



Tackling Career Blockers – Main Takeaways

On the 1st of June 2023, Wo.Men in Finance Belgium hosted yet another INclusive, educational, sparkling and moving event. Moving as we aimed at creating mind-shifts. Practical because with 6 workshops, this event focused on TACKLING the career blockers that we identified during the further results of our survey about career blockers in the financial sector. We wanted you to go home not only with the 'WHY' of 'Why does this matter?', but also with the 'HOW' of 'How can we create change?'. The event took place at Vlerick Business School, which attracted over 120 professionals from various functions and seniority levels in the finance sector in Belgium

The event included six different workshops, facilitated by committed members of the Wo.Men in Finance community and Vlerick faculty. The interactive workshops aimed to instigate personal change within the participants and potentially contribute to larger transformational processes within their respective organisations. The following six workshops were delivered:

Dare to Speak Up! How To Build Psychological Safety at Work *by Jesse Segers of Sioo and Alois Thiant of Marsh McLennan*

The purpose of this workshop was to show that there is scientific background to building psychological safety. It is making sure that everyone has the right framework to making everyone feel comfortable and bringing up issues that could make other people uncomfortable, especially management.

Main Takeaways:

- Set the stage and create the right (physical) conditions for people to speak up
- Invite participation from employees, and not just make something that is automatic. It is important to seek their feedback
- Respond productively. Welcome the feedback, express gratitude and appreciation and act upon it. Not necessarily in the way where you would want to be the white knight and seek justice, but rather to make sure that the person feels heard, there will be follow up actions and afterwards, there will be no retaliation.

Another important mention is about setting your own boundaries and knowing what you can accept, which in turn becomes a strength and knowing where and why you feel psychologically safe in the workplace

For more information, check out this useful [presentation](#).

The Role of Internal Networks *by Jeroen Somers of BEAMA, Katrien Goossens of ING, and Anne Charlier*

In this workshop, the focus was put on Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers by empowering culture change via Employee Networks. Anne Charlier and Carine de Groot of *Mix City Belgium* at BNP Paribas Fortis, Julia Schneider of *Rainbow Lions* at ING, Dorthy Van Saen of *Diversity Rocks* at KBC and Jeroen Somers, the *Chair of the Networking Workstream* from BEAMA shared some tips & tricks on Employee Networks.

Main Takeaways:

- Define a clear scope of the employee network(s) from the start (e.g. gender, LGBTQIA+, age, disabilities, etc.).
- Start from data to build a case (e.g. conduct an internal anonymous survey, discuss available data with HR from exit or promotion interviews),
- Liaise with Human Resources to discuss collaboration and try embedding the network(s) in existing structures (e.g. in terms of recruitment: diverse; internal or external quota; keep job vacancy open if no candidates of all genders, etc.).
- Set up a solid governance structure:
 - ✓ Gather a motivated and dedicated team to run the network from the ground (bottom-up). Stimulate organic growth by finding passionate people.
 - ✓ Seek a sponsor at ExCo level (active role as part of a strategic priority) and strive for management buy-in at all levels of management (top-down culture). Request visibility of high-profiles at events. Ensure involvement from different locations.
 - ✓ Create a steering committee with key stakeholders from all levels.
 - ✓ Consider a formal membership to ensure active commitment (member sign-up, signature of networking charter, newsletters, etc.)
 - ✓ Keep monitoring data along the way for reporting purposes (KPI, action plans, SteerCo meetings).
- Stress the value of networks and inclusion & diversity, create awareness, seek allies & ambassadors (avoid creating division, but focus on the common benefits).
- Ensure sufficient diversity within the networking team, but allow for sufficient similarities at the same time so as to encourage an open and free dialogue.
- Seek a balance between the paradox of volunteers versus dedicated resources/FTE (discuss availability with management, link into target setting & evaluation, request budget for dedicated team).
- Communicate throughout the organisation on your networks, its needs and its accomplishments. Use other events to put the topic on the agenda.

Seek external partnerships for the purpose of networking, knowledge sharing, perspective, etc.

For more information, check out this useful [presentation](#).

