

Why International Women's Day Talks For All Talent Communities



Today (Tuesday, 8th March) is International Women's Day and in this Venture special feature we explore how celebrating differences and embracing diversity across all our demographics is ultimately the key to genuine inclusion - and the pathway to helping fulfil the potential of everyone, everywhere ...

For the past 112 years, **International Women's Day** has marked a key moment to reflect on the progress being made in bringing equality of opportunity to 49.58% of the world's population.

There's certainly much to celebrate here in the UK. This week alone welcomed the first report from the **FTSE Women Leaders Review** showing that almost 40% of UK FTSE 100 board positions are now held by women, **Openreach** revealed that a record 600 female engineering apprentices were recruited last year across the UK; and here in Wales, pioneering programmes such as our first all-female accelerator scheme - **The Rise Programme** being run by We Are Radikl in Bridgend and Caerphilly - and the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Programme** (which has attracted a 50% female graduate cohort) are driving the agenda of an even playing field for all genders.

In many ways these laudable landmarks are hugely encouraging evidence of inclusive history being made, especially in light of the Welsh Government's **Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan**, unveiled in 2020 and built very much on deeds not words. Yet much remains to be done. The **ONS** reports that the equality pay gap for full time employees is stuck stubbornly at 7.9%. **Chwarae Teg** notes that in our region, only 28% of women run their own businesses (lagging behind the underwhelming 31% average that exists across the rest of the UK). And, critically, **The Fawcett Society's** regular studies have shown how age, race, ethnicity, disability and access to education continue to inform gender inequalities - and most other inequalities.

This is about everyone and all of us

Viewed as an inclusive whole, there's no room for complacency here in Wales and the UK. Far from it. Britain's push to level up is a tacit acceptance that inequalities have become in many places too wide, too deep and too ingrained. So taking the time to look at best practices, successful roadmaps and areas of sustained progress made in female inclusion shouldn't just be viewed exclusively through the lens of 'gender'. It should open our eyes on how we can connect and engage with **anyone and everyone** who is excluded from fulfilling their potential - and in some cases effectively disenfranchised from the opportunities most of us take for granted.

Many people look towards the Government to lead the way in what is so often called Diversity & Inclusion but could equally be characterised as the building blocks of Sustainability and Wellbeing. And with the Welsh Government embedding inclusion in major programmes such as the creation of 125,000 all-age apprenticeships, there's clearly important strides being made.

But a Government alone won't drive sustained progress in opening up opportunity for everyone. It will only be achieved inch by inch and day by day, in our schools and colleges, through our training provision, role-modelling and workplace cultures. As an example, Openreach attributes their success in hiring 600 female engineering apprentices (including 50 here in Wales) to the inclusive language they use in their job ads and job descriptions. It's that type of conscious effort made by employers and training providers to engage at every step, understanding that they have a responsibility to inspire and connect, that ultimately makes the difference in someone reaching out for an opportunity - or not.

CIPD Wales recognises that employers (and specifically HR and L&D departments) have a huge role to play in opening up organisations to the talent of all communities: creating a two-way value chain where employers can access previously untapped human capital - and individuals can pursue their life chances as employees.

That approach is at the heart of CIPD Wales' **"Hidden in plain sight - Wales' alternative talent pool"** event, which will focus on helping 'disconnected' people into work. Those people may need support in making their first move into the workplace. They may struggle to realise the skills they naturally possess. They may have lost confidence in their abilities - or may even be overwhelmed by the different options available to them. Whatever the obstacles, it's encouraging that the 'people profession' is looking to shape solutions to help potential employees become real-life colleagues, with a pathway to pursue their hopes, dreams and ambitions, regardless of background or orientation.

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To find out more about the range of gender-inclusive skills and training programmes supported by Venture, go to www.venturewales.org