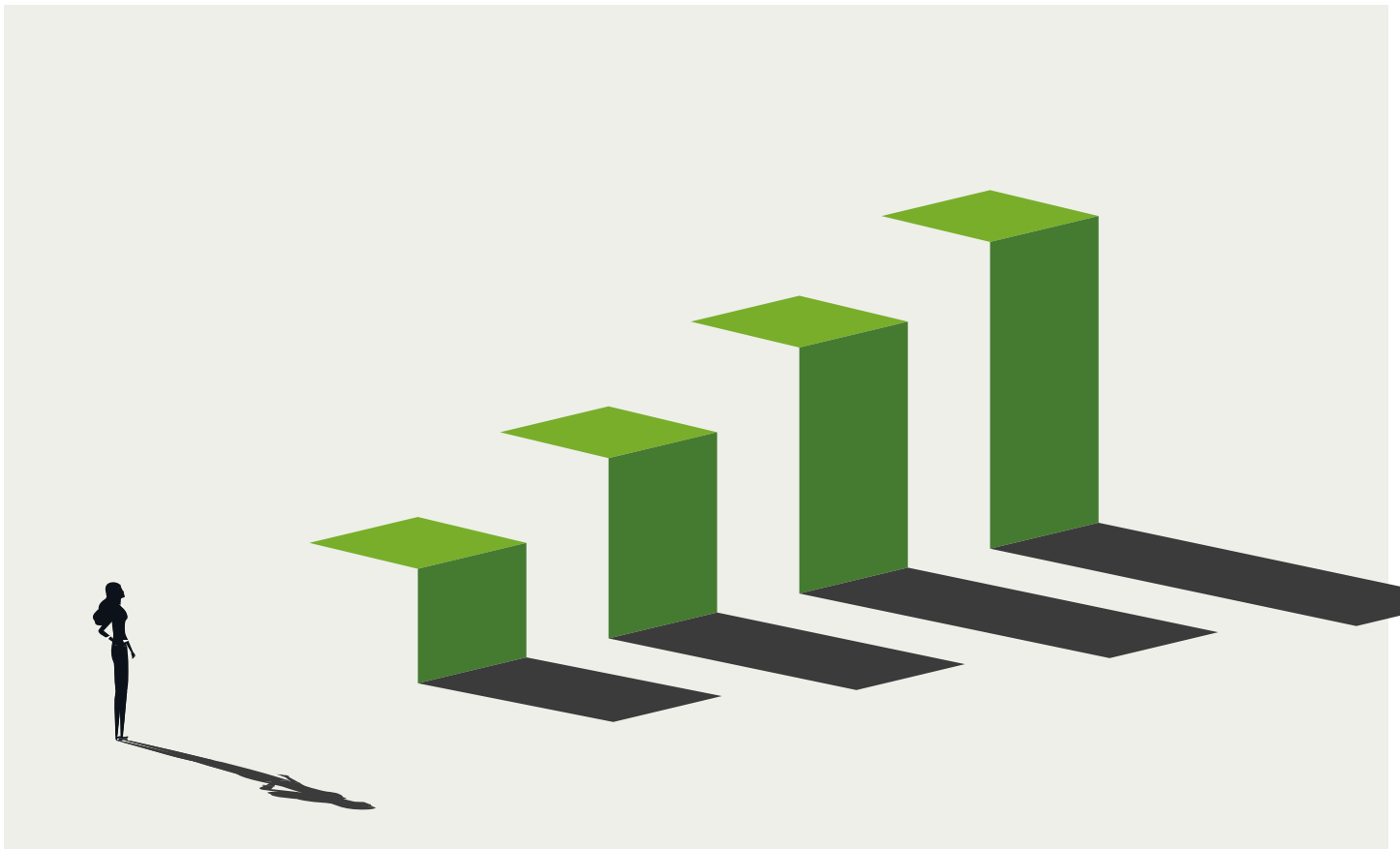
The automotive sector remains one of the most exciting and fast-paced industries to work in. Women are involved in every part of the UK automotive ecosystem including providing exceptional retail customer service, researching and designing the latest cutting-edge models, working on our vehicle production lines and leading some of the biggest global brands. The automotive industry would not exist without women in its workforce and further improving gender balance, by recruiting and retaining more women, will ensure a brighter future for the sector.”

