



***Staying Ahead
of the Pack:
What She Said***

Building trust through
Transparency

Strategic Support

Flexibility and
balancing priorities

Time to Walk
the Talk



Introduction

With the fight for global talent at an all-time high, there seems to be one important resource that organisations still overlook – women. In Singapore, despite having more female CEOs and CFOs than other markets, the reality is that women still remain underrepresented, particularly in leadership roles.

Women are confident and more ambitious than ever and ready for what's next in their careers

In Singapore, women have strong leadership aspirations; with 73% of women saying it is important to them that they get to the top of their chosen career. Women are proactively pursuing their career goals by negotiating for raises, promotions and seeking out the experiences seen as critical to advancing their careers, and our survey revealed it is working; there is a strong positive correlation to show the women who negotiate are getting what they ask for, particularly access to high-visibility projects and stretch assignments.

These findings are extremely positive, but we are not yet seeing this confidence and ambition translate, based on the current rates of female progress. There is a lot that employers in Singapore can and should do to make sure they are getting the most from the highly-skilled, highly-experienced, and highly-ambitious female talent pool.

Take action now

The situation in Singapore is actually critical, with only 10% of respondents surveyed stating that they would stay with their current employer in the longer term. There is no question that employers are still complacent and need to take action quickly, especially to retain and develop female talent in the pipeline. Our report highlights three major areas where employers should focus:

- Trust and transparency
- Strategic support
- Flexibility and balancing priorities



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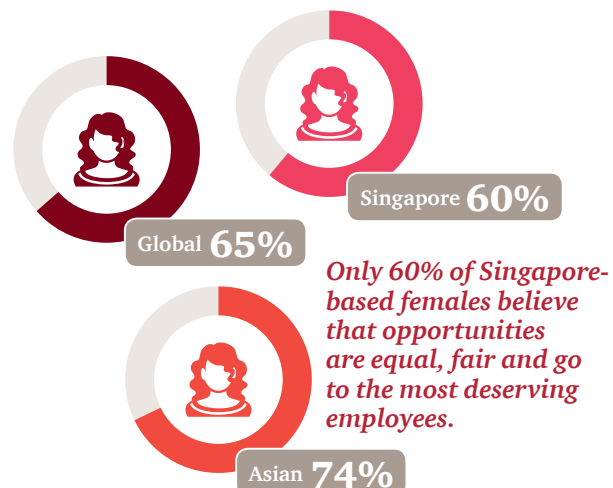
Building trust through Transparency



In Singapore, women are sceptical about how employers manage opportunities, when compared to both their global and Asian counterparts. Women continue to believe that employers are biased towards men, particularly in relation to developing employees and promoting from within. Only 10% of females stated that they will stay with their current company in the long term, with better pay cited as the top reason (37%) they would leave. It's clear that employers should consider increasing the transparency of performance and pay. Specifically, Singapore employers need to work on:

- Improving the fairness and transparency of promotion and appraisal systems
- Provide clear definition of organisational roles and levels
- Promotion criteria.

This should start with reviewing the potential for stereotypes and unconscious biases in assessment systems. While more companies are seemingly committed to gender equality, progress will remain slow unless we confront blind spots. Singapore employers are not doing enough — only 50% of women agree their employer is doing what it takes to progress gender diversity. A one size fits all approach is not typically the answer; organisations need to recognise there are many facets of difference that go beyond gender, for example: age, culture, ethnicity and even geography and life stage.



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Strategic Support



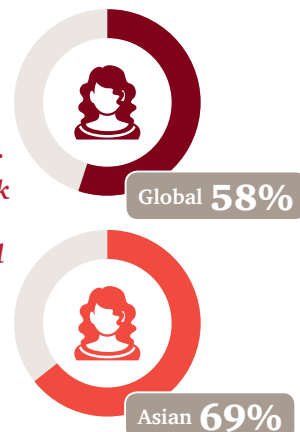
The positive correlation between women whose managers provide career opportunities, and women who have the confidence to lead have been extolled far and wide, and is further supported by this research. Yet just over half (51%) of women in Singapore say their managers give work experiences that provide accelerated developmental opportunities, lower than global colleagues (58%) and women in the broader Asian (69%) region. They also felt that their managers do not advocate on their behalf enough for opportunities, such as promotions (49%) or provide enough networking support (46%).

