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DIVERSITY
What It Means At Deloitte
Lorraine Griffin is a tax heavy-hitter. She started her career in Arthur Andersen 20 years ago and became a Tax Partner in Deloitte in 2002. In 2015, she was appointed Head of Tax Services, and now runs a department of around 300 people.

Deloitte Ireland has a firm-wide 50/50 gender balance and 60/40 in the Tax department. Did this situation evolve naturally or were there specific diversity policies implemented by the firm?

It has evolved and developed over many years with the support of a number of policies. One such policy is our ‘respect and inclusion’ strategy, which is not gender specific but is an initiative that focuses on respect and inclusion for all of our people. We recruit the best people based on competency and fit and, in recent years, Deloitte has seen the gender split of our partnership become more balanced. This is a direct result of the strong pipeline of female talent within the firm, who have then taken on the role of acting as strong role models and mentors for those coming up the ranks.

How does the diversity situation today at Deloitte compare with when you started out? From your perspective, has the rebalancing of genders improved the performance of the firm?

I think I’ve been very fortunate throughout my career to work with progressive firms and leadership teams that have embraced change, diversity, progression and opportunity based on merit. When I started in Deloitte, there were four female partners in the firm; now there is a firm-wide gender balance. And in 2016, 53% of experienced new hires and 42% of our graduate intake were women.

We believe in having a balanced team of professionals – diversity of thought, talent and ideas is critical to the overall performance of the Tax department and the firm. Gender aside, I think it has become even more important to be confident and self-aware, as success is not just related to academic results. I also believe that people thrive in a diverse and collaborative work environment.

In terms of practical measures, what does Deloitte do to ensure that women can combine their professional career with being a busy parent?

About six years ago we started a working parents’ forum where we provide support and advice through lunchtime talks with experts who provide practical support and allow working parents’ to learn from each other. We have a culture that recognises the demands on our people from a work life balance perspective. We encourage personal ownership of that agenda by openly discussing issues such as workload management, checking if people are routinely working late or on emails outside of business hours, and if so, addressing it.

Being a mum of three myself, and often doing the school run dash in the morning, I regularly ask the teams I work with practical questions around timings of meetings, for example. Are mornings or evenings more challenging, or both, depending on childcare arrangements, school drop-offs and so on. This type of discussion can really help with work life balance and demonstrate that it is taken seriously at all levels within the firm.

A lot of employers pay lip service to flexible working options. What are the Deloitte policies in this regard?

We have developed a suite of best practice HR policies to support flexibility for working parents, both male and female, some of which measures include:

- New Parent/Paternity Leave was introduced as a statutory entitlement in September 2016. Prior to this legislative change, we provided our employees with a period of New Parent Leave following the birth of their child.
- As part of our Maternity Leave policy, women have the option to return on a phased basis over the course of several months to transition back to work. We also run ‘Return to Work’ workshops for people returning from maternity leave to help them to transition back to the workplace.
- We allow flexibility in how our people use their 18 weeks Parental Leave entitlement, with many using it to work a shorter work week. We also offer the option of reduced hours for those who want to have a permanent arrangement of a shorter work week.
We provide emergency childcare for parents whose childcare arrangements have fallen through.

We also offer a flexible working day where it is possible to adjust starting or finishing times.

A new initiative is our wellbeing initiative ‘Deloitte Unplugged’. The programme focuses on reminding our people to refuel both physically and mentally and change the mindset that we have to be ‘plugged in’ all of the time.

Deloitte has a diverse workforce in terms of the number of women employed. What about the workforce diversity in terms of people from a working class or immigrant background?

We recruit based on competency and fit for Deloitte. If an individual meets the criteria then we will recruit them, and as a result we have a diverse workforce in terms of cultural backgrounds and nationalities. As a global business, we have over 20 nationalities working together at any given time.

Would you describe yourself as an inclusive leader? If so, what does that mean to you? I would certainly like to think I am, though I recognise that there is always room for improvement. It is important to me that I continually seek to raise the bar in terms of how I can personally improve, address development areas, and drive a high-performance culture that includes openness, collaboration and inclusion.

There is a critical balance between driving a high-performance culture and achieving business success and objectives while also ensuring that you nurture and retain the people and talent that are critical to the business.

In my view, an inclusive leader is someone who is visible, connected with their teams, and fosters an environment of open dialogue, respect and inclusion, and where there can be an honest exchange of views. An inclusive leader is also someone who can deliver and explain decisions that may not be popular in a way that is respectful and transparent to those impacted.

INCLUSIVE LEADER TRAITS

In 2016, Deloitte released a Human Capital Trends report which included six traits of inclusive leaders.

**Commitment** Inclusive leaders are committed to diversity and inclusion because these objectives align with their personal values and because they believe in the business case.

**Courage** Inclusive leaders speak up and challenge the status quo, and they are humble about their strengths and weaknesses.

**Fair Play** Inclusive leaders are mindful of personal and organisational blind spots, and self-regulate to help ensure fair play.

**Curiosity** Inclusive leaders have an open mindset, a desire to understand how others view and experience the world, and a tolerance for ambiguity.

**Culturally Intelligent** Inclusive leaders are confident and effective in cross-cultural interactions.

**Collaborative** Inclusive leaders empower individuals as well as create and leverage the thinking of diverse groups.