Louise Gardner, Head of Talent, Diversity & Inclusion – Stellantis and **Laurence Drake**, Chief Executive Officer – The Anderson Group Limited, joint chairs of the Automotive Council DE&I Workstream

Recruitment attracting diverse talent is as much about removing invisible barriers as it is about removing physical barriers

Practical suggestions on recruitment

- 01 Anonymise application forms to remove the potential for bias in the interview selection process.
- 02 Review job descriptions to ensure that they are more skills rather than experience based.
- 03 Use bias-free and inclusive language in job applications.
- 04 Devise a confidential equality and diversity monitoring form to accompany the application process by logging applicant gender identity and other diversity characteristics. This will provide data which will assist your DE&I recruitment strategy, to ensure that employees are applying from diverse backgrounds.
- 05 Promote flexible working arrangements and policies from the outset and communicate roles across different channels, including social media, to attract a wider pool of applicants.
- 06 Ensure recruitment agencies commit to DE&I and can evidence their commitment.
- 07 Aim for 50/50 gender balanced applicant shortlists based on meritocracy and ensure inclusion of diverse interview panels wherever possible.
- 08 Provide hiring managers and internal recruitment teams with training and support on how to identify and overcome bias.



- 09** Move away from a 'one size fits all' interviewing and assessment process to reduce invisible barriers.
- 10** Showcase careers in the industry to young people through outreach programmes, such as recruitment roadshows. Women talking to young women and girls about their career aspirations can be very powerful. If you can't see it, you can't be it.
- 11** Organisations like ductu can help companies connect with local schools to run effective outreach programmes.
- 12** Launch returnship programmes aimed at those who have been out of work for some time, such as for caring responsibilities or childcare needs.
- 13** Coach employees on sharing successes, working in conjunction with companies such as Google who can co-host #Iamremarkable events to improve confidence.
- 14** Profile females from across the business via marketing channels to highlight diversity and implement referral schemes to widen recruitment pools.
- 15** Use existing trainees to promote the business and to recruit for new trainees.



Case study

Stellantis

Stellantis has a wide-ranging 'outreach' strategy to foster greater gender balance in the automotive industry. Creating a close relationship with local schools has enabled Stellantis to showcase early careers opportunities across the whole of its business, from the retail arm, Stellantis & You, to head office and manufacturing facilities. The Stellantis 'outreach' strategy includes visits to local schools, providing talks and coaching by current female apprentices together with open days, which has increased gender balance with the company's degree apprentices, industrial placement students and graduates to over 50%.

Recently Stellantis invited female students into its UK production facilities to experience manufacturing up close and to inspire and empower them to choose a career in engineering.

