



Informing Progress - Shaping the Future

FOIL UPDATE 7th July 2022



Harnessing Male Allyship to Build a Truly Gender Equal Workspace

This event was held (virtually) on 15th June 2022 and was led by **Mark Huxley** (MH), special adviser to London FOIL.

MH began by advising that the views expressed by the panel would be their own views and not necessarily those of the organisations they represented. The panel comprised:

Aarti Leadbetter (AL), head of tax at **Brit Insurance**

Mark Lomas (ML), head of culture at **Lloyds of London**

Mark Freed (MF), founder and CEO of **E2W**

Bios and contact details of the panel are attached.

What is the current state of play around gender/gender quality/male allyship?

AL: In the early stage of her career, AL had not been particularly aware of these issues. As she moved into another role, she began to hear more and see more from her peers and other colleagues. She saw herself as being fortunate to have been on the Lloyds' Advanced Course, essentially a leadership course for women in the Lloyds Market. This was a real eye-opener, as at that time AL had not realised the existence of 'road blocks' to advancement in her career, i.e., the stages in a woman's career where there is often a 'drop-off'. However, she had had support from her employer to overcome those barriers and was now in a position to provide similar encouragement to others.

ML: There is no doubt that slow and steady progress is being made within Lloyd's Market, since the need for reform was recognised. This is measured in two ways: first, the market's practices and policies survey, which measures representation in the sector; and secondly, a culture survey which measures the individual's experience.

There is a 1% per year-on-year increase in representation, so that this year the overall representation by women increased from 41% to 42%; and women in leadership climbed to 30% from 29%. ML recognises that this is too slow but sustainable progress like this is better than none.

The culture survey also shows improvement. Individuals see their firms as being inclusive and collaborative but see the market as outdated and traditional.

Positive action has been taken, such as the Advance Programme, which continues to be effective both within and outside the organisation.

To ML the larger question is around how Lloyd's Market is improving recruitment, talent and professional practices. These remain fairly immature in this sector. It is the systems and processes which need changing, rather than the people. Preparing talent is being improved but the selection processes need to improve to further remove biases and to focus on objective criteria.

Core culture seems to be a clear barrier. Is this any different elsewhere in financial services?

MF: Thought that the historical context is important. When he started work in the 70s, the typical work carried out by women was secretarial/switchboard. There was no paternity leave and men could not be openly gay. There has been a huge journey, with great progress and this needs to be continued.

The statistics show that at the current rate of progress, it is going to be 50-plus years before there is true diversity and inclusivity. A great deal of emphasis has been on bringing more women into the industry and then getting them to work like men, to succeed in a man's world. Little has been done to change the male behaviours, the male values and male cultures that dominate the financial service industries. Those inhibit the progression, performance and experience of female colleagues and others from under-represented groups. To speed the journey up, some emphasis needs to be put into teaching men how to understand their relative advantage and how their behaviours/values hinder the performance, etc of female colleagues.

AL felt that the last 10 years had seen a great improvement in the type of support and 'investment' in the individual. However, she agreed that it seemed to focus on training women to fit in to a male dominated environment. Some of the training received did not resonate with her: she did not see why she should have to change her behaviours in the way suggested. AL felt that the qualities she believed she brought to her job were being downplayed and devalued. The Lloyds' Advanced Course she had been on was a general leadership qualities course and would have been useful to anyone. It enabled AL to consider who she was as a person, without trying to shoe-horn her into behaving in a particular way. Looking back, the courses appear to have been aimed at women. At the time, that seems to have been the focus of the market and other businesses.

AL now sees a shift, for example with an increase in reverse mentoring and discussions with both more junior and more senior people, many of whom have experienced their own form of prejudice. Understanding others' experiences is crucial.

How can change be driven at a faster rate?

ML: Change would move at a faster rate if there was accountability. Only 29% of leaders in the market have compensation linked to diversity/culture issues. Chief financial officers could be setting

KPI objectives on these issues, linked to financial performance and remuneration like is common for many aspects of business performance. Male leaders speak about these issues and sponsor them but the data demonstrates less than a 1.3rd of leaders are accountable for Culture/D&I metrics... ML believes that if there is more accountability then, progress will accelerate.

He believes that the talent is there: it is the processes are not supporting our D&I ambition sufficiently.. Males need to do more to become involved in supporting females at a practical level. Within Lloyd's Market, a cross- Market mentoring system exists but it needs to be used more. It is no good relying on evolution: some revolution is required. This in turn needs to be based on deliberate action, which accountability encourages.

