



International Women's Day: reflections from women across Ogier

Insights - 08/03/2019

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is #BalanceForBetter, and is focussed on how all of us can help to make the world more balanced by tackling bias - both conscious and unconscious - and advocating for equality.

To mark International Women's Day, we asked individuals across a range of Ogier's jurisdictions and teams to share their insights on women at work and the issues that are holding women back.

Many thanks to the individuals who participated: Monique Adams, managing director of Ogier Global (BVI) Limited, Matthew Davies, associate in Ogier's dispute resolution team in Jersey, Emma Graham-Taylor, HR Manager in Cayman and founding member of not-for-profit organisation Gender Equality Cayman, Kate Hodson, first female partner in our Hong Kong office and mentor for Women in Law Hong Kong, Joanne Huckle who became one of Ogier's youngest partners in 2017 and is a member of 100 Women in Finance, Simone Miranda, team leader in our Global Support Team in Luxembourg and Sophie Reguengo, counsel and founding member of Lean In Jersey.

Diversity is a business imperative

Emma Graham-Taylor: "Diversity, and gender equality in particular, are key metrics of highly productive, profitable and stable businesses.

"According to research carried out in 2017, companies in the top 25 percent for gender diversity in their executive teams were 21% more likely to achieve above-average profitability than companies at the bottom of the scale. These same companies were 27% more likely to have superior value creation. Companies who take gender equality and diversity seriously are more able to recruit the top talent, have more empowered and engaged employees, see an increase in creativity and innovation and have reduced turnover costs.

"One of the most encouraging things I saw from Ogier this year was, of the 29 people promoted in February, 72% were women (50% of whom were being put in management/senior positions) and 34% were not white."

If you can see it, you can be it

Monique Adams: "I am proud to be the team leader of three well rounded and qualified women. As the financial services industry of the BVI evolves, it is my hope that Ogier's example will influence other service providers to be more open to appointing women in senior roles."

Sophie Reguengo: "It's why I joined Ogier in the first place – I saw more senior women in my field. It helps you identify your own path because you can follow a similar route. I think that's why men are so successful in business; there are more role models, more well-trodden paths and a large network available to them."

Making the workplace more attractive for women

Kate Hodson: "We know that despite the numbers of female solicitors in the industry (for example, the number of women solicitors practicing in England and Wales outnumbered the number of male solicitors last year), this isn't reflected at the senior levels of the profession.

"To tackle this disparity, we need for it to be sufficiently attractive for women to stay in private practice and it goes without saying that there should not be a gender pay gap. Juggling family life and professional demands is possible but law firms/companies need to be sufficiently agile to adapt to different working arrangements.

"I'm proud of the fact that Ogier has been working hard to not only provide the necessary infrastructure to allow for flexible working but has gone a step further, namely to strive to embed this in our culture. Just take a look at the technology we have invested in and the firm's embrace of remote working. There's also that constant questioning "how can we be doing things differently".

The value of networks - and why gender equality should be everyone's priority

Joanne Huckle: "What really stood out to me, after a packed 48 hours with 300 other women in the private equity industry at the recent Kayo Women's Private Equity Conference in Chicago, is how incredibly inspirational, how powerful and how motivational it is to simply hear the stories of women who have risen to the top of the industry.

"I left feeling excited, energised but also responsible, realising how important this sort of peer engagement is not only for women in the industry and those of a younger generation with aspirations to join it, but for the industry as a whole."

Kate Hodson: "We can be our own worst enemy if we're not recognising our value and

advocating for our personal progression. Coaches/mentors can provide an independent sounding board to help guide one through this process, which is why I applied to become a mentor on the mentoring programme established by Women in Law Hong Kong."

Sophie Reguengo: "The reason we set up Lean In Jersey is to help more women in business achieve senior positions. Lean In focusses on networking for women, to help us build our own networks, which helps to build practices. Too often women are overlooked for partnership in law because they have thinner files. That may be because the referral network for women is not as well developed."

Matthew Davies: "Things are in motion to create a Lean In circle, run by men, that promotes diversity. Ultimately, no one benefits from a lack of gender equality. It is therefore important for men to do their part in championing gender equality. This new circle will be aimed at exactly that."

The importance of challenging the wider culture

Sophie Reguengo: "There is a view held by some that only women have children. As we all know, men have children too. But because we do not have shared parental leave policies as a rule, women take the lion's share of leave to care for children. It is a shame there aren't more men celebrated as carers, because men make excellent care givers at home."

"I think it is sometimes seen as unnatural for woman to have ambition and to want to earn a high salary. What I have learned is that men and women are more similar than we realise. It is as individuals, we are all different."

Simone Miranda: "Society makes us believe that if we choose our career we are bad mothers or partners, but if we choose family we will never be able to aspire to leadership positions. It is important to support women at work, to remind them about their successes and to give them the confidence they need to believe in themselves and achieve their goals."

"Society must not define us. We, women, must redefine society."

About Ogier

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