

Chapter 3:

Recruitment

Strategies for an inclusive and rigorous interview and selection process

Recruitment is a critical component of an organisation's gender diversity strategy. Leading organisations in the mining, utilities and construction industries recognise this and now use the recruitment process to address negative perceptions about the industries.

These same organisations ensure they have trained and diverse recruitment teams with representation of men and women at each stage of the cycle from information sessions to interviews and networking sessions. This enables these organisations to address the risk of informal evaluation and selection methods which favour men over women.

Recruiters are trained to consider how candidates with a diverse range of experiences can transfer their skills to jobs in male-dominated industries. They look more laterally at skills and experiences and focus on an applicant's ability to learn the required technical skills on the job.

A candidate's experience during the recruitment process is a key determinant of whether they will accept a role with an organisation. Leading organisations therefore recognise the benefits of making the process a positive experience for all candidates.



Leading organisations are using recruitment strategies to:

- Broaden the capabilities required for non-traditional roles, which in turn, increases the pool of potential candidates.
- Establish an inclusive and rigorous interview and selection method which is based on genuine meritocracy.

The following key points provide examples of recruitment strategies used in male-dominated industries in Australia and internationally.

1. Diverse and trained recruitment teams using merit based processes:

- **Establish recruitment targets for women, both shortlisting and interview targets** and explain the process and rationale to all employees.
- **Share targets with recruitment and labour suppliers** and encourage them to partner to achieve these targets.
- **Monitor the composition of recruiting teams** and ensure they are gender diverse and include women from non-traditional roles.
- **Train recruiters to recognise stereotypes and unconscious bias** about the sort of work women can do and the myths about women in non-traditional roles.
- **Adhere to a documented, transparent and standard recruitment process focused on meritocracy** from the resumé screening phase through to final offers.
- **Offer women the opportunity to display their skills** during the recruitment process instead of relying solely on interview questions.
- **Centrally track women candidates** and the effectiveness of attraction strategies to reach them.

2. Broaden capabilities and pool potential candidates:

- **Broaden the skills and experience required** for non-traditional roles to increase the number of potential candidates.
- **Expand the pool of potential candidates** for non-traditional roles and include local women, older women, women with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- **Establish leadership capabilities** that focus on the capabilities and skills that are genuinely required to lead in these industries.
- **Support women to re-enter the industry or to move to non-traditional roles** after periods of extended leave or time in corporate roles within the organisation.

3. Interaction with candidates to achieve a positive recruitment experience:

- **Obtain feedback from women applicants at each stage of the recruitment process** and use this process to create a positive experience for applicants.
- **Provide feedback to all candidates who request it** to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Offer an induction program and buddy system** that starts from the job offer stage and assists women to form relationships, build networks and transition successfully to the organisation.

1. Diverse and trained recruitment teams using merit based processes



Employees involved in the recruitment process are often the first face-to-face contact for the potential candidate. As a result, their language and behaviour sends a strong signal about the culture and values of the organisation. The experience the candidate has during the recruitment process will be a key determinant of whether they will accept a role with an organisation.

The recruitment process is not only an opportunity to assess and select future employees. It is also an opportunity to 'sell' the organisation and the opportunities available to women in non-traditional roles. Recruiters will be most effective if they:

- Adhere to a recruitment process that uses fair and grounded criteria, instead of a reliance on subjective and informal judgments of 'fit'.
- Are cognisant of any stereotypes or bias they have about female candidates, the work they can do and their potential for a successful career in a male-dominated industry.
- Highlight the strategies that the organisation is implementing to address the perceptions female candidates may have about the culture of the industry.

Recruiters represent the 'face' of the organisation and their language and behaviour send a strong signal about the culture and values of the organisation.

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to recruit women to non-traditional roles:

Establish recruitment targets for women, both shortlisting and interview targets

Leading organisations recognise the need to have targets at all stages of the recruitment process including shortlisting, interview and selection. The process is based on merit and acknowledges that targets are needed to ensure more female candidates are included in the process and there is a broader pool to choose the 'right person for the role'.

Leading organisations explain the process and rationale for establishing targets with all employees, both men and women, to address any perception that targets unfairly advantage or disadvantage women.

Share targets with recruitment and labour suppliers

Leading organisations share their targets with recruitment firms and labour suppliers and encourage them to partner to achieve these targets. Some organisations overseas are more directive giving external partners KPIs for their component of the recruitment process, including the sourcing and shortlisting of candidates.

Monitor the composition of recruiting teams

Recruitment teams usually involve employees from Human Resources and line management roles. Organisations recognise it is important for the team to be gender diverse and include women from non-traditional roles.

This diversity increases the likelihood of objective assessment during the selection process. It can also provide a more positive experience to female candidates participating in the interview process.

