On the Level

Women working in trades and technology

An employer’s guide to creating respectful workplaces
On the Level
Women working in trades and technology

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On the Level: Women Working in Trades and Technology has been developed by the Hypatia Association as part of the Women Unlimited project. The Hypatia Association is a not-for-profit women’s organization in Nova Scotia with a mandate to promote the full participation of women in science, trades and technology.


Funding from Status of Women Canada enabled women employed in trades and technology to participate in the development of an important resource document titled Working it Out – Women describe their experiences working in trades and technology. We want to acknowledge the contribution of the many women who met with us, shared their experiences and offered their sage advice as we developed On the Level.

We want to acknowledge the contributions of our industry partners. Michelin North America (Bridgewater plant), Halifax Regional Municipality, and L3 provided support, insights, advice and considerable amounts of time in the design and testing of workplace strategies presented in On the Level. We greatly appreciate their input.

In addition, numerous small and medium-sized enterprises gave of their time to attend workshops, to meet with us individually and provide feedback and insights. We thank you.

We also want to acknowledge the contribution of the WinSETT Centre, an initiative of the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science Trades and Technology for their ongoing support and guidance.
Nova Scotia is experiencing a declining labour force. Labour shortages, especially in skilled trades, are being felt now and it’s anticipated that the supply of skilled labour will not meet the demand from Nova Scotian employers in the very near future.

At the same time, women are a virtually untapped resource for employers looking to fill trades and technology positions with skilled workers. Women comprise about 47 per cent of the labour force in Nova Scotia, clearly indicating they want to be active and productive members of the workforce. Yet, in 1991, 4.5 per cent of trades workers in Nova Scotia were women. Fifteen years later in 2006, participation of women in trades had risen to only 5.0 per cent. It’s a missed opportunity for employers and for women.

Why women?

There has been much discussion about the cost-benefit analysis of training and employing women in non-traditional trades and technology. In its September 2008 report, the McKinsey Quarterly stated that although there are costs associated with the implementation of workplace change, “…the benefits – for instance, a larger talent pool and stronger financial performance – also suggest that making gender diversity a significant goal is well worth the investment.” (A Business Case for Women. McKinsey & Company 2008.)

On the Level makes the argument that workplaces that are respectful and healthy for women are respectful and healthy for all employees. The Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA) has examined the business case for investing in respectful and healthy workplaces. The financial cost of “doing nothing” are described in terms of increased absenteeism, health insurance claims, workplace accidents and employee turnover. The IAPA report states that while there are difficulties in quantifying some of the results of workplace change “…there is growing evidence that the cost benefit ratio ranges from $1.50 to $6.15 for every dollar invested.” (The Business Case for a Healthy Workplace. IATA 2008.)
By increasing the number of women in trades and technology workplaces, you will be in a much better position to deal with current and projected skills shortages. Employing diverse women in previously male-dominated trades and technology workplaces can bring many benefits to your company.

- You’ll have access to a larger pool of skilled, talented workers to draw from. Women represent the largest untapped human resource in Nova Scotia to meet the need for skilled trades workers.
- You’ll broaden the diversity of perspectives within your company, enhance innovation capacity, and increase your competitive edge.
- By creating safe and respectful workplaces, you’ll provide a return on your company’s investment in training and save on the high costs of employee turnover.
- You’ll have a greater ability to reach new markets. Women have a significant impact on the economy as consumers and wage earners. The collective purchasing power of women is substantial.
- By employing skilled women, you’ll be increasing their economic security and contributing to the economy of your community.

Many businesses and organizations have found that having a gender-diverse workforce leads to greater productivity, creativity, and employee satisfaction. We asked a number of Nova Scotia employers to tell us about the benefits they’ve discovered as a result of employing skilled female workers. You will find that many of these benefits apply to your workplace. Employers told us:

- Women are more patient with customers and clients.
- Women bring a whole different perspective and help companies think “outside the box.”
- Mixed male/female teams are more productive than all-male or all-female teams.
- Women are highly creative and open to new ideas.
- Women are eager to take advantage of training opportunities.
- Women are collaborative and favour a team-building approach in the workplace.
- Women, happy in their jobs, become enthusiastic advocates for their employer.

By welcoming diverse women into the workplace, you will be compete to compete more effectively for the best people, resources, and market share, and better appeal to female consumers and clients. Increased gender diversity in the workplace, including Aboriginal women, African Nova Scotian women, women living with disabilities, and immigrant women can result in increased productivity and competitiveness in industry.

CCWESTT: Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology
Goals of On the Level

On the Level has been designed to support employers seeking to hire diverse women in trades and technology. It presents field-tested approaches to the creation and sustainability of welcoming, safe and respectful workplaces. Women are drawn to welcoming workplaces and are more likely to apply for positions there. By supporting employers, On the Level also meets the needs of women seeking employment in trades and technology. It’s a win-win resource guide.

For many employers, involving more women in trades and technology means a major change from current and past employment practices. On the Level provides strategies and actions to help you manage the change process. The goal is to create and sustain safe and respectful workplaces for women, leading to safe and respectful workplaces for all workers.

“The values of equality, respect, and opportunity for all represent the cornerstone of workplace diversity. Inclusiveness is thus a win-win dynamic: it generates opportunities for growth, flexibility, and adaptation in the marketplace for both the employee and the organization.” (Nancy Lockwood, Workplace Diversity: Leveraging the Power of Difference for Competitive Advantage, 2005.)

Development Process

On the Level has been developed by the Hypatia Association as a component of the Women Unlimited project. Women Unlimited is designed to increase and sustain the participation of diverse women in the non-traditional trades and technology labour force in Nova Scotia. The sponsoring organizations are the Women’s Economic Equality (WEE) Society and the Hypatia Association, two not-for-profit women’s organizations in Nova Scotia.

In developing On the Level, we worked closely with industry partners. We also met with small and medium-sized enterprises. We talked to owner-managers, HR personnel, shift supervisors, managers, trades workers, apprentices, technicians, technologists, and front line workers – male and female. We talked to men who worked where few, if any, women were employed. We heard from many women across the province currently employed in trades and technology.

Employers described the benefits they discovered and the challenges they faced in relation to employing women in trades and technology. Women passionately described how much they love their work. With the same intensity, they shared personal stories of harassment, bullying and disrespectful workplace practices.

We carefully documented the input, insights, and suggestions we received. We then compiled it all into concrete, tested strategies and actions. The result is On the Level.
You can start using *On the Level* in whatever section best meets your needs. If you have job openings and want to hire skilled women in the near future, you should go directly to the Recruitment section. You’ll find suggestions on how to prepare job postings to attract women, how to prepare for interviews with female applicants, and how to introduce women to your workplace. You will also be referred to other sections of *On the Level* where you’ll find information on how to create and sustain a respectful work environment for women.

If you already have women employed in non-traditional occupations and are concerned about retaining them, you should start at the Retention section. It contains information on how to establish and maintain work environments that respect women – and all employees – thus increasing the likelihood that women will remain with your company.

If you’re looking to the future and want to prepare your workplace for female employees in advance of hiring, you should start with the Readiness section. It provides lots of suggestions on how to assess your work environment and design and implement a process to create and sustain a respectful workplace for diverse women.

Regardless of where you begin to use *On the Level*, you’ll find references to other relevant sections. Some of the action strategies have an impact at all stages on the capacity of your company to employ women. These critical strategies are mentioned in each section.

We know that *On the Level* will not meet all the needs of every employer and workplace. The size of your company, the number of employees, location, industry sector, your experience employing women in non-traditional occupations, and many other factors will determine how you use this guide. You may have the staff and resources to implement the strategies, or you may already have implemented a number of strategies to support diverse women and just want a few new ideas.

You may need some help getting started. If so, there are resources available to assist you. Some staff members of Women Unlimited will be available to help Nova Scotia employers customize the strategies found in *On the Level* to meet the needs of individual workplaces. We can work with you to prepare and implement a series of action strategies to create and maintain a safe and respectful workplace for diverse women in your workplace. This service is available through financial support from the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development to the Women Unlimited project. Contact information for Women Unlimited can be found in the Useful Resources section near the end of *On the Level*.

Some of the changes you’ll want to make will take time, especially those involving workplace practices that reflect attitudes and values. To quote a popular saying: “If we always do what we’ve always done, we’ll always get what we’ve always got.” To create and maintain safe and respectful workplaces, you may have to do some things differently. *On the Level* is designed to help you do just that.
Our research tells us that most Nova Scotia employers are aware of the benefits of gender diversity in the workplace. Despite this, most employers we spoke to told us they had not achieved the diversity they desired.

Attracting, hiring, and retaining skilled female workers can be difficult for employers. There are many myths and misconceptions about women working in non-traditional occupations. Most of these myths are based on stereotyping about the role that women can or should have in our society. *On the Level* is designed to eliminate the impact of gender stereotypes, increase your company’s capacity to employ women in trades and technology, and help you address skills shortages.

**GET STARTED**

No matter what size your workplace is, you may want to seek the input of special advisors from outside your company. There are women in the community who have extensive experience and expertise in gender issues and workplace diversity. They can help you address specific challenges and develop a gender diversity plan customized for your company. If your company is large and you employ human resources personnel, you can involve gender diversity specialists in building the capacity of your existing staff to sustain the initiative over many years. They can also provide you with information and connect you with networks of women in your community. Women Unlimited can provide this service and can also link you with women in trades and technology training at NSCC.

With the assistance of a specialist in gender diversity issues, you can

- look at your workplace in a fresh new way
- better understand workplace behaviours and attitudes
- maintain energy levels and creativity
- gain support and encouragement along the way
- mobilize management and employees
- to build the capacity of your company to retain skilled women

Contact information for Women Unlimited and other women’s organizations can be found in the Useful Resources section at the back of *On the Level.*
**ACTION ITEM**

**Make Hiring Women a Strategic Priority**

Research in Canada and other countries has stressed the importance of linking a company’s diversity strategy to its business plan. You can find information about some of the research in the Introduction to *On the Level*. As with any strategic priority you identify, it’s important that employees at all levels in your company be informed about the effort you want to make. Change starts at the top. There are several essential steps you can take to make hiring more women a priority.

- Link your commitment to employing diverse women to your company’s business plan.
- Make your commitment to gender diversity clear to your managers and all employees.
- Set specific goals for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in your workplace.
- Create a communication plan.
- Include specific recruitment and retention objectives in the performance agreements of individual managers.
- Report your progress annually to your staff.

Find out what’s going on outside your company. Local, regional and national business associations, chambers of commerce and sector councils are sources of information about companies using workplace diversity as a key driver for enhanced productivity, competitiveness, and improved bottom lines.

Over the past few years, there have been a host of innovative discoveries about how to involve company executives, managers, and employees in embracing and leading change in a number of important areas including diversity. A gender specialist can help you learn about and utilize effective new processes to facilitate change.