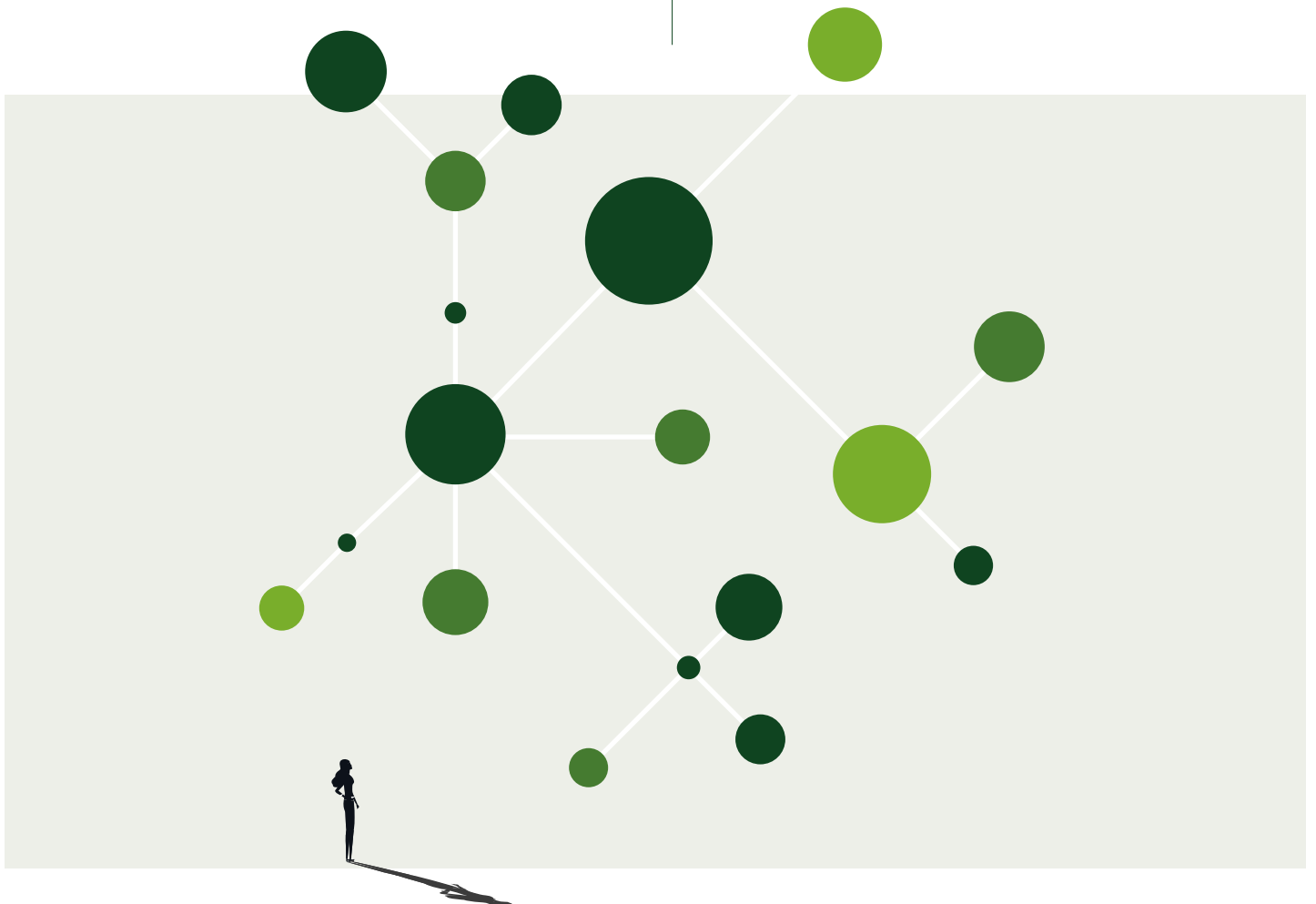
The Stellantis Ellesmere Port manufacturing facility invited a number of 13-year-old female students from several local schools who were considering a career in engineering to a dedicated 'Women in Engineering' day at its Ellesmere Port plant. Students were guided through the assembly process of the latest EV batteries, observed skilled operators turning sheet metal into vehicle panels and used a 3D optical CMM scanner, which provides accurate measurements and surface inspections, to scan the facial features of their peers. Students were also driven around the newly installed test track in a Citroën Berlingo, navigating cobbles, hill starts and speed bumps and spoke with female engineers and apprentices to understand more about a career in automotive engineering.



Retention ensuring diverse talent remains in the workforce takes proactive focus and attention

Practical suggestions for retention

- 01 Create flexible working environments such as working from home, job share, reduced hours and term time working.
- 02 When flexible working is difficult to translate into practice, consider compressed and annualised hours.
- 03 Closely monitor female leavers and review their exit interviews to inform future strategy and practices.
- 04 Support maternity leave transition. A high percentage of women do not return to work or leave when children are young. Provide return to work coaching following leave to help tackle this.
- 05 Offer 'keeping in touch' days for all employees on maternity/adoption/shared parental leave.
- 06 Improve benefits for maternity, adoption, surrogacy, neonatal and pregnancy loss and ideally offer equivalent paternity leave and shared parental leave.
- 07 Train managers to better support parents and carers.
- 08 Provide back-up care through companies such as Bright Horizons, which offers childcare, tutoring, holiday clubs, elder and pet care.



- 09 Introduce a menopause policy, which includes support, and provide awareness training for people leaders.
- 10 Introduce a carers policy, which includes support, and provide awareness training.
- 11 Offer extended flexible working during school holidays and when children are starting school for the first time.
- 12 Offer core hours to allow parents to structure their working day to be able to drop-off or pick-up children from school.
- 13 Give provision that will enable someone to return to their career while balancing the demands that took them away for a while. For example, offering flexibility to continue to balance work with caring responsibilities and time to enable them to refresh their skills/knowledge.
- 14 Encourage employee support groups and allyship programmes.
- 15 Identify the proportion of trainees that become permanent hires and redress balance if required.