Train recruiters to recognise stereotypes and unconscious bias

Leading organisations train recruiters to recognise potential stereotypes and biases that can emerge during the recruitment process and impede consideration of a diverse range of candidates. These myths include the sort of work women can do and the ability of women to be successful in non-traditional roles.

These organisations are also training recruitment teams in the broad range of experiences that can demonstrate the competencies being sought. They focus on selection process using fair and grounded criteria, instead of a reliance on subjective and informal judgments of 'fit'.

Adhere to a documented, transparent and standard recruitment process focused on meritocracy

Leading organisations hold recruitment teams accountable for following a standard recruitment approach, from the resumé screening phase through to final offers. They have multiple people review applications so that resúmes are not screened by just one person. Some organisations overseas are also removing names from all cover letters and resumes to address any potential bias.

Offer women the opportunity to display their skills

Some organisations have introduced greater objectivity in the recruitment process by allowing women to do a practical test, demonstration or job trial. In addition to talking about their experience, women are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and to address any perception they may 'struggle' with the physical aspects of the role.

Centrally track women candidates

Organisations overseas are assessing the effectiveness of their attraction and recruitment strategies. They track the progress of female candidates through each stage of the process. They assess the effectiveness by monitoring the number of women who applied, were interviewed, received offers and finally, accepted non-traditional roles. This enables organisations to consider if existing recruitment mechanisms are delivering a diverse workforce.

Some good industry examples include:

- An **energy company** implemented a process where all selections and appointments must be approved by a panel of senior managers. Justifications are required if women are not on the shortlist of candidates. In addition, where there are female candidates, an explanation is required if a woman is not successful in securing the role.
- Another **energy company** has a target to increase the number of women in senior roles by 15% from the previous year. The recruiters ensure there is at least one woman on every interview panel and at least one female candidate on every shortlist.
- A **mining company** has a target of a minimum of 30% of women in the final interview stage of the recruitment process. A rigorous explanation needs to be provided if this 30% is not achieved.
- A **construction company** has established and communicated a target of recruiting 50% women for their graduate program.
- Another **construction company** altered the graduate recruitment process by changing the language from being too 'male-oriented'. This included re-developing the selection criteria, making the group assessment process more inclusive, including women on the panels, and training assessors in bias and stereotypes.
- A **mining company** considers closely every resumé from a female candidate for every job. There is a concerted effort to avoid unconscious bias and an acknowledgement that women do not always highlight their full breadth of skills and experiences.
- A **construction company** changed their recruitment practices to focus on merit. This process now includes more detailed questioning in interviews, looking at achievement and potential for ongoing development and having both men and women on the selection panel.

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- Some **engineering companies in the UK** have introduced greater objectivity by allowing women applying for science, engineering and technology occupations (SET) to do a practical test, demonstration or a job trial. In this way, in addition to talking about their experience, women have an opportunity to show their skills and experience in these SET occupations.

Share your views...

Share your views on which recruitment strategies have worked, and which ones haven't. We also hope you will share any other ideas you have to recruit women in these industries.

Please click on the hard hat to go to the discussion area of the toolkit.



2. Broaden capabilities and pool of potential candidates



There is a skills shortage in Australia and many organisations are experiencing difficulty filling key positions. One of the reasons is that many organisations narrow their potential recruitment pool by requiring a sequence of specific skills and experiences rather than considering transferable skills and demonstrated competencies.

Leading organisations train their recruitment teams to consider how candidates with a diverse range of experiences may be able to transfer their skills to non-traditional roles. They value applicants who have mastered skills in other industries, shown ability to learn quickly and shown significant growth in the previous career path.

To broaden the pool of potential candidates for non-traditional roles, organisations must:

- Review the skills and capabilities that are genuinely required to be successful in a role and broaden the pool of potential candidates accordingly.
- Develop recruitment strategies to attract pools of talent that may not have been accessed previously, including older women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Support women to return to work from extended periods out of the workforce.

Organisations need to broaden their potential recruitment pool by considering transferable skills and demonstrated competencies.

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to recruit women to non-traditional roles:

Broaden the skills and experience required

Many industries have narrowed their potential pool of candidates for non-traditional roles by requiring a sequence of specific experiences rather than considering transferable skills and demonstrated competencies.

Leading organisations consider how candidates with a diverse range of experiences may be able to transfer their skills to technical roles in male-dominated industries. They look more laterally at skills and experiences and focus on an applicant's ability to quickly learn the required technical skills on the job.

Organisations can work with recruitment firms and labour suppliers to encourage candidates who might not necessarily be seeking employment in non-traditional industries to apply.

Establish leadership capabilities

Many leaders within technical industries have progressed to senior levels through tenure, versus demonstrated leadership skills. The risk is that while they have deep technical skills, they do not have the capabilities to be successful leaders.