If you are a member of a local business association or sector council, encourage those people responsible for organizing meetings to include opportunities to hear from employers who are creating gender diverse work environments. Learn from their experiences and why they are committed to promoting and supporting diversity. Find out more about specific ways they have implemented diversity in their workplaces.

**LOOK CLOSELY AT YOUR WORKPLACE**

Before you hire skilled women to fill trades and technology positions, it’s important to take a close look at your workplace. Ideally, this process takes place before you begin hiring women but in reality, it often occurs at the same time that you hire or sometimes, even after women are already employed.

How things are done in a workplace is often referred to as its “culture.” The term “workplace culture” refers specifically to the type of work environment that employees face each day. It includes the assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that shape that environment. Workplace culture includes the way employees interact with one another and the practices routinely followed in the course of the workday. Aboriginal women, women of colour, women from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, and women living with physical challenges experience the workplace culture in different ways. Women have told us they are more likely to remain with an employer when respectful workplace practices and behaviours exist.

Aboriginal women, women of colour, women from different ethnic or religious backgrounds experience the workplace culture in different ways. Workplace culture is important, it can have a significant impact on your capacity to hire and retain women.
The staff at one Nova Scotia company we met with is 23 per cent women. Gender equality in the industry is a passion of [the] CEO and Creative Director, “I’ve worked in too many places where it’s all guys and it’s just a totally different atmosphere when it’s mixed.” His reasons for employing women in the typically male-dominated field aren’t just about personal politics, either. After all, he is running a business.

I’m not convinced if I had more women on my team I’d get better design ideas. I am convinced that I might have more openness to the business part of the project—why it’s important to please the customer, why it’s important to always do continuous improvement, find better ways to do things. My experience is women are a little more open to change, to let’s try this, let’s improve the way our team works, let’s team build.

An Employer

An effective way to learn more about your company’s work culture is through a workplace survey. This is not a written survey but rather one you conduct using a combination of one-on-one interviews and small group discussions.

Whether your company has one, two or several managers and supervisors, it would be wise to meet with them first. They need to know why you want to better understand the workplace culture and why you will be seeking information from them and from other employees. From our research, we’ve learned that it can be hard to bring all managers and supervisors together at the same time for a group discussion. We found that one-on-one interviews worked best. They are a good way to gather information from each manager who interacts with female employees on a regular basis. One-on-one interviews are especially important if you employ female managers or supervisors because they’re often reluctant to speak openly in a group of mostly male managers. We also found that career advancement issues had an impact on the extent to which some managers, male and female, would speak openly in a group discussion.

Hiring women is an important aspect of meeting obligations under the Federal Employment Equity Act and will be a benefit to you in securing federal government contracting.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Gather the Data**

To learn more about the workplace culture that exists in your company, you need to gather information and create a base from which you can build. Good baseline data will tell you about the issues within your company that need to be addressed. Baseline data will also provide a good overview of your work culture and help identify individuals who can act as champions to create greater workplace diversity. As you collect information about your company’s workplace culture, remember that this is not about laying blame on anyone – you’re just trying to get a better feel for how the workplace operates.

The staff at one Nova Scotia company we met with is 23 per cent women. Gender equality in the industry is a passion of [the] CEO and Creative Director, “I’ve worked in too many places where it’s all guys and it’s just a totally different atmosphere when it’s mixed.” His reasons for employing women in the typically male-dominated field aren’t just about personal politics, either. After all, he is running a business.
One-on-one Interviews

Information gathered from interviews with managers and supervisors will provide key insights into how women are viewed within your company. You’ll also be able to identify individuals who can play a leadership role in bringing change to your workplace. If you are the owner/manager of a small company, the following questions are ones you can consider yourself.

1. How would you describe the overall work environment at your company? Is it open, respectful, inclusive? What is the overall perception of the role of women in the trades and technical areas at your company?

2. What has been your experience with female employees in trades and technology occupations? Do you find that women are capable of doing the work? What advantages do they bring to the job? Are there any disadvantages?

3. Do you have Aboriginal women, African Nova Scotian women or women from different ethnic backgrounds in your workplace? Lesbians? Women with physical disabilities? What special challenges do they face in your work environment?

4. Do women face any particular physical barriers in the workplace at your company – more than men? Are tools and supplies located where women can reach them? Are there washrooms for women? How are individuals invited to make their accommodation needs known? Are there ways to accommodate them?

5. Does your company have a harassment-free policy in place? If so, have all employees and management received training on the policy? Are processes in place to remind all employees of these expectations? What steps are employees encouraged to take if they do experience harassment? Is the culture open to employees speaking up? Are accountability measures in place regarding the policy?

6. Does your company have regular performance reviews? Are employees encouraged to move up in the organization? What training is available for employees interested in other jobs? Have supervisors been trained in gender differences? Have women been identified as potential supervisors?

7. Does your company have a role in accommodating employees who are also the primary caregiver within their family?

8. What strategies and changes would be required to make your workplace a workplace of choice for women?

In Diversity at Work: The Business Case for Equity (1997), Trevor Wilson shows how employee satisfaction is linked to a higher level of productivity which in turn is linked to superior customer service, improved customer satisfaction, and ultimately, customer loyalty. Whether selling pizzas, airplanes, or corporate services, establishing lifelong customers is a crucial step in maximizing revenue and profit. Through his model, Wilson links revenue and profit back to an equitable employment system.
ACTION ITEM

Talk to the Female Employees in Your Company

We’ve spoken to many women working in trades and technology. They’ve described the high points and the low points of their experiences. We’ve learned that women feel safe when they’re part of a group of other women and speak more openly then. This is because many women find it difficult to describe their experiences if they think there will be a negative backlash to their openness and honesty. They are often more confident describing their concerns when they hear from other women who’ve had similar experiences. In some cases, it may be necessary to meet individually with some women but we recommend, where possible, that you bring female employees together with an experienced facilitator. See the Useful Resources section at the back of this guide for the contact information of women’s organizations that can put you in touch with a trained facilitator.

Generally, it is not a good idea to ask a male employee to conduct the interviews or facilitate group discussions with women. Even a highly sympathetic, understanding male is likely to receive guarded responses from female employees despite his best efforts. In order for your baseline information to give you a clear picture of your workplace culture, it’s essential that women feel comfortable and are open and honest in their responses.

If your company is large, you may have an HR division with at least one woman employed there. If she has group facilitation experience, she would be an appropriate choice to facilitate discussions with your female employees. If your company is small or you do not have anyone on staff with appropriate experience, you may want to consider involving a trained facilitator from outside the company, someone who has skills and experience in interviewing and facilitating small group discussions. See the Useful Resources section for contact information.

Group Discussions

For women to provide feedback on the culture of your workplace and the impact it has on them, they must feel safe in doing so. This means finding ways to invite women to participate in discussions without setting them up for harassment from their male colleagues. A trusted manager or HR employee can invite women employees to participate in a group discussion. The invitation should be kept confidential and discussions should take place away from the work-floor. If there are only one or two women in your workplace, we suggest meeting off premises at a quiet coffee shop or similar venue. All responses from the women must remain anonymous to ensure safety within the workplace.

Workplace culture is a concept that originated from the broader concept of culture within a society. While there is no one universally accepted definition, culture generally refers to the system of shared beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and values that characterize a particular society.
An experienced facilitator will be able to use the questions to introduce the topics for discussion and will follow the responses with further questions.

1. What do you like the most and the least about your job?
2. Has gender been an issue for you in your job?
3. Do you feel supported by your male colleagues?
4. How would you describe your present work culture? Open and respectful? Supportive? Friendly?
5. Have you experienced any challenges in your work because you are a woman? (e.g. co-workers thinking you can’t do a certain job because of gender; not being considered for training or promotion because of gender)
6. What has been the experience of Aboriginal women, African Nova Scotian women or women from different ethnic backgrounds in your workplace? Of Lesbians? Of women with physical disabilities? What special challenges do they face in your work environment?
7. Does your company have a policy on harassment? Would you feel comfortable bringing an issue forward?
8. If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?
9. What ideas do you have for making your company a workplace of choice for women?

Record the Results
Once the interviews and group sessions have been conducted, you’ll be in a position to analyze the results including both positive and negative findings. The analysis need not be long. Compiling the responses in chart form will help focus your analysis. Be sure to include quotes – hearing the voices of your female workers can be a very powerful force for change. Remember not to use any identifying information in the quotes.

Developing a culture that supports gender diversity requires working with formal aspects of a company’s systems and processes and also with assumptions and attitudes. Involving the people who create and make these systems work – both top down and bottom up – is critical to a successful culture change.
### Examples of a Work Culture Analysis: Feedback from Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Comments from Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Culture is challenging for women</td>
<td>Management is matter-of-fact about the behaviour of their male employees towards female employees. “The reality is it’s a male environment and there are still a lot of verbal comments. Women need to defend themselves from a lot of that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Our management group is referred to as the Golf Club – Gentlemen only, ladies forbidden.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of a Work Culture Analysis: Feedback from Female Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Comments from Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All women interviewed love their work.</td>
<td>“I enjoy serving the public…seeing that our services are well used and well maintained…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I love working with my hands…it is so rewarding to know that I can do my job well.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers are retiring and younger and more educated workers are being hired.</td>
<td>“The newer staff are younger and smarter…they are in their 40’s and under and used to working with women as equals…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work culture is still affected by old attitudes.</td>
<td>“If a woman is given an opportunity and there is a male who could have done the job as well, I’ve often heard ‘she must be sleeping with someone or knows somebody.’ Her skills for the job are never taken into consideration.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying exists in the workplace.</td>
<td>“They gave me a hard time because I applied for the supervisor’s job and got it and they were all male. It’s just the way it is.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**ACTION ITEM**

**Report the Findings**

Once you’ve completed the interviews and group discussions, it’s time to analyze the findings. Even if your company has only one or two managers, you should share the results with them first before going to the rest of your employees. If you involved a facilitator from outside your company to collect the information, she could help explain the significance of the findings. Involving managers, male and female, at this early stage keeps them “in the loop” about the changes you’re considering and allows them to explore their own assumptions about women working in non-traditional fields.

Sharing the baseline information you’ve gathered can be very powerful for male employees. It’s crucial they have a chance to express their views about having more women in the workplace. One manager told us about what happened when the whole management team was invited to hear about the results of an information-gathering process.

“There were people who had not seen nor confronted nor ever been part of any of the situations that were demonstrated in the needs analysis. So, having the hard-hitting information being recounted by one of our managers was really powerful. And then the opportunity to engage in a conversation to say ‘what does this mean?’ and then, ‘what can we do about it?’ I think was really powerful in terms of moving us forward. And that happened at all three management levels. All three groups of leaders that were involved became very engaged.”

