

Supporting women in the workplace



Global giant Johnson Controls is rightly proud of its Women Resource Network, which aims to motivate, attract and retain more women in the workplace. Yet, while it has led to a series of women progressing into senior management positions across the world, the UK has very few senior females to act as role models in the organisation.

Recognising there is much to do if Johnson Controls' UK operations are to catch up with colleagues, particularly in the United States, Germany and France, when it comes to having women in leading roles, the Women's Resource Network contacted Skills 4's Managing Director, Jayne Little.

Skills 4 is a leading provider of gender diversity initiatives, specialising in the engineering and advanced manufacturing sectors. The company designs and delivers bespoke interventions that enable clients to achieve their diversity objectives and utilise the skills of their entire workforce.

More than 80 women at Johnson Controls have been through the Skills 4 Career Development Programme for women and Leila Dassi, an Account Finance Manager and President of the UK Women's Resource Network, was one of the first to complete the training.

"We recognised a need to do more to make the company attractive to women, both internally and externally," said Leila.

"We talked to Jayne about the work she had



done with other major companies and we realised to make a diversity policy work, we had to make sure both men and women understood the issues. Jayne came and delivered unconscious bias training to a group of 27 employees, which included 10 senior managers and 15 women. We examined unintentional people preferences, created and maintained by factors such as the way we have been socialised growing up, personal experiences as an adult and the impact of the media."

The Skills 4 training shows how being aware of personal biases allows leaders to make better and fairer decisions; enhances problem solving skills and increases ability to think differently, ultimately leading to better client relationships and better business.

"To have more women in the room was unusual for us," said Leila. "Men and women see things differently. The training showed how gender diversity can help a team listen and see the value in taking account of everybody's opinion."

Steve Garnett, Plant Manager for the Telford site, rolled out the unconscious bias training to all of his staff. "The plant was in the midst of an accelerated change programme. To balance the stress this induces we supported the team by providing training that raises awareness of behaviour.

"The unconscious bias training achieved this in a



fun and interesting way. It is referred to daily amongst the team and helps reset team norms and boundaries.

"Following the training, employees have reported a change in their thinking which is benefitting them both at work and at home. Employees have commented that they are now more aware of how they think and the decisions they make, which is resulting in improved communication, decision making and team work at the site."

David McMahon, VP & GM Asian OEM's Europe, was keen to extend the content of the talk with senior leaders within the business and invited Jayne to attend the company's next European Leadership conference. "Jayne performed a workshop with the JCI European Leadership team with specific focus on unconscious bias highlighting the impact it can have on decision making. A process was shared to determine the strength of bias within individuals as well as positive changes which can be made at a personal and organisational level. The talk was well presented to a multi-cultural leadership team with humour and clear experience of the issue."

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Its 170,000 employees create quality products, services and solutions to optimise energy and operational efficiencies of buildings; lead-acid automotive batteries and advanced batteries for hybrid and electric vehicles; and interior systems for automobiles.

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