Analysis of change management effectiveness in elevating women to more senior positions

Jane Normann[1], Mohamed Saheed Bayat[2] and Vartikka Indermun[2]

[1]Human Resources and Site Services Executive- Control Instruments Automotive.

[2]Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA).

ABSTRACT

Despite the strides made over the course of the past decade to address the barriers present for women to overcome in order to progress in the work place, it is still relevant and necessary to assess the degree of transformational and effective change within the workplace in general, and within the Control Instruments Group in particular. Firstly, to establish whether these barriers till exist; and secondly, what can be done to overcome those that still remain. The various problems addressed within this research included whether the position of women and their rights within the greater context of the working environment have improved since the new dispensation which became effective following the 1994 election, and the level of transformational change within the Control Instruments Group was assessed to identify what barriers still exist, and how can these be overcome.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyse the benefits of how effective change management processes can be utilised to elevate women staff members within the Control Instruments Group (CIG) to more senior levels, and their resulting contributions to the organisation. The automotive industry is the leading manufacturing sector in the South African economy. It is the third largest contributor to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) after the mining and financial sectors. Based on its contribution to national GDP, level of employment and its status as an export-oriented manufacturing sector, the automotive industry in South Africa is of key importance to national development (Kaggwa, M. 2011).The automotive industry within the South African context, as well as globally, is male dominated across all levels of occupational categories. Female representation is a very low percentage of the total staff complement, but more specifically from the middle to senior management categories (Kaggwa, M. 2011).

Background to the problem

Women's advancement within the workplace is a problem not just endemic to South Africa, but one that is a global issue. During the apartheid era in South Africa the country was a collaboration of both racism and sexism, with the then government ensuring that every day the country was kept in such a state (Hutson, 2007). The gender discrimination was perpetuated through the deeply rooted culture of discrimination against women in the traditions of the different cultures, and to a large extent by the compliance of women themselves. In the post-apartheid era, the government is under immense pressure to develop black skills and the concentration has been focused more on male skills at the expense of women's skills – but this has also been accomplished with the cooperation of women who have to a large degree remained silent on their oppression. Women therefore have remained untrained and are excluded from a large portion of the job market. The majority of women who are employed find employment with the lowest paying wages.

CIG has been listed on the JSE Limited (JSE) since 1987 trading under the share code "CNL", in the Electronic and Electrical Equipment sector and their core business is automotive component manufacture and distribution. The companies within the Group include Control Instruments Automotive (Pty) Ltd with two divisions – one in Cape Town being the Gabriel shock absorbers manufacturing facility in Retreat, and the other in Johannesburg which is the trading, sales, marketing and distribution arm of the business. An additional company under the Group's umbrella is PI Shurlok Engineering (Pty) Ltd in Port Elizabeth which is a plastics injection moulding facility and manufactures battery housings for the automotive market.

Of the total workforce employed by the Group, 32.55% are women and only 1.77% of middle to senior management positions are occupied by females.

There is growing evidence of greater female representation in Management positions in First World countries such as the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia (Sheridan, 2002), however men still outnumber women in the high-level, C-Suite power positions across the majority of organisations.

The rationale for this study is to analyse the barriers to advancement for women in general and women in the Control Instruments Group specifically and to assess the effectiveness of change management processes in addressing these barriers, and to recommend improvements within the Group so that meaningful change occurs.

Problem Statement

This research study investigates the problem of barriers to advancement for women prevalent in business today in general, and in CIG specifically. A full understanding of what these barriers are and how they continue to affect women in CIG is essential in order to make constructive recommendations.

According to Eade (2007), women have had, and still do to a large extent, a tendency to position themselves as the support of male leaders rather than seeing themselves as potential and

actual leaders. This in part is inculcated through years of indoctrination, culture and tradition where women assume the role of a subordinate – be it in the workplace or in the home – and this strengthens the perception that women's skills lie in the softer skills areas which are there to support the male leaders and increase their credibility and advancement in the workplace.