As you review the findings from your research, try to identify the barriers that have been preventing your company from being a workplace of choice for women. Look at various behaviours, attitudes, physical restrictions, and organizational structures and policies. What things are happening now in your workplace that may be preventing more women from being employed within your company? Use this assessment as a baseline from which you can measure and report progress. For example, some barriers identified by one Nova Scotia employer included:

- accepting off-colour language or put-downs as “the norm”
- not speaking up when a female employee is treated disrespectfully
- using tools and equipment that aren’t ergonomically safe for women
- having an interview process that is not welcoming to female candidates
- failing to provide gender training for job interviewers and trainers
- lacking a “pool” of diverse job candidates
- not insisting on accountability when addressing complaints

Are some of these practices happening in your workplace? If so, you should know they can act as barriers to employing women and may be unnecessarily limiting your capacity to attract and retain skilled female employees.

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*I think the individual members of each of our teams, in their own way, have made efforts to try and increase the opportunities for women in our plant, to make our workplace a more welcoming one for women. But it’s one thing to individually take a stab at things and try to do things as you work through it. It’s a completely different thing to go to a workshop where everyone is focused on making that a positive step forward. And you’ve got the building of ideas and energy with one another to say, ‘I can do this and here’s my experience’ and ‘Have you ever thought about doing that?’ and, ‘What if we tried this?’*

A Manager
BUILD A TEAM

Once you have a clear understanding of your company’s workplace culture and have reported to your managers, you will need to form a small planning team. Their role is to lead the development of a strategy to increase the gender diversity within your company. The team does not have to be large. The initial members should be employees who have already indicated interest, people you may have already identified through the interviews and group discussions.

ACTION ITEM

Identify Where Interest Lies

Don’t assume there is no interest or commitment within your company to hire and retain women. In our discussions with male employees, we learned that most of them were supportive of the prospect of creating a respectful workplace for women and for all employees. Many male managers appreciated the opportunity to share stories with us and with each other about their own workplace experiences with women’s employment in non-traditional occupations. Many are also keen to examine their own beliefs and attitudes and to learn more about the challenges women face working in non-traditional jobs.

Present the findings of your research and then ask managers and other employees about their interest in pursuing the issues further. As an alternative, you could run a facilitated workshop. In our research, we often use a workshop model called the World Café. It’s an approach that maximizes insights and input from all participants. It’s also a good way to identify people who would like to become part of a diversity planning team for your company. You can find many sites on the Internet that further describe the World Café and other approaches.

Creating cultural change is an “inside job.” Involve managers at all stages of the process and encourage them to take a leadership role in implementing a vision of a respectful workplace.

The more broadly people in the company are involved, the more impact you will see. Once individuals in the workplace begin to notice the benefits of diversity, they’ll begin to act differently.
CREATE A VISION AND GIVE IT LIFE

Once the diversity planning team understands that your company is committed to creating a respectful workplace for diverse women, they can begin to develop a practical, detailed vision of what that kind of workplace would look like. They may need some help in developing this vision – an experienced facilitator could assist. The following steps will help your diversity team create a new vision of a respectful workplace.

• Hold a special meeting of the team, dedicated to creating a vision of a respectful workplace.
• Assure team members of your commitment to workplace diversity.
• Stress to your team that the vision is a collective effort.
• Encourage team members to contribute their insights and concerns.
• Listen to what team members tell you about what is needed to create a respectful workplace.
• Prepare a draft vision statement and provide opportunities to give feedback.
• Revise the vision based on the feedback.
• Make the vision known to all employees.

To make the vision a reality, the team needs to prepare a framework of an action plan or strategy, one that will lead your company to a diverse workforce. Clear goals, accountabilities, and time frames need to be set. Your diversity plan requires a commitment of time and resources to be successful. Once again, you may seek the assistance of a trained facilitator to support the team.

ACTION ITEM

Expand the Team

The next task is to review the strategies proposed in the framework and begin implementation. If your company is large, you should expand the original diversity team to include employees at all levels of your company. If your company is small, the original team may be able to lead implementation of the

In general, strive to do more of what’s working and build on existing initiatives that already support a respectful work environment – i.e., gender diversity training, workplace policies regarding harassment and discrimination, flexible work arrangements, and performance management systems.

This is an ideal time to enlist the help of outside expertise. You can contact local women’s organizations such as xx or xx for information on contracting a gender specialist skilled in creating and maintaining diverse work environments.

It became apparent that if just the two of us went ahead and made some interventions, it was going to be far harder to sustain and probably not as powerful as getting a whole management team behind the effort and having people really committed to moving ahead...we needed to have a steering committee...with other very motivated managers or people who had a lot of energy in this respect.

HR Manager
strategy with input from other employees. It’s important to involve as many employees as possible in the creation and maintenance of a safe, respectful workplace. Let your employees know that you value their input by inviting to participate in the process.

- Identify your internal supporters and allies. Who already understands the value of hiring women in trades and technology? Who would be willing to work on the committee?
- Identify employees who bring new or different perspectives – women from different cultural or religious groups, women of colour, women living with disabilities, summer students, younger employees, people who are new to your community or company.
- Ensure the team has time and resources to create employee-led activities.
- Identify your internal supporters and allies. Who already understands the value of hiring women in trades and technology? Who would be willing to work on the committee?
- Identify employees who bring new or different perspectives – women from different cultural or religious groups, women of colour, summer students, younger employees, people who are new to your community or company.

The major tasks of this newly-expanded diversity committee are to:

- further develop the diversity vision
- review the workplace culture assessment and expand if necessary
- develop a long-term diversity strategy with time lines and measures
- implement the strategy in keeping with the vision of diversity for the company
- monitor, evaluate, and adapt the strategy as necessary

These tasks are not necessarily easy ones and may require the services of an experienced facilitator. This is another opportunity for you to build your company’s capacity to address changes in the labour market availability of skilled employees.

In our research, we commonly used a type of facilitated workshop called the World Café. It’s very effective in creating a comfortable workshop environment that maximizes insights and input from all participants.

The first task for the expanded diversity team will be reviewing the detailed diversity vision already created by the initial members of the committee. Bring employees together to discuss the vision and then encourage lots of feedback and revision. What’s important to your employees in this new future for your company or organization? What are their insights and concerns? What do they see as the way forward?

People leading the effort to create and maintain a respectful workplace need to be personally involved in ways that are meaningful to them. They also need to know they have the support of senior management.

People support what they’ve helped create. Aim to have employees at all levels join in, making diversity a reality rather than a “buy in” after the fact.
**ACTION ITEM**

**Provide Training and Support**

Workplace change is not easy to manage. Your diversity team may need special training and support to prepare for some of the issues, challenges, and opportunities they’ll face as they implement the diversity plan. If your company has HR specialists, they could provide the necessary training and support. If your company is small, you may want to bring in some support from outside. You can also help support the diversity team by taking some of the following steps.

- Be clear about the senior management commitment to creating a welcoming workplace for women.
- Provide ongoing training re: respectful workplaces to the entire workplace team.
- Provide opportunities for employees to talk about the value of a diverse workplace.
- Create opportunities for members of the diversity team to talk about their concerns.
- Provide information about the types of challenges that might be experienced by female employees, by the existing staff, and by managers.
- Explain your policy re: harassment in the workplace and explain the process for addressing harassment complaints.
- Be cautious about placing women in work units where there has been no preparation – place new employees where they have the most potential for success.

Achieving diversity is not about changing people but evolving organizational systems to support their inclusion.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Provide Opportunities to Learn About Diversity**

Not all your employees will immediately see the value of having more women in the workplace. Some will, but others may not see the impact of gender diversity until it directly affects them. It’s important to keep inviting staff to give their feedback on the changes that are happening. It’s also important that you continue to seek ways to help your employees learn more about gender diversity. Depending on the number of employees, you can implement workplace activities such as

- on-going training about workplace diversity and sensitivity, anti-harassment policies, and communication in the workplace
- monthly gatherings to informally share information on topics of concern to men and women
- discussions with individuals from women-led businesses, women’s organizations, business associations, and sector councils

A one-time conversation or training course is simply not enough to ensure respect in the workplace.
ACTION ITEM

Communicate Your Commitment

Let employees know you are prepared to do whatever it takes to hire and retain women in non-traditional positions. Communicate your commitment. Be clear about the kinds of attitudes, behaviours, and actions that will result in a safe and respectful work environment for female employees. Formal and informal communication as well as a demonstration of respectful behaviour are on-going, daily necessities.

ACTION ITEM

Develop Policies and Practices that Respect Women

You may need to change some existing policies and workplace practices that are not respectful of female employees. You may decide to develop some brand new policies and practices that you feel are more appropriate. Before you do this, however, it's important to know what's working well in your workplace and to build on existing strengths. Using the information you've already gathered, try to identify the specific policies, processes, and systems that are supportive of female employees. Knowing what works to promote gender diversity in your company or business will help you change the things that don’t.

Anti-Harassment Policies

Some of the most important policies you will develop as part of your diversity plan will be those regarding workplace harassment. Harassment is a form of violence. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal in nature. It can be expressed as

- insulting jokes and comments about women
- displaying sexual materials in the workplace
- sexual coercion (e.g. hinting at job benefits in exchange for sex)
- name calling
- threats of physical harm
- bullying
- grabbing, pinching, fondling
- being made to feel isolated or “invisible”

Harassment is compounded for women of colour, for women of visible ethnic or religious backgrounds, for lesbians and for women living with disabilities. Regardless of the form it takes, the impact on female employees can be devastating. A zero tolerance policy towards harassment and bullying in your workplace should be made a major component of your diversity strategy to ensure the safety of all employees, both female and male.

It’s important to understand, however, that developing strong anti-harassment policies is not enough. Women working in trades and technology jobs report that even though a company may have anti-harassment policies in place, the real issue is whether or not they are enforced and monitored.

Holding employees accountable for their behaviour demonstrates that you’re serious about creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace – one based on respect for all employees.

To garner the cultural benefits of diversity, we have to want them badly enough to not just tolerate diversity but to embrace it, to demand it as part of our culture, as part of our competitive advantage. And once we do, we have to adopt the policies, practices, and personal discipline it takes to get the most from it.
According to some women we spoke with, many harassment incidents go unreported because the reporting process itself is not safe. Women have told us that, at times, harassment is worse after a complaint has been made through the company’s procedures. Women stress it’s essential that employers act swiftly and decisively when informed of harassment.

Make your workplace safe for all employees by:

• developing policies and practices that clearly define inappropriate behaviour
• providing a safe reporting process
• providing employees with formal and informal means to report harassment
• holding managers accountable for responding to all reported instances of harassment
• not associating a lack of formal complaints with an absence of harassment
• remaining alert to possible indicators of harassment (e.g. sudden request for a transfer, refusal to work with a certain individual, high absenteeism, sudden changes in work quality)

Work-Life Balance Policies

Workplaces with cultures that attract and retain female employees are often those that support work-life balance. Many women who have children and/or aging parents require flexibility around issues such as scheduling and personal leave. Increasingly, practices that support work-life balance are an important factor in the retention of male employees, especially younger men who want to balance work with family responsibilities.