Case study

Leyland

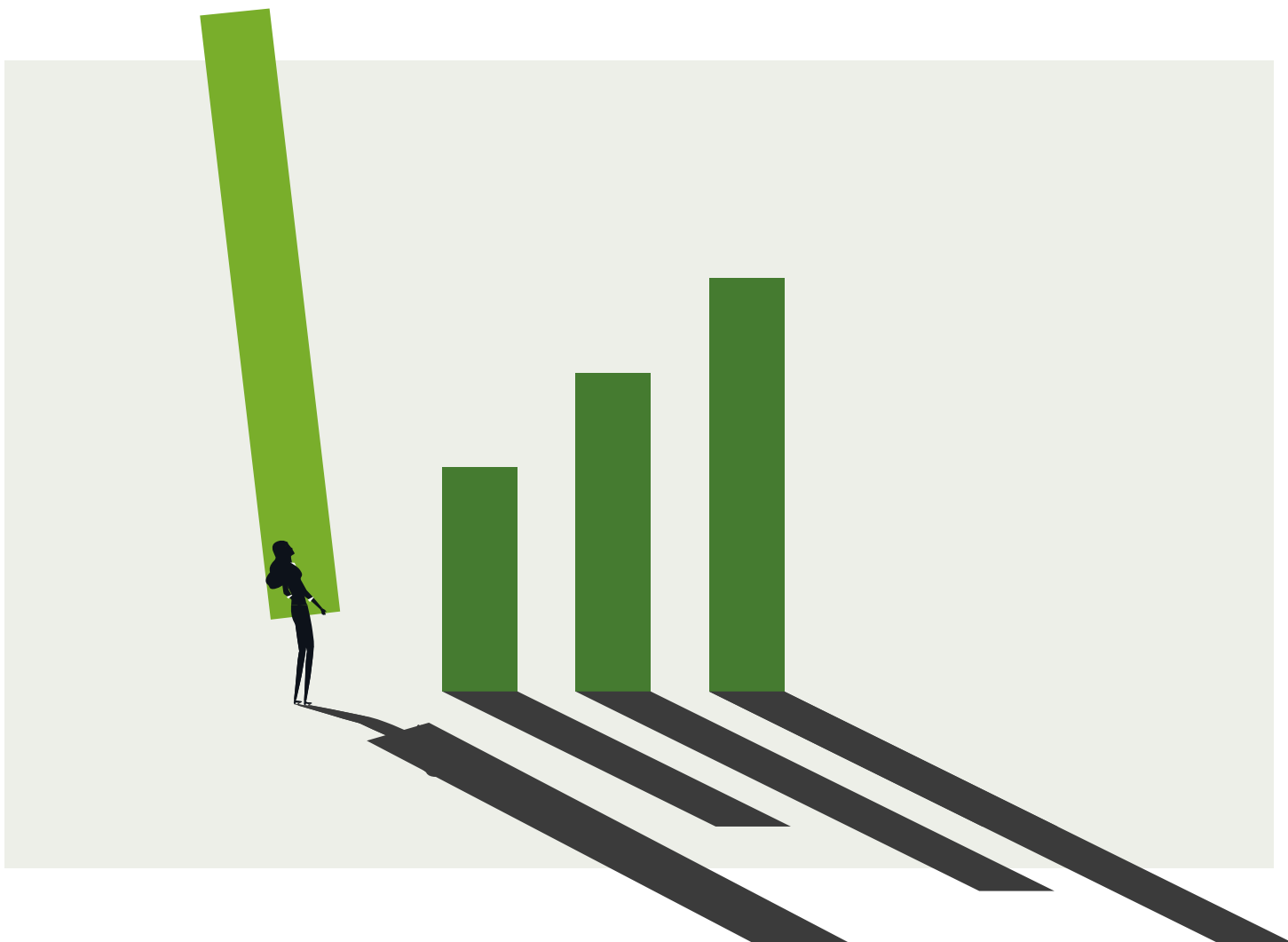


Finding a way to accommodate flexible working within a manufacturing environment can be particularly difficult, given how different production requirements are to working within a service focused office environment. Despite the challenge, Leyland Trucks was keen to investigate what innovative ways of working could be found to allow flexible working in its production areas. As there is no 'one size fits all approach', the company proactively welcomes proposals from staff and reviews requests on a case-by-case basis. One successful arrangement, suggested by two employees themselves, involves them job sharing, covering a full-time role between them by working alternate weeks and coordinating holiday timings. This allows them to balance their work hours with other responsibilities without having to change role or employer and has proved successful.

