

# The Equity Opportunity Women, Wellbeing & Work

WHITE PAPER

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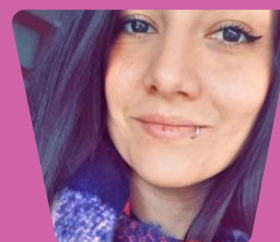
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# Foreword



A warm welcome to Women, Wellbeing & Work, a new white paper that interrogates the state of play of the female experience in the workplace.

**In a world of Great Resignations, quiet quitting, and career cushioning, we've set out to explore how Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies are impacting the working lives of women.** So that they can show up with courage and confidence to lead fulfilling, rewarding careers – without a personal cost.

You may ask why we're still having this conversation in 2023. Isn't equality in the workplace, access to opportunities, and flexibility a given for women today?

Huge steps have been made in DEI. But as you're reading this, I hope you'll see that we're not there yet when it comes to equity at work. Despite more organisations prioritising DEI programmes, more women – even young ambitious women – are changing jobs at the highest rates ever. (McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2022).

1 in 10 women are reported to have left their job due to menopausal symptoms in 2022 in the UK.

**For genuine, sustainable progress to be made, we need to go beyond targets and tick boxes. We need to see gender equality through the lens of opportunity, inclusion, and shaping the future, rather than pure policy and processes.**

What happens when significant numbers of sub-communities exit the workforce? How can we cultivate cultures of compassionate leadership? Where can we take more ownership of our career paths and wellbeing in safe environments?

These are the questions we wanted to explore. Where organisations collaborate with their female employees to shift culture and nurture the co-creation of a relevant, flexible, empowering workplace.

We'd love you to join us as we lead this big conversation and bring together colleagues and experts from across the HR community and leadership community. Our multi-industry panel has generously shared professional experiences and personal insights into how we, as HR decision makers, can better engage and connect with genuine parity in a fast-changing workplace.

A personal thank you to each of our contributors for their thoughtful perspectives on how we've come to this critical juncture point for Women, Wellbeing & Work in the female employee experience and how, together, we can transform the future for generations to come.

**Kate Hesk**

Chief People Officer and Co-Founder  
Cognomie

## Chapter 1.

# Setting a strategy for equity

Coming into The Equity Opportunity, we wanted to understand where DEI strategies are starting from. How can organisations ensure their programmes support and empower women at all levels? And how accessible are these initiatives?

### Not all equity strategies are created equal

Across organisations, the maturity of DEI strategies varies significantly; as we'd expect, the higher the female employee quotient, the more advanced the strategy.

As Christina Quinn, Director, South West Leadership Academy, NHS explains, "In the NHS over 50% of the workforce is female so dedicated programmes within our DEI strategy are essential. My concern is that while it has the provision, can everyone access it in an equitable way? I'd like to see more work on that."

Charlie Johnston, Chief People Officer at Mambu, agrees that there's an awakening that is demanded of organisations looking to lead on DEI. "We've grown from 500 people 15 months ago to 1,000 today and we are actively developing our own strategy. Our DEI policy, Belonging at Mambu, will accelerate and develop our approach to attracting, retaining, engaging and developing women in our workplace."

Tom Perry, Head of Learning and Development at Opus Talent Solutions, explains how some organisations are building effective initiatives to support women. "Businesses I have been a part of have created communities of practice where women can come together to share their stories and challenges, provide one another with peer coaching, hints and tips or address any kinds of anxieties. It's keeping it front of mind and provides a platform for true equity to exist."

### Owning the women in workplace conversation

A starting point is really understanding who owns the women and equity conversation within the organisation, who's communicating it, and how it's cascaded deeper so that employees benefit.

Christina opens the discussion, "The women in the workplace conversation is owned by all, ultimately the CEO, and it's driven by women and the networks themselves. The organisation empowers that through its DEI strategy. There's the intersectionality angle to look at too. For example, we know that women of colour in the workplace feel a greater level of discrimination so the change needs to be driven from both a strategy and a policy point of view, to drive more engagement."

Working with a range of leading UK organisations, Helen Normoyle, Co-Founder at My Menopause Centre, also sees the conversation owned by HR. "It's led by HR but it must have active executive sponsorship – it can't just be driven through the HR team. We always recommend that senior male executives are involved. When it comes to menopause specifically, this isn't just a matter for middle aged women – it's a business issue and business opportunity."



