



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.

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



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