

DATE	2 nd November 2016
Circulation	22,000



Rail Professional

Women in rail Adeline Ginn



A visible presence

Adeline Ginn advises how to attract and keep great women in your organisation

Employment opportunities in UK rail are booming, yet the industry is facing a real challenge – a skills shortage and a lack of diversity which threatens rail's growth. To achieve a better future for rail it is vital to promote rail as a career of choice, to redress the gender balance and fill our ever growing pipeline with the best and more diverse talent. Currently, just 16.4 per cent of the total UK rail workforce is female, an issue that Women in Rail is working to redress with the wider industry.

But how do you convince more women to join your organisation and how do you retain them and help them progress through their career?

Company culture
Company culture is a key contributor to attracting and retaining female talent. A

“ To create a positive culture that supports women, it is advisable to showcase company policies and initiatives aimed at challenging unconscious biases and promoting diversity ”



company that shows dedication to achieving gender diversity will be more attractive to prospective female employees, particularly within an industry having a reputation for being male dominated, like rail.

To create a positive culture that supports women, it is advisable to showcase company policies and initiatives aimed at challenging unconscious biases and promoting diversity. This can be done through, for instance, an internal mentoring scheme where senior managers and executives mentor junior women.

Generate a pipeline
The decisions made early on in our career will shape its path. Employers wishing to retain their female talent should ensure that there is a clear policy demonstrating that women and men working in the company are treated equally and progress in equal numbers throughout the organisation. The rationale for building a pipeline is simple: it's about building a path for women leaders to tread upon, not only today but for future generations. It's about establishing role models and mentors for younger women

DATE	2 nd November 2016
Circulation	22,000



in the workforce and setting them up for success.

Improving women's progression from middle to senior management is likely to have a 'multiplier effect' by generating a healthy pipeline of female talent for executive and board-level appointments.

Be flexible

The availability of flexible working is an essential consideration for working women and, as such, internal company policies that support parents' choices and demonstrate that it is culturally acceptable to work flexibly will be very attractive to women. Many women do want to return to work following a period of absence, often as a result of maternity leave, and just as many men would love to be more involved with hands-on parenting, despite cultural misperceptions around this. Senior managers and executives supportive of the flexible working policy should promote it as a positive for men and women and lead by example – leave early on a Tuesday for a language class or the PTA for example. And importantly, encourage others to do the same.

Be open about the gender pay gaps

The gender pay gap can only persist within a culture of secrecy. Back in July,

David Cameron announced plans to make companies more open about what they pay women compared to men. These rules, which will see firms with more than 250 workers reveal whether they pay men more than women, are expected to come to fruition in April 2017. It is important to take a view across different seniorities too. Often gaps across senior positions are less significant, but in entry level roles, differences are often wider. Companies should use data to focus efforts to ensure equal pay. If women, or men, feel discriminated by their organisation on pay, they may leave for other companies or industries that have a better pay process or balance.

Review and reward

Companies should regularly review people's performance ratings and promotions by gender to see trends and differences and take pro-active steps to close any gaps. This may involve reviewing job descriptions and the method of evaluation to ensure women's talents and achievements are evaluated in line with their male colleagues.

Assignments abroad

It is important that organisations do not assume that just because a woman has children she will not want to be considered for an overseas post. Those companies who

might find it difficult to second their talent overseas, may want to consider short-term or split-base postings.

Return to work

Every company should have an excellent maternity leave policy. Employers who get it right allow mothers to get in touch while they are away, help phase them back into work, encourage them to pursue their careers and show them that they are valued by giving them career-boosting opportunities. Prioritising the development of women in rail is not just about striving to appear fair and equal – it is about expanding and optimising the talent pool in any organisation. With just 0.6 per cent of women in rail being executives, this is especially important.

What is self-evident is that the rail industry is in possession of a wealth of relentless enthusiasm which – properly harnessed – will certainly enable it to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Adeline Ginn is founder of Women in Rail and General Counsel at Angel Trains