## Chapter 1. Setting a strategy for equity

Elsewhere, women's equity is integrated throughout the organisation.

Tom Perry explains the good practice he has seen. "While the agenda is driven by DEI leaders, the conversation is also organically led by female leaders, who are positively influencing culture within their own departments. DEI leaders are experts who can bring insight to life, but it's those female leaders - who have real influence and passion who can make it part of the everyday conversation, through their lived experience."

He adds, "If we're not having a conversation as a business, then we're not moving the conversation on - it will remain as is."

### Equity as a board issue

Our contributors were unanimous that boards play a pivotal role in prioritising women-focused strategies, in terms of governance, implementation and leadership. Ultimately, boards set the tone.

Mambu's board uses measurements and parameters as a starting point. Charlie Johnston explains, "Our board, investors and CEO are clear, DEI must be a priority, particularly on gender. It's a regular discussion with leadership. One of our co-founders is a woman so she's also pioneered the way we do things since our inception."

He adds, "The challenge is making sure that conversations on diversity aren't happening in a vacuum. How do you bring our diverse communities together with leadership and have real conversations on what needs to change?"



Devyani Vaishampayan, Non-Executive Director (NED) and Future of Work expert, speaks to the strategic role boards play in pushing this agenda. "The board's role is about strategy, governance, and oversight of performance. Therefore, DEI is becoming important for boards. There's been a big social shift in women in the workplace with a visibility of issues being discussed in a bigger way."

Devyani echoes Charlie's reference to investors. "Today's investors are looking at diversity in the organisation and want to see hard DEI metrics. There's also a scarcity of talent and skills and boards are increasingly keen to understand talent and career progression too. The increased level of awareness about the issue means the whole eco-system gets involved."

### Real inclusivity starts with leadership

Through this whitepaper, we wanted to explore the role of leadership in shaping a workplace where women not only perform well, but thrive in their careers.

As Helen Normoyle shared, "An inclusive culture requires top-down leadership married with bottom-up, grassroots support and 'pull'. This requires education, tools, and staff confidence that their organisation is coming from a place of good faith and integrity. To drive real cultural change, you need to go beyond policy-as-a-document to bringing it to life and creating the psychological safety that will enable an age-inclusive culture."

**"DEI is becoming important for boards. There's been a big social shift in women in the workplace with a visibility of issues being discussed in a bigger way."**

Devyani Vaishampayan,  
NED and Future of Work expert



## Chapter 1. Setting a strategy for equity

Charlie Johnston argues that leaders must embrace their responsibilities and commitment to driving equity across their organisation. “In my privileged position as a male leader, I need to make it a business imperative in my day-to-day work. We know performance is driven by having better gender diversity and making sure everyone feels included, welcomed, respected, and heard. Women should be shaping the policies that apply to them. We did this when reimagining our people policies and approach to work. Deep listening, better involvement in shaping strategy is critical. Companies need to be very comfortable – holding up the mirror, embracing new ways of engaging and always asking ‘how can we do things differently?’”

He adds, “The role of the leader is critical; you can have nice values, nice intentions but you need great leaders to bring these to life on a daily basis.”

Being bold about doing things differently to step out of unconscious bias is a strategy Tom Perry believes in. “There’s a good chance within typically male dominated industries, colleagues may have similar hobbies or interests; they may think in a particular way that becomes an echo chamber. It needs all types of diversity to innovate and challenge the way things have always been done.”

### Leadership in actual action

Christina Quinn highlights the importance of leading by example too. “Having an extremely senior leader champion this work – beyond lip service– is essential. This means doing and being it. Attach hard metrics to it so you can demonstrate that “If we get this right, it improves our productivity by X amount. Building evidence in the workplace is important.”

For Foot Locker’s EMEA Lead People & Culture, Corina Breban, identifying what leadership means in your culture and workplace is key. “Leadership is often synonymous with traditionally male qualities. More women in the workplace are looking at leadership through the lens of success that’s not traditional. The footwear industry has always been male dominated, which is why we’re so proud of our shift in leadership with Mary Dillon joining us as CEO. It means we are authentic about female leadership.”

Devyani Vaishampayan adds, “In today’s environment having the right skills and leadership capability is your biggest competitive advantage so you have that cascading effect. Today we need leaders who are empathetic, can communicate well, bring creative thinking – traditionally skills that women are good at. Without women in leadership positions, organisations are ultimately losing out on essential skills in a tough competitive environment.”