One way you can demonstrate support for female employees is by learning about childcare options in your area. If your company is in an urban setting or a large town, talk to local daycares. Develop partnerships with them to help meet employee needs. Develop a list of local childcare providers, including caregivers available for evening, overtime, and illness situations. This is more difficult in areas of the province where there are no local daycare centres. However, you might be able to form partnerships with other employers to support the development of a childcare facility.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has pointed out that the negative consequences of workplace violence have a ripple effect well beyond the person who is the focus of the violence. The ILO maintains that the impact of workplace violence includes direct costs of lost work and improved security measures as well as indirect costs stemming from reduced efficiency and productivity, quality problems, loss in company image, difficulty in future recruiting and a reduction in customers.
Physical Safety Policies

Safety and security are critical issues for women entering non-traditional fields. As an employer, you may be concerned that the changes you’ll have to make to accommodate female workers will be costly. You’ll be happy to know that research has shown, in fact, the opposite is true.

Cost benefits can arise when equipment and work practices are modified to reflect the physical capabilities of women (and many men). Back injury rates for both men and women, for example, can be reduced by changing lifting practices. The overall number of workplace injuries can also be reduced, resulting in fewer days lost. Similarly, when maintenance standards are improved to make equipment easier to use, time lost due to equipment failures is decreased.

Employers have the legal responsibility to provide safe workplaces. Occupational Health and Safety guidelines developed by many government agencies, industry associations, and unions are a source of specific details. When work practices are modified to meet health and safety guidelines and become less physically demanding for women, they often become more efficient for all employees. Increased workplace efficiency usually results in increased productivity. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are two of the national agencies providing useful information for employers.

CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR WOMEN

In most companies, new employees receive some form of informal support during their first days on the job. A more experienced worker will help them “learn the ropes” and fill them in about standard policies and practices in the workplace. By speaking to women in trades and technology, we learned that this kind of support isn’t always offered, and without it, new female employees often feel adrift and alone.

“I think we need to support each other as women in trades…you know, we’re not going to get the support from men, not the type of support [and] the understanding you would get from your women peers,” a female trades worker said.

ACTION ITEM

Develop a Mentoring Program

Make sure your new female employees receive the support they need and deserve by establishing a mentoring program. By pairing up an “old hand” with a “new hire,” you’ll be extending a number of benefits to a new female worker. If your company is small, your mentoring program may be an informal one. A company with a large number of employees could implement a more comprehensive program. Regardless of size, mentoring is an important step in the process of welcoming women into your workplace.

Benefits to new employees include encouragement to continue in non-traditional work; access to “lessons learned” by their mentor’s experience; advice about career advancement; and a feeling of encouragement to reach their full potential. There are a number of benefits for
the mentor as well: an opportunity to develop communication skills; maintaining links with industry and training institutes; and the positive feelings of helping someone else succeed.

There are some steps you can take to ensure your mentoring program is effective.

• Identify employees who are willing to be a mentor. It would be ideal if the mentors are women but if you have no female employees, men who understand and respect the challenges of being a woman in a non-traditional occupation can be very effective.
• Ensure the mentoring program is well publicized throughout the workplace.
• Ask each new female employee if she would like to participate in the mentoring program.
• Regularly communicate management support of the mentoring program.
• Make sure mentors and mentees have a designated time allotted for all mentoring activities.
• Ask potential mentors and mentees if they would like to contribute ideas for mentoring guidelines, agreements, and applications.

Whether your company is large or small and whether your mentoring program is formal or informal, there are some standard principles of healthy mentoring relationships you should follow.

• Host events directly related to the program with as many individuals who wish to participate.
• Ensure all interactions are respectful, informative, and engaging.
• Establish guidelines for effective communication designed to support, empower, and guide the mentee.
• Understand the challenges and barriers women face entering male-dominated workplaces.
• Make sure both mentor and mentee agree to maintain confidentiality to ensure that information shared stays between them.
• Ensure the relationship between the mentor and mentee is mentee-driven – i.e. the mentee sets the agenda for what she wants from each session with her mentor. Guidance and feedback is requested by the mentee.
LOOK OUTSIDE YOUR COMPANY

Making necessary workplace changes, especially those related to attitudes and behaviours, can sometimes seem overwhelming. Sources of information outside your own company can provide a wealth of innovative ideas and strategies for change. If you are a member of an industry or business association or active in one of the sector councils, you may be able to get workplace diversity on the agenda of one of the regular meetings.

You may be surprised to learn about activities happening in your region to support and maintain diversity. A search on the Internet can also provide you with more insights into how employers across the country are creating workplace diversity.

Bring the following questions to your diversity team:

• What can we learn from other employers about creating and maintaining diversity?
• Who else in our community is working on women’s employment issues?
• Which organizations have a large number of female employees?
• What are our “burning questions” about creating a respectful workplace?
• Which women’s organizations could be a resource for us? Which educational institutions? Which other individuals or organizations?

Encourage Women to Get Trades and Technology Training

Employers have told us it can be a real challenge to find female candidates for available positions in trades and technology. A statement we have often heard from employers wanting to create diversity is “No women apply.”

You can help women get into the trades and technology labour pool by encouraging them to get the training they need. Join with other employers in your area to financially support women by providing scholarships, purchasing tools, protective clothing, and gear. Hire women as summer students. Hire women as apprentices. Provide mentoring, work experience, or co-op programs for women in trades and technology training. Demonstrate that your company wants to employ women by: offering to speak to classes about your workplace and your intention to hire women; arranging tours of your workplace; volunteering your workplace for job shadowing for women; providing work placements; and by establishing awards that honour the achievements of women.

There are several programs and initiatives in Nova Scotia specifically designed to support the participation of women in trades and technology. Information on some of these programs is available in the Useful Resources section at the end of On the Level.
While it’s true the number of skilled tradeswomen in Nova Scotia is lower than we’d like, that number is growing. Enrollment of women in trades and technology programs at NSCC has been steadily increasing and female graduates are now looking for employment. If women with backgrounds and training in trades and technology haven’t been applying for work at your company, maybe it’s time to adjust your recruiting methods.

Do your recruitment attempts tend to attract mostly white male applicants? If so, maybe it’s time to take a different approach. To recruit for gender-diversity, you’re going to have to recruit differently. As many philosophers, educators, politicians, and scientists have wisely noted: if you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.

Women make up about 47 per cent of the labour force in Canada and increasing numbers of women are expressing interest in receiving training in trades and technology occupations.

In order to attract skilled female workers, you may have to make a few adjustments in your recruiting methods to appeal to a broader range of applicants. Things like how you word job ads and the kinds of informal networks you rely on for personal referrals will need to be considered from a new angle of inclusion.

Remember that many of the skilled women you’d like to hire have probably run into gender-role stereotyping at some point in their lives. Many of the applicants you’re hoping to attract may have been mocked or put down because they want to work in non-traditional fields, fields that have not always been open to women.

Many women have encountered employers who are not willing to hire them simply because they’re women. In order to best attract skilled female workers, you’ll have to send a clear, strong, positive message that you’re serious about wanting female employees in your workplace. One of the best ways you can send that message is through job ads.

If we were to receive 100 applicants, we might get five female applicants if we were lucky.

An Employer
ACTION ITEM

Create Ads that Appeal to Women

Women in trades and technology fields have told us they are especially sensitive to the language employers use in their job ads. You can signal to potential female applicants that you are an inclusive employer committed to promoting workplace diversity by directly saying so in your job ads in any of these ways:

• We are an employment equity employer (standard wording).
• We welcome applications from women (more personal wording).
• Applications from women, Aboriginal people, African Nova Scotians, persons living with disabilities, and new Canadians are welcome (demonstrates inclusion for a wide range of culturally-diverse groups).

Whichever statement you choose, you can use large print and place it at the very top of your ad rather than in small print at the bottom. Graphics should also be inclusive and can picture female as well as male workers. High quality graphics can be purchased online at low cost.

The goal of your ad is not to discourage male applicants—it’s to expand the pool of applicants from which you will hire to include women.

Watch your words! Always use inclusive language in all company communications including job ads. Be careful to avoid using the generic pronoun “he” to refer to job candidates. Be very careful, also, that you are using inclusive language to describe job titles. For example, the term “firefighters” is inclusive “firemen” is not. “Police officer” is inclusive policeman is not. “Journeyman” is not inclusive. Use “journeyperson” or “journeyed worker.”
Creating job ads that are likely to appeal to potential female employees is a great first step to attracting women to your company or organization. Then you need to place your ads where women are most likely to see them.

Most people who are seeking employment tend to go to standard employment sites to learn about new openings. You should consider placing your ad in the usual places such as regional and local newspaper employment listings, and career resource centres. You should also post your ad in places where women are likely to go. Some places to consider are:

- child care centres
- community bulletin boards (e.g. in grocery stores)
- women’s organizations and outreach centres
- employment centres
- shopping malls
- laundromats
- gyms
- family resource centres (e.g. on military bases)

Although word-of-mouth has traditionally been used in the trades sector for generations, it’s a recruitment strategy that doesn’t work to identify female applicants. Word-of-mouth promotion through your existing male networks will identify sons, brothers and nephews, but not tap the pool of competent, skilled female workers you’re hoping to attract.
**SCREEN THE APPLICANTS**

Many women who are now employed in trades and technology jobs told us about how difficult it was for them to make it through the stages of the hiring process. As an employer who supports gender diversity in the workplace, it’s important to pay special attention to the screening and interviewing of female applicants.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Eliminate Gender Stereotyping**

Sexist attitudes about women working in non-traditional jobs can negatively affect every step in the hiring process. Bias, discrimination, and stereotyping can exist in any situation; you must take steps to make sure that female applicants aren’t being subjected to sexist attitudes and expectations in your company’s screening and interviewing processes.

Make sure that human rights and gender diversity training are given to all employees involved in recruitment and hiring. Remember that negative stereotyping is pervasive in our culture. Don’t assume that staff members involved in the screening and interviewing process won’t be affected by it.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Make No Assumptions**

Gender-role stereotyping is common in our communities. Often, people aren’t aware that their perceptions are influenced by stereotypical ideas about the kinds of work women can and want to do. Sometimes, a company’s recruitment team wrongly assumes women won’t be attracted to non-traditional work that is considered dirty or physically demanding. Here are some other misconceptions that might lead your recruitment team to screen out female applicants:

- assuming women won’t stick with work in trades or technology fields
- believing a woman won’t be tough enough to cope on a male-dominated job site
- expecting a woman to be too focused on her home life and responsibilities to do the job well
- predicting that a woman won’t be able to get along with her male co-workers

These are all false assumptions that can reduce your capacity to recruit highly skilled women. Provide diversity training for your recruitment team to ensure that recruitment practices remain as unbiased as possible.

