

#UsFirst

Why our industry must be first to influence real change beyond #MeToo

The gender culture of all businesses permeates every aspect of day-to-day work – respect for women, meeting dynamics, chance of harassment – and needs to be shifted if change is to happen. As people open their eyes to the gender realities and accept that there are imbalances, we should be observing more carefully and calling out bad behaviours and stereotypes. Our industry has one of the biggest responsibilities to clean up our act internally and in how we communicate our brands.

The recent announcement of the world first independent national inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) underpins what Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins says follows on from the #MeToo movement. She told ABC News “The timing was right, the appetite for change is there, and we have all the functions to make sure we can help Australia lead the globe on finding new solutions for sexual harassment.”

It’s a positive move, but as an industry, our media and marketing companies have a huge responsibility to drive the cultural tipping point needed to influence real change.

Gender parity discussions has moved on a great deal in the last twelve months

At Kantar, we launched our first study into the state of play in Asia Pacific last year, learning that there was no shortage of ambition amongst women working in the media and marketing industry. However, for all the rhetoric around equality, many women felt that bias still existed and was holding them back from reaching their full potential.

Since then we’ve witnessed a global shift in the gender debate. The #MeToo movement exposed the prevalence of sexual harassment, especially within the workplace, while new transparency laws have revealed the true extent of gender pay gaps. The debate has become louder and more forceful – gender inequality is still a pervasive issue and needs to be addressed.

Our second study undertaken in March and April assessed how the situation has progressed, how both women and men feel about the gender dynamics in the workplace, and importantly, how awareness is changing. Unfortunately, the prevalence of sexual harassment in the APAC media and marketing industry reflects the #MeToo movement.

53 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men experienced or observed sexual harassment

Half of all women and a quarter of men report they’ve personally experienced workplace harassment encompasses both physical or verbal actions. Two in five women and one in five men also observed it happening to others. In short, 53 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men have seen or experienced this behaviour – it is in plain sight.

The most commonly experienced form of harassment was degrading comments or sexual innuendo, with particularly high levels in countries with a more masculine office culture such as Australia and New Zealand.

Although harassment frequency is shocking, people are recognising improper behaviour

There were signs of what could be done to address the problem, yet organisational involvement is rare – only 14 per cent of those who have experienced it or seen it told their employer.

Those surveyed said that the most important thing that would increase the likelihood of reporting is the knowledge that their career would not be damaged. Statements like “de-stigmatising sexual harassment so I don’t feel embarrassed about it, like it was somehow my fault and I am to blame” and “as a man, reporting an incident of sexual harassment will destroy my career and credibility” must be taken seriously.

We need to create an environment in which people feel comfortable to call it out

There is high correlation between companies where employees felt men and women were not treated equally and incidence of feeling pressure to conform to gender stereotypes. In a workplace where women are expected to be 'nice' and 'accommodating', they are more likely to experience male dominance of meetings - 59 per cent in fact.

Having women in senior leadership positions is a check on this kind of behaviour - the presence of a female CEO within a business was a factor that halved the amount of male dominance reported. However - to really make a difference - a much more holistic approach to company culture and avoiding gender stereotyping throughout the business is critical.

Women feel judged on who they are, and not what they do

Both men and women believe that people have preconceptions about their ability, and this feeling has become more pronounced in the past year, with 85 per cent of women and 79 per cent of men agreeing. But the difference lies in the reasons why people feel they are judged. Men are more likely to believe that years of experience and their track record define their standing in the workplace, while women tend to see gender as the judgement.

This unconscious bias permeates through to how many women believe their gender affects opportunities at work. Two thirds of women think men had more opportunities to advance their career (compared to just 32 per cent of men), whilst almost half of women surveyed have missed out on an opportunity because of their gender.

A focus on performance, not the person, has long been a challenge to implement

However, with tension increasing over the impact of these negative assessments on careers, Australia's media and marketing landscape needs to actively demonstrate how and why it is nurturing and rewarding people. By getting our own affairs in order, we can then work harder to showcase gender equity, diversity and inclusion through our brands, advertising and communication.

This work is making a difference though and is making industry leaders stop and listen. CEOs of the six major media holding companies signed a 'Mandate For Change' in May agreeing to implement steps to drive change including creating equality action plans, offering flexible work options, development and mentoring of women, and reviewing pay parity. It's now time for us all to personally commit to change.



