



A good gender balance gives better business outcomes

The Yield's story

The Yield is an agricultural technology company that provides customised information services to primary producers. Founder and Managing Director, Ros Harvey, has prior experience with the World Bank and the United Nations International Labour Organisation, and is currently an Adjunct Professor at the Queensland University of Technology. In her latest role, she works actively to engage women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). In 2016, the Australian Information Industry Association awarded The Yield its inaugural Diversity in Technology award in the business category. Diversity and inclusion are core values for The Yield, which has focused on recruiting a diverse team. The result is that staff come from 8 countries and speak 9 languages, and across the whole business 67% of the staff are women. Ros Harvey, and Chief Operations Officer, Phil Randal, are absolutely committed to gender diversity in the workplace because they believe that there is real value to the diversity of thinking that women bring to the workplace, especially in technology.

Genuine commitment to supporting women's careers

The Yield used Diverse City Careers (DCC) to recruit highly qualified women to the team.

Diverse City Careers operates an online jobs board, but only advertises jobs from companies that it has judged, through a rigorous qualification process, to have genuine initiatives in place to support women. The process required The Yield to think carefully about how they actively support and encourage gender diversity.

Job descriptions that attract women

The Yield worked on removing unconscious bias from their job descriptions and advertisements, and sought help from an expert to identify the kind of traditional, corporate language that may discourage women from applying for jobs.

Language such as 'team player' or 'expert in' may seem harmless, but research has shown that women don't respond well to it. However, language such as 'contribute to team work', 'help build a cohesive team', or 'has the ability to acquire the skills to...' gets a positive response from women.

Flexibility to accommodate needs

On the whole, The Yield prefers staff to be in the office most of the time because team interaction is important to their work. But, if people need to be at home, they can work from home, or sometimes, they bring home to work.

In one case, a staff member often brings her dog to work. Initially, because her fence needed to be repaired, the staff member brought her dog in, and since then, the dog often comes to work with her simply because she enjoys having him around.

Another example is a staff member who currently has a particularly complex personal situation, and so he does a lot of work from home.

The Yield understands that staff have lives outside their jobs, and their approach is to concentrate on how staff can achieve the best outcomes in both spheres — they want people to feel comfortable, and be able to do a good job. They want to avoid the situation they have seen in other organisations where people are often apologetic about having personal issues that sometimes need to take priority over work. The Yield feels that work should be flexible enough to accommodate such events, whether it is a doctor's appointment, taking children to school, or other personal responsibilities a staff member may have.

Focus on outcomes

While Chief Operating Officer, Phil Randal, admits that managing employees is always a challenge, he said that the team works well because they break down priorities by quarter and share them across the whole team. In this way everyone knows what outcomes they are aiming for, and can focus on that. The Yield prides itself on being an outcomes-driven organisation, and as long as people are focussed on getting the necessary results, the company trusts them to organise their own work.

Use technology

The Yield chose an IT platform that allows staff to access everything they need from anywhere, as long as they have internet access and their password. Staff can use their own device or a standard company laptop. If they use their own device, they receive an allowance, with the expectation that they will keep their hardware up-to-date, and can claim a tax deduction at the end of the financial year.

The Yield has found that often solutions don't cost a lot, and people are far more productive when they have access to flexible practices.

Show leadership

Phil Randal advises that policies, quotas or targets don't help move a business towards gender diversity without senior staff being committed to the goal and modelling the appropriate behaviours. He says, 'Leadership is action; it's really important that senior leaders are aligned with the values and thinking on gender diversity, and then act accordingly.' For The Yield, the benefit of a good gender balance in all types of positions is that they achieve diversity of thinking. They believe that if the team is made up of similar types of people, it will come up with the same solutions again and again, rather than new and innovative ideas. Also, when organisations focus on diversity in general, without an emphasis on gender diversity, they tend to achieve ethnic diversity, but don't address the unconscious bias around gender diversity.

Tips for business

- Check that job descriptions and advertisements use language that attracts women.
- Accept that people have lives outside their jobs.
- Prioritise work and divide it so that everyone knows what's expected of them.
- Focus on outcomes.
- Trust staff to organise their work to achieve desired outcomes.
- Use technology.
- Show leadership.

Where to find out more about flexibility and gender diversity

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency (<https://www.wgea.gov.au/>)
- Diverse City Careers (<https://www.diversecitycareers.com/>)
- Queensland Government Unconscious biases web pages (<https://www.qld.gov.au/gov/unconscious-biases>)