

ARE YOU INCLUSIVE ENOUGH?



Each year, March 8th serves as an occasion to ask ourselves if we are doing enough to be really inclusive for women in our organizations.

This year, we're hearing a lot about "opting out", which leads me to think we can still improve management practices and company cultures for women (and men!).

"Opting out" refers to women leaving their careers to become full-time mothers or take up "alternative work" in pursuit of different personal and professional goals.

So, is this a real choice, or a decision forced upon them? Whatever the answer, the role of an organization is to create an environment that allows women who want to leave to do so, and create the right conditions for those wanting to stay to find their way and maintain a good balance in their careers.

How? I don't have all the answers, but here is some food for thought:

Batoul Hassoun is the founder and head of The Salmon Consulting, part of H/Advisors Havas Paris.



1 Safe spaces... and safe moments

Is it possible for women in your organization to share their questions and their doubts in a (physical or digital) space without judgement? How can you make that possible?

Safe spaces could be part of the solution. Creating an internal Women's Club has proven to be efficient for many and is something H/Advisors is embracing this year.

Give it a try. In addition to creating safe spaces, what about imagining different career paths in your organization?

To dig into this idea, I highly recommend *The 100-year life* (a book from Lynda Gratton and Andrew J. Scott) that suggests different ways to think about life in the age of longevity.

That means shifting from a three-stage approach (education, work, retirement) to a less linear life, including what I would call "safe moments" to take care of kids, go back to school again or simply take a break before returning to work with energy and fresh ideas.

2 Self confidence

I recently saw the results of a job postings study that showed the majority of applications received during the 2 first weeks were from men. Women's applications only really started to come in during the 3rd week.

Why? Because a woman will first wonder if she is up to the job, and if it is the right time to change. She will then discuss with her partner, and only then set about writing the perfect application letter. All those steps require time!

This highlights how levels of self-confidence are definitely not the same between genders.

How can we improve things here? First, of course, by waiting before moving to the interview phase in the recruitment process. More profoundly, we need to do more to help women gain in self-confidence.

Have you tried to implement mentoring programs for women in your organization? I've mentored 3 (great) women and their feedback is highly encouraging.

3 Flexibility and autonomy

Another expression I've heard a lot this year is the "mental load". Some call it the "thinking work" i.e always having to remember what's coming up, what needs to be done next, and so on.

Studies have shown that this mental load is heaviest on the woman's side.

To help them deal with it, organizations can provide women with flexibility and autonomy, something they've long been asking for.

Is your organization offering enough flexibility and autonomy? It's a top requirement now for the youngest generations, both men and women, and will feature as a strong draw for you as an employer.

Get in there ahead of your competitors if you want to attract the best talent.