**What’s clear from future-focused organisations is the necessary engagement of the board, authentic DEI programmes and a compassionate, listening leadership.**



## Chapter 2.

# The big equity gap

In this next chapter, we explore the barriers still in play across women's careers and how high-performing organisations are proactively dismantling them.

### The strategic reset requires action

Across our panel of experts the call to action is clear. Organisations need to act now.

For Tom Perry, it's about diversity of thought as much as people. "Bringing more women into underrepresented sectors helps to diversify thinking – a different perspective is only going to help challenge people and thought, so diversifying your talent must be part of your strategy."

Nora Latapi-Dean, Regional Diversity, Inclusion & Participation Manager, Health Education England & NHS England, believes that a strategic reset requires an authenticity and an organisation-wide desire for equity.

"When it comes to changing culture, it must be more than a tick box exercise. Why do you want to have more women at the top? Why is it important to help women through menopause and having them represent and leading? It must be about more than box-ticking and being able to represent your workforce in a genuine way."

### Glass ceilings, invisible barriers, socialised blocks

What's clear is that when it comes to barriers, they are far-reaching and diverse. And the gateways to equity can be in place from the outset.

Tom Perry starts with recruitment. "When it comes to recruitment, organisations need to challenge bias at all levels. Yes, you need to look at a diverse pool of talent – but be aware of nuances. For example, make sure interview question set, process and language is neutral."

"I've seen my counterparts in early careers place a real focus on making sure graduate pools are diverse. Utilise graduate schemes to make sure women do have the opportunity to move into the tech environment, for example. Just last year, the business I worked for had an intake where 50% identify as women."

Several contributors highlighted childcare as a key and very present barrier for career progression. As Devyani Vaishampayan says, "There must be a focus on making sure that women are developed and progressing through the talent pipeline. Studies show women drop out once they start having children. There's simply not enough women progressing to senior levels. It's a board issue – to drive that culture and environment of flexibility."

"Bringing more women into underrepresented sectors helps to diversify thinking – a different perspective is only going to help challenge people and thought, so diversifying your talent must be part of your strategy."

Tom Perry,  
Head of Learning and Development, Opus Talent Solutions

## Chapter 2. The big equity gap

Christina Quinn also picks up on the need for equity in flexibility for all women. “While there is more flexibility, it’s not universal in my workplace. I’m very aware that I’m privileged to have so much flexibility and opportunity – not all women will have the same based on role or status. A cardiac consultant would have flexibility – a porter or cleaner wouldn’t.”

Charlie Johnston stresses the importance of removing bias from within role specifications and requirements and being transparent about the opportunities that are available. “A big part of career blocks are the structural systems around the job. You need to make sure there’s nothing in the role specification that could create an unconscious bias, like travel for example. But most importantly, it comes down to leaders demanding diverse candidates in the hiring process.

Having primarily managed predominantly female teams, participated in people leadership teams where he was the minority, and worked most of his career for female leaders himself, Charlie’s insight into internal barriers is perceptive. “I always think carefully about the questions I ask of the people I manage, work alongside and mentor. What’s important to you in this role? What self-limiting beliefs might you have? How can I support your growth? I also think role models are critical.”

Christina Quinn adds, “Sometimes the biggest barrier is internal – thinking “I can’t do it, I’m not good enough.” I’ve seen very capable women continue to question themselves and their abilities. The internal factors are very present.”

Helen Normoyle is clear that organisations need to be proactive if they are going to avoid an exodus of senior talent from the workforce. “Menopause ties entirely into economic impact as the pay gap increases when women hit their 40’s and 50’s. It’s where the divergence happens with women leaving the workplace because of menopausal symptoms. This is an opportunity for employers: with the right support you can retain brilliant women. Moral imperative aside, there’s a strong

business case, if you think about the 40m days lost in productivity across the UK. Support women through this journey, help with performance, let them thrive.”

### High-performance equity habits

We’ve spoken to leaders from across industry who are already shaping the future of women’s workplace equity. These are CPOs, HR leaders, and emerging talent designing genuinely game-changing strategies. We wanted to understand where those programmes are creating impact and affecting change, so that more organisations can learn from their leadership. Here’s what we found.

