



Industry leaders must break down diversity barriers to reap rewards

# 'Equality, diversity and inclusion will help to fill the skills shortage'

Anthony Kendrick brings you the highlights from last month's Women in Logistics Annual Conference.



A diverse workforce is more productive and innovative

**T**he first Women in Logistics Annual Conference held since the Forum integrated with CILT investigated the importance of making your company resilient through building an inclusive and diverse workplace. A sold-out audience gathered at John Lewis's Magna Park Campus to hear from inspiring and engaging speakers who encouraged delegates to increase their confidence, embrace change, have difficult conversations and make the most of opportunities.

## Why do women not play golf?

Wendy Dean, Managing Director, Strategi Solutions Group, kicked off this year's conference by tackling self-limiting beliefs and encouraged the women in attendance to have more confidence in their own ability, saying: 'You're only worth what you can negotiate.' She described her route to senior management and how, for many women, trying to get to where she ended up were hampered by their own 'crippling defeatism'. In a plea to delegates, she concluded: 'The biggest thing we can do is

support other women. We should not be reluctant to help others succeed, especially in today's world, which offers so many challenges for women to overcome.'

### Not just job titles

Kirsty Dean, Managing Director, Passion Inc, discussed the importance of committing to a culture that is open, transparent and enables employees to thrive. She enthused: 'If your employees are engaged and believe in your values, then they will care more, enjoy work and you will have better results to show for it.'

She outlined the four enablers of employee engagement: strategic narrative, engaging managers, employee voice and integrity: 'In logistics and transport, we have such a big opportunity for growth and to make a difference, if you ensure that your employees are engaged.'

However, she warned: 'The industry is still wrestling with hierarchy and leaders must break down these barriers to reap rewards. Leaders must start looking at the whole person. We have to remember that our employees are more than just job titles, they are people.'

The Women in Logistics Annual Conference always offers one of the most diverse audiences, including in terms of age, and it is Millennials that Kirsty Dean believes must be targeted, nurtured and supported to ensure workforces are recruited in order to futureproof an organisation: 'Millennials are a big cohort of today's workforce and by 2020 will make up 50% of our employees. It is important that our culture allows these young minds to thrive.' She went on to suggest that 86% of Millennials would move to a company that shared their values, even for less pay.

### How can I help?

'There is evidence to show that the more diverse your workforce is, the more productive and increasingly more innovative your organisation will be,' said Fiona Triller, Programme Director, Creating Inclusive Cultures. Her presentation outlined that it is one thing to have a diversity and inclusion strategy, but it is increasingly more difficult to bring that to life.

She said: 'It's very easy for managers to expect people to act in a certain way, but people come to your team wanting to be their own person. It is important that managers treat people the same way and nurture everyone's unique qualities; not doing so would do your team a massive disservice.'



By 2020, Millennials will make up 50% of our employees

Building an inclusive and resilient organisation requires leaders to make an effort with their team. She said: 'The best question a manager can ask is: "How can I help?" It is your role to get the best out of your team and the only way to do so is by providing the platform for everyone to be their best on a daily basis.'

### Not just a woman's job

Naomi Irvine, Director, Naomi Irvine Ltd, explained how to engage in constructive dialogue in the workplace and offered her thoughts on how to make discussions about diversity less polarising and less confrontational. She said: 'We need to start by having conversations. We need to talk to each other and not tiptoe around tackling difficult topics. Discussing equality can be a painful subject, one where you feel you won't be listened to and you can go round in circles. It's frustrating, knowing that and having to continuously point something out, and that stops you being the best you can be.'

She went on to explain to delegates the intricate differences between equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and stressed the importance of these topics being regular conversations with staff of all levels: 'We have to feel safe in articulating how we feel about EDI. We have to be prepared to learn about ourselves before we change our culture. If your organisation is open to EDI, that is going to help tackle the skills shortage by providing you with people you wouldn't previously consider.'

'We won't get equality without each other. It is not just a woman's job to fight for equality. This isn't about who's good or who's bad, we have to find new ways of doing and discussing things.'

### Choice, chance, change

Marisa Baker, Senior Business Partner, Kingsley Consulting, explained how her life experiences – a child brought up through the care system and not able to read or write until the age of eight – have shaped her career in helping those less fortunate into work. She said: 'Let's stop thinking about and talking about recruitment; let's start providing solutions today.'

One of her main initiatives over the last few years has been helping ex-offenders back into the workplace, and logistics operators have been open to providing this opportunity. More than 85,000 offenders are in UK prisons today and Marisa Baker believes that if we are open to employing them, they could be the valuable labour pool logistics organisations require.

She introduced delegates to the 3Cs of life: choice, chance and change. She said: 'We must take time to support, encourage, educate and care to offer the 3Cs to those less fortunate to make them desirable for our labour pool. I was born into circumstances well beyond my control and you start to believe you'll spend your entire time with all of these stigmas; but really, all you need is someone to take a chance and someone to give you that one opportunity.'

The CILT Women in Logistics Forum would like to thank all of the speakers at this year's conference and John Lewis for hosting this inspirational and thought-provoking day. The Women in Logistics Annual Conference 2019 will be held on Wednesday 25th September 2019 at IMHX 2019, Birmingham.



**WOMEN** **IN** **LOGISTICS**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019**

Wednesday 25th September 2019 • IMHX 2019, NEC, Birmingham  
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