



RAISING THE STANDARD

NOT ALL business leaders are joining the battle for gender equality. As more women are being pushed up the corporate ladder and trained for senior roles, some male chief executive officers (CEOs) privately admit to feeling belittled, excluded and minimised. They complain that “you can’t say what you think anymore” and it’s “PC gone mad.”

In the push for parity, the privileged majority can mistake equality for oppression. “They’re fearful of the future,” says Richard Robinson, managing partner at Econsultancy. “Many white, straight men have been playing cards with a loaded deck for so long they’ve either forgotten, or never known, what it’s like to compete fairly through their own merit and skill.”

There are just six female CEOs running FTSE 100 firms (dwindling to five when Kingfisher’s Veronique Laury

steps down), with average earnings of just over half what their male counterparts enjoy. Widen this out to FTSE 350 companies and the most recent Hampton-Alexander Review found that just three per cent – that’s 12 businesses – have female CEOs.

“The global pay gap will take more than 200 years to close. We cannot wait that long,” says Dame Cilla Snowball, former group chief executive of ad giant AMV BBDO and chair of the government-backed Women’s Business Council. “Men in positions of power have a vital role to play in driving societal and economic change. Men of quality back equality.”

The Women’s Business Council teamed up with Management Today and Sky to spotlight Britain’s “Agents of Change” – an army of male leaders who are tackling inequality by changing company cultures, shattering glass ceilings and challenging the status quo.



It’s the collective responsibility of male leaders to lead by example

Danny Pallett, a senior creative at sports marketing agency Dark Horses, features in this year’s list. Fed up with seeing women only celebrated on International Women’s Day, he co-founded a platform called Badass.Gal to showcase a different young female creative every single day – and try and change the dismal facts that only 12 per cent of creative directors are women, and that many young women drop out of creative careers before

even signing their first contract.

Rod Flavell, who started FTSE 250 firm FDM Group in his attic in 1991, says you have to “measure, monitor and tackle any gender imbalances at every level of your business”.

The firm, which has reported a zero per cent median gender pay gap for the past two years, works with schools and universities to encourage more women into the sector and runs a Getting Back to Business Programme for those who have been on a career break.

Flavell is also calling on recruiters to broaden shortlists for non-executive positions. “We need to get more women – from a wider range of backgrounds and sectors – into the boardroom,” he says.

These Agents of Change recognise that promoting diversity isn’t just the right thing to do, it also makes business sense. McKinsey estimates that bridging the gender gap at work

would add £150bn to the UK economy by 2025. Research also shows that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity in their executive teams are 21 per cent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the bottom quartile.

“It’s the collective responsibility of male leaders to lead by example when it comes to driving gender parity,” says Chris Stylianou, operations chief of Sky UK and Ireland and executive sponsor of the firm’s Women in Leadership programme. “Everyone benefits from a more diverse workforce.”

This year’s Agents of Change list was judged by Snowball; Daniele Fian-daca, co-founder of Utopia; Wendy Hallett, MD of Hallett Retail Services; Rick Lee, chief human resources officer, Willmott Dixon; Richard Robinson, managing partner at Econsultancy; and Kate Bassett, head of content, Management Today.

AGENTS OF CHANGE: THE TOP THIRTY (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

1. Robert Baker
Senior partner, Mercer Limited

2. Phil Bartlett
Managing director, CDM Group

3. Ray Berg
Managing partner, Osborne Clarke

4. Chris Brook-Carter
Managing director, Retail Week

5. Phil Burgess and Felix Koch
Chief people and operations officer (Burgess), and regional CEO (Koch), C Space

6. Ian Durant
Chairman, Greggs

7. David Ellis
CEO, Harlequin FC

8. Martin Firrell
Public artist

9. Rod Flavell
CEO and founder, FDM Group

10. Stephen Frost
CEO, Frost Included

11. Andrew Geoghegan
Global consumer planning director, Diageo

12. Josh Graff
UK country manager and VP marketing

solutions Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and Latin America, LinkedIn

13. Sir Philip Hampton
Chair, Hampton-Alexander Review

14. Simon Harrison
Head of international franchise for Europe, Marks & Spencer

15. Aongus Hegarty
President EMEA, Dell Technologies

16. David Holmes
Director of retail operations, Sky

17. David Hynam
CEO, Bupa UK

18. Andrew Keating
Group finance chief, Bank of Ireland

19. Sulaiman Khan
Founder and chief purpose officer, This Ability

20. Nadeem Mahmood
Senior manager, PwC

21. Gavin Makel
Head of women’s football, Manchester City Football Club

22. Les Matheson
CEO of personal and business banking and executive sponsor for gender, RBS

23. Stephen Mercer
Head of technology consulting, Deloitte

24. Danny Pallett
Senior creative, Dark Horses and co-founder, Badass.Gal

25. Warren Richards
Head of group parts operations, Volkswagen UK

26. Matthew Rycroft
Permanent secretary, Department for International Development

27. Sean Tompkins
CEO, Rics

28. Leendert van den Hollander
Vice president and general manager, Coca-Cola European Partners

29. Rob Walker
Facility manager, Caterpillar

30. Stephen Woodford
Chief executive, the Advertising Association