



# Diversity Driver Downloads

**Charmian Caines**

Developing women's initiatives in a global organisation

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# Diversity Driver



**Charmian Caines**  
*Managing Director and  
Senior Partner at BCG*

31 years at BCG holding a variety of roles including Head of Women's Initiative,\* practice area lead for Consumer, Retail and travel & tourism,\* UK lead for Consumer and Retail practice, Head of London Recruiting, Head of Client Development Committee, and member of the BCG Global Strategy Review Committee

\*For Western Europe & South America

## How to build strong women's initiatives in a global organisation

Multi-pronged strategy to address the professional and personal needs of female talent at all levels

“ You need the right Executive Sponsors and robust data to identify key focus areas and drive initiatives forward

”

### Who should apply this Download?

Any global company wanting to build an inclusive culture, retain female talent, and develop strong female leadership

# Context and case for launching the women's initiative

## Context

Diversity driver Charmian Caines became motivated to develop women's initiatives after noticing an absence of women in leadership positions early during her career.

She joined in 1988 in a class of 8; she was the only woman.

She first set up the women's initiative in London, starting with a series of women's lunch sessions.



## Case for change

There was a lack of resources, support networks or mentorship for women at BCG.

There was also a noticeable absence of female leaders.

Charmian pioneered part time working model through the 1990s:

- Worked 4 days per week
- Raised 4 children
- Whilst maintaining successful career as a Partner and Senior Partner in the Consumer & Retail practice



## Summary

Initiative:

- Launch of robust women's initiatives in western Europe and South America regions
- Multi-pronged effort to support and retain female talent across the firm

Key pillars:

- Data transparency
- Affiliation
- Recruiting
- Career / personal development

# Key pillars of the global women's initiative strategy

Comprehensive professional and personal support systems for female consultants at BCG

## 1 Data Transparency

- Understood current pool of female talent and identify gaps
- Key data per country: number of women at each level, promotion and performance vs. men, attrition levels
- Shared learnings with global leadership team

## 2 Affiliation

- Installed country nodes with local knowledge
- Organised affiliation groups in each office, along with region-wide conferences
- Involved senior leadership in affiliation groups

## 3 Recruiting

- Increased focus on hiring female talent
- Set recruiting targets for % of females in each starting class or at each level
- Built a dedicated female recruiting team

## 4 Development

- Set up mentorship programs, including with senior men
- Developed policy for flextime work and return to work after maternity programs
- Organised conferences for networking and development

# Actions that Diversity Driver took to set up global women's initiatives...

Initiative	Objective	Actions
Nodes Network	Ensure local initiatives occurring for all female consulting staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported nodes in each country/geography with implementation of local women's initiatives (used repository of best practices to respond to multiple requests, share training materials, provide support for local events)</li> <li>Ran one-to-one calls with local nodes to capture local updates</li> <li>Ran quarterly European calls on specific topics e.g. running local speaker events</li> <li>Identified and encouraged opportunities for continuous improvement and appropriate alignment across offices</li> </ul>
Consulting Moms Network	Provide targeted network for female consulting staff with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established European Consulting Moms network with 200 members from consulting staff</li> <li>Curriculum of 7 well-attended conference calls on topics requested by European female consultants, recorded and shared with all</li> <li>Collection of local flex working models</li> <li>Developed and maintained members' work/life profile, showing professional and personal steps</li> </ul>
Mentoring Program	Provide support network for senior female consultants, outside of formal career dev. process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoted EMEA Partner/Principal mentoring programme, 80% of female Principals and Partners enrolled</li> <li>Kept track of status, carried out regular pulse check</li> </ul>
Pipeline / Pyramid Monitoring	Highlight impending or actual issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitored female HR metrics on an ongoing basis (annually)</li> <li>Monitored and analysed the female recruiting/retention/pyramid on regional and at an office level</li> </ul>
Annual Affiliation Conference	Important networking opportunity for European consulting women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organised annual affiliation/training Conference for Principals and Partners</li> </ul>
Regional Network Coordination	Keep women's initiatives on the broader agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated regular regional conference calls</li> <li>Cooperated with other HR platforms including recruiting, mobility, training, career development, career services on cross-functional topics and business update</li> </ul>

## ...and challenges that she faced

1

### Cultural differences across countries

Initiatives needed to be tailored for geographies. For example, in some countries it was much less acceptable for women to have a fast-paced, demanding career like consulting

2

### Cultural tendencies within offices

Making part time work culturally and professionally acceptable was a hurdle in many offices

4

### Initiatives perceived as preferential treatment

Male colleagues, including at senior levels, questioned why similar programs were not being developed for male employees

3

### Hesitation to set targets

Senior leadership hesitated to set targets for recruiting and retention to avoid the risk of a drop in quality of female talent



# Women's initiatives work...

*At the beginning of the initiatives...*

<15% of the starting class was female

Charmian was the only female Managing Director & Partner in London

Loose policies and low awareness of part-time working options

*...to today*

3-4x improvement in percentage of female new joiners

Equal promotion of women and men to Managing Director & Partner level

~90% awareness amongst consulting staff; women and men across different levels choose to work part time

**...but a clear strategy is key**

## 6 key actions

to set up effective global women's initiatives in your organisation

### Start with a clear and up-to-date baseline

- Determine which areas of the firm have higher attrition
- Determine at what stage women are choosing to leave the firm
- Understand differences between geographies

### Investigate root causes of inequities

- Encourage women to provide input through pulse checks or existing mentorship programs
- Use tools to gather information, including confidential survey and focus groups

### Tailor your interventions to address root causes

- If at the beginning of the journey towards robust women's initiatives, start with basic measures such as defining company antidiscrimination and maternity policies
- Organisations further along the journey should launch initiatives aimed at changing workplace culture and conversations
- Different offices may need different interventions based on local culture & practices
- Examples of initiatives are provided earlier in this download

### Ensure strong leadership team for initiatives

- Team leading day-to-day working of initiatives should include prominent women
- Demonstrate commitment from senior men by getting them fully involved in working groups or leadership teams

### Define targets - then track, measure, and adapt

- Have explicit goals tied to metrics to encourage management to stay focused
- Adopt agile ways of working to quickly review progress and change strategy if needed

### Regularly engage with and communicate to the organisation

- Communicate widely and frequently to reinforce focus on women's initiatives
- Initiatives should involve engagement between junior and senior women, and regular feedback should be sought from both groups





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