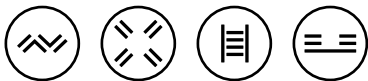


LEADERS FOR EQUALITY



GENDER-INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

- Developing a culture of equality
- Claiming fairness
- Supporting and promoting women
- Facilitating work-life integration





DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF EQUALITY

CULTURE CHANGE AS A LEVER FOR GENDER EQUALITY

In order to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions, it is crucial to change the gender equality culture in the company – and a large number of male leaders have already started to do so. Become active too! The following gender-inclusive leadership practices offer you concrete possibilities for action in everyday leadership and work to develop the gender equality culture in your company.



“I participate in internal company activities on gender equality”

- Ask that women and men are addressed and invited to activities on gender equality issues (unless they are explicitly women's events).
- Set an example and take other colleagues and staff to gender equality activities.
- Stay until the end of events to show your interest and the relevance of the activities.

“I make myself available as a mentor for women as (junior) managers”

- Even without an official mentoring program, you can support women as a mentor or sponsor.
- Meet at eye level and also learn from your mentees.
- Communicate your commitment openly within the company - and encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Establish supportive contacts even beyond your own organisational boundaries.
- Open up your own networks (both professional and technical) and introduce your mentees to them.

“I defend gender equality measures in discussions with colleagues and superiors”

- Provide your colleagues and supervisors with information about the different starting conditions for women and men in working life and the need for gender quality measures.
- Point out motivations of male managers for gender equality engagement.
- Collate the successes and benefits of gender equality measures in your company (in cooperation with the management and HR managers/HR or gender equality or diversity divisions) and communicate these in discussions and meetings.



**“I defend gender equality
measures in discussions
with my colleagues”**





“I openly discuss and address the fears of my employees regarding gender equality measures”

- Talk openly about possible disadvantages for men due to women’s advancement or gender equality in team meetings.
- Ask your employees specifically about their perceived fears – take them seriously and refer to the advantages and necessities of equality.
- Address your employees’ fears of being promoted on the basis of their gender and not on the basis of their performance (for example, as a “quota woman”) and explain the connections between the performance principle and gender equality. The concept of the “level playing field” can be seen as a myth of modern society that prevents equality).
- Initiate gender dialogues in your team to give space to existing fears, exchange ideas, and increase the acceptance of gender equality measures and issues.

“I give positive feedback to my male colleagues when they show leadership behaviour that promotes women”

- Extend your appreciative leadership style to include positive feedback for gender equality activities.
- Establish feedback on pro-women leadership behaviour as a natural part of your feedback culture.
- Also, take the opportunity to mention pro-women behaviour in informal conversations.

“I will cancel my participation (if possible) if I find that I have been invited to an all-male meeting”

- Find out in advance about the composition in terms of women and men.
- If it is impossible to have mixed groups due to the lack of women in leadership positions and male-dominated business areas, at least point out the fact of a male group and the disadvantages of homogeneous and advantages of mixed groups.
- Engage with #allmalepanels and communicate this within the company to ensure more visibility of women.

“I set a good example and take care not to make remarks that (perhaps unintentionally) devalue women or don't take them seriously”

- Remarks about women's appearance are inappropriate in a professional context, even if they are meant as compliments – instead, better highlight professional and technical achievements and competencies.
- Do not use “girl”, “miss”, “little one” as supposedly caring terms (of younger women) because they belittle and devalue them as competent employees and leaders.
- If you are unsure about your vocabulary, ask your colleagues – listen to them and accept their views, even if you cannot understand them or have experienced derogatory comments yourself.
- Ask your female colleagues which comments they consider derogatory and avoid them.
- Do not consider women who complain about inappropriate remarks as hysterical or oversensitive, but take them seriously and create an atmosphere of trust.