*With a few notable exceptions, discrimination and stereotyping in hiring practices, classrooms and workplaces is perceived to continue to pose significant barriers to women entering the trades.*

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

*It is not that individuals...are inherently unable to achieve equality on their own, it is that the obstacles in their way are so formidable and self-perpetuating that they cannot be overcome without intervention.*

In the Picture, p. 6
Don’t Penalize Women

It’s important that anyone involved in your company’s recruiting practices understands that women seeking work in non-traditional fields face significant barriers not faced by their male counterparts. Males are much more likely to have gained experience from a very early age in mechanical and technical work through a father or uncle. Males are also more likely to be encouraged through informal mentoring to express an interest in the trades and to pursue trades training and apprenticeships. These life experiences often become interpreted as an “aptitude” for trades.

Girls are not usually encouraged by their fathers, brothers, or uncles to work under the hood of a car or to help build a backyard deck. As a result, many female applicants lack the kinds of specific knowledge and experience that a male applicant may have acquired. One female technologist expressed it very clearly to us.

“Every single guy I work with has what I call the ‘informal 20 year apprenticeship’ which is being around it when you’re growing up. Even if it was just helping their dad shingle the roof or working on the car. They always have these stories about old broken stuff that was lying around and they would try to fix it and maybe it would work and maybe it wouldn’t. It doesn’t really matter. What matters is that when they got to start in the trades…it was like a language. To me, it feels like a second language.”

It’s crucial that a woman is not penalized for the lack of hands-on experience she received as she was growing up. As one tradeswoman said to us, “all that hands-on stuff is teachable” and can be learned as an adult. Remember that aptitude tests often indicate that a person has some experience in demonstrating a particular skill. These tests don’t necessarily reflect the ability to learn that skill.

In a Women Unlimited focus group, a tradeswoman referred to a past situation in which a major company employed women as consultants to gain insight into why so few women were being hired. As this woman puts it, “It’s no wonder there were no women in the line trade. They couldn’t get past the first stage because all the men sitting on the board didn’t think there should be any women line people.” The consultants informed the company that unless they changed their interview process, they would continue to have a shortage of female workers.

When screening potential job applicants, always take training potential into consideration.
INTERVIEW AND HIRE

Many employers want to create a diverse workforce and are open to hiring more female applicants, but often the interview and hiring process itself acts as a barrier to women eager to enter the non-traditional workforce.

ACTION ITEM

Remove Barriers from the Interview Process

Many Nova Scotia employers want to create a diverse workforce and are very open to hiring more female applicants. Oftentimes, the interview and hiring process itself acts as a barrier to women eager to enter the non-traditional workforce.

Women who work in non-traditional fields have told us about very negative experiences they’ve had during job interviews. One of the biggest obstacles that women encounter during the interview process is being asked inappropriate questions. Women are sometimes asked questions that are not asked of male applicants. This makes women wonder whether the workplace involved would really be a welcoming one. Here are some of the questions women have reported being asked during job interviews:

- Do you know that you’re going to get dirty?
- Are you physically able to do this job?
- Will you get upset if the guys ask you to make coffee?
- Will you be able to get a babysitter if we need you to work shift work?
- If somebody sexually harasses you, are you going to lodge a complaint?

A number of women told us that the formal set-up of the interview process itself made them feel awkward and intimidated. Many women reported being interviewed by an all-male team. One woman described a scenario of “seven men sitting around a room. Nobody smiled. Nobody laughed. They all just stared at me.”

The Human Rights Act endorses programs that support people who face barriers to employment. If a workplace has an Affirmative Action or Employment Equity Program, applicants may volunteer information about themselves in relation to such a program.
**ACTION ITEM**

**Pay Attention to Interview Do’s and Don’ts**

Design an interview process that is welcoming and fair to your female applicants by taking the following steps:

- Include women on the interview team.
- Ask about transferable skills.
- Make sure the interviewer(s) have received gender-diversity training.
- Educate interviewer(s) about which questions are appropriate to ask and which are not.
- Be certain interviewer(s) understand it is illegal to ask certain questions.

Certain questions should not be asked during interviews because they can result in a violation of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. For example, interviewers are prohibited by law from asking questions about gender, pregnancy, or plans for child-bearing; sexual orientation; a person’s marital status, spouse or a second family income; or childcare arrangements and person’s number of dependents or children.

Here are some examples of questions that interviewers can legally ask job applicants and questions that are prohibited by law and should not be asked. For more information about the Human Rights Act and how it relates to the interviewing process, contact the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. They have a number of resources and programs that can help you make sure your company’s interviewing process is appropriate, fair, and welcoming to women.

*Aptitude is a code word for experience and exposure.*

A Female Worker
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before a person is hired</th>
<th>After a person begins work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical or mental disability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions about disabilities, past dependency on drugs or alcohol, or health issues.</td>
<td><strong>Can ask</strong> what kind of accommodation the person may need for a disability.</td>
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<td><strong>Race or colour</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions.</td>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions.</td>
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<td><strong>Sex (includes gender and pregnancy)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions, including any about gender, pregnancy, or plans for child-bearing.</td>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions, including any about gender, pregnancy, or plans for child-bearing.</td>
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<td><strong>Sexual orientation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions.</td>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions.</td>
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<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions, including any about a person’s spouse or a second family income.</td>
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<td><strong>Family status</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Can ask</strong> about a person’s ability to meet job requirements such as for travel and shift work.</td>
<td><strong>Can ask</strong> about a person’s ability to meet job requirements such as for travel and shift work.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions about issues such as childcare arrangements or number of dependents or children.</td>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> any questions about issues such as childcare arrangements or number of dependents or children.</td>
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<td><strong>Origin/ethnic, national, or Aboriginal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can ask</strong> for a Social Insurance Number and other documents that show the person is eligible to work in Canada.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can ask</strong> questions to find out if the person speaks or writes a language well enough to do a job when there is a legitimate need for them to be fluent in a particular language to do the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> about the nationality of the person or their relatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can not ask</strong> for a birth certificate, citizenship status, or mother tongue.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Before a person is hired | After a person begins work

**Religion or creed**
- **Can not ask** any questions, including any about religious affiliations or customs, or whether the person will want to take religious holidays.
- **Can ask** what kind of accommodation the person may need for such things as religious holidays.

**Other personal information**
- Can ask questions about any specific physical or mental abilities that a job requires, when they are bona fide requirements for the job.
- **Can not ask** for a photograph.
- **Can ask** for any information required for tax benefits or insurance purposes.
- **Can not ask** for a medical examination.
- **Can ask** for a medical exam that is required for the job. The medical exam questions must relate to the job.


**ACTION ITEM**

**Consider Added Value of Women in the Workplace**

Employers have told us that female employees bring a number of added benefits to the workplace above and beyond the skills needed to do the jobs they were hired for. These employers identified benefits such as success, productivity, creativity, and employee satisfaction. Other positive skills and abilities women bring to the workplace include mediation, organization, and facilitation. Many of the benefits women bring to the workplace were described in the Introduction to *On the Level*.

Some women currently employed in trades and technology occupations have told us that they often informally play the role of mediator, coach, or counselor on the job. These women reported very high levels of job satisfaction and told us that their male co-workers and supervisors recognize and appreciate the unique skills and aptitudes they bring to the work environment as women.

When considering female applicants, think about what abilities, skills, and aptitudes she’ll bring with her into your company or organization. Consider the benefits of abilities that are above and beyond the basic skills she’ll need to do the job.

*It brings a different balance to the table. Women, because of their experiences in life, really feel and think differently and might have a piece of the pie that hasn’t traditionally been talked about at a table of electricians.*

An Employer
**ACTION ITEM**

**Align Applicants with Company’s Diversity Goals and Business Plan**

It’s only natural to want to hire the best candidates for the jobs you have available. But how does your hiring team decide what “best” means? How are they determining merit? Is your vision of a diverse workforce included in your company’s hiring criteria?

Often, employers wanting to create a diverse team of employees fail to include gender diversity as part of their criteria for determining the best candidates. Job applicants are frequently scored or rated on the basis of individual merits – i.e. their skills, aptitudes, and experiences – but not on how they would contribute to your company’s diversity goals.

Consider expanding your company’s definition of “best” to include an applicant’s contribution to gender diversity in the workplace. You would still be hiring on the basis of merit, but the measure of merit would then take into account the applicant’s contribution to diversity.

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**Provide Effective Workplace Orientation**

If you’ve successfully recruited and hired skilled women, it’s very important that you invite them into your workplace in a way that makes them feel welcome and supported.

*Achieving diversity is not about changing people but evolving organizational systems to support their inclusion.*

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**ACTION ITEM**

**Notify Staff that Women Have Been Hired**

One of the biggest issues for a woman entering a non-traditional job site for the first time is that often her male co-workers haven’t been told she’s been hired. As a result, a new female employee is often greeted with baffled looks and confusion rather than interested and welcoming expressions. Avoid this completely by informing your male employees ahead of time that a woman has been hired, what position she’s been hired for, and when they should expect her.

As part of your diversity strategy, you should be planning to provide male employees with diversity training and making sure they have a clear understanding of issues relating to employment equity.

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Diversity training plays a key role in retaining talent by promoting workplace harmony, improving communication, and developing leadership skills. Awareness training raises understanding of diversity concerns by uncovering hidden assumptions and biases, and heightening sensitivity to diversity.

*My first morning in here, I didn’t have a clue about a washroom, didn’t have a clue about anything. Nobody to show me. Nobody to talk to.*

A Female Worker
ACTION ITEM

Introduce Women to People, Policies, and Procedures

You’ve put a lot of time and energy into attracting and hiring skilled, diverse women to your company. You need to put just as much time and energy into making sure they feel welcome and comfortable on the job site.

Fitting into the non-traditional workplace can be challenging for a new female worker. A woman’s first day and first few weeks on the job provides a wonderful opportunity for you to ensure that she feels included. Follow these guidelines to make sure a woman’s first days on the job are good ones:

Formally introduce her to all staff on her first day. You may want to make the introduction yourself or assign a staff member to take her around – choose someone who you feel confident will help make her feel welcome and will answer her questions.

Arrange a physical tour of the work site as soon as possible.
Both men and women feel more at ease when they’re familiar with their surroundings. Don’t forget to show her the lunchroom and washroom.

Show her to her own workspace and show her where all the basic equipment or tools are.
The sooner she can see her physical space and knows where the basic tools of her trade are, the sooner she’ll be able to feel a part of this new work environment.

Give her a copy of a policy and procedures manual or handbook.
For both men and women, learning how things are done in a new workplace is a steep learning curve. Help make it easier by creating an easy-to-read handbook or manual that outlines key procedures and policies. Make it available to a new female employee for quick reference.

Recruitment | 29
Provide Quality Training

Because of the kinds of barriers women face gaining education and experience in non-traditional fields, many new female employees will be especially grateful for formal and informal training opportunities. Many women working on non-traditional jobsites have told us about problems they’ve had getting hands-on training. Though trades and technology work is frequently physical in nature, a number of female employees told us that their male co-workers often found it difficult to assist them with hands-on learning. According to the women, even male co-workers who were specifically tasked with training them became impatient and frustrated. Sometimes, the men would simply stop showing the women how to do things. Trainers need to be suited for the training role and have the necessary skills to encourage and support new employees.