#### 1. The power of networks

**Internal advocates and employee-led movements are hugely beneficial to shifting culture.**

As Tom Perry explains, “In networks you have a whole community of people going through familiar challenges. You have advocates, peers who have gone through similar experiences that can help you figure out how to carve out your own path. Networks also push against stereotypes that may exist out there. These conversations can filter through into the workplace.”

Corina Breban told us that employee-led networks have been key to Foot Locker’s women’s strategy. “We have a range of employee resource groups; EmpowHERed is our ERG specifically for women, to unlock, empower and embrace the full potential of all women in our company, through professional development, education, and communities. Like all our ERGs, this is made by employees with leadership sponsors.”

For Nora Latapi-Dean, networks are a key way to raise awareness and visibility. “An example within the NHS is its Menopause Network – it makes it visible, tells employees “We need to have this conversation” even though it may have stemmed from the fact that people aren’t getting the support. It’s a signal for change.”



## Chapter 2. The big equity gap

### 2. Seeing is believing: modelling matters

Role model visibility is a key theme. For women of all levels, being able to see someone who has trod the path ahead of them within an organisation is a real impetus; it shows what's possible.

As Corina Breban speaks to role-modelling in action. “We have our first female CEO, Mary Dillon, coming in at Foot Locker, and this is something we’re super-proud of. It’s exciting for retail sportswear as an industry. Role models are such an important element of allyship, so having a female CEO speaks to the unique positioning of how we approach female leadership.”

Charlie Johnston adds, “Mambu is currently 40% female, but we know we need to do more, particularly at senior levels. It’s essential we keep female talent, and that women can look up and see themselves in the most senior roles. That’s powerful.”

Nora Latapi-Dean believes that role-modelling is vital for women within the LGBTQ+ community too. “If you’re going to thrive at work, who’s going to support you? You can’t do it by yourself. You need access to those opportunities. Do you see someone like yourself already in that role? Role modelling and being able to see women in those senior spaces is all part of creating a culture of equal opportunities.”

“As an LGBTQ and BAME person, I’m conscious I have a feeling of inadequacy that comes from not seeing people like myself in the room. It goes back to role modelling – seeing a woman leading on something huge, seeing a disabled LGBTQ leader opens doors to thoughts you haven’t had before. Seeing that woman in that learning space, who’s overcome societal conditioning, you see it’s not impossible for you either.”

Devyani Vaishampayan concurs. “We need to see change. Younger women don’t see enough senior women – we need this cascading down, a groundswell of women internally to create and shift the mindset around that culture.”

“Role modelling and being able to see women in those senior spaces is all part of creating a culture of equal opportunities.”

Nora Latapi-Dean,  
Regional Diversity, Inclusion and Participation Manager,  
Health Education England and NHS England

## Chapter 2. The big equity gap

### 3. Creating safe spaces for women

Post-pandemic, the importance of psychological safety has truly emerged in the workplace. How can employers create an environment of psychological safety to allow people to reflect on key concerns, specific challenges impacting them, and manage these?

Helen Normoyle explains how this ties into an organisational culture of change. “You need that inclusive culture: walk the talk, take the tone from the top, create psychological safety, and build trust.”

Corina Breban highlights the need for these environments in an inclusive way. “You have the fundamental need to belong to a community where you feel safe enough to articulate your needs and learn your boundaries.”

Charlie Johnston adds, “Critical to conversations about equity in the workplace is the need to create an environment of psychological safety. People need to know it’s ok to talk about getting ready to have a kid, career goals, workplace needs, about menopause. The more we can be human at work and encourage more authenticity and vulnerability the better.”

In our next chapter, we’ll look at the shift in culture that will drive those open conversations – and lasting change.



“Critical to conversations about equity in the workplace is the need to create an environment of psychological safety. The more we can be human at work and encourage more authenticity and vulnerability the better.”

Charlie Johnston,  
Chief People Officer, Mambu

## Chapter 3.

# Transforming a culture of equity

As we look to the future, in Women, Wellbeing & Work, we wanted to gather new, workable strategies from forward-thinking organisations. What are the cornerstones of a culture of equity for women? What's working in female focused organisations? How can we re-write old playbooks to ensure that a commitment to women's wellbeing in the workplace is grounded in equity, accessibility, and inclusivity.

### 1. Start with a culture of support

For Christina Quinn, supporting women's careers is a multi-layered approach. "Coaching and mentoring, peer networks and genuine flexible workplace policies afforded to all. You need a deep scrutiny about the equity of any policies too. It's about asking: How are we going to apply it to everybody, not just a certain group of people?"