Progression being transparent on the opportunities available, and the decisions taken, will help to encourage the development of diverse talent

Practical suggestions for progression

- 01 Establish mentoring and sponsorship programmes to encourage and support progression.
- 02 Take part in automotive-wide mentoring and sponsorship programmes to share experience across the industry.
- 03 Support career opportunities and progression for every employee, through training, talent management and succession planning.
- 04 Share stories of women who have taken different paths within organisations and the sector.
- 05 Selection for promotion by panel, rather than based on individual preference to reduce bias.
- 06 Train managers on how to identify and encourage internal talent to apply for promotions.
- 07 Monitor the gender split in succession planning and consider how to address any imbalance.
- 08 Provide accelerator programmes and leadership coaching for women who want to progress, or those who show potential but may lack the confidence to put themselves forward for promotion.



Case study

Nissan

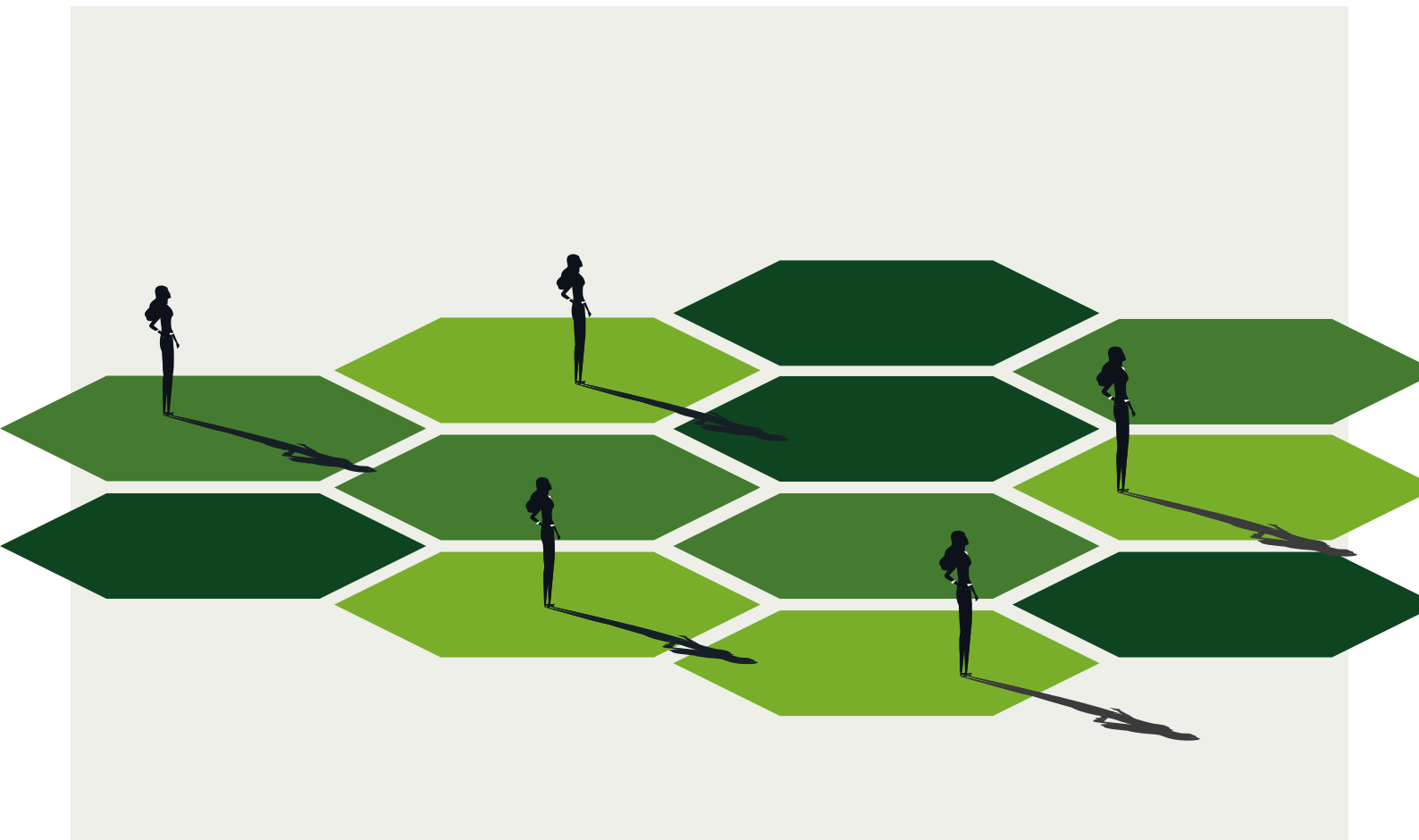
To help support career opportunities and progression for every employee, Nissan has established mentoring and sponsorship programmes internally, including a reverse mentoring programme, where colleagues from across different seniority levels and departments pair up to expand their business knowledge and discuss anything from employee engagement to working styles. There is a focus on generating stories, for internal communications, to promote different routes women have taken within Nissan and 12 female Nissan employees attended a winter network meeting of 440 people to discuss career progression and matters affecting women in the workplace.