National policies and legislation of the country previously favoured men and in particular white men and in post-apartheid South Africa, despite the change in government and the establishment of the Constitution, discrimination towards women is still highly rampant. This results in women leaving their current working environment, due to them not having the equal opportunities for advancement to more senior managerial positions and searching for this fulfilment either in other companies or through entrepreneurial ventures of their own. The situation is then further exacerbated for women who remain in the workplace as there are fewer senior women left to act as mentors for others in the organisation.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EEA) has generated a response from private business to address the gender inequality issues and more focus is now being placed on gender equality at work. South Africa's Bill of Rights and Constitution enshrines women's rights, prohibits sex discrimination, and promotes women's equality. This establishes gender equality as a fundamental value of the post-apartheid society. It ensures that there is a vision and legitimate goal, to debate on a national level the improvement of women's status. Formal provisions for political and legal equality in the constitution make the State accountable for dismantling gender discrimination.

Former President Nelson Mandela said, "freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression, … unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of the women of our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society"

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

• To assess the various challenges that face women within CIG in their upward movement within the organisation.

• To analyse what initiatives are most effective in genuinely changing the parameters for women within CIG.

Literature Review

South African women, irrespective of their race, have stood for many decades in the second tier of society with past policies and laws favouring men – and more specifically white men. This inequality of power between men and women led to a correlating inequality in the sharing of resources.

In order to promote the rights of all citizens in South Africa, new policies and strategies have been implemented to align the rights of all women and men whilst at the same time addressing the issues of improving the status of women in the workplace (Mathur-Helm, 2004).

Following the elections in South Africa in 1994, the problem of women and their lack of representation in leadership positions within South Africa was highlighted (Mathipha 2000). In trying to deal with this situation, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) was established to fully understand the nature and extent of the problem in South Africa. Although Employment Equity (EE) legislation was promulgated in 1996, it has been shown that progress in this area has been limited (Booysen, 2006). This equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation was implemented as part of the national strategy of redressing the imbalances of the past apartheid regime. As part

of this strategy was the issues of women's rights, equality, and empowerment and with the passing of the Gender Policy Framework (GPF), the aims were to integrate policies which ensured:

• Women's rights are perceived as human rights;
• Women have equality as active citizens;
• Women's economic empowerment is promoted;
• Their social upliftment is given priority
• They are included in decision making;
• They are beneficiaries in political, economic, social and cultural areas, and
• Affirmative action programmes targeting women are implemented.

Source: (Commission on Gender Equality, 2010)

However despite these forms of legislation being promulgated as well as various initiatives to document the problem, women remain under-utilised in the South African employment scenario and still face many challenges and barriers with the workplace, often ending up as a wasted resource. Women employees fill the lowest ranks in most organisations and find barriers and difficulties in rising to senior and executive management levels (Mathur-Helm, 2004).

Although the implementation of equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation brought structured, legislated and formal equality, there are still major barriers to implementing the objectives of the EEA and organisations in South Africa are still not women friendly (Mathur-Helm, 2004). Top management positions are l held predominantly by white males which continues to create obstacles for women's employment and advancement. According to the 2011 Businesswomen Association (BWA) South African Women in Leadership Census, women hold only 4.4% of Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Managing Director (MD) positions, 5.3% of chairperson positions and 15.8% of all directorships.

Challenges

The advancement of women into senior levels of management in business within South Africa remains one of the challenges facing most companies today (Bezuidenhout et al, 2008). The barriers which women need to overcome in order to break the glass ceiling include gender discrimination and stereotyping, the dual role women play in society as well as the perception that men are born leaders.