How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb? by Claire Godding of Wo.Men in Finance and Leen Vermeersch of Euroclear

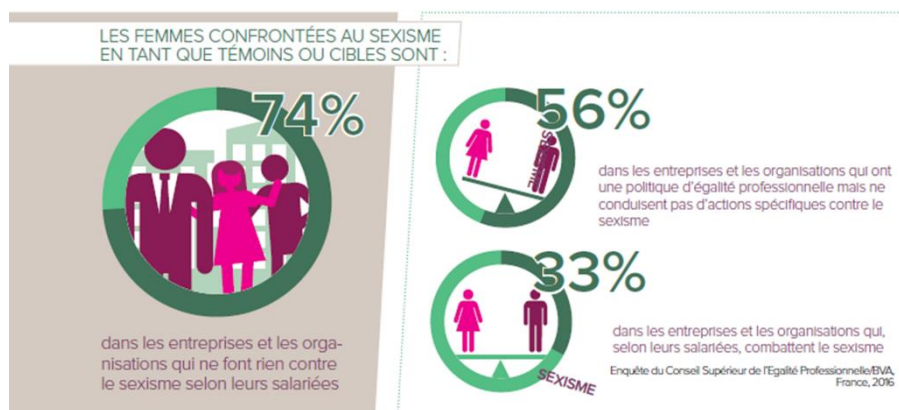
This workshop focused on the importance of tackling sexism, belittling comments and jokes at work. Why is it important to have this discussion? The illustration below shows the latest result of the Wo.Men in Finance Survey on Corporate Culture and Career.



More figures, presented by Enquête du Conseil Supérieur de l'Égalité Professionnelle, show why this is a pressing issue that needs to be brought to our attention.

DES CHIFFRES QUI DOIVENT VOUS CONVAINCRE D'AGIR

PLUS LES ENTREPRISES COMBATTENT LE SEXISME, MOINS IL Y A DE SEXISME !



Furthermore, having a conversation about what microaggressions are, what is the impact and what do they mean is vitally important. Some examples of microaggressions include:

- When passing by the coffee machine I hear my colleagues laughing at a sexist joke
- In a meeting, my female colleague who is expert on a theme is interrupted by someone less expert.
- An older colleague gets a nickname "Oma" by some colleagues

- A creative colleague tries to explain a new idea during a team meeting, but gets cut – “as we don't have time to discuss new ideas.”

Main Takeaways:

- As a witness and ally: in the case of a microaggression or sexism — REACT DIRECTLY – IN YOUR NAME, not in the victim's. “When I hear this joke (these words...) I do not feel comfortable”...
- As a victim, do not stay alone – remember that you are not guilty – TALK ABOUT IT, FIND HELP
- As a hierarchic or functional representative : LISTEN –RESPECT (do not minimize or relativize) - ACT
- As a presumed author (of microaggression, benevolent sexism...) : Apologize – do not minimize or justify – Learn.
- Regarding humour at work, it is always the receiver who gives the meaning!

And what are the main steps to tackle sexism in your work culture (as well as racism, homophobia and more)



For more useful readings, you can check out the following links:

- Decision tree of how to react when faced by unacceptable behaviour (as victim or witness)
<https://inclusioninfinance.be/en/tool/11> (available in 3 languages)
- Dealing with microaggressions? Please go to theme 4 of the *Inclusion in Finance Toolbox* <https://inclusioninfinance.be/en> (available in 3 languages)
- Book “nonviolent communication”, with concrete steps on how to react & communicate - “*Nonviolent communication. A language of life.*” from Marshall B. Rosenber
- Wo.Men in Finance webpage : <https://www.womeninfinancebelgium.be/en>
- A great way to illustrate what microaggressions are like can be found in this video: [How microaggressions are like mosquito bites](#)

Skills for the Future by Vlerick Professor Aleksandra Klein and Nathalie Delaere

This workshop put an emphasis on ‘soft skills’, and attributing it to powerful terminology such as social, emotional, enabling, people skills.