As part of your diversity planning, be sure to include specific, detailed plans for job training. Consider both formal and informal training opportunities for female employees. Make sure all male employees, including trainers, coaches, and male mentors, have received their own gender diversity training.

Create Mentoring and Networking Opportunities

In the Readiness section of On the Level, we present some steps you can take to create a mentoring program for female employees (see page xx). Many women we’ve spoken to remember vividly how tough it was to enter a new non-traditional workplace. Most will be eager to help out another woman who’s new to the company.

Women working in trades and technology jobs told us it’s vitally important for them to have at least one other woman somewhere in the work environment. According to one tradeswoman, even though she hadn’t run into problems in her job, it helped just knowing there was a more experienced woman she could turn to: “If I have any trouble, I’m going to her because she’s been there, done that.”

You can also create opportunities for female employees to meet regularly to share experiences and support. Encourage them to talk about their experiences in the workplace and provide a safe environment for them to communicate their concerns to managers or to you directly.

The first guy that was supposed to train me for the whole first year, he just couldn’t do it. It was like he just couldn’t do it. He’d just kind of talk to me but he didn’t know how to...it was so frustrating for him to try to put into words what he was doing. He would rather do it behind my back while I was at lunch...and so then, I still didn’t know the next time around and now, I’m four years in and people are like ‘Didn’t anybody ever teach you that? How come you don’t know this and you’ve been here four years?’

A Female Worker
I think it makes it a little easier if there’s somebody who’s “been there” and who’s established and they kind of say “If you have any problems, just come see me,” because when you’re just starting there, whether you’re an apprentice or you’re job training or whatever, they [male coworkers] can be pretty intimidating.

A Female Worker
You have a respectful work environment and have hired skilled women in trades and technology. You have a vision, a strategy, and a diversity team. Is the work over? Unfortunately, it’s not quite that simple. Sustaining a respectful work environment and retaining your vision of a diverse workforce will require on-going attention.

Interviews we’ve done with female employees working in Nova Scotia businesses suggest that the real challenge for employers is retaining the competent women they’ve hired. The good news is that there are specific strategies you can use to ensure that your female employees are respected in their workplace and the retention rate is high. In fact, our research on retention points to a single, simple factor that makes the difference between whether a female worker stays or leaves a job site.

If you create a work environment in which workers are treated equally and with respect, all employees, including women, will be much more likely to remain with your company.

If you haven’t done so already, now’s the time to develop and implement strategies to create a respectful workplace, as described in the Readiness section, on pages XX_YY.

On pages XX in the Readiness section we described a step-by-step process to closely examine your workplace culture. A crucial part of diversity planning involves assessing your workplace by carefully reviewing current policies, practices, and procedures. The purpose is to better understand how things are done within your company and the impact workplace culture has on your capacity to retain employees. You will likely get a more honest assessment of the impacts of your workplace practices if someone from outside the immediate work environment facilitates the process. Female employees often feel more comfortable with female facilitators. Women’s organizations are particularly aware of gender issues in the workplace and can put you in touch with a qualified person to help you.

A work environment where women are treated with respect and as equals to their male co-workers is the single biggest factor in retention.
Women currently working in trades and technology have told us repeatedly that leadership from senior management is essential to address and eliminate inequality in the workplace. Female employees will only be truly respected in non-traditional work environments when a company’s management reflects a commitment to her being there. Gender-inclusive workplaces are ones in which women have:

- a clearly stated anti-harassment policy
- a zero tolerance policy for workplace bullying
- well developed codes of conduct
- swift and visible response to harassing or bullying behaviour
- a workforce with diversity of colour, ethnic or religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and abilities
- employees who demonstrate respectful behaviour to all other employees
- freedom from stereotyping about gender roles
- opportunities for advancement
- policies and conditions that support work-life balance

ACTION ITEM

Provide Leadership

Women working in non-traditional jobs stress the importance of management’s attitude. As one woman who had worked in construction put it, “If the management is proactive, if the management is taking a leadership role around issues, it’s a much more positive environment on the floor.”

Many women working in non-traditional fields tell us it’s important that supervisors and bosses demonstrate respect for female employees. We’ve heard a number of women speak appreciatively of company leaders who demonstrate through their behaviour that they believe women are more than qualified to be in trades and technology. We’ve often been told by women how meaningful it is for them to feel supported by their bosses and supervisors.

The paradox is that in order for leaders to get what they want, they must let go of the belief that they alone have the answer. Indeed, they must involve more people in the change process than they ever thought prudent or possible.

Terms of Engagement, Richard H. Axelrod
Company leaders can show support for female employees by being explicit about the importance of promoting women. Supervisors and managers can seek out opportunities to help women advance within the company. When a woman is promoted, managers should make the skill sets required for the job as well as the reasons for the woman’s promotion clear to other employees. This can help counter any potential backlash from disgruntled male employees.

Female employees should be included in all meetings attended by their male colleagues and managers should ensure that all employees receive preparatory materials in advance.

Female workers have told us about the powerful impact such comments can have. As one woman explained, “I know in the last job I had, the person who hired me and our manager did that [made proactive statements about diversity] and it made a difference.”

Clear, positive statements about your company’s decision to create and maintain an inclusive workplace creates a model of desired behaviour and lets employees know what’s expected of them.

**Catalyst**, a leading research and advisory, non-profit organization contends that companies and businesses that achieve diversity achieve better financial results, too. They compared the gender diversity and financial performance of a sample of Fortune 500 corporations between 1996–2000 and again in 2004 and found that

- The group of companies with the highest representation of women in their top management teams experienced better financial performance than the group of companies with the lowest women’s representations.

- In each of the five industries analyzed, the group of companies with the highest women’s representation in their top management teams experienced a higher return on investment.

- In four out of the five industries analyzed, the group of companies with the highest women’s representation in their top management team experienced a higher total return to shareholders.

**ACTION ITEM**

Model Appropriate Behaviour

Without the ongoing presence of dedicated leadership and concrete reminders to reinforce new behaviours, it’s all too easy for old behaviours to resume. Managers and supervisors within your company can emphasize the importance of gender diversity by regularly making proactive statements to employees about the company’s commitment to a respectful workplace.

Some of the best sources of information about employment systems are employees. Be sure to involve your male and female employees in any survey you carry out.
**ACTION ITEM**

**Take Complaints Seriously**

Managers and supervisors tell us it’s easy to turn a blind eye to inappropriate behaviour. In fact, several admitted that this has been their usual practice in the workplace. Sadly, sometimes it becomes part of the workplace culture to ignore offending behaviour.

Most people feel uncomfortable or even threatened at the thought of bringing attention to the bad behaviour of a co-worker, and, as a result, tend to keep quiet. Make it easier to confront unacceptable behavior by providing a few examples of what managers and supervisors can do and say. An experienced facilitator can provide a training session or you can contact a local women’s organization for some suggestions.

Ask your female employees about their concerns, especially about the reporting process. What’s the safest process for them? Let them know that any employee can “call” another on disrespectful behaviour and that any concerns they have will be taken seriously.

The best way to help your employees feel safe in reporting inappropriate behaviour is to show through your own actions that disrespectful behaviour will not be tolerated. A quick and decisive response to inappropriate behaviour sends a clear message about your commitment to a respectful workplace. Employees need to see action, not words. The number of incidents and actions taken can be reported on while respecting anonymity. Both male and female employees need to know their complaints will be taken seriously and they will not suffer any form of retaliation as a result of filing a complaint.

**A Code of Ethics** was established by one company we met with. It contained statements on ethical and respectful behaviour. The codes are written on a laminated card and each employee was expected to wear them around their neck with their employee card. But many employees refuse to wear them as they have observed that the worst behaviour comes from senior management. As one employee stated “When the company follows them, we will too.”

Members of your management team need to know that you support and encourage them to “call” employees on behaviour and attitudes that are not respectful of female employees.

The real challenge is to assist male employees to question their own attitudes and values about gender, to unlearn some deeply ingrained but outdated ways of thinking, and to look for creative approaches to attaining truly equal partnerships between women and men in the workplace.

Madeline Comeau, 1994 from In the Picture, p. 23

A senior manager with a local company was orienting a new female employee to the plant. On their rounds, the manager introduced the new employee to a supervisor, who commented on how nice it was to have a good-looking woman join the firm. Later that morning, the manager went back to the supervisor and told him his comment was inappropriate and that comments of a physical nature are not acceptable. The manager then went to the new employee, apologized for the incident, and explained the steps he had taken with the supervisor. This is an example of senior leadership “walking the talk.”
The following case study presents a picture of what can go wrong when a company ignores the key principles that lead to employee retention. This is a true story. The woman’s name, skill set and details of her workplace have been changed for purposes of confidentiality. The names of other people involved have also been changed.

Betty, a graduate from NSCC, was hired as an apprentice in a non-traditional trade by a large organization and placed in an all-male shop. She had a two-week training period under the supervision of James, the head tradesman of the shop. “At first I couldn’t do anything so my foreman advised upper body training, understanding that it takes about three months to kick in.” After the training, Betty was in good shape and able to handle the physical requirements of the job. However, Betty constantly felt that she was “on trial” with James. He was often aggressive towards her and looked for problems with her work. He was also known to be a troublemaker. But Betty had the support of Richard, the foreman, and the other workers in the shop were civil and would sit with her during lunch breaks.

About a year into the position, Betty was moved to a smaller shop. The only other worker at the smaller shop was the head tradesman who had moved over a few weeks earlier. Richard advised Betty that if she had problems with her co-worker, she should come directly to him. However, he worked the day shift in the other shop and Betty worked the night shift. Because the work required in the smaller shop was a better fit for Betty, she tried to put up with the situation and for about three months Betty and James worked well together. Then another trades worker, a male, was hired and Betty trained him because James was on vacation. When he came back from vacation things took an ugly turn “He no longer made an effort. He ignored me. Things went from bad to worse. It was like I was invisible.”

Betty approached James, asking what the issue was. Was it because she is a woman? Was her work not up to his standards? “His answer was always the same. He didn’t like my work ethic.” Betty’s assessment is that it was all about power “He couldn’t stand it that I was good at what I was doing.”

Another trades worker was hired and then all three of the other men in the shop adopted James’ isolating behaviour “He’s the leader and they follow him. When it’s break time, they go with him. It’s a gang mentality.” By then, the stress of “never knowing what was facing me when I would come in to work” was beginning to take its toll. Betty started taking a lot of sick days.
When fall arrived, Betty returned to her apprenticeship training for five weeks training and then took vacation. When she returned to the shop, the isolating behaviour escalated. In addition, the three tradesmen would sign out early, leaving Betty in the shop by herself until the end of the shift. Betty didn’t think this was either fair or safe and went to her foreman. Richard told James that the four employees to either take turns closing the shop or have all four stay until the shift was over. In Betty’s words, “James didn’t like it.” In retaliation, he made a complaint to Richard that Betty wasn’t getting her work checked (a requirement for an apprentice). But Betty always had her work checked “Everybody saw how he was treating me” Betty explained Richard did speak with him but “he took it personally” and took it out on Betty.