Culture creating a respectful and inclusive company culture is fundamental to the success of any DE&I strategy

Practical suggestions on culture

- 01 Lead change from the top by promoting DE&I supportive views and positive experiences of senior leaders.
- 02 Ensure brand guidelines and communications reflect company DE&I values.
- 03 Implement DE&I training for senior management and communicate DE&I policies to workforce.
- 04 Create a respectful and inclusive company culture for all colleagues.
- 05 Embed DE&I policies into company values and ensure they are reflected in all communications such as email signatures, corporate documentation, notice boards, intranet and the external website.
- 06 Launch an award for employees who go above and beyond to support others.
- 07 Engage all groups by creating safe spaces to talk about challenges without fear of being judged.
- 08 Encourage the implementation of Employee Resource Groups, which are voluntary and help to drive forward DE&I initiatives as well as help inclusion and feeling of belonging.



- 09 Create platforms, practices and values that support everyone and try to draw on shared experience, similarities and allyship.
- 10 Clearly communicate the channels available for raising concerns and address any issues or inappropriate behaviour in a timely manner. Based on issues raised, continually adapt and make changes where necessary.
- 11 Keep reminding the business why DE&I is important.
- 12 Ensure DE&I topics are included within the new starter induction, including ways staff can contribute to fostering a positive culture within the organisation.



Case study

Kia

Kia offers a comprehensive package of measures to support women in the workplace. One of the main changes made recently is the improvement of family leave policies and support. Kia has improved the maternity and shared parental leave benefit offering and increased paternity leave so that men can play a more active role in childcare. Transition and return to work coaching has also been introduced through a partnership with Bright Horizons. Kia offers training for managers to better support women and all parents through the early stages of parenting and is exploring accreditation via Careers After Babies.

Kia offers what it refers to as “Smart Working”, which provides core hours and hybrid working with three days in the office, as well as the opportunity to work for a week per year from any location (which may be abroad if the employee has the right to work). This all helps to support working women and all parents with the school drop-off and pick-up as well as greater flexibility for a full week during school holidays.

In addition, Kia has carried out employee research on menopause resulting in manager and all-employee awareness sessions and has launched a new policy. The progression and retention of women is extremely important to Kia and so it has partnered with Moving Ahead to roll out inclusive leadership training to all employees, as well involvement in Moving Ahead’s cross-company Gender Equity Mentoring programme. Kia has also launched an internal mentoring programme and now offers Women in Leadership Apprenticeships through Raise the Bar. As a result of these initiatives, and others, Kia was recognised as a ‘Great Place to Work’ and made the list of ‘Best Workplaces for Women’.



Leadership by demonstrating a commitment to DE&I, senior leaders can help to drive change

- 01 Appoint a board-level DE&I champion.
- 02 Demonstrate commitment at senior levels to DE&I through consistent communications.
- 03 Provide unconscious bias and other DE&I specific training to managers on the business value of an inclusive and diverse workforce with regular follow-up.
- 04 The DE&I strategy should permeate all areas of the business, starting with senior leaders.
- 05 Set DE&I targets for leaders and support them to achieve those targets.



Case study

Renault Group

At the UK board-level Renault recently undertook a reset on its approach to gender balance in the workplace after recognising that more needed to be done to accelerate change. Starting with revisiting best practice to shape a new approach, with a clear plan and buy-in from the entire business.

Measures have included a focus on gender equality, looking at how evaluating what Renault does for all genders promotes balance, e.g. enhanced family leave policies and advocacy for all genders. The company is also using direct InMail approaches on LinkedIn for vacancies and renewed job adverts, along with internship advertisements on ratemyplacement.co.uk that include recommendations from trainees. Renault is revamping its interview processes too, including the removal of assessment centres.

The result is that 35% of the company's UK headcount, and 65% of its trainee cohort, is now female.



- 06** Introduce the Equity Sequence™ model, which is a progression of five simple questions that can help anyone spot and interrupt bias in decision-making and design. Before a decision is made there are a series of questions to work through to consider all viewpoints and impact. Questions focus on who will be impacted by the decision and what the impact will be.
- 07** Engage leaders by inviting them to own one aspect of DE&I agenda.
- 08** Inspire leaders by sharing best practice from other companies to stimulate new ideas.



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