



Future-Based Consultancy & Solutions

Female employment and equal opportunity
*Questions for gender specialists we'll entitle you today
to introduce the diversity management by the same way*

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Daniel C. Renson, founder-partner, editor

« Le sexisme obtient une grande dis », titre *Le Soir* (Belgium) qui reprend une étude de l'ULB sur la réussite scolaire par rapport au sexe. Les filles réussissent mieux tant dans le cycle scolaire inférieur qu'à l'université. Par contre, elles sont 14 pc à exercer comme professeurs dans les universités belges. Pour arriver à la parité au sein de l'ULB, il faudrait 200 ans avec le système actuel, selon les chercheurs. Un système sans doute à revoir.

Wage Gap Narrows Between The Sexes

NEW YORK - The gap between men's and women's wages has narrowed to the closest on record. The reason for the change is that the median full-time female worker received a 5% weekly pay raise last year, while her male counterpart's pay rose only 1.3%, which was below the inflation rate of 2%. However, women's pay still lags behind men's, with women full-time workers earning 77.5% of what male workers earn. (The Career News, The Latest News, Tips and Tools for Your Career, March 3, 2003)

Introduction

Women represent more than half of the world population. But that isn't the case in the jobs markets. Especially when we are looking at some areas in the world. However, in the more economically advanced countries (Europe -mainly the Scandinavian area, USA, UK, ...), the participation of women has significantly changed the labor force structure. In UK, it seems that women represent largely more than 50%. But they are still concentrated in the low levels (catering, clerical occupations) and poorly represented in areas such as sciences, technologies, informatics and management.

Is that enough to explain the wage gap ?
And many other matters ?
We'll investigate that matter through a set of questions.
We'll also talk about the equal opportunity and discuss the difference (if any) in between that first concept and the **diversity management**. It focuses on all the differences and suggests to take advantage of them !

18 questions to investigate the matter with you ...

Only 18 questions for making the « tour » ?

Well, we know that it isn't enough AND we won't deliver any answers at this time. We'll tell you more at the end.

- 1- do you see any improvement of the women position in the job market ?
- 2- are women now gaining more top paying jobs ?
- 3- do you believe that women are entering equally all professions ? e.g. it seems that they aren't progressing in more technically oriented sectors ...
- 4- would it be due to their usual "cultural education" (historically-based education and according Simone De Beauvoir's quote "*on ne naît pas femme, on le devient*") ?

5- the actual scholar system has arranged for attendance with the boys and they are doing better than their companions ! What do you conclude ?

6- what would be the issues in the job market in the next 10 years with more young women in more professional fields ?

7- Scandinavian countries are supporting the working women for many years already (equality of pay and better childcare -available to women and men) but the job market is still segregated in terms of "men's jobs" and "women's jobs". Do you believe that it is due to the related "child" problem ;

• the desire to combine family and career (that is demanding for many work hours and sacrifices)

• "antique" view as far as business experiences are concerned (women aren't exposed to all a company's operations)

• In some other words, can we also say that it is a consequence of the actual "balance" of roles : family, work and personal development ?

8- does that situation explain the relative greater representation (all levels -low and medium high) in the public administration as the governments have to apply equal opportunities laws and rules + states bodies privileges, etc. ?

9- some business areas become "feminized" ; communication, HR, accounting, sales in some sectors, low and medium education. How do you consider these important inroads ? (at the family set-up, the professional level in large companies or in smaller entities and, finally, in their own enterprises)

10- how do women reveal themselves with the Internet ? (because of their compromising situation "in between home and work" that is limiting their professional socialization. Many studies have been recently conducted. They are revealing new behaviors)

11- men and women have their own preferences and "skills" : do you believe that a mix of these typical skills could give significant advantages to companies that are supporting communities of practices made of mixed genders practices ?



12- let's continue with an other consideration : do you believe that women have to comply with the "male model" ?
 13- what's your opinion about the following statement : "most of the time, women aren't challenging men and / or aiming at quick career progress because they are concerned about their real relevant experience for moving on !" (the way men and women are self-perceiving themselves is very different).