Betty was now at the breaking point and took more vacation time. She has not returned to her employment since. It’s not because she didn’t want to but because each time she made up her mind to return, she would become physically ill. At one point she ended up in hospital. She has also had to purchase teeth guards because she grinds her teeth while sleeping due to stress. The dental work has not been covered by the company’s health policies.

Meanwhile Betty’s bills are escalating and the company is working through the legalities of the situation. Occupational Health and Safety personnel has been brought in and management, according to Betty, has been both concerned for her and supportive.

What is difficult to understand, however, is why management would place Betty in a work environment with a known troublemaker. There were clear signs of her illness. Guidelines were in place but yet nothing was done. Interviews with others in the organization confirmed that this particular section of the company is “known as a very difficult place to work. It’s a bullying work environment.” Betty was not the first woman to have experienced harassment in the unit. Another female employee also left this same section after six years of putting up with similar bad treatment. Her colleagues were shocked that the company had let her go “We lost her and it is so unfortunate that now we’ve lost another woman. It is a shock to see that bullying is still going on."

Footnote: Betty has two and a half years remaining in her apprenticeship but she has decided to close that career door. She intends to start her own business in a non-trades fields.
When it comes to equality in the workplace, many of us would probably say we’ve come a long way toward eliminating sex-based discrimination from our work environments. But evidence suggests that the issue still warrants attention.

Albert Mills, Sobey School of Business in Halifax Chronicle Herald, February 3, 2005

MAINTAIN WORKPLACE RESPECT AND EQUITY

We’ve learned from our research that employees working in trades and technology occupations place great value upon a company’s ethical behaviour and practices.

Employees are keenly aware of how other employees are treated. Our discussions with members of the Nova Scotia workforce illustrated that most employees – both male and female – expect management to treat all staff with fairness, dignity, and respect. We discovered that workplace equity is very closely linked with employee satisfaction and retention, which in turn is linked to workplace productivity.

ACTION ITEM

Apply Policies Equally

Our research also showed that formal policies and practices are often applied unevenly. Your female workers need to feel confident that company policies, codes of conduct, and work-life balance practices will be applied equally across all parts of the workplace.

Good leadership works to ensure there is consistent application throughout the company. Employees need to know that the same workplace policies and practices are being extended to everyone and are not dependent on the good nature of individual managers. Unevenness in the way employees are treated within the workplace can lead to serious issues with retention.

Consistency is especially important in enforcing high standards of employee behaviour. When instances of harassment occur, immediate action is required at all levels and in all sections of your company. All employees should be encouraged to report instances of workplace bullying and/or harassment to their supervisor. A safe process for reporting harassment is essential. Your employees need to see that action has been taken; otherwise, they won’t support the process.

One woman we spoke to had been with an organization for 10 years. For half of those years she worked with a male manager who mentored her and encouraged her to move outside of her comfort zones “He was wonderful. He saw skills in me that I didn’t know I had and when there was a shake-up in the organization, he encouraged me to move to my present job.” The new job was at a superintendent level in a different section of the company. It entailed working on an all-male team with a male manager who neither supported her nor recognized her skill sets. This woman tried hard to deal with the insults (e.g. being called a bitch to her face) and isolating behaviour of her male colleagues. As the youngest and only female member of the team, she had initially planned to wait out her baby-boom colleagues until their retirement in a few years. But after three years in the job, this woman finally left the organization “It’s been rough. It eats away at your confidence.”
ACTION ITEM

Implement Supportive Policies and Practices

Women have told us that they aren’t concerned only about their own experiences on the job – they want employers to demonstrate respect and fairness towards all employees regardless of gender. As one woman suggested, employers should “stop making it about the men and women who work there. It’s about the employees who work there.”

Women also told us that leadership from senior management is absolutely critical in addressing and eliminating inequality in the workplace. Female employees will be respected in a non-traditional work environment when a company’s management demonstrates a commitment to women being there. Women look to employers to:

- value and promote diversity
- appreciate, and appropriately reward employees
- enforce fair policies regarding vacation time, parental leave, taking time off, pay scales, etc.
- offer training opportunities
- honour work-life balance
- provide a mentoring program
- encourage women to apply for promotion

There are a number of policies and practices you can implement in your workplace that have already been introduced successfully by companies committed to creating supportive work cultures. Consider the following.

Policies and practices involving parental leave

- Provide accommodations for time off for medical appointments as required.
- Arrange accommodations for employees returning to the workplace after parental leave. Specific policies should recognize that new parents may need to be eased back into the workplace. Discussions should be held with the returning employee to determine appropriate workload.

Family-friendly policies and practices

- Offer flex hours to allow employees to work around bus schedules of school-aged children.
- Allow employees to “buy back” days (i.e. exchange pay for additional vacation days).
- The decrease in pay can be pro-rated over a year to ease the financial burden.
- Enable an employee to work at home if his or her child is sick.
- Compress the work week (e.g. 80 hours over 9 days giving every second Friday off).
- Consider an employee’s family responsibilities when planning for staff training.
- Accommodate shift workers with childcare needs. Seek out other employers with shift work (e.g. hospitals) to collaborate in setting up a 24/7 daycare.
- Don’t make major changes or decisions when an employee’s away from the workplace due to parental leave or family crisis.

Policies and practices involving work clothing

- Provide female employees with properly fitting work clothes. Find a supplier that makes uniforms and work boots for women.
- Ensure the safety of pregnant employees by providing appropriate gear and clothing.

All employees will benefit from workplaces that are known for inclusiveness, physical safety, and good management practices.

Denise McLean, Workplaces That Work, 2003
ACTION ITEM

Listen to Women

We learned from our research that the attitudes of male co-workers and supervisors dramatically affect how a woman in trades and technology experiences her workplace and whether or not she stays. It’s important to remember that female employees stepping onto the shop floor or the building site are entering what has traditionally been a male environment. As a result, women in non-traditional work must often contend with prevailing attitudes and beliefs about gender and work.

Sexist comments aren’t the only things that make women feel discounted and unwanted on the job site. Female employees have told us that their male co-workers are often reluctant to credit their suggestions and ideas. They reported that often the men they work beside reject their advice about aspects of the tasks they’re supposedly doing together as a team.

Sometimes, male workers and supervisors go to the opposite extreme and put female employees “on a pedestal.” They mistakenly think that a woman working in trades, for example, isn’t tough enough emotionally or strong enough physically to do the job. As a result, male tradesmen often rush in to help their female co-workers lift or operate heavy machinery without being asked.

Female employees in non-traditional workplaces don’t want to be treated differently from their male colleagues. As one woman told us, “I don’t want to go into the workplace and be made to feel that I have to be put on a pedestal or I’m special because I’m a girl there.” However, women don’t want to be treated like the men if the men are being bullied and harassed by their co-workers. Women want to be respected, valued, and acknowledged for their contributions to the workplace.

Many tradeswomen are especially proud to be able to ‘hold their own’ on an all-male job site. Many non-traditional worksites still have a ‘macho’ culture that allots respect based on how much an employee can lift. When pressure is placed on women to “prove themselves” in this way, though, serious injuries can result.

Changing workplace cultures to attract more women will foster the very changes being demanded of successful organizations in today’s global economic context.

Management practices and workplace cultures that are good for women are also good for men and for the employer’s financial results.

Workplaces That Work, p. 9

I’ve gotten the comment that in order to do this job, you need to have broad shoulders and if you don’t, you shouldn’t be here. I don’t know what the size of my shoulders has to do with anything.

A Female Law Enforcement Officer

Encountering negative attitudes and beliefs about gender and work is hard for all women but is especially difficult for women of colour, lesbians, immigrant women, and women living with disabilities. Members of these groups must often contend not only with sexist attitudes on the job site but also with racism, homophobia, and discrimination. Don’t assume “one size fits all” when examining practices that support gender diversity – realize that each set of challenges a woman faces must be addressed separately.

Workplaces That Work, p. 8
For example, when female employees are expected to lift heavy weights when hoists are more appropriate for the job, workplace injuries may increase. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has a very informative website at www.ccohs.ca. It contains a detailed explanation of the lifting guidelines developed by NIOSH – the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Tasks for all workers should be assigned in a way that is realistic, appropriate, fair and consistent with workplace health and safety regulations. The adage “work smarter not harder” is a good approach.

**ACTION ITEM**

Establish and Maintain Pay Equity

Equal pay for equal work – it’s only fair (and legal) that women are paid the same wage as their male colleagues in identical positions. Women working in trades and technology jobs have told us, however, that although the issue seems like a no-brainer, they aren’t always paid the same as their male co-workers.

Being paid less than male workers is an affront to female employees. We learned from speaking to women that they simply don’t stay with a company that pays men and women differently when skills and experience are equal.

One woman described how policies were being applied unfairly by her manager to keep her from receiving the same pay as her male colleagues “There are six superintendents in my group – five men and me. For three years I was paid less than they were. When I first took the position, it was under the understanding that I would be moved up fast on the pay scale. I asked when I was getting my raise and my manager said I wasn’t going to get it.”

One woman described an incident where she and her male co-workers were having trouble assembling a catwalk. Her suggestion about which pieces should go up first were met with hostility from one man in particular who stormed off maintaining that he “didn’t come here to be told what to do,” despite the fact that he frequently told her how she should be doing things. “He didn’t want to take my advice,” she concluded. Although the other men weren’t openly resistant, “nobody would bother listening” to suggestions she made though they later proved correct.

Women working in non-traditional fields don’t want special treatment from their supervisors. They don’t want their male co-workers doing their jobs for them. They want to be part of the team.
**ACTION ITEM**

**Identify Opportunities to Make Changes**

Remember to ask male and female employees about their experiences in your workplace. Do it on a regular basis, not just once. Pay close attention to what they tell you about working conditions and how they feel about the workplace culture. Ask about how they are treated, consulted, and respected. If they have concerns, do something about them.

In our research, we identified a number of workplace practices that support gender diversity initiatives. As part of your on-going diversity strategy, you'll need to ask questions to identify which current practices contribute to a respectful workplace and which don't. Examine issues such as:

- employee perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace
- flexible work arrangements to meet child and elder-care needs
- employee knowledge about harassment and discrimination policies and procedures for filing a complaint
- employee response to gender diversity training

As suggested previously, it’s important to provide a comfortable and safe setting in which employees can talk about their experiences and provide the insights you’ll need to maintain a respectful work environment for all employees.

**PREVENT THE ISOLATION OF WOMEN**

Women leave well-paying non-traditional jobs if feelings of isolation become overwhelming. A sense of isolation can be greater for Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant women, lesbians, and women with disabilities. Sometimes, the pressure of being the only woman on a job site – or one of only a few women – is too great for a woman to bear and she quits. She doesn’t leave because she can’t do the work. She leaves because she feels alone and apart.