Black women's challenge

In the South African corporate environment, black women face a dual challenge in rising through the ranks to positions of leadership and power. Historically organisations excluded women, and in particular black women, and they have therefore been kept out of the economic mainstream. According to the Corporate Research Foundation (2003), black women lack the collective clout of established businesses and additionally they face greater prejudices due to their extended family systems and traditional lifestyles. A lack of access to education, training and the patriarchy prevalent in their black culture, resulted in black women experiencing gender oppression and discrimination more heavily than their white counterparts (Mathur-Helm, 2004). During the launch of Women's Month in August 2012, the South African Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana, pointed out that woman still bear – in particular black women – a disproportionate burden of the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment. She pointed out that "women continue to be marginalised and discriminated against in terms of economic opportunities, the labour market as well as access to land, credit and finance."

While the call for gender equity laws to enforce more jobs for women in senior management positions in South African companies has been widely discussed and proposed by Lulu Xingwana, executive head hunters believe that legislation alone will not bring about gender transformation in the workplace (Gibson, 2012). However, South Africa is not the only country that is calling for the implementation of gender equity laws; France's parliament has recently approved a new law which forces companies to increase their Board female representation to 40% by 2016 and Spain has introduced a quota of 40 percent to be reached by 2015, with both Italy and Netherlands contemplating similar measures.

The revised Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) codes of good practice, issued on 5 October 2012 by the South African Government, for a sixty day period for public comment in South Africa, seeks to change the parameters around the Ownership, Management Control and Supplier Development addressing black female representation (Department of Trade and Industry, August 2012).

Perceptions and natural behaviour

A major stumbling block to the advancement of women into leadership positions across all companies may be attributed to the perception that society has different rules for women and men. In order for aspiring women to become leaders, they need to be judged and chosen in the same way as their male peers. Social pressures have tended to favour gender role consistent behaviour and this can also cause people – in this case, women – to internalise these expectations and therefore act in a way consistent with their roles.

Characteristics that are commonly ascribed to women, men, and leaders, play a contributory role to the challenges that women face in gaining leadership roles, and performing well when they are in them. The predominantly communal qualities such as being compassionate and empathetic, which are associated with women, are in contrast to the qualities of being assertive and competitive – qualities believed to be required for success as a leader. These qualities are generally associated with men and therefore leadership is generally thought of in the context of the masculine (Eagly, 2009). These different meanings ascribed to women form a backdrop to social interaction – both in the workplace and society in general – and affect the judgement made about women within an organisation (Wood, 2010).

Prejudice toward women leaders

In existing evidence and research, men – more than women – believe that good leaders have masculine qualities and this results in prejudice against female leaders (Koenig et al, 2011). This role incongruity, according to Eagly et al (1995), effectively means a biased evaluation between the stereotypical women and the stereotypical leader. Men are seen as more similar to the leader stereotype than women, automatically creating a disadvantage and barrier to women wishing to progress into any form of leadership role. Even women, who possess suitable and exceptional qualifications necessary for leadership, have to overcome preconceptions that they are not suitably equipped to lead.

A recent study of white male managers towards the upward movement of women found that although they accepted the principle of equal opportunity, and that women can acquire the skills necessary for leadership and make a valuable contribution to an organisation, they questioned their ability to compete equitably with men. One third of the sample believed that women are less aggressive, less ambitious and less capable of learning mathematical and mechanical skills than men. In this respect, research has shown that men managers are more likely than women managers to be in more senior positions, to be better paid, having more power, more security in employment, be less stressed and have not experienced prejudice and discrimination in their path to their positions of power (Alvesson, 2009).

It is interesting to note that in recent gender discrimination research, in contrast to their predecessors; young women are perceived to have more choices and more freedom – both outside and inside work – on the same basis as men. Gender disadvantages, including the proverbial glass ceiling, are seen by many of these younger women as problems only encountered by their mothers' generation. However, in research conducted by Kelan (2009), the study still showed a paucity of women in senior positions within their organisations. The difference with the rationale of the younger women studied in this research was however that they felt the disparities were due to individual deficiencies such as a lack of ambition, rather than for cultural and societal reasons.

