
Apollo Project - Baker & McKenzie submission Global Aspirational Targets for Gender Diversity

Overview

Baker & McKenzie was the first major international firm to announce a target to increase its percentage of female equity partners to 30%. In 2013 we took 10 concrete steps towards achieving the target.

As a truly multinational law firm, diversity has always been integral to Baker & McKenzie. Russell Baker appointed the first female partner in 1961 and when a young Christine Lagarde joined in 1980- later to become chair of the Firm- she was interviewed by Monique Nion, the Paris managing partner. Lagarde later commented: *"[Being interviewed by Monique] made a very strong impression on me. The fact that a woman could actually share the experience that she had with all these male partners was quite encouraging for a young woman my age. In those days there were hardly any female partners in international law firms."*

But despite these pioneering efforts, we are also well aware that there is still plenty of room for improvement when it comes to promoting the professional growth of women. That is why, in 2012, we implemented our **Global Aspirational Targets (GATs)** for gender diversity. In so doing we became the first major international law firm to set gender targets for partners.

The targets, which were spearheaded by London-based Global Executive Committee member Beatriz Araujo, aim to increase the percentage of female equity partners to at least 30%, the percentage of female junior equity partners to 40% and for the 30% of leadership roles in the Firm to be held by women.

In order to deliver on these targets we have introduced a broad range of innovative initiatives, including the rollout of our firm-wide 'unconscious bias' training to address subconscious bias in evaluations, work allocation and promotion discussions.

In London, our largest office, a 'comprehensive action plan' was also created to implement policies to make the GATs more achievable, and make partnership a realistic goal for a broader spectrum of our female workforce, particularly those balancing work and family life. These actions were drawn up by the leadership of the influential BakerWomen group, **Jo Ludlam, Julia Hayhoe and Louise Webb**. The action plan was unanimously approved by the London Management Committee in January, 2014.

Strength of Business Case

While Baker & McKenzie has made strong headway in bringing greater gender diversity to its partnership and leadership positions, there remain stark examples of how more can be done. In London, 54% of our associates are women, yet women make up only 20% of our partnership.

There isn't just a moral case for addressing this disparity, there is also a business case. It is a key belief in the firm that a diverse workforce enables us to respond better to the needs of our clients and diverse leadership teams are generally more effective. Readdressing the balance and striving towards greater female representation in senior positions is a fundamental goal.

The introduction of Global Aspirational Targets served as a call to action, challenging the leadership to look more closely at what should be done to develop, retain and promote more females both to partnership and to leadership roles.



In order to meet the targets, practical measures were taken to identify and retain female talent and remove the barriers to their progression. We are confident that the comprehensive action plan that we have now introduced will help remove some of these barriers.

Innovation

We believe we were the first global firm to announce global gender targets (announced end 2012) and the first to implement them. 2013 and 2014 have seen the rollout of several highly innovative initiatives, including a comprehensive action plan designed to help the firm meet its gender diversity targets:

1. **Unconscious bias training** – These training seminars helped address subconscious bias in evaluations, work allocation and promotion discussions, as well as day-to-day office relationships. This training was compulsory for staff at every level.
2. **Maternity coaching** - The introduction of 1:1 maternity coaching for associates, including advice on planning for maternity leave and how to stay in touch and manage the return to work. These sessions are conducted by a former partner who recently retrained as an executive coach.
3. **Leadership positions** – Ensuring that more women candidates are put forward for office committees and working groups. Equally, more women will be identified to head practice groups, client teams and industry groups.
4. **Recruitment review** - A full review of the lateral partner hire process to ensure we have a diverse pool from which to recruit. Recruiters have been asked to commit to increasing their efforts to engage female candidates, striving for 30% long lists to comprise women.
5. **Lawyer job sharing** – An increased rollout of our successful job-sharing programme between senior associates. This ensures that the flexible working hours that some lawyers enjoy will not come at the expense of continuity of client service.

6. **Partner coaches** - The provision of specialist training to partner coaches to assist them in developing female talent. Partner coaches attended a session titled “Coaching Women, is there a difference?” facilitated by Catherine Sandler, a leader in this field.
7. **Client relationships** – Close monitoring of the number of female decision makers among our client base and the gender balance of our pitch and client service teams.
8. **Events programme** - The expansion of our highly successful BakerWomen client events programme (running a client event each quarter) increases the opportunity to engage with female decision makers and bring topical issues to the attention of clients.
9. **Office engagement** - The London office conducted a survey which focused on the aspirations and challenges facing female employees. The results of this survey have helped to inform and shape our action plan. We also host quarterly meetings for our gender network, in addition to regular informal networking sessions, focusing on topical gender related debate.
10. **Gender forum** - The Firm recently held a forum for partners across the EMEA region, providing an opportunity to share challenges, ideas and best practice and to make commitments as a group aimed at strengthening our resolve to achieving greater gender equality at all levels in the Firm.

Output

The London office has already made great strides towards attaining greater diversity in its leadership. In 2012 just 12% of its Management Committee was female, now that figure stands at 37.5%. Of the four partners who sit on the committee, two are female.

The committee has also given its full support to the comprehensive action plan, much of which has now been implemented. The recent EMEA Gender Forum is another indication of how seriously this is taken, since over 30 partners from across the EMEA region attended, including the London managing partner, Paul Rawlinson.



We continue to monitor our progress closely, and in 2014 we conducted a survey within our BakerWomen network, which captured a broad range of views from across the office, including men and women from the fee-earner, business services and secretarial services populations. The survey has already highlighted areas of success – including training, development and coaching programmes offered to lawyers – as well as areas that need more focus – such as flexible working and the challenge of balancing parenting and career responsibilities.

We believe that we were the first global firm to set out such clear gender diversity targets. We have since seen other firms follow suit, including Herbert Smith Freehills and Pinsent Masons, by announcing their own targets. This is a strong reflection of how important the issue of gender diversity has become, not just to Baker & McKenzie but also to the wider legal market.