



International Women's Day

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“
If you fix a problem
from a woman's
perspective, then
you fix it for
everyone

– *Baroness Patricia Hollis*

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In the world of diversity and inclusion, women are often viewed as another minority. But women represent over 50% of society. They should enjoy equal representation and equal treatment in all aspects of their lives, including in the workplace. Yet, according to Fortune magazine, women make up barely 25% of board members and as the gender pay gap analysis shows, women's earning power remains around 30% lower than that of men – this is shocking especially as it comes half a century after most countries implemented legislation on equal pay.

The law may have changed but employer behaviour has failed to adapt. Making positive change happen needs women to be empowered. But it remains the case that most corporate leaders are men. Making positive change also requires allyship from men in positions of power. Change will take place much quicker when men start to talk about women's rights and to take those rights seriously.

As a gay man, I have a lived experience of prejudice and discrimination. I know that so much human potential is wasted when we treat people differently because of their gender, race, or sexuality. I also know from experience that empowering all people – particularly women – and unleashing that human potential makes good business sense. Societies where women are held back are not only less progressive, but they are also less prosperous. Countries which push women's right to the fore – such as Norway, Sweden, Canada, New Zealand – are also ranked among the best places to live and work.

As a business leader, I want to create a great place to work. That is why women's representation matters. When I became CEO in 2021, I set myself the goal of increasing female representation across the whole workforce, particularly in the senior leadership team. In 2021, women accounted for 36% of our senior leadership team. Today, that number is 47% and we will reach equity by the end of the year. What difference does that make?

As my old friend and women's rights campaigner, the late Baroness Patricia Hollis, always used to tell me: if you fix a problem from a woman's perspective, then you fix it for everyone. Because women have more in common with other marginalised groups their perspective is more inclusive. That is why it makes sense to put women in positions where they can fix problems and make decisions. As senior role models, they transform the workplace culture and help to build female retention. Senior women will improve the way the business is run and improve its impact on wider society – not by thinking better than men, but just by thinking differently. It's the diversity of thought that leads to better decisions, and good decisions make good businesses. That's why women's empowerment and inclusion is so important to all businesses and at all levels of the organisation.