“I make myself aware that men often have an advantage over women in the professional world”

- So-called “care work” such as childcare, caring for relatives, maintaining relationships, and daily household chores are still predominantly done by women. This means extra time and mental effort leaves less capacity for gainful employment for women in comparison to men. Where men can devote themselves solely to their work, women do not have that luxury.
- The so-called modernised bourgeois family model of the male family breadwinner and the part-time working mother is still preferred in Switzerland. It ensures fundamentally different starting positions for men and women in leadership positions.
- Most women and men in leadership positions work full-time, but the partners of the men are predominantly employed part-time. At the same time, the partners of the women are also employed full-time – women in leadership positions are therefore existentially dependent on flexible working hours and locations which can be restrictive with regards to career development.
- Take these different life realities into account when considering or assessing commitment, performance, availability, accessibility, etc. – be reflective and differentiated.
- Change your perspective and put yourself in the shoes of your female colleagues – and expand your understanding of leadership to include their challenges and demands.
- Initiate gender dialogues in your team to create a mutual understanding for different life situations and realities.





CLAIMING FAIRNESS



FAIRNESS IS THE PRIMARY MOTIVATOR FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Being committed to fairness is an essential motivator for leaders to become engaged in gender equality. The following practices offer you concrete opportunities to counter discrimination and create inclusion and belonging. They require courage!



“I am careful not to make any remarks (perhaps even unintentionally) that devalue women or do not take them seriously”

- Remarks about women's appearance are inappropriate in a professional context, even if they are meant as compliments – instead, highlight professional and technical achievements as well as competences.
- Do not use “girl”, “miss”, “little one” as supposedly caring terms (of younger women) because they belittle and devalue them as competent employees and leaders.
- If you are unsure of what vocabulary to use, ask your female colleagues to listen and accept their point of view. Even if you cannot understand them or have never been addressed in these terms yourself. As a man, you have a more natural position in the professional world as a woman. Having another pair of ears at hand will reduce patronising and condescending vocabulary, however unintentional the comment may have been.
- Ask your female colleagues which comments they consider derogatory and avoid them accordingly.
- Do not consider women who complain about inappropriate remarks as hysterical or oversensitive but take them seriously and create an atmosphere of trust.

“I address my male colleagues, staff and/or supervisors when they make remarks that (perhaps unintentionally) devalue women, are sexist or misogynistic”

- In all-male meetings, there is sometimes a rough tone and crude humour that women and increasingly men find inappropriate – do not wait until someone expresses his or her discomfort about it, but bring it to the attention of the men present and ask for a change of tone and/or vocabulary.
- So-called (old) men's jokes with a jovial, usually sexualised humour, as well as sexualised remarks in both male and gender-mixed rounds, are not “trivial offences” but forms of sexual harassment that should be taken very seriously.
- Together with your colleagues and staff, create an appreciative and welcoming culture of discussion and cooperation so that women and men feel equally included.
- Initiate gender dialogues with colleagues and staff to share different perceptions and agree on appropriate ways of dealing with them.



“I stand behind my female staff and colleagues when their competence is ignored, disregarded, or questioned”

- Intervene if women’s competencies are ignored or disregarded in conversations or meetings – even if the women concerned are not present.
- Address and stop men repeating or passing off as their thoughts or ideas what women have previously said.
- Present your female employee or colleague as a responsible, competent person to customers, suppliers, or colleagues or, if necessary, point this out in a corrective manner.

“I make sure that women’s speeches are heard and taken up equally in meetings”

- Keep a speaking list and give women an equal share of contributions.
- If necessary, limit speaking times so that everyone has the same (maximum) speaking time.
- Make sure that women’s speeches are not interrupted and are allowed to finish.
- Introduce women as experts and responsible persons to all meeting participants.
- If there are any questions to you, refer them to the respective (female) expert.

“I make sure that women are integrated into the conversation in all-male meetings”

- Introduce your female colleagues or co-workers.
- Choose a topic that makes it easy for women to enter and connect to the conversation.
- Use words, gestures, and behaviour to show that women are welcome.



**“I address my male
colleagues when they
make sexist remarks”**





SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING WOMEN

SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING WOMEN IS ESSENTIAL

Supporting and promoting women is perceived as crucial by most male managers. Many are already committed and engaged in creating positive change. The practices below offer you concrete ideas in how to support and promote women in different ways.



“I approach suitable women directly to apply for a management position”

- Women are often perceived as more reserved than men and prefer being approached directly for professional opportunities.
- Women tend to receive less affirmation and support in their everyday work than men. This can lead them to doubt their suitability for a leadership position. Confirmation and encouragement can be helpful here.
- Women tend to plan their career or professional development less stringently than men, so that a leadership position may not be their primary focus.

