



**Smart Specialisation
Business Needs in
Higher Level Skills**

CASE STUDY

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Residential Workshop

Wednesday 9th - Thursday 10th November 2022

Sands Resort, Newquay, Cornwall

Introduction & Overview

The aim of this activity was to explore the question: "How to attract and retain women in senior leadership?"

This was a two day residential workshop event, based at a hotel in Cornwall.

Offered by invitation only, the intended audience was SMEs, micro businesses and sole traders operating in C&IoS who have, or wish to have, gender balance within their senior leadership team.

Through this event's engagement with small and medium size enterprises we aimed to identify opportunities, skills and training gaps that may help to address the issue.

Aims

The event was designed to examine the challenges & issues in seeking, engaging and sustaining the often overlooked, higher level skills that professional women offer in senior management roles, particularly in specialist careers.

Over 24 hours, the topic was explored through talks, interactive workshops, discussion and networking opportunities.

We examined potential solutions for making lasting changes in businesses, and ways to resolve current employment issues whilst improving the diversity of leadership teams.

Outcomes

Event Activity:

- Delegates were presented with four talks and engaged in four interactive sessions across the two days. Each session included feedback, Q&A & discussion time.
- Networking opportunities were also key to the programme. Some were more structured, such as 'table discussion' sessions. Others more fluid such as networking lunches, group dinner and networking drinks.



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- Delegates were provided with an Information Booklet and branded notebook for use at the event. Delegate name tags and 'Business Profile' cards were also provided to aid introductions and ice-breaking.

One of the most positive, yet intangible outcome, was the networking opportunities offered to the delegates. Time away from day-to-day work of running their businesses, allowing space to think and problem solve was also a notable outcome. Both of these came out strongly in feedback and represent potentially the more positive ongoing benefits and outcomes for delegates and also great opportunity for future development.

Impact

Quantitative measures of success

Attendance:

- The event was attended by 30 delegates. Our initial target was for 20 so this represents highly positive attendance figures. The group represented a wide range of businesses across Cornwall, including limited companies and startups/microbusinesses/sole traders
- We welcomed two guest speakers. A third guest speaker unfortunately had to decline due to ill health on the day
- The event was supported by 10 members of Academic and Professional services staff from the University of Exeter.

Qualitative measures of success

The event received positive as well as constructive feedback from delegates & staff, gathered both at the event and posted on social media such as LinkedIn as sampled below:

I had an amazing time at the Women in Leadership Residential organised by the University of Exeter. So inspiring to be in a room full of female leaders discussing shared leadership, the importance of role models and representation, ...see mor



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Fantastic and inspirational first speaker at the Women in Leadership residential discussing different leadership models - particularly shared leadership models Carl Rowlinson 🍷



I'm back from the best networking event I've ever been to: the Women in Leadership Residential hosted by [University of Exeter](#). It was so good, I didn't take any photos or even look at my phone.

The event has really got me thinking about gender and leadership, and how we can do better, and SHOULD do better, to make work positive and productive for everyone. We have a huge amount of unconscious bias, we judge people without even knowing, and we also exclude people without knowing too. Even I'm guilty of it.

Lets rethink who we are, who our employees are, and what we want our future to be. Lets not wait the 267 years it will take to see gender equality at work (actual stats based on our current state of play) and instead accelerate positive change through positive leadership.

Oh and men, get involved! Gender issues affect everyone, and a levelled playing field will improve all of our lives. You hold the power, so it's really important you're present, aware and proactive.



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Event Photography

Arrival: Welcome Pack & Profile Cards Guest Speaker: My Story - A Woman in Politics



Table Discussion: 'Delegate Ambitions'



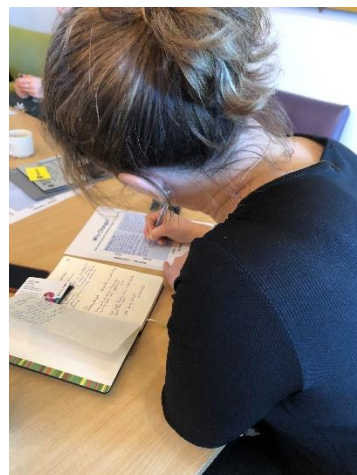
Thought Leader Talk: Evaluate your Culture



Interactive Session: Leadership Re-imagined



Table Workgroup: 'Making a Change'



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Conclusion & Next Steps

Overall the event was a great success and achieved the main aim of exploring the inherent problems in and potential practical solutions towards achieving great gender balance within senior management teams.

Key next steps would be to harness this starting point and allow for further development of the invaluable networks that started at this event, for example establishing a Southwest SMEs LinkedIn Group. This would allow businesses to continue the conversation, share insights, ideas and best practice around working towards achieving more women in senior management roles.

This could represent ongoing benefits, not only for those delegates present at the event, but also their wider networks, such as fellow businesses, customers and stakeholder. This also offers ongoing benefit to the University of Exeter Business School, representing legacy benefits beyond the lifespan of the SS-HLS Project.



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