MH observed that it has been shown that a truly diverse organisation has better profitability. Nevertheless, at a talk at Lloyds, he had been one of a limited number of men, in an overwhelmingly female audience, at an important talk on this issue. Men at the top need to recognise that they are the problem and not just empower other people to come up with a solution.

How do we go about getting better male inclusivity?

MF: One of the first problems is men who are resisting the necessary change, both in relation to women and ethnicity. A survey suggests that one-third of men, across a range of industries, think like that. Others are passive: it is not about them/they do not know how to help/they are too busy.

There are then those who are objective driven and who may focus just on the percentages or the numbers. They are target driven but do not necessarily create the right environment for women colleagues.

There are then 'allies' who actively mentor women and champion women but perhaps with a view to helping them succeed in a man's world.

Finally, there are the 'inclusionists': men who are looking at themselves, their actions, and running their teams in a very inclusive way. They understand that everyone is an individual and they manage and support them as such. This is the aim. How we get there is by sharing the research that has been done into the things that hinder women in their progression and their day-to-day work. There also needs to be discussion about how much the lack of diversity is costing the organisation and how much it would cost to solve the problem. If half a business is underperforming, there is good reason to do something. But there is also the personal case, based on personal experience, which individuals can bring to the change needed in their leadership.

Examples of 'good behaviour'

AL: The availability of day-to-day support and realising that as a manager of a female you have a pivotal role to play in someone's career journey. AL had experienced such people who both made suggestions as to how she could advance and who were still prepared to give advice.

ML: Inclusive leadership should not be treated as a 'nice to have' but as an absolute core competence. This needs to be fed into selection and training, to make it 'deliberate'.

In response to a question by MH, he agreed that the Lloyd's Market is unique in that there are those over whom Lloyds has direct control and then those, still involved in the market, but much more removed from that degree of control. The issues under discussion today are pushed through

engagement with managing agents and through the operation of the market principles where there are consequences for material non-compliance. Culture is among those principles.

With brokers, it is through engagement but ML conceded that there are some gaps appearing, which need to be addressed and solved. We need to improve Culture and D&I across the whole Lloyd's' Market eco-system.

ML sees the solution for the future to be through common usage and sector wide solutions, for example in early years selection. All parts of the market should benefit from a cost-saving common approach and this will increase progress in D&I rapidly. This would be better than many disjointed processes.

MF: MF agreed that sector wide initiatives are far better. But we still need to turn the mirror on ourselves as individuals and think about the way we behave. MF agreed also that a mini-revolution is required. He believes that today's leaders are aligned to do that. Emerging leaders must be inclusive or will not remain leaders in the future. Inclusivity has been proven to be the most effective leadership model for everybody. Emerging talents need to learn how to be and then become more inclusive.

Open discussion

A delegate asked about the resisting change group and how to get them on board when they are determined not to be.

MF: There are quite often many different reasons for people resisting. Sometimes the very fact that an organisation appears to be fulfilling quotas may leave some men feeling overlooked: merit does not appear to be a relevant criterion anymore. There need to be honest conversations with those men.

There are also dinosaurs, about whom nothing can be done and they must be allowed to 'die-off'.

There are opportunities to talk to the other men, to show them the unlevel playing field that has benefited them for years but that there needs to be a levelling up. Frank conversations are necessary on this and other issues, to try to change these men's perspectives.

The passive group offers the best opportunity but experienced 'D', diversity before 'I', inclusivity came along. 'D' was deemed to exclude the white male and so a lot of men are late to the agenda. These men need a little bit of education and a little bit of help but it must be recognised that they often do not know how to help or support and/or they may be scared to support. MF had appeared as the only white male on a diversity panel and had found it very difficult to judge what to say and was afraid of using the wrong language.

Another delegate asked MF how he had gone about addressing his concerns at that meeting.

MF: He had started by apologising for any mistake he might make; by indicating that he was there to learn; and that he was happy to be called-out.

ML was asked about the concept of being 'deliberate' in relation to the systemic changes that need to be made and about accountability. How can individuals be held to account where one male in an organisation may be on board with the concept but another is not? The delegate was thinking beyond a tick-box system where training is provided but may not necessarily lead to a change in behaviour.

ML did not think this was necessarily a long process but depended on what was meant by 'tick-box'. Should everyone in a leadership role have inclusivity training/D&I training? Probably yes, at a basic level but after that there should be other processes, such as reverse mentoring, which have the benefit of allowing people to develop relationships. These processes were reciprocal but non-negotiable: it was part of the expectation of being a leader. They were part of the performance management of the individuals and were taken into account in future interviews for further leadership positions. These had to be systemised, so that D&I was a core competence and not based on goodwill. This needs to come from the top down, as well as from the bottom up. The senior leadership team needs to make the choice to impose such systems and not leave it on an opt-in/opt-out basis. There is then collective responsibility.