“I encourage female employees to participate in the leadership development program”

- In the sense of the “Barcelona Model” - in reference to the well-known professional football club – it makes sense to train your own junior staff and ensure that they do not leave the company.
- Give potential female managers the confidence at an early stage that they have the skills and the potential for a management position.
- Keep a conscious eye on the potential of your female employees.
- Be aware that quiet or reserved women can also have leadership qualities and ambitions.
- Clarify the needs of your employees and include their life circumstances outside of work.

“In my assessments, I take into account that women often choose different words or express themselves more carefully than men”

- Men often present themselves and their achievements more offensively than women and are more likely to be heard – reflect on these differences and disregard them when assessing performance.
- Ambition, careerism, and assertiveness, for example, are considered masculine attributes and are associated with men accordingly – be aware of possible other forms of expression and expressions of ambition by women and include them equally.
- No one is immune to implicit biases, which usually go hand in hand with gender stereotypes and prejudices – be aware of this, reflect and change your assessments and behaviour.





**“I approach suitable women
directly when looking
for candidates for a
management position”**





“I make myself available as a mentor for women as (junior) managers”

- Whether with or without an official mentoring program, you can support women as a mentor or sponsor.
- Meet at eye level and also learn from your mentees.
- Communicate your commitment openly within the company – and encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Establish supportive contacts even beyond your own organisational boundaries.
- Open up your own networks (both professional and technical) and introduce your mentees to them.

“I offer prestigious, challenging, and interesting tasks to one of the women in my team to help her gain more visibility, recognition and notoriety”

- Allow women space in committees and meetings to give them a stage for more visibility and transparency.
- Give women responsible and challenging tasks to give them opportunities to experiment and take responsibility.
- Let women take over negotiations with customers and suppliers – and pass on any queries directed at you to your colleague or employee.
- Ask women to give presentations.
- Encourage and inspire women to be confident in contributing their skills.

“I try to avoid ‘men-only’ teams, for example, by specifically looking for suitable women”

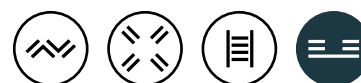
- Even if the percentage of women is low in management floors and male-dominated companies, be on the lookout for suitable women for project teams, management teams, meeting rounds, etc.
- Encourage and offer your women employees places on boards and committees.
- Keep an eye on your female employees’ potential and give newcomers and career changers a chance – because “a new broom sweeps clean.”
- Encourage your colleagues to also look for suitable women and avoid “men-only” teams.



FACILITATING WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

RECOGNISE AND ENABLE CARE WORK BY WOMEN AND MEN

Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. A central reason for this is that women are still mainly responsible for so-called “care work”, i.e., family work. This added responsibility impacts employment and career development for women – the same applies to men who are primary caregivers or care workers. Support, flexibility and understanding are needed here. The following gender-inclusive leadership practices offer you concrete possibilities for action in your everyday leadership and help to contribute to better work-life integration.



“I enable and promote mobile working and home office in my area of responsibility”

- Ensure that what is taken for granted during the pandemic is maintained afterwards.
- Make sure that both women and men (with and without children) can work from home equally.
- Use more trust and care in your leadership – instead of control and pressure.
- Be aware that women and men in leadership positions work full time, but the partners of the men are predominantly part-time. At the same time, the partners of the women are also employed full time – so women in leadership positions are more dependent on flexible working hours and locations than men.
- Even if your own life and work routine allow for presence and full-time work, put yourself in the position of those primarily responsible for family tasks. Ask them about their needs, and let them describe their everyday lives to you. Adapt new ways of thinking and propose mutual solutions with your employees for professional disadvantages that might arise with the responsibility of care work.
- Set a good example and work (temporarily) outside the office.

