

A Change of Strategy – Sky Blog

Hi Holly, thanks for speaking with us today. So, tell us, how did the issue of poor gender balance within the Home Business come about?

The issue was raised from a couple of different angles. One was from our customers, some customers didn't feel comfortable allowing men in to their home, so there was a desire for more women home service engineers. The second was from the business. We are a conscious employer and it was noted that within the Home team, we really struggled to attract women to this part of the business. It was as much as a business driver as it was a customer demand.

What were the steps involved from the point of recognising the issue, to bringing about a resolution?

The fix was not difficult, and it was a multi-faceted approach. We engaged with staff who had shown interest in moving to the Home function, but hadn't put themselves forward for roles, to understand what the barriers were. Some of the feedback received was related to a perception that the roles were "male focussed". So, we changed the job descriptions, and we rolled that out across the business too, not just within Home, so that the descriptions now reflect what the job actually is, using strengths and attributes-based language.

For the few roles that do require lifting or at-height work, we reinforced that these roles carry low risk, with appropriate safety equipment supplied.

We also rolled out strict reinforcement of uniforms, and ensured that female uniforms were also available.

We introduced a buddy system – regardless of gender. Typically, it would be a male and female pair.

The training scheme was also rewritten in consciously gender inclusive language.

You said it was quite easy to solve, how long did it take to resolve the issue?

These changes were all implemented very quickly.

How was the wider workforce engaged to take them on the journey?

The business set up a taskforce to focus on this area, with key and relevant individuals, and there was continuous communication. We rolled out a workshop to all staff.

How was the solution received by the stakeholders?

Sky is an equal opportunity employer in all areas of diversity and inclusion with a strong, open culture, through the ongoing project “Step Up / Speak Up”. We have won awards and often appear in top inclusive employer lists so it’s already in our culture, and it wasn’t too challenging to get our employees involved and onside. As always there were some moans, especially about having to wear uniforms, but it went through without issue.

We received a lot of positive feedback, some of the male employees in the Home business were also really happy with the uniforms being reintroduced as it made them feel more professional, and they liked the introduction of the buddy system as they themselves didn’t always know what situation they could be walking in to. Overall well received.

The growth in the business has also been good as a result. Our gender balance within the Home business has improved.

One last question before you go, what advice would you give to others if they also wanted to make a change similar to this?

Be brave and take the brave decision. Look at the problem and find a solution that fits the need; in our case the lack of diversity affected our customer base, and it affected our business with the skills shortage – the solution needs to solve the problem.