There is much room for improvement for greater sponsorship of female talent in Singapore. Employers should look at giving their female talent opportunities to improve their profiles through:

- Publishing their views or work, both internally or externally
- Public speaking engagements
- Giving them access to stretch-assignments.

Through this, female talent will benefit from having greater exposure to female and male role models, including in senior management and broader support networks.

1 in 2 women in Singapore say their managers give work experiences that provide accelerated developmental opportunities.



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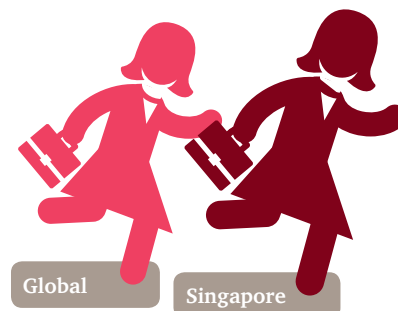
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Flexibility and Balancing Priorities



This would explain why more than 6 out of 10 female employees view the lifestyle of their senior leaders as undesirable. While flexible work measures have been increasingly introduced to mitigate this, employees remain sceptical on whether employers value flexible work as an efficient way of working. There is also a real stigma regarding the perception of people who do take advantage of flexible work schemes, with 48% of female respondents in Singapore stating that they believe taking advantage of work-life balance or flexibility programmes has negative career consequences at their workplace.

A shared pain that still exists between Singapore women and their global peers is the motherhood penalty, particularly when it comes to being overlooked for opportunities. New mothers in Singapore (54%) felt that they were overlooked for career advancement opportunities, such as promotions, upon their return from maternity leave.



45% of female employees in Singapore believe that their work demands interfere with their personal lives, 5% higher than their global counterparts.



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Personal fulfilment and job satisfaction is and always had been top of the agenda for women globally. This becomes even more apparent as the workforce becomes a millennial-majority. It is crystal clear that the three imperatives outlined here are fundamental to accelerating progress:

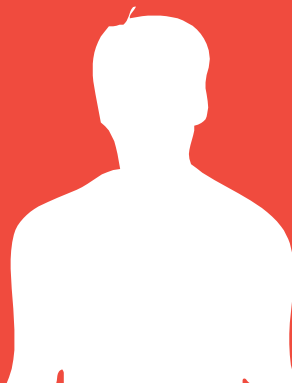
Build trust through transparency

Singapore women don't trust performance and appraisal systems. Employers can start by making the first move by providing a higher level of clarity and fairness in their appraisal and promotion systems, and being clearer about what it takes to progress.



Provide strategic support

Forget hunting for unicorns and instead, take a look inwards and start providing a network that mobilises your wonder women. The resource is already there; profile and promote them so that your talented women can see that they too can make it to the top. Managers, sponsors and networks should also play a part in supporting female talent.



Flexibility and balancing priorities

Employers need to take action and fully embrace flexibility in the workplace. Expand and communicate best practices more broadly. Review maternity, paternity and adoption leave policies and enhance them beyond just providing the bare minimum. A culture shift that recognises performance over presence and overcomes outdated assumptions that women want to step back or opt out of their career when they become mothers is absolutely critical.



Moving forward, employers in Singapore need to forge an ecosystem that puts these three key elements at the core of their wider diversity change efforts, if they wish to create the environment needed to accelerate progress.

Contact us

Karen Loon

Singapore Diversity Leader

PwC

+65 6236 3021

karen.loon@sg.pwc.com