ML was asked who was responsible for setting a CEO's targets and how that group might be influenced to make inclusivity one of the goals. ML responded that in the survey referred to above, leaders were categorised broadly, to include the executive, boards, and chairs, all of whom can be very influential and can decide to set that agenda and accountability. Where this is a collective decision, it usually becomes easier, it is seen as added value for those who support it and those against become the outliers.

Leadership is not always about agreeing that a choice which has been made is your personal preference: it can be about what is best for the organisation. Alignment is more important for ML than agreement. A group of leaders makes a decision and then aligns behind it. If a leader cannot do this then they must consider if they are in the right organisation.

MH asked AL what, as a sector, can be done to provide better and broader mentoring, in its various forms.

AL: A lot of mentoring programmes are voluntary and therefore only engage those who are interested. The risk is that they are self-selecting. There are people who are not being reached by that approach. AL felt that there should be more active promotion of the opportunities and benefits.

AL also agreed with MH's suggestion that mentoring should be extended beyond the insurance industry, to include other sectors, particularly where they are doing more: what works and what changes should be made?

A delegate asked how the panel would deal with bias, with conscious or unconscious?

MF responded that he had experience of a female only recruitment agency being brought in only late in the recruitment process. There were already male candidates in the frame and somebody had suddenly put on a diversity lens. This is one example of many process biases. As statistically it takes longer to recruit female candidates, they should be looked at first.

Processes that have been in place for years need to be examined for inbuilt bias. Are they holding back the organisation on its D&I journey?

People biases (biases within us) include allocating office house work to women in the team and career enhancing opportunities to the men. Do the women volunteer more readily for the office house work tasks? Leaders need to recognise these things happen and allocate these roles more equitably between male and female team members. They must also take into account that the

social bond between two males or two females may be stronger but should not cloud any decision making in relation to individuals.

The delegate remained concerned that very few within the legal profession were prepared to put the time in to learn the importance of not being biased in some way. (It was noted that the majority of delegates to this event were female but a delegate later commented that at least there were people in attendance and the message could gradually be passed on to others).

Another delegate made the observation that in coaching women both within and outside her firm, she had found a reluctance to speak up in meetings because of some off-the-cuff remark made by their bosses. There needs to be a willingness not only to be more confident but also to call out those sorts of remarks and have an open conversation about D&I. People need to be encouraged to bring their whole self to the firm. Coaching and mentoring would accelerate this process.

MF responded that some organisations have an inclusionist 'first-aider' in every meeting, who assists the chair in ensuring that everyone can have their say and generally influencing the meeting behaviour.

FOIL CEO **Laurence Besemer** wondered whether the increase in online meetings had affected how people interact with each other. What are the pros and cons of this in terms of ensuring inclusivity?

ML felt that there is a real need to consider accessibility with online meetings. Expectations need to be addressed at the beginning of the meeting, e.g., letting people know that you will be asking for their comments but that there is no obligation to respond; or to use the hands-up function; or messaging people individually to see if they want to comment, using the captioning functionality etc. These are just some of the ways that participation in an online meeting can be encouraged.

By way of general observation, a male delegate confessed that before receiving the email relating to this event, he had never heard the phrase 'male ally'. He sought examples of how mentoring/reverse mentoring worked in the workplace.

AL felt that she had found mentoring particularly useful in providing guidance as to how to navigate through political situations and relationships, rather than day-to-day issues. Also, it had been helpful on issues such as seeking a pay rise and even job applications. Even when considering joining her present company, AL had sought assistance from mentors for reassurance that she was capable. Her experiences of hearing different views had assisted her in mentoring others. By listening to them she has been able better to frame training and development for graduates joining the company during the pandemic.

MH added that, as an older person, with extensive experience, he does a great deal of mentoring. Yet, he believes that he does 50% reverse mentoring, as he needs to keep his brain active and to gain insight into different age groups and demographics. This in turn enables MH to understand how the insurance market is likely to function in the future. He also seeks mentoring from outside the insurance sector, to bring new perspectives. MH sees reverse mentoring as key to the proper functioning of senior management.

A delegate observed that D&I was now part of partnership applications in her organisation but feared that once that hurdle had been negotiated it might drop-off. It had been suggested that compulsory reverse mentoring should come in when someone had been admitted into partnership. It is easy to capture the people who are interested but the stick is needed for others.

ML agreed. It was easy to call out the names of those pro-active in this area and so the process must be systemised to avoid an opt-in culture.

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