Some organisations are focused on developing leadership capability frameworks which focus on the skills that are actually required to lead in these industries. These organisations acknowledge that leadership capabilities are not 'masculine' or 'feminine' and are instead, more inclusive of a broader range of experience. They also acknowledge that leadership experience from other industries may be transferable to their organisation.

Expand the pool of potential candidates

Some organisations acknowledge that there are pools of potential candidates for non-traditional roles that are currently largely untapped. These include local women, older women, women with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Many region-based organisations often train and provide targeted employment opportunities for both male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to work in the industry. This can help provide stable regional workforces.

Some organisations overseas actively acknowledge that Indigenous women have the primary relationship with the land and it is particularly important to include them as employees.

A few organisations are also proactively targeting older women for non-traditional roles including apprenticeship programs. These organisations recognise the benefits of employing older workers, many of whom are currently underutilised and are actively seeking career opportunities.

Another strategy is to recruit and train local women to address a specific business need. For example, some organisations are developing specific marketing programs to target mothers who are seeking flexible work hours. These women can help maintain continuity in business operations while full time employees take breaks.

Support women to re-enter the industry or to move to non-traditional roles

Some organisations overseas have recognised the benefits of attracting women to return to their organisation after periods of extended leave.

These organisations offer 'return to work' programs that provide a means for women to transition into the workforce and to gradually rebuild their confidence, get up-to-date on recent developments and/or become skilled in new areas of work.

Some organisations are also recruiting within their organisation by focusing on women who are currently employed in corporate roles. These women may be interested in moving to non-traditional roles and are provided with the training and mentoring needed to ensure a successful transition to the technical role.

Some good industry examples include:

- **Rio Tinto** holds an annual Roebourne Women's Day. The aim is for 70 women from across the community, government and industry to gather to discuss ideas aimed at encouraging Indigenous women to gain employment in the resources sector.
http://www.riotintoironore.com/documents/Milli_Milli_Edition30.pdf
- **Newmont Mining** identified a large loss of production time occurring while fulltime equipment operators on twelve hour shifts took morning tea and lunch breaks. This was equating to thousands of tonnes of ore not being moved. The management team decided to train and employ local women, who were looking for work between 9am and 2pm, to relieve the fulltime operators.
http://www.thisisourstory.com.au/our-stories_boddington-hot-seaters.aspx
- A **construction company** is conducting a career audit to challenge the notion that there is only 'one way' of getting into a senior management position. The aim of the audit is to highlight that there are many career paths that can result in developing successful leaders.
- A **mining company** actively approaches women in administrative roles to consider moving to non-traditional roles. The women are supported by a technical supervisor and mentor.
- A **mining company** reviewed recruitment and promotion procedures, including competency frameworks, which take into account skills and experience acquired outside of the workplace. They ensure only relevant factors are included in recruitment decisions and do not focus on length of service, as this can indirectly discriminate against women.

Examples from other male-dominated industries include:

- The **Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force** recommended (recommendations 6 and 7) broadening the talent pool from which leadership is drawn. It is recommended that each Service Chief should identify and implement a target aimed at broadening the work background of people available to enter into leadership positions. The aim is to build flexibility into the career model, time in rank provisions, timing of and access to 'career gates' and career pathways, to enable more flexibility in career progression. This includes developing, on request, longer term career plans (ie more than 5 years) for personnel to allow for different life stages and changing requirements.
<http://defencereview.humanrights.gov.au/>

