

Leading retailers want more women in management.

9

If over 50 per cent of retail staff are women, why do so few women apply for management positions?

There are no doubt a number of reasons, including personal choice by women themselves.

However, the key question that more and more employers are starting to ask is whether or not this is a genuine expression of choice, or whether work practices and lack of career opportunities are deterring a significant proportion of the workforce from reaching their full potential.

"The majority of questionnaire respondents (74 per cent) reported that they wanted to progress in their career, that is, move higher than their current level, countering the belief that women are less ambitious and less career-oriented than men."

(British study based on 111 female assistant managers at retail outlets (Traves et al)).

Business Achievement Awards

EOWA honours Australian companies, CEOs and Diversity Leaders for their commitment to equality for women in the workplace.

Information on these Awards can be found at

<http://www.eowa.gov.au>

Benchmarking data

Our survey found:

- 42 per cent of retailers said that the relatively few female shop managers in the retail industry is an important or 'very significant' issue, and
- 36 per cent of retailers said that the relatively few female head office managers is an important or very significant issue.

Management positions attracting applications from women.

Proportion	Head office management	Store management
Less than 10%	25%	39%
10 to less than 25%	17%	6%
25 to less than 50%	17%	23%
50 to less than 75%	27%	6%
75 to 100%	14%	28%

New models of management

"Modern retail units offering 60 to 80 shopping hours a week will need another model for managerial staff. Flexible working conditions for all managers are likely to be a requirement for all future employers and employees" (Brockbank and Airey, 1994).

Australian stories

Lone Star Steakhouse and Saloon has recently changed their operational model from 4 managers to 5 managers.

Suzanne Grae is attempting to change the long-hours culture by capping management hours at 38 per week.

I began working for the company nine years ago. I was a single mother with young children and began working 12 hours a week in specialised retailing, working in a couple of outlets. Later I moved to permanent part-time in the main shop working from 10.00am to 2.00pm. This fitted well with my family responsibilities. As my children grew and became more independent I was able to work more hours and eventually I worked full-time as a supervisor. I am now the service manager (senior supervisor) responsible for more than fifty employees.

To continue my development I work with the HR department on recruitment issues as well as maintaining my service manager role. This provides me with plenty of challenges and a wide variety of work. Over the years the company has assisted and encouraged me to develop my career and move into supervisory and management roles while maintaining a balance with my family responsibilities.

Here there are a lot of women in management positions. Eighty four per cent of employees are women but 100 per cent of Service Managers are women, 95 per cent of Service Coordinators are women and 62 per cent of Pharmacists in Charge are women

Service Manager - National Pharmacies

Workshops

EOWA regularly conduct workshops designed to assist you to obtain the maximum business benefit from attracting and retaining female employees. For more information visit www.eowa.gov.au or call 02 8255 6300.

International comparisons

ASDA, is a strong advocate of seeking out management talent within its own ranks – and particularly that of female talent. At present only 7 per cent of ASDA's stores are run by female store managers, but they aim to increase this to 30 per cent by 2003.

ASDA has launched a program to encourage female managers to put themselves forward to be store managers of the future. The aim is to present positive role models so that more women will have the confidence to apply as candidates. ASDA launched its first ever supermarket store manager job share in 1999.

Sears, Roebuck and Co, a USA retailer, believes in actively seeking staff feedback and in developing female talent. Among Sears employees, 40 per cent are women and about 40 per cent of its workers at manager level and above are women. Sears attributes some of this success to the Sears Women's Network. The Network is open to all female staff and its key objectives are to:

- long-term, create a culture including and developing women at Sears in order to maximise employees' potential and contributions, and
- short-term, assess needs throughout Sears regarding career development for all women staff – and address those needs.

The group was a significant catalyst in pushing the need for mentor oriented training and the need to define work/workload expectations as part of a work/life balance.