Instinctive and natural female behaviour and traits can however be linked to the emerging gender balance question and according to Charles Handy, who became Britain's leading management spokesperson, when interviewed by The Times regarding his, The Age of Unreason, "they (organisations) want people who can juggle with several tasks and assignments at one time, who are more interested in making things happen than in what title or office they hold....... they want people who value instinct and intuition..... who can be tough but also tender, focused yet friendly..... they want therefore, as many women as they can get" (Handy, C. 1996).

There has been a concerted focus at Control Instruments, especially within the manufacturing arm of the business, on elevating women through training initiatives from the 'sticky bottom' of operator level occupations, to supervisory positions such as team leaders, and hopefully beyond these levels. The women who have undergone this training are proving their capabilities and willingness to progress and are becoming real assets to the organisation, despite having to juggle work life, family life and the pervasiveness sexism that they still encounter from some of their direct superiors.

Research Methodology

It was critical to ensure that this research project conformed to the principles of validity and reliability, in fulfilling the formal systematic approach to research design. Guidance was obtained in addressing the study under review by the research design decisions made. Questionnaires were the sole method of data collection and the analyses of the data enabled quantitative findings to be extrapolated ensuring that these findings were both valid and reliable. The questionnaire was compiled using the Lickert Scale, and distributed to the entire female population of CIG, to explore and fully understand the qualitative and quantitative nature of data relevant to the topic. In terms of the questionnaire issued, there are 25 closed ended questions and 3 open ended questions to gain data from the population group.

Research Findings

1.6% of respondents have worked for the organisation less than a year, 16.1% between 1-3 years, 19.4% between 4 – 6 years, 9.7% between 7-9 years, and 53.2% over ten years. This information was deemed relevant as there could be a correlation between the length of service of an employee and the perceptions and responses they would have to the questionnaire.

From the information in table 4.4, 6.3% of respondents have a Grade 9 as their highest educational qualification, 25.4% a Grade 10, 25.4% a Grade 11, 22.2% a Grade 12, 11.1% National

Certificate/Diploma, 6.3% Higher Diploma/Degree, 1.6% Professional Qualification/Honours Degree, and 1.6% a Masters/Doctoral Degree.

Figure 71 – Frequency Bar Distribution of Highest Educational Qualifications
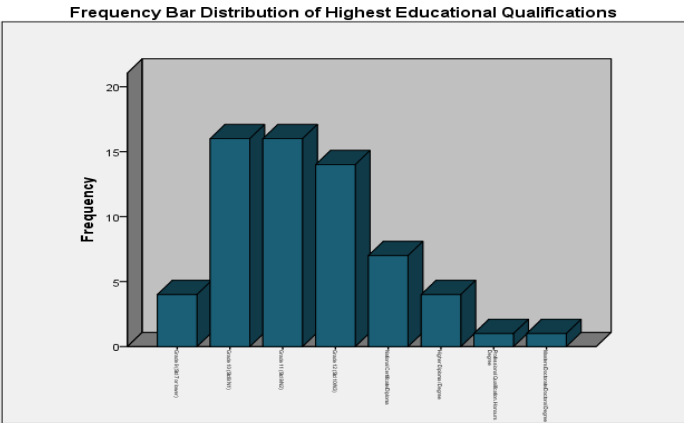
Mathur-Helm (2004) recommended a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) as an appropriate qualification required for promotion in senior managerial positions. As can be seen from the results of this question, there is a very low percentage of female employees who have qualifications above a higher diploma or degree, namely 9.5%. This low percentage highlights the real issue of lack of required skills necessary for advancement within the company.