14- One more opinion : men are sometimes encouraged at more sensitivity ... women should learn from men to gain more self-confidence ...

Is it something you do agree with ?

15- do you believe that "some" lack of self-confidence could be one of the reason that is limiting the women career ? Or what should they do differently ?

16- are the traditionally male-dominated practices to be considered as barriers to women tomorrow's working environment ? E.g. : army, high educational administration posts, informatics, etc ...

17- is **diversity management** an alternative to equal opportunities? Semantics or material substance difference? Social justice or along a new management hype and / or style ?

18- what practice of equal opportunity **in your working environment** could you talk about ?

And describe precisely ?

As already said, we won't deliver answers at this time : more could be made available with your participation.

May we invite you to contribute for participatively going further ...

Maybe will it also be a good opportunity to meet for an in-depth discussion. The matter is going beyond the gender "divide". Origins are part of the concern as well ...

Diversity and equality

Equal opportunity is a generally well known concept that recognizes the individual skills for allowing an equal access to all what constitutes his / her environment.

In some other words, equal opportunity exists when individuals with similar abilities deliver similar results after the completion of a similar work amount. Equality of outcome is the final criteria.

That approach has now more audience as it emphasizes the discrimination groups are suffering from in various domains : education, housing, employment, wages, etc.

Solutions brought by the experts, politicians, sociologists and others are evidencing the barriers to entry elimination and support to more "diversified" entrepreneurs.

In the most economically advanced countries, public administrations and progressive enterprises, equal opportunity has been endorsed.

However, the progress of women's presence at the management senior level is still slow.

And we may not forget several other groups, such as people speaking foreign languages, representatives of small ethnics groups or of different religious practices, elderly and / or disable people, individuals with other sexual orientations, etc.

Since the end of the '80ties, in USA, the diversity management / strategy says that the workforce regroups diverse populations of people.

It requires the design of workplace diversity programs offering equitable opportunities to all groups of people as already listed in the preceding paragraph.

As a matter of consequence, workforces are now much more diverse.

Diversity consists of visible and non-visible differences which will include factors such as sex, age, background, race, ability and disability (with its over-exercised positive counterpart). All these characteristics are contributing to the personality and work style.

Culture is often evocated and related to particular skills, typical ingenuity and humor.

All together, they force CEOs and Human Resources executives to reconsider the human capital phenomenon and admit that people are much more participating with an enterprise project than simply work !

Harnessing differences is contributing to the creation of a productive environment in which everybody feels valued.

When talents are fully utilized, organizational goals are met! Diversity management could be applied to our problematic : it will also facilitate the progress of an enterprise with optimized contributions of both genders, at least, and could be considered as an alternative to the equal opportunities concepts and principles because of the deep look at the very delicate relationship problem in between men and women.

Why not with a larger diversification : the solely gender-related perspective moves to another one which focuses on all employees.

Diversity management recognizes also individuals with different needs requiring different kinds of help to succeed.

Short bibliography : Understanding and Managing Diversity, 3d edition, E. Carol Harvey, M. June Allard. Editor : Upper Saddle River, New-Jersey. Pearson Education / Prentice Hall, 2005.

Equal opportunity	Diversity management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is more externally driven (laws and groups of pressure) - men and women have to be treated the same ! - other groups such as minorities have to be offered equitable opportunities ! <p>It's also a matter of numbers : women do represent more than fifty percent of the world population. Assimilation of the other groups is contributing to more social cohesion as they could counts up to 15 to 20 % of the population in some countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is internally and externally driven : it represents a sound change for more (sustained) progresses with more diversified skills contributing to innovative defendable market positions ; - reveals the somewhat forgotten difference but it won't reach its target without a solid organizational culture that will catalyze the collaborating activities.

**This article is also associated to the
DR. Douglas S. Rebne's
"View from the North Atlantic" :**

"Female employment and equal opportunity: youthful (California) lesson".

The list of Douglas S. Rebne's "Views" have been made available in the "America" rubric of the "News" section.

The "Resources" section contains some other documents related to that subject.

Associated concepts or tags :

Diversity and diversity management,
Equal opportunity,
Female employment.

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