Tom Perry stresses the need to normalise career breaks within this. "It's about making career breaks accessible through structures and policies that help women feel confident and comfortable when leaving, and then returning to the workplace."

"When I think about my wife and her experience before, during and after maternity leave, it's clear that having policies and appropriate touchpoints is important.

Whether it's career break/maternity leave interviews, keep in touch days, support groups, clear reintroduction plans after leave, or actionable flexible working arrangements, we must do what we can to minimise the anxieties that some women can face when returning after a significant amount of time out of the business."

The work-life balance piece is essential for organisations looking to be supportive and build a sustainable talent pool. As Corina Breban echoes, drawing on her personal experience, "As a company, you need to ask how you create the right support system for mothers to have the ambitions to carry on – whether they're taking maternity or leave of absence for caring. We see so much historical social wiring. Since moving to the Netherlands, I see how so much is society-driven. Here, they've normalised the equal share of childcare and flexibility."

"Coaching and mentoring, peer networks and genuine flexible workplace policies need to be afforded to all."

Christina Quinn,  
Director, South West Leadership Academy, NHS

## Chapter 3. Transforming a culture of equity

### 2. Creating a culture of coaching

Overwhelmingly, our HR experts champion the value of creating a coaching culture across your organisation, supporting performance, employee engagement and retention. They stress its role in shaping holistic career paths rather than something saved for key talent.

Tom Perry adds, “I’m a massive advocate of coaching regardless of demographic. That’s because it’s uniquely tailored and bespoke, not a “sheep dip” approach. So as a woman, you get to set the agenda, whatever your goal, and own the actions and goals that have meaning for you. It’s why I’ve worked to form partnerships with Cognomie: so that the people I support to develop can focus on what matters to them.”

Tom emphasises “democratising coaching” too. “Don’t limit it to your most senior people. I believe coaching is key to empowering people.”

Helen Normoyle stresses the importance of bringing in coaching specifically to support specific communities, such as menopausal women. “Many are at or are approaching the peak of their careers and relying on mental fitness to perform at their best. Because menopause can affect memory, concentration, and focus, they think they’ve lost their mojo, or are simply not as good as they used to be. Coaching can help them rebuild their confidence and reconnect with the value they bring their organisation.”

Nora Latapi-Dean spoke openly of her own coaching experience. “I found coaching really useful to challenge many of the thoughts that I’ve got around imposter syndrome, for example. Coaching brings an outside voice to reality check me. And challenges me to challenge myself.”



### 3. Next level culture of sponsorship

Building on coaching to support career development, a number of contributors stress the benefits of sponsorship in the workplace.

**While mentors support with career-changing guidance, sponsors can provide a more direct impact – elevating visibility, positioning new role opportunities, celebrating your successes.**

Having sponsored several women throughout his career, Charlie Johnston observes, “I’ve seen how sponsorship has helped women break through glass ceilings. I feel a responsibility to helping you reach your career potential. And the impact of that promotional velocity to your career movement is significant.”

Corina Breban agrees that sponsorships tend to be a characteristic of organisations embracing a progressive DEI programme – often led by female executives themselves. “At Foot Locker, sponsorships are happening more naturally because of the female leadership team – they’re empowering that and enabling the programmes.”

Nora Latapi-Dean echoes how this plays out in reality. “I’m at the beginning of my career so when I see successful women in senior positions, I want to ask, “How did you get there?” It’s really about allyship. Somebody being willing to see potential in you and pave the way.”

## Chapter 3. Transforming a culture of equity

### 4. Cultivate a culture of allyship

The term “ally” goes beyond being another buzzword. At Cognomie, we understand the term as someone who is not a member of a marginalised group, but actively wants to support and help others in that group. From our white paper research, it’s clear that allyship in the workplace is crucial for inclusion, equality, and change.

At Mambu, alongside offering female-only training, men in leadership roles are invited in to the conversation. Charlie Johnston explains, “It means allies can get clear on what’s going on – equity around pay, promotional velocity, seniority in teams, and ensure there’s more diversity around making decisions.”

He also believes it’s evolving. “We’re looking at how male engagement can affect change. We’ve delivered training for male leaders to involve them in recruitment, for example, making sure we have diversity on interview panels so candidates can see diversity in the interview process, and not accepting all-male shortlists.”