From the information gathered in table 4.5, 69.5% of respondents are a Team Member, 13.6% Team Leader, 1.7% Middle Management, 6.8% Senior Management, and 8.5% a Specialist. As can be seen from the results of this question, by far the larger percentage of female employees within the Control Instruments Group are employed in the lower levels and occupational categories.
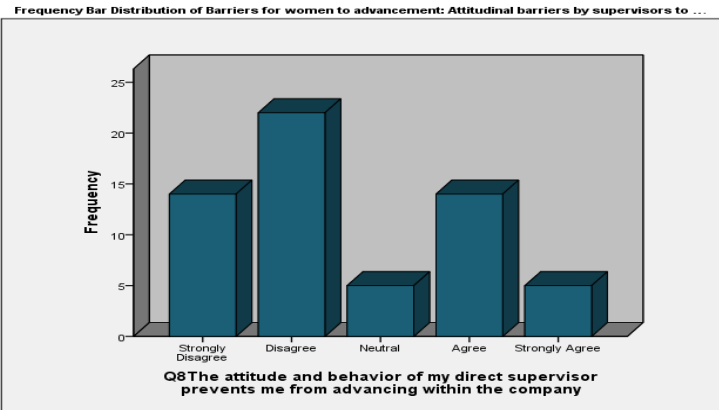
There is a significant difference in position held, and the perception that the company is implementing different strategies to address women's training, development and advancement to ensure equity and fairness.

With reference to this question, 23.6% of respondents strongly disagree, 34.5% disagree, 20% are neutral, 7.3% agree, and 14.5% strongly agree that they have encountered barriers which prevent them from advancing within the company. Over 58% of respondents have not encountered barriers which prevent them from advancing within the company. This relatively positive response to this question is corroborated by the recent report by Accenture (2010), as discussed in chapter two, paragraph 2.13.1, which indicates that more and more companies are implementing initiatives to provide career enhancing assignments to prepare women in organisations, as well as that more South African companies are becoming committed to making a meaningful difference for women in the workplace.

According to the respondents, 23.3% strongly disagree, 36.7% disagree, 8.3% are neutral, 23.3% agree, and 8.3% strongly agree that the attitude and behaviour of their direct supervisor prevents them from advancing within the company. The 60% of respondents who disagree that the attitude and behaviour of their direct supervisor prevents them from advancing within the company enforces the significant, moderate and positive correlation between questions seven and eight. According to Alvesson (2009), and as discussed in chapter two, 2.4.1., some men still question women's abilities to compete equitably with men. However this attitude is not

wholly reflected in the responses to question 8 with fewer than 40% agreeing with the statement.

Figure 7.2 – Frequency Bar Distribution of Barriers for women to advancement: Attitudinal barriers by supervisors

From the information gathered in table 4.5, 69.5% of respondents are a Team Member, 13.6% Team Leader, 1.7% Middle Management, 6.8% Senior Management, and 8.5% a Specialist. As can be seen from the results of this question, by far the larger percentage of female employees within the Control Instruments Group are employed in the lower levels and occupational categories. There is a significant difference in position held, and the perception that the company is implementing different strategies to address women's training, development and advancement to ensure equity and fairness.

The response to this question was that 12.9% of respondents strongly disagree, 19.4% disagree, 19.4% are neutral, 30.6% agree, and 17.7% strongly agree that here are different expectations of performance from men and women within the company. A larger percentage of the respondents – 48.3% - feel that the company has different expectations from them when compared to the men in the organisation. The literature shown in chapter two, specifically 2.4 and 2.4.1., discusses the different rules that society holds for women and men, as well as the prejudice towards women leaders and the responses obtained to question nine compares to the current literature.