Anne Rayner
Global Head of Communications
Kantar TNS

Anne Rayner led the second annual Kantar and Campaign Asia diversity study investigating men and women's perceptions and experience of gender within the workplace. The study interviewed 300 people in the media and marketing industry, both agency and non-agency, across Asia Pacific. The fieldwork was undertaken in March and April 2018.

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24 ANNE RAYNER

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Discussions on gender parity in the workplace are progressing, but there's a long way to go. **Anne Rayner** says the media and marketing industry must be first to influence real change beyond #MeToo.

The gender culture of all businesses permits every aspect of day-to-day work - respect for women, meeting dynamics, change of harassment - and needs to be shifted if change is to happen. As people open their eyes to the gender realities and accept that there are imbalances, we should be observing more carefully and calling out bad behaviours and stereotypes. Our industry has one of the biggest responsibilities to clean up our act externally and in how we communicate our brands.

The recent announcement of the world's first independent national inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) addresses what sex discrimination commissioner Kate Jenkins says follows on from the #MeToo movement. She told ABC News, "The timing was right, the appetite for change is there, and we have all the functions to make sure we can help Australia lead the globe on finding new solutions for sexual harassment."

It's a positive move, but as an industry, our media and marketing companies have a huge responsibility to drive the cultural tipping point needed to influence real change.

Gender parity discussions in the last year

Kantar launched our first study into the state of play in the Asia Pacific region last year, learning that there was no shortage of ambition among women working in the media and marketing industry. However, for all the rhetoric around equality, many women felt that bias still existed and was holding them back from reaching their full potential.

Since then we've witnessed a global shift in the gender debate. The #MeToo movement exposed the prevalence of sexual harassment, especially within the workplace, while new transparency laws have revealed the true extent of gender pay gaps. The debate has become louder and more factual - gender inequality is still a pervasive issue and needs to be addressed.

Our second study, undertaken in March and April, assessed how the situation has progressed, how both women and men feel about the gender dynamics in the workplace and, importantly, how awareness is changing.

Unfortunately, the prevalence of sexual harassment in the APAC media and marketing industry reflects the #MeToo movement.

Experience and observation of sexual harassment

Half of all women and a quarter of men report they've personally experienced workplace harassment that encompasses both physical or verbal actions. Two in five women and one in five men also observed a happening to others, with 33 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men having seen or experienced this behaviour - it is plain sight.

The most commonly experienced form of harassment was degrading comments or sexual innuendos, with particularly high levels in countries with a more 'masculine' office culture such as Australia and New Zealand.

Recognition is growing

There were signs of what could be done to address the problem, yet organisational involvement is rare - only 14 per cent of those who have experienced it or seen it told their employer. Those surveyed said that the most important thing that would increase the likelihood of reporting is the knowledge that their career would not be damaged. Statements like "Sexual harassment is not a 'boys' club' thing" and "It's not just a 'boys' club' thing" and "It's a team, reporting an incident of sexual harassment will develop your career and credibility" must be taken seriously.

Create comfortable environments

There is high correlation between companies where employees felt men and women were not treated equally and the incidence of feeling pressure to conform to gender stereotypes. In a workplace where women are expected to be 'nice' and 'accommodating', they are more likely to experience male dominance of meetings - 59 per cent, in fact. Having women in senior leadership positions is a check on this kind of behaviour - the presence of a female CEO within a business was a factor that halved the amount of male dominance reported. To really make a difference, however, a much more holistic approach to company culture and avoiding gender stereotyping throughout the business is critical.

Perceptions of judgement

Both men and women believe that people have preconceptions about their ability and this feeling has become more pronounced in the past year, with 85 per cent of women and 79 per cent of men agreeing. But the difference lies in the reasons why people feel they are judged. Men are more likely to believe that years of experience and their track record define their standing in the workplace, while women tend to see gender as influencing the judgement.

Focusing on performance

With tension increasing over the impact of these negative assessments on careers, however, Australia's media and marketing landscape needs to actively demonstrate how and why it is nurturing and rewarding people by getting our own affairs in order, we can then work harder to showcase gender equity, diversity and inclusion through our brands, advertising and communication.

This work is making a difference though and is making industry leaders stop and listen. CEOs of the six major media holding companies signed a 'Mandate For Change' in May agreeing to implement steps to drive change including creating equality action plans, offering flexible work options, development and mentoring of women, and reviewing pay parity. It's now time for us all to personally commit to change.

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