

Women in Engineering

Industry Blueprint of Successful in-house Professional Women's Programs





Introduction

Engineers Australia's Women in Engineering National and Division Committees have been approached by a number of organisations to provide advice and guidance on how to set up a successful in-house professional women's program.

Many of our members work in organisations that have had singular success in recruiting, retaining and celebrating female engineers in their workforce.

This paper has been developed following a round table discussion with industry partners. It looks at programs proven to encourage and retain women in the engineering profession including issues to consider, some of the key messages to achieve success and some lessons learnt.



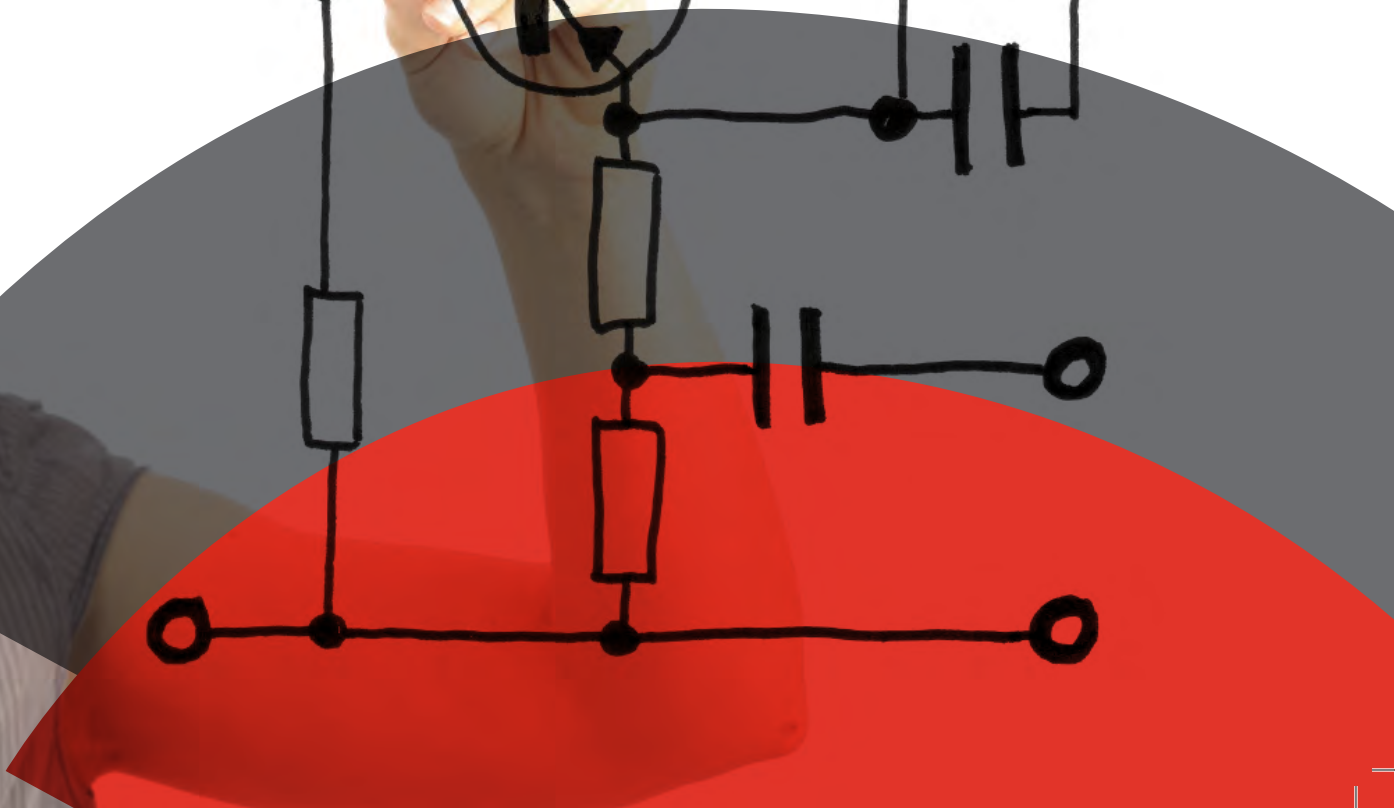
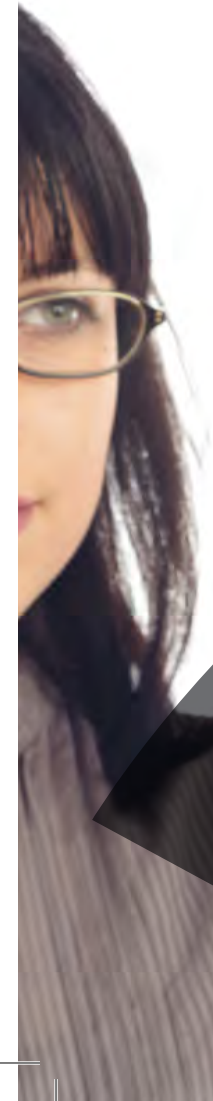
Outcome: Equality Means Business

Better business outcomes allowing organisations to evolve and successfully compete in a changing environment, take advantage of globalisation and other business development opportunities with long term sustainability and financial reward.