You can read about how to establish mentoring and networking programs in other sections of On the Level (see pages xx). Active participation in these kinds of programs can dramatically reduce feelings of isolation for women in male-dominated work environments. If you don’t already have networking opportunities for women in your company, approach a female employee and let her contribute ideas and insights into how to get started. The network you help create for female workers could be formal or informal. Mentoring

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**Supervisors need to know their employees’ skills and abilities and allot work assignments accordingly.** As one supervisor put it “If we have five men and one woman on a crew, there is always something I can give the woman to do instead of the heavy lifting. If the woman is slight in stature, there’s no point in setting her up for failure. But don’t get me wrong, I’ve had women who were just as capable as any guy in carrying planks.”

One of the best sources of information about employment systems is an employee. They have first-hand knowledge of the systems on a daily basis and know what’s working and what isn’t.

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I have developed a group of women both within the organization and outside the organization who are in similar positions as a support for me. This allows me to cope...

A Female Worker
and networking programs have been widely shown to be a powerful tool to boost employee satisfaction and, subsequently, retention rates.

It’s important to create opportunities for female employees to gather as a group on a regular basis. Offer them a comfortable space where they will be assured of privacy. Providing refreshments is a good way to convey to the women that you fully support and encourage them to meet and discuss concerns. Encourage them to talk openly about their experiences on the job and provide a safe environment for them to bring their concerns to management.

Be aware, too, that many women aren’t able to join their male co-workers in an informal social gathering after work. They may have major responsibilities for childcare, elder care, or meal preparation that require their attention. Be careful not to schedule your company’s social activities at times when female employees are unable to attend because of other responsibilities.

INVOLVE MALE EMPLOYEES

People support what they help create. If you enlist the input of male employees, you’re much more likely to be successful in your attempts to create and sustain a workplace environment that’s respectful of all employees.

Don’t assume all male employees will easily adjust to changes in what was previously a male-dominated work environment. Provide them with opportunities to speak openly about their own experiences working with women. Examine issues such as:

- What are the men’s perceptions about fairness and equity in the workplace?
- What experiences have they had working with women?
- What do they see as the benefits?
- What are their concerns?
- How can their insights be applied to the creation and maintenance of a respectful workplace?
- How do they feel about gender diversity training?
- What is their understanding about the company’s harassment policies?

You should regularly examine the expectations and experiences of all employees within your company. How do they support gender diversity? What are their expectations of respectful behaviour in the workplace? It’s important to provide opportunities to clarify mutual expectations to make sure everyone is sharing the same vision.

Diversity comes in allowing people to express what they are really passionate about, believe in, and want to contribute without feeling like they have to say what the boss wants them to say.

Dorothy Spence, CEO FocalTRACK Inc., Fredericton, NB
**ACTION ITEM**

**Be Aware of Generational Differences**

Women working in trades and technology often tell us that younger men seem to have a much more accepting attitude towards the presence of women in trades and technology occupations. We’ve also heard the opposite view that older men are generally more respectful of women. As an employer, it’s good to keep in mind that a male employee’s attitude about women performing non-traditional work is really more about perceptions and beliefs than about age.

You may find that older male employees have a different expectation of the participation of women in the workplace than younger males. Younger men may be more accustomed than their fathers and grandfathers are to seeing women doing work long considered to be “men’s work.” As a result, young male employees are often less surprised – and have less of an issue – than their older co-workers with the presence of women on non-traditional job sites.

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**A discussion held with a construction team clearly depicts the difference in attitudes between these two generations.** The foreman, a man with over 30 years experience in construction, commented “It’s common to swear on worksites. It’s part of the environment.” In response, a recent male NSCC graduate said “No, we don’t need to swear. At NSCC, instructors set ground rules early in the class. They dealt with mutual respect, talked about not treating anybody differently. Everyone needs to operate under the same rules.”
My notes
**IN CONCLUSION**

*On the Level* has provided some of the tools you need to create and maintain a safe, respectful and welcoming workplace for women and for all employees. We’ve described how you can create a vision, build a team, design a strategy for gender diversity and then how to make it happen. We’ve encouraged you to look closely at current policies, practices and behaviours that define your workplace. To what extent do they support your efforts to build a diverse workforce?

We’ve also drawn attention to the concerns and shared the voices of diverse women, African Nova Scotian and Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, lesbians and immigrant women.

We know change in your workplace culture may be difficult. There may be challenges and setbacks along the way. There are community resources that can help you achieve your goal. We would like to work with you to create workplaces in Nova Scotia that celebrate diversity and respect all employees, male and female.

We applaud you as an employer who recognizes the importance of gender diversity in your workplace, an employer who’s willing to take the steps necessary to achieve and sustain it.


The following is a partial list of women’s resource and employment centres in Nova Scotia. You may want to contact these organizations for more information and/or referrals to facilitators and gender specialists who can assist your company with diversity planning.

Many more organizations and employment centres exist throughout Nova Scotia. Contact your local library or chamber of commerce for more information.

### Women’s Centres and Organizations in Nova Scotia

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<th>Centre Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre</td>
<td>204 Kirk Place, 219 Main Street</td>
<td>(902) 863-6221</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antigonishwomenscentre.com">www.antigonishwomenscentre.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Nova Women’s Resource Centre</td>
<td>535 Prince Street, Truro NS B2N 1E8</td>
<td>(902) 895-4295</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cnwrc@eastlink.ca">cnwrc@eastlink.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Woman’s Centre</td>
<td>102 Townsend Street, Sydney, NS B1P 5E1</td>
<td>(902) 567-1212 or (902) 567-1911</td>
<td><a href="http://welcome.to/EveryWomansCentre">http://welcome.to/EveryWomansCentre</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA Place Women’s Centre</td>
<td>22709 Highway # 7</td>
<td>(902) 885-2668</td>
<td><a href="mailto:leaplace@ns.sympatico.ca">leaplace@ns.sympatico.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictou County Women’s Centre</td>
<td>503 South Frederick Street</td>
<td>(902) 755-4647</td>
<td><a href="http://www.womenscentre.ca">www.womenscentre.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Story Women’s Centre</td>
<td>22 King Street, PO Box 821</td>
<td>(902) 543-1315</td>
<td><a href="http://www.secostory.com">www.secostory.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Women’s Place Resource Center WPRC</td>
<td>86 Atlantic Avenue</td>
<td>(902) 638-8566 or (Toll-free) 1-877-392-8800</td>
<td><a href="http://www.womensplaceresourcecenter.com">www.womensplaceresourcecenter.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-County Women’s Centre</td>
<td>238 A Main Street</td>
<td>(902) 742-0085 or (Toll-free) 1-877-742-0085</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tricountywomenscentre.org">www.tricountywomenscentre.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Employment Outreach</td>
<td>1888 Brunswick Street</td>
<td>(902) 422-8023</td>
<td><a href="http://www.weo.eastlink.ca">www.weo.eastlink.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Resources in Nova Scotia

Black Business Initiative
(for African Nova Scotian business owners)
Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre
1575 Brunswick Street, Halifax, NS  B3J 2G1
(902) 426-2224 (Toll-free)1-800-668-1010
www.bbi.ns.ca

Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association
(serves newcomers to Nova Scotia)
Suite 201, Chebucto Place
7105 Chebucto Road, Halifax NS  B3L 4W8
(902) 423-3607
www.misa.ns.ca

Mi’kmaq Native Friendship Centre
(serves Mi’kmaq/Aboriginal persons)
2158 Gottingen Street, Halifax NS  B3K 3B4
(902) 420-1576
www.micmaccentre.ca

Native Council of Nova Scotia
(serves Mi’kmaq/Aboriginal peoples residing off-reserve on traditional Mi’kmaq territory)
PO Box 1320, Truro NS  B2N 5N2
(902) 895-1523 (Toll-free) 1-800-565-4372
www.ncns.ca

ReachAbility
(serves persons living with disabilities)
200-6389 Coburg Road, Halifax NS  B3H 2A5
(902) 429-5878 (Toll-free) 1-866-429-5878
www.reachability.org

Team Work Cooperative and The WorkBridge
(serves persons living with disabilities)
The Village at Bayers Road
Suite M278, 7071 Bayers Road
Halifax, NS  B3L 2C2
(902) 422-8900, TTY (902) 420-0721
www.teamworkcooperative.ns.ca

Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association
(serves African Nova Scotians in the Valley region)
55 Webster Street, Kentville, NS  B4N 1H6
(902) 678-7410 (Toll-free)1-866-313-VANS
www.vansda.ca

YMCA Enterprise Centre of Halifax
(serves unemployed persons)
2269 Gottingen Street, Halifax, NS  B3K 3B4
(902) 425-3464
www.ymcahrm.ns.ca

YMCA Enterprise Centre of Dartmouth
(serves unemployed persons)
118 Wyse Road, Unit 14
Dartmouth, NS  B3A 1N7
(902) 902-461-2513
www.yec.dartmouth.ca

Online employment/job sites

Career Beacon
www.careerbeacon.ca

Monster
www.monster.ca

Nova Scotia Job Shop
www.regionalhelpwanted.com

Service Canada Job Bank
www.jobbank.gc.ca

Workopolis
www.workopolis.com
## Checklist of Action Items

### Readiness

#### Get Started
- Make Hiring Women a Strategic Priority  
  
### Look Close at Your Workplace
- Gather the Data  
- Talk to the Female Employees in Your Company  
- Report the Findings  

### Build a Team
- Identify Where Interest Lies  
  
### Create a Vision and Give It Life
- Expand the Team  
- Provide Training and Support  
- Provide Opportunities to Learn About Diversity  
- Communicate Your Commitment  
- Develop Policies and Practices that Respect Women  

### Create a Support Network for Women
- Develop a Mentoring Program  
  
### Look Outside Your Company
- Encourage Women to Get Trades and Technology Training
RECRUITMENT
GET THE WORD OUT – YOU’RE HIRING!
- Create Ads that Appeal to Women 20
- Place Your Ads Where Women Will See Them 21

SCREEN THE APPLICANTS
- Eliminate Gender Stereotyping 22
- Make No Assumptions 22
- Don’t Penalize Women 23

INTERVIEW AND HIRE
- Remove Barriers from the Interview Process 24
- Pay Attention to Interview Do’s and Don’ts 25
- Consider Added Value of Women in the Workplace 27
- Align Applicants with Company’s Diversity Goals and Business Plan 28

PROVIDE EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE ORIENTATION
- Notify Staff that Women Have Been Hired 28
- Introduce Women to People, Policies, and Procedures 29
- Provide Quality Training 30
- Create Mentoring and Networking Opportunities 30

RETENTION
STAY ON COURSE
- Provide Leadership 33
- Model Appropriate Behaviour 34
- Take Complaints Seriously 35

MAINTAIN WORKPLACE RESPECT AND EQUITY
- Apply Policies Equally 38
- Implement Supportive Policies and Practices 39
- Listen to Women 40
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INVOLVE MALE EMPLOYEES
- Be Aware of Generational Differences 44