Tom Perry adds, “It’s also about leaders understanding their people and knowing what they need. Have one-to-one relationships, get what drives people, provide opportunities for them to gain experience. Do male leaders know enough about what it means to be an ally? Have they the tools and skill to support women in their team? Ultimately advocacy requires allyship.”

Speaking specifically to supporting women experiencing the menopause at work, Helen Normoyle adds that allyship brings empathy and connection. “It’s about being a great colleague. As a young person, having more awareness means you’re better able to support people going through it. People will say “I’m going to speak to my mum about this – I wish I’d better supported her.””

NB we’re referring to allyship relating to women at work, conscious of different racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ identities, and people with disabilities.

### 5. Invest in a culture of wellbeing

**A clear thread emerging from our generous conversations with HR and people leaders is that employers need to consider the whole person when creating workable workplace strategies.**

So how are those high-growth, progressive organisations implementing wellbeing into these strategies to shift culture and support employee experience?

Devyani Vaishampayan points to the impact wellbeing has on future workplace policy. “Wellbeing is key to culture and engagement. After Covid, wellbeing has become increasingly important. As a board mentor, working with CEOs, I’m seeing wellbeing policies shaping hybrid working, as more employees want work life balance and prioritise wellbeing.”

Christina Quinn observes, “We do a huge amount on health and wellbeing. We obviously did a huge amount during Covid. It’s been positive, but again, we’re seeing that some people can access and participate in resources more than others.”

She adds, “Again with menopausal care, while we’re doing so much around it, do we interrogate whether everybody is able to benefit from it?”

The benefit of investing in wellbeing at work shines through in Nora Latapi- Dean’s explanation. “Knowing there’s support and resources, makes you feel like a human rather than a cog in the machine. Sometimes I don’t have the time to access things like the Headspace app but knowing that my employer’s looking after our mental and physical wellbeing makes you feel valued.”

As Christina Quinn explained, “Part of a wellbeing strategy is about keeping people well. Full stop. Another part is keeping people well at work. Within the NHS, there’s the huge workforce issue of staff shortages where it really can be life and death. In that way, enabling people to stay well at work is vital to productivity.”

For Devyani Vaishampayan, wellbeing comes back to being a board issue. “Boards need to have an informed view that wellbeing is not a tick box activity. It’s critical that boards lead on this. Ultimately this is not about hiring more women but shifting cultures that support career progression throughout the career cycle – Mental Fitness is key to this.”



## Chapter 4.

# Future shaping – cornerstones for women to thrive at work

This white paper aims to move the conversation forward for Women, Wellbeing, and Work. As well as decoding barriers, culture, and environmental influences, we want to move closer to normalising a culture where women thrive.

Lofty thinking? Perhaps. Change starts somewhere

So, as we conclude our expert conversations, we ask our panel to reimagine the future for women at work. How would they advise equity-driven organisations to create parity and opportunity across their workforces, from the cafeteria into the boardroom – driving real momentum in equity?

Tom Perry suggests, “Continue the momentum with the initiatives that exist, focus on building a diverse recruitment pool and have mechanisms in place that minimise bias and maximise the voice of women. It makes sense to me to involve and partner with the women in your business to truly understand and shape the future that enables women to thrive. Then support everyone to have powerful conversations that drive pace and change.”

Helen Normoyle agrees. “Expect to see more momentum: nothing succeeds like seeing success. I hope to see organisations and women sharing stories about how menopause support has made a difference. We’re seeing men who have partners going through it really get it too. They’re coming into the workplace asking, “What can I do to change this?”

### 1. It’s me, hi – customer representation

**The need to reflect your customer base is a key starting point.**

As Charlie Johnston advises, “Start with your customers. Ask what you might need to do differently to better represent customers. What are the practices, policies, role models? I’ve seen situations where female customers have said to a tech firm “Don’t come back till you’ve got more women on your team” – it’s diversity as a non-negotiable.

Corina Breban adds, “We need to be conscious of finding the right balance and composition of workforce. Make it relevant for your market, that individual society or industry. Employers need to understand where diversification really matters is being able to offer the correct representation of that community and customers you serve.”