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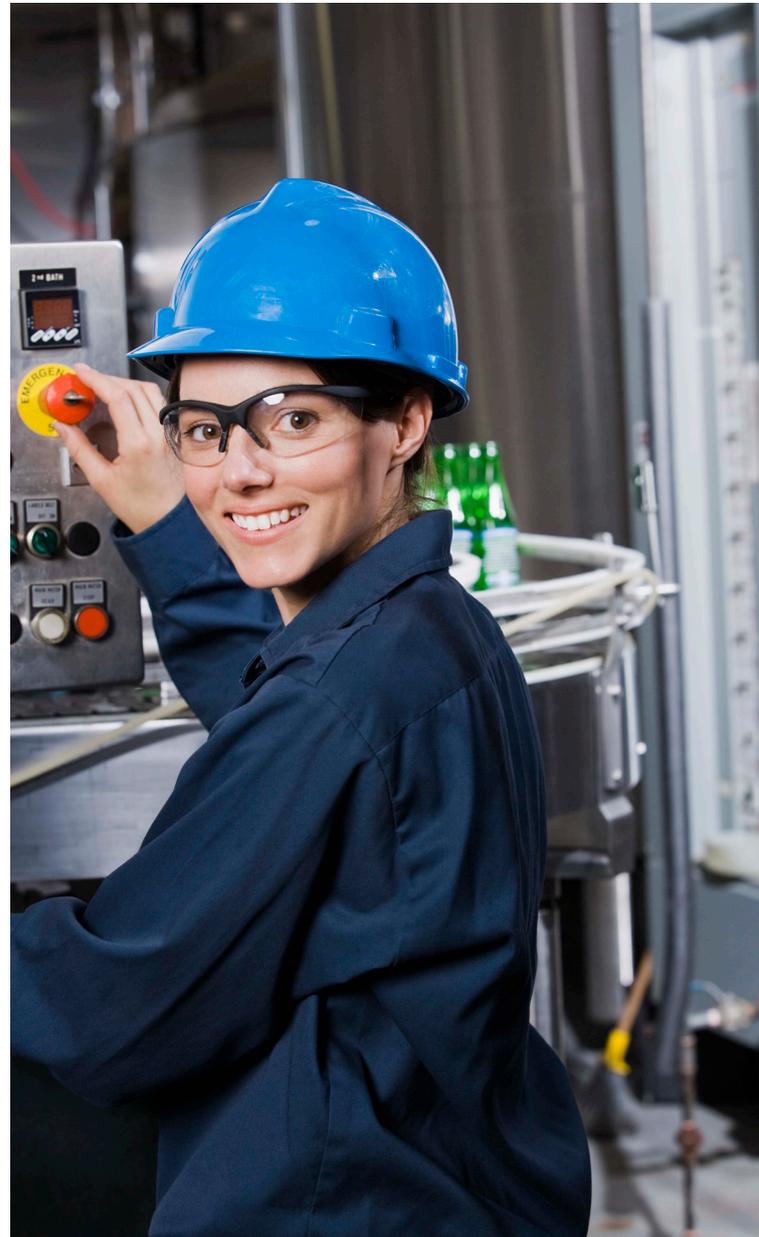
3. Interaction with candidates to achieve a positive recruitment experience

The recruitment process can be a positive experience for a candidate even if they are not successful in obtaining a job offer. Creating this positive experience is particularly important for male-dominated industries where there are existing negative perceptions and bad experiences are often shared amongst applicants.

A positive recruitment experience can also benefit candidates who feel they are taking a risk applying for a role within mining, construction and utilities. This may apply to women applying for non-traditional roles.

A positive recruitment experience:

- Is focused on continuous improvement and seeks feedback from participants about how to improve the process.
- Provides feedback to candidates to set them up for success in future interviews.
- Ensures a smooth transition from job offer to the first day on the job.



A positive recruitment experience will boost the image and reputation of the recruiting organisation, whether or not there is an offer.

Strategies used by organisations in Australia and internationally to recruit women to non-traditional roles:

Obtain feedback from women applicants at each stage of the recruitment process

Leading organisations recognise that obtaining feedback from applicants, male and female, is an excellent way to continuously improve the recruitment process. It is also important to obtain feedback from women on how inclusive the recruitment process was and to get suggestions on how to create a more positive experience for candidates moving forward.

These organisations request feedback from candidates at each stage in the recruiting process, including application, interview and selection. This creates a positive experience for applicants, whether or not they are selected for roles.

Leading organisations also seek feedback from those who are hired during their first year of employment. One of the aims is to assess the congruency between the employment promises discussed at the recruitment stage and what is actually delivered during their first year of employment, when attrition can be high.

Provide feedback to all candidates who request it

Candidates who are not successful in the recruitment process can benefit from feedback on their performance during the interview. This feedback will give applicants tips on how to be successful in their next interview. This is particularly important for candidates who feel they may have taken a risk in applying for non-traditional roles.

If a candidate requests feedback, it is important to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement. This may assist them to get a job elsewhere. It is also an opportunity to discuss opportunities that may be available elsewhere within the organisation.

Some organisations overseas provide support to candidates during the recruitment process.

For example, the recruitment team may be contacted via a toll-free line to provide tips, information and assistance on the application process.

Offer an induction program and buddy system

Induction programs usually start on the first day an employee commences their role at the organisation. However, leading organisations understand that this process should start at the job offer and acceptance stage.

These organisations recognise that it is important to maintain a relationship with the successful candidate prior to their first day of employment.

Keeping in touch with successful candidates is an opportunity to validate their decision to join the organisation and pave the way for success in the role. It also encourages women to form relationships, build networks and transition successfully to the organisation.

Induction programs commencing immediately after the recruitment phase will reduce the rate of losing candidates prior to day one on the job.

Some good industry examples include:

- An **energy company** provides two mentors to a woman who has accepted a non-traditional role with the organisation. These mentoring relationships start before the first day on the job. One mentor is an on-site mentor and the other is a 'winner' mentor. The winner mentor is from a network of women who are employed in non-traditional roles and want to share their knowledge and experience for transitioning to a new role. For example, a cadet engineer may be mentored by an experience qualified engineer.

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