Figure 7.3 – Frequency Bar Distribution of Barriers for women to advancement: Differing expectations in performance
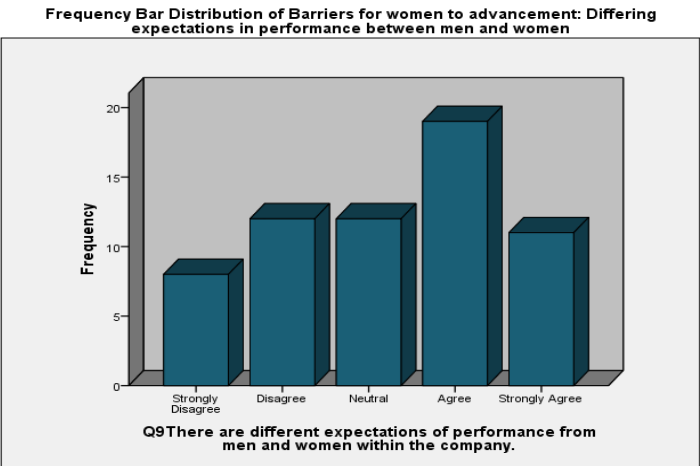
Relating to the above question, 21% of respondents strongly disagree, 11.3% disagree, 9.7% are neutral, 38.7% agree, and 19.4% strongly agree that there are certain jobs within the company that are reserved for men only. Being in a manufacturing environment within the automotive industry, the high percentage of 58.1% of respondents who agree with this statement, is not unexpected.

Table 7.1: Length of Service

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	1	1.5
	1-3	10	15.4
	4-6	12	18.5
	7-9	6	9.2
	10 or more	33	50.8
	Total	62	95.4
Missing	System	3	4.6
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.2: Highest Educational Qualification

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Grade 9 (Std 7 or lower)	4	6.2
	Grade 10 (Std8/ N1)	16	24.6
	Grade 11 (Std 9/N2)	16	24.6
	Grade 12 (Std 10/N3)	14	21.5
	National Certificate/Diploma	7	10.8
	Higher Diploma / Degree	4	6.2
	Professional Qualification. Honours Degree	1	1.5
	Masters/Doctorate/Doctoral Degree	1	1.5
	Total	63	96.9
Missing	System	2	3.1
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.3: Position in the Company

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Team member	41	63.1
	Team Leader/Supervisor/Foreman	8	12.3
	Middle Management (Line Manager)	1	1.5
	Senior Management(Executive)	4	6.2
	Specialist (Industrial Engineer, Chemical Engineer, HR Officer etc.)	5	7.7
	Total	59	90.8
Missing	System	6	9.2
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.4: Barriers for women to advancement: I have encountered barriers which prevent me from advancing within the company

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	20.0
	Disagree	19	29.2
	Neutral	11	16.9
	Agree	4	6.2
	Strongly Agree	8	12.3
	Total	55	84.6
Missing	System	10	15.4
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.5: The attitude and behaviour of my direct supervisor prevents me from advancing within the company

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	21.5
	Disagree	22	33.8
	Neutral	5	7.7
	Agree	14	21.5
	Strongly Agree	5	7.7
	Total	60	92.3
Missing	System	5	7.7
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.6: There are different expectations of performance from men and women within the company

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	12.3
	Disagree	12	18.5
	Neutral	12	18.5
	Agree	19	29.2
	Strongly Agree	11	16.9
	Total	62	95.4
Missing	System	3	4.6

Table 7.7: There are certain jobs within the company that are reserved for men only.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	20.0
	Disagree	7	10.8
	Neutral	6	9.2
	Agree	24	36.9
	Strongly Agree	12	18.5
	Total	62	95.4
Missing	System	3	4.6
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.8: Men and women are paid at different rates even when they perform the same job function

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	18.5
	Disagree	15	23.1
	Neutral	10	15.4
	Agree	18	27.7
	Strongly Agree	9	13.8
	Total	64	98.5
Missing	System	1	1.5
Total		65	100.0

Table 7.9: The company is implementing different strategies to address women's training, development and advancement to ensure equity and fairness.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	17	26.2
	Disagree	19	29.2
	Neutral	13	20.0
	Agree	8	12.3
	Strongly Agree	5	7.7
	Total	62	95.4
Missing	System	3	4.6
Total		65	100.0

Responses to this question showed that 18.8% of respondents strongly disagree, 23.4% disagree, 15.6% are neutral, 28.1% agree, and 14.1% strongly agree that men and women are paid at different rates even when they perform the same job function.