**“Employers need to understand where diversification really matters is being able to offer the correct representation of that community and customers you serve.”**

Corina Breban, EMEA Lead People and Culture, Foot Locker

## Chapter 4. Future shaping – cornerstones for women to thrive at work

### 2. Prioritise access for everyone

Ensuring that all female employees have access to equity will also be a priority, as Christina Quinn recommends, “Before you start bringing in a new thing, make sure what you have works for everybody. Some women simply have more privilege than others. Check flexible policies are available to everyone before you introduce more.”

Helen Normoyle echoes this. “There must be the recognition that everyone’s different. It’s still more challenging and harder for women of colour and from less affluent backgrounds at work. More research into what can be done is needed and strategies developed from there.”

For Nora Latapi-Dean, access is also about shifting behaviour. “Look at someone who was once in your shoes. From a female point of view, be willing to show solidarity towards other women. A lot of senior execs have success because someone helped to pave the way for them. Now you’re there, don’t be afraid to share that space – empower each other, open the door for others to follow.”

### 3. Make it measurable

Helen Normoyle points to the need to build metrics into future strategies. “Have targets – something to aim for. That allows you to track where you want to get to with DEI in the broadest sense, for women, people of colour, sexual orientation. Look at the market you’re in, who your target audience is and make sure you’re reflecting that. It’s always good to understand where you’re baselining and where you want to be.”

Devyani Vaishampayan agrees. “Good boards will look at each area of the business to demand and track data. There needs to be a holistic view to strongly encompass culture. The whole of the board needs to be involved and take ownership.”

She adds, “By tracking data, you can understand key pain points in the organisation. For example, if you’re recruiting diverse candidates but attrition levels are high, you need to make the time and effort to understand why. This requires data and a qualitative understanding of issues vis-a-vis demanding accelerated targets.”



## Chapter 4. Future shaping – cornerstones for women to thrive at work

### 4. One size won't fit all

**Personalisation will be key to embedding equity into the growth organisation of the future.**

Helen Normoyle says, “If we look at menopause support, for example, it won't be one size fits all as it's different for different women. Menopausal women are not a homogenous group. You have to understand the individual needs of your workforce, providing personalised support and a supportive environment within a framework.”

She adds, “Where can you open this up? Think about engaging male colleagues, younger women – this is something for everyone in the organisation to get behind.”

Corina Breban points to the essential need to bring diversity into strategy too. “When you're looking to develop your women in the workplace culture, always make sure there's someone at the table who's not in agreement with you.”

### 5. By women, for women

Ultimately, the final word from our experts is the fundamental requirement to engage women in the shaping of equity strategy and culture.

For Christina Quinn this means factoring the value that your employees bring. “Women need to be able to articulate what their unique contribution is. And when you see something's not working, you can't ignore it.”

Charlie Johnston concurs. “Listen to women in the workplace in what they want – involve them – look at best practice of organisations out there and make it a business imperative.”



**“Speak to women in your organisation, develop best practice around the journey you need to go on to provide workplace culture so that you ultimately co-create it with women.”**

Helen Normoyle,  
Co-Founder, My Menopause Centre

# Conclusion

The insights, strategies and lived experience shared within this white paper show us how far the culture around supporting equity in the workplace has come.

And how far we still must go.

The current swathe of job cuts across multiple sectors is just one example of how fragile DEI is when tested by the reality of tough economics.

Together, with our experts, we've explored the forces at play when it comes to creating a sustainable and accessible culture of wellbeing for women in the modern world of work.

What's more, we've learnt how essential the dialogue is between employer and employee – that sense of shared ownership for our career paths, employee experience, and progression, within the workplace.

As employers and leaders, it's our duty of care to create the cultural requirements needed to empower our female employees – from policies and strategy through to opportunities like networking and ERGs.

We want this to go even further. The pandemic created a major setback for many women's careers, whether in terms of a new level of work-life imbalance or the impact on our confidence as the world of work shifted on its axis again.

Now's the time for individual women to truly step into who they want to be in the workplace – wherever that may be. For organisations to provide the space, support, and resources so women can ask the powerful questions about how they show up to their careers, for their colleagues, for their own leadership, bringing their best selves to work every day.

**We need women's wellbeing to be a business imperative. So that women can perform at their best and fullest potential with confidence, self-trust, and purpose.**

When all women have the capability to do this, we'll know that we've achieved a culture of true equity and opportunity.

We hope you join us in this next step.

**Kate Hesk**

Chief People Officer and Co-Founder  
Cognomie

**“Now's the time for individual women to truly step into who they want to be in the workplace.”**

Kate Hesk