“I enable and encourage part-time and job sharing in my area of responsibility”

- Establish part-time work as a matter of course for all employees – because it is not only mothers and fathers who want work-life integration.
- Offer part-time work not only to mothers but also to fathers.
- Offer job sharing to both women and men.
- Create job sharing as pilot projects and communicate them in your management circles as good examples worth imitating.
- Consider whether part-time work by both women and men can be included as a performance criteria for career development. This way, competencies acquired outside the workplace are valued. Many employees acquire competencies and skills that can also be significant for the job (e.g. organisational talent, flexibility, patience). These skills could be considered when the employee is seeking career development.
- Make part-time and job sharing in management positions the (new) norm.
- Do not misinterpret part-time requests as a lack of career ambition.
- Free yourself, your clients and stakeholders from the belief that part-time work is impossible and unreasonable and is only done by lazy and unambitious people. This belief is entirely unfounded – on the contrary, many part-time employees are especially efficient and creative.



**“I reduce my own workload
for better work-life integration
and encourage colleagues to
do the same”**





“I encourage men to also work part-time”

- For establishing part-time work as a matter of course, you need to have more men working part-time within your organisation. As the overwhelming majority of men work full-time – and this is particularly true for management positions – the desire and the need to work part-time are often regarded as “women’s problems”.
- Proactively offer part-time options in career development talks with men and especially with young fathers.
- Reassure your team that part-time work is not an obstacle to further career development.
- Initiate discussions on part-time work. What are men’s desires and needs? What are they afraid of? And how do women perceive the situation?
- Encourage your colleagues within management to increasingly work part-time.
- Promote more part-time work for men in management meetings and ask your colleagues to do the same.
- Participate in developing company-wide campaigns, measures and regulations to increase the proportion of men working part-time.

“I make sure that meetings end in such a way that mothers and fathers can pick up their children from daycare and look after them.”

- In particular, schedule recurring appointments within the opening hours of daycare centres and schools.
- Set a good example and consistently ask to reschedule meetings outside the opening hours of daycare centres and schools to which you are invited.
- Advise facilitators and participants to keep to the scheduled end of the meeting – so that parents do not have to leave the meeting in a hurry.
- Also, try to avoid “emergency meetings” in the evening hours – check the (supposed) urgency if necessary.

“I do not answer emails and phone calls after hours and/or during holidays (if possible) – and I do not expect my staff to do so”

- Even if you don’t always succeed, try to stick to the email- and phone-free times.
- Motivate your staff to do the same.
- Make it clear to your employees (from time to time) that you do not expect them to respond to emails for example, during non-working hours – and thus contribute to a changing work culture by challenging “permanent accessibility”.
- In case of home office and/or flexible working hours, clearly communicate and make it understood when each person has “closing time” and must leave the meeting.
- Critically question in the team and management circle the necessity and belief principle of “permanent accessibility” – and critically examine “urgencies”.

“I reduce my own workload for better work-life integration and encourage colleagues to do the same”

- Be a role model and be openly visible as a role model.
- Point out that a family-friendly corporate culture is a valuable asset that massively increases attractiveness as an employer and contributes to improved recruitment and staff retention.
- Report on your experiences, advantages, and disadvantages, as well as motivation and hurdles.
- If possible, keep to your reduced working hours.
- Contribute to establishing job percentages below the 100 percent norm in management positions.
- Motivate others to do the same.

Meaning of Work-Life Integration

We have deliberately chosen not to use the term “work and family integration” because it is often associated with being a problem of women only. This means that “private life” is narrowed down to “family”, and part-time work due to voluntary work, sport, or hobbies does not have the same relevance. Introducing the notion of “work-life integration” we want to make it clear that our lives consist of gainful employment *and* private life – which not only need to be reconciled with each other but also that the goal is a corporate culture in which both spheres are valued and accepted.

LEADERS
FOR
EQUALITY

With “Leaders for Equality” our focus is on male leaders as relevant actors for gender equality.

“Leaders for Equality” is financially supported by the Federal Office for Gender Equality in accordance with the Gender Equality Act.

Graphic Design: Isabelle Meyer | meyer Müller.ch
Photos: iStock, Adobe Stock, Unsplash



University of St.Gallen

Contact

Prof. Dr. Julia Nentwich
Dr. Gabriele Schambach
Dr. Nilima Chowdhury
University of St.Gallen
Research Institute for Organizational Psychology
Girtannerstr. 6, CH-9010 St.Gallen
T: +41 (0)71 224 26 38
E: leaders4equality@unisg.ch
www.leaders4equality.ch