CIG pay in accordance to a grading system for wage staff which is legislated through a Main Agreement with Motor Industries Bargaining Council, and irrespective of whether an employee is male or female, if they are performing the same level of work, the pay grade is identical. As far as salaried staff is concerned, salaries are based on a National Remuneration Guide as well as on market related influences.

The percentage of respondents who strongly disagree is 27.4%, with 30.6% disagree, 21% are neutral, 12.9% agree, and 8.1% strongly agree that the company is implementing different strategies to address women's training, development and advancement to ensure equity and fairness.   58% of total respondents disagree with the statement in this question.

Recommendations

The first recommendation for the CIG is to begin the transformation and change management process throughout the organisation by establishing a Gender policy, the objectives of which would be to:

• Serve as a tool and framework for the business leaders to mainstream gender equality

• Enable the business to integrate gender into key organisational processes and practices

• Stimulate debate, provide direction and drive action

The establishment of such a policy would send a clear message to all stakeholders of the organisation as to the level of commitment from top leadership to the transformation process. By establishing clear guidelines and principles, a generic understanding throughout the company will be gained and continuous monitoring will be facilitated.

One of the strategic objectives of the Control Instruments Group is to become the employer of choice in our sector of the economy. As women make up a sizeable percentage of the workforce in general, and up to thirty five percent within the Group, negative treatment of women may result in negative consequences for the brand and the company's image. Taking gender issues seriously makes sound and good business sense.

In the global community in which the company operates on an ever-increasing basis, women are in leadership positions and patriarchal ideas about the role of women in business have no place in the modern global village. By investing in women and ensuring that once having trained them, we retain them and they become an effective happy workforce, productivity increases and working relationships improve – investing in gender equality is not only about being compliant to the equity laws within South Africa, it makes the company competitive.

A key strategic driver for one of the authors of this paper, as the HR Executive for the company, is to focus outwardly to our external stakeholders to ensure that the company is providing the necessary levels of service and delivery to remain profitable and sustainable. Gender equality will reflect that the Group is serious through its external services and the image that it portrays.

Various initiatives to implement this external focus may include the following:

• Marketing and advertising briefs to agencies and partners must ensure that women are represented in a positive light.

• Preferential procurement – in line with the proposed changes to the BBBEE scorecard elements – should also focus on having a company policy to procure services, where possible, from female-owned businesses.

• Corporate Social Investment (CSI) that includes job creation, training and development programmes, mentorships which focus on skills upliftment – specifically aimed at young black women.

Conclusion

The main aims of the research were to investigate and analyse what the barriers were to women's advancement in the company specifically and in industry in general as well as how these could be eliminated and change management initiatives implemented to ensure consistency in the future. In reviewing current literature, theories, articles and other research documentation, it was clear that many of the top barriers to women's career advancements relate to a lack of acceptance of women into executive-level culture with women experiencing that men are not comfortable dealing with them on a professional level, and resulting in women's exclusion from the men's club. Workplace culture, patriarchy as well as gender stereotyping adds to the limitations put on women in succeeding in business. Together with these barriers, women are also faced with the challenge of balancing their personal and professional lives.

All of the recommendations for change management processes and initiatives requires adjustment; to change the culture of the organisation, and for true transformation to be implemented, there must be a commitment from Board of CIG downwards to re-orientate the mind-set of the company – don't just tick the boxes, walk the talk. Be proactive, and become a leader in the automotive industry by evolving into a dynamic organisation that truly embraces the transformation culture necessary for a democratic South Africa.

Structural interventions are vital, such as appointing women in critical, strategic and profit driving roles versus traditional/functional roles usually in marketing, administration, finance and HR. Companies that implement these modern strategies will benefit from a transformed, dynamic and motivated workforce as Boards, management teams and company structures generally with gender diversity are usually more innovative, flexible and forward thinking.

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