Outcome indicators:

- Employer of choice
- Higher retention levels
- Greater profitability due to greater resource choice
- Diverse engineering workforce demographic that reflects the community and client profiles
- Increased creativity, productivity and effectiveness
- Broader talent pool for succession planning
- Inclusive, cooperative and engaging work environment and culture
- Greater opportunities for women at all levels of the engineering organisation both technical & managerial roles
- Improved client relations
- Diversity of thought and new approaches to business.





In-house Professional Women's Program

A program that successfully encourages gender diversity in an organisation through initiatives that attract, retain and celebrate women in the engineering profession.

Key messages for success:

- The organisation needs to be radical, bold and open to change
- Open minded to challenge the status quo and 'business as usual'
- CEO support of the program and senior leadership
- Clear objectives of what the organisation wants to achieve
- Well documented policies and education to implement effectively
- Formalised program plans with allocated responsibilities and resources including budget, time and reporting KPIs
- Targets and measures in terms of female participation and roles
- Reporting and accounting mechanisms
- Resilience, commitment and long term view
- Formal male and female champions and role models within the business
- Consideration of location specific issues
- Diversity a key agenda item for executive management meetings.



In-house Professional Women's Program

Key challenges:

- Work environment cultural issues that required challenging traditional expectations and behaviours.
- Changing a culture that doesn't typically recognise and celebrate successes.
- Continuing education of the program and long term benefits
- Budget and resource restrictions
- Other priorities conflicting with the program
- Inconsistency in execution of the program
- Lack of confidence/peer support of the program
- Creating a flexible environment around the constraints of the organisation incl. periods of non recruitment
- Ensuring early engagement at all levels for the program
- Making it fun and engaging
- Management of conflict
- Unconscious bias
- Branding program as inclusive not discriminatory
- Role of the program within the overall diversity strategy of the business.

Strategic Objectives

Recruit

Attract women of all ages to engineering careers.

Key indicators of success:

- Positioned as an employer of choice for female engineers
- Having equal numbers of female and male applicants for positions.

Key strategies include:

- At least one female candidate for all positions
- Female graduate hiring aspiration of 50%
- Specific female recruitment program including social media
- Gender pay equity
- Senior female engineers actively involved in recruitment incl. participation at universities, speaking at student clubs
- Vacation student program/ student cadet program
- Scholarship program for female students
- Support of third party attraction programs targeting high school girls
- Speaking at schools and universities
- Sponsorship of University design projects.

Support and Retain

Retain women in engineering and support women throughout their engineering careers.

Key indicators of success:

- Engaged and stable workforce
- Succession planning
- High return to work rate following parental leave.

Key strategies include:

- Flexible work practices including part-time, job share, compressed work week, self funded leave, leave of absence.
- Promotion of flexible work options
- Mobile working (not office based)
- Women's network program incl. technical & networking activities
- Mentoring and role models
- Professional development program(s) tailored for women incl. acceleration programs
- Parental leave program
- Gender pay equity
- One-on-one meeting with management representative incl. career development aspect
- Child care facilities
- Connection and engagement throughout their career incl. whilst on extended leave
- Management training and education in diversity and how to manage it.
- Recognition and creation of development opportunities by looking internally for existing skills that can be further developed.

Celebrate

Celebrate the achievements of women in engineering.

Key indicators of success:

- Achievements of women recognised, celebrated and promoted.

Key strategies include:

- Sponsoring conferences promoting diversity
- Supporting employees to attend and participate in conferences
- Women's network that promotes and develops women leaders throughout the organisation
- Articles in company newsletters reinforcing positive outcomes and success stories
- Specific publications
- Connection with other similar networks/programs both in Australia and internationally.



Next Steps

1. Get a pro-active team together including a senior champion who wants to make a difference
2. Work to the strengths of your team and organisation
3. Connect with relevant industry associations and programs for ideas (don't recreate the wheel)
4. Think it through for your particular organisation. Don't just do what other organisations do because it might not be appropriate for your circumstances.
5. Make a longer term plan (say 3 years) and set objectives and appropriate measures. For example: % of female engineers recruited, % of females in senior leadership roles, services / programs developed to support females in a sustainable career.
6. CEO announcement and senior leadership support with business plan and budget approval.

Industry Partners:



David Hood

President Engineers Australia 2012



We live in a world that desperately needs new engineering solutions. As Albert Einstein said: "You can't solve problems with the same thinking that created those problems." We need new thinking to create new solutions.

This industry blueprint of successful in-house professional women's programs by the Women in Engineering National Committee starts on the journey of looking for new solutions to help raise the proportion of women amongst our ranks.

As a profession, we need to set an example for society and work much harder at overcoming the subtle and unconscious bias that many hold to truly accept women as absolute equals, uncluttered by historical dogma and traditions.

Having engineering teams that are equally comprised of men and women will greatly assist in driving this new, balanced thinking that we require to create a better world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Hood'.

David Hood
President Engineers Australia 2012



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