Main Takeaways:

- Among the most demanded skill soft the future, most can be characterized as “soft” skills. Examples include, but are not limited to leadership and teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, empathy, etc.
- These skills are more enduring and can act as enablers for other on-demand skills, such as higher cognitive skills – e.g., critical and agile thinking, creativity and innovation, resilience, self-efficacy, and complex problem-solving – and digital skills – e.g., digital citizenship and fluency.
- Skill gap is dangerous, as it leads to job segregation and related pay gap.
- The term “soft” can be a problem for raising awareness about the importance of these skills in organizations and among some of their members. Possible alternatives could be: socio-emotional, enabling, or people skills.
- The awareness must be raised among the executives to provide organizational support for employees to develop these skills of the future and at the same time underpinned with individual initiatives of employees.
- Organisations should act. Possible initiatives include, pay transparency, inclusion of skill-based component in the compensation scheme, in-company training and knowledge sharing incentives, etc.

For more information, you can check out the following [article](#):

Skill shift: Automation and the future of the workforce by McKinsey Global Institute.

Khaleidoscope: Inclusive Game by Cecile Cormier of Inclusive Games SRL

We are all a mix of visible and invisible characteristics, which makes our richness, and the richness of our team. We all know that diverse teams perform better. But in order to shine with our teammates, we need to feel valued and supported for who we are, the way we are.

How do we all benefit from diversity? Through inclusion! Like a hammock, it makes us feel comfortable enough to bring our added value to the team. That said, how can we make inclusion a reality in our corporate environments? Through inclusive leadership! The Khaleidoscope® model lists 9 inclusive behaviours used by inclusive leaders (Kindness, Humility, Empathy, Empowerment, Equity, Stimulation, Courage, Proactivity and Versatility).

To be inclusive, you do not need to use those 9 behaviours simultaneously. You just have to find the mode(s) of inclusive leadership that suit you and use at least one of them in every situation where there is a risk of exclusion.

Main Takeaways:

Playing Khaleidoscope®, you become aware of behaviours and biases, discover attitudes that you may be less familiar with, share with other players concrete solutions for inclusive leadership on a daily basis and develop together tools to make your workplace more inclusive and, de facto, increase the performance within your company.

There is no inclusive leadership, there is a kaleidoscope of inclusive behaviours you can discover thanks to the immersive workshops based on the Khaleidoscope® card game.

For more information, you can check out the Inclusive Games [Website](#)

Assimilation and Imposter Syndrome *by Frédérique Billay of ING, Sarah Ndayirukiye of NBB, and An Van Doorselaer of Euroclear*

In the workshop on Assimilation and Imposter Syndrome, some key insights were shared on how managers, organisations and ourselves can tackle this topic and open these conversations.

Main Takeaways:

- For managers :
 - ✓ Mentor and network with people different than you and/or the majority group and encourage reverse mentoring
 - ✓ Encourage divergent opinions
 - ✓ Value and acknowledge team members from an underrepresented group
 - ✓ In a meeting with your team, make sure you speak last. This gives other people to express their opinions, as well as giving you the opportunity to hear the opinions of others
- For organisations :
 - ✓ Create a psychologically safe place to work
 - ✓ Promote different leadership styles, testimonials, videos; women and men with feminine/inclusive leadership style, success stories. Promote managers and not only leaders at the top
 - ✓ Talk openly about assimilation in the workplace. This can be done during the D&I week for example
 - ✓ Organise workshops for managers and leaders
 - ✓ Create and make available a toolkit : what is it? How do we recognise? Examples of assimilation etc.
- For ourselves:
 - ✓ Identify impostor syndrome and assimilation and accept it in a first step, be kind with yourself
 - ✓ Check if your 'negative' thoughts are true and always true: challenge them and see how they resonate when you reformulate in positive thoughts
 - ✓ Open up to people we trust in the workplace, to people who may have experienced the same, to employee networks who are there to support. Speak to family and friends we trust. Consciously look out for other examples, for people who don't assimilate
 - ✓ For each other: when we identify risk of assimilation and in a culture of feedback, share what we observe. There is no judgement and feel free to ask questions !

For more useful readings, you can check out the following links:

What is imposter syndrome and how can you combat it? - Elizabeth Cox – [YouTube](#)

Michelle Obama explains imposter syndrome – [YouTube](#)

The Surprising Solution to the Imposter Syndrome | Lou Solomon | TEDxCharlotte – [YouTube](#)