



Breaking through Bias

Report on the 8th CEO Roundtable

Held virtually on 10 May 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD Network's eighth CEO Roundtable was held virtually on 10 May 2022, taking as its theme **Breaking through Bias**. The aim of the session was to consider the actions that CEOs and senior leaders can take to interrupt, disrupt and eliminate the workplace bias that affects the career progression and advancement of women.

After our previous CEO Roundtable, the feedback we received showed that participants wanted the sessions to be more outcome oriented, with greater focus on the *how*, and not just the *why*. So, this time, we circulated an anti-bias self-assessment to be completed ahead of the event, to help pinpoint practical actions on three different levels: individual, institutional and industry.

Three key takeaways

- 1 Make tackling bias a consistent daily activity. Challenge instances of bias as soon as you witness them.
- 2 Provide unconscious bias training to every employee, not just managers. Make sure new recruits receive the training as part of onboarding, so they understand from the outset what standards are expected.
- 3 Seek out ways you can influence those beyond your own company, to help spur industry-wide action on bias. This could include speaking on the topic at external events, getting involved in cross-company sponsorship programmes, and providing leadership to one of LEAD Network's functional chapters (sales & merchandising, digital, supply chain).

The CEO Roundtable was chaired by Sean Cohan, Chief Growth Officer and President, International at Nielsen Global Media. Forty-one CEOs and regional presidents took part, representing 34 organisations. There was an even split between men and women.

Introducing the session, Sean said he had learned a lot from completing the anti-bias self-assessment. "It allowed me to reflect, and to realise it's not only about my own company and teams but about the industry," he said. "At Nielsen we need to impact people and processes outside, to set an example and help women grow."

Sarah McGowan, Partner at August Leadership and member of LEAD Network's Advisory Board, developed the session content and moderated the event along with Sean. She gave a brief overview of the topic before participants went into breakout rooms to discuss the findings of their self-assessments and begin formulating their own personal 'breaking through bias' action plan. Their thoughts were then shared with the wider group. The key findings are summarised below.

This report is shared among our Partners. In keeping with our 'safe haven' policy, all identifying information has been removed. We hope it captures some useful insights to provide a spur to your D&I efforts.



Sean Cohan

Chief Growth Officer and President,
International of
Nielsen Global Media
Chair of the 8th CEO Roundtable



INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

- Make tackling bias a consistent practice, and challenge instances of bias as soon as you witness them.
- Intentionally put together diverse teams for every big project or opportunity, rather than opting for those who are available or within easy reach. Make sure your customer is reflected in all large-scale strategic project teams.
- Be more intentional about the language you use, for example saying ‘folks’ instead of ‘guys’.
- Reinforce your individual contribution by consciously trying to make a difference to one person. Meet with diverse talented individuals frequently to hear about their experiences within your company.
- Start building a more diverse professional network to broaden your outlook. Be curious about others’ different experiences.
- Hold yourself accountable for implementing inclusive practices within your own team.
- Instigate conversations with other CEOs about the topic.

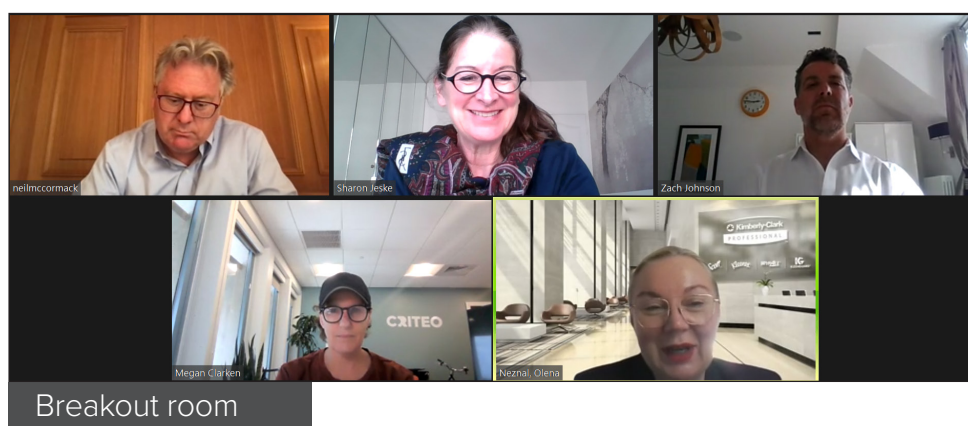
INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS

- Raise the issue of bias, and D&I more generally, with business partners, clients and competitors to set an example and steer the whole value chain towards good practice. Explore potential joint actions with suppliers and manufacturers.
- Provide unconscious bias training to every employee – including your own leadership team – not just managers. Make sure new recruits receive the training as part of onboarding, so they understand from the outset what standards are expected.
- Don’t take a ‘once and done’ attitude to unconscious bias training. Refresh it regularly and follow up with discussions.
- Adopt more rigour in creating balanced slates. Make the process consistent and automatic for every appointment and opportunity.
- Scrutinise particular functions where there is a lack of women to find out how bias is interfering with career progression.
- Introduce a structured approach to exit interviews to find out whether bias is a factor in someone’s departure. Collate and act on the insights.
- Increase awareness and acceptance of a variety of management styles, to avoid candidates being written off as ‘introverted’ or ‘too nice’.
- Use an app such as [Gender Avenger](#) to track how much ‘airtime’ in meetings is taken up by male participants as compared to female. Use this to prompt a conversation about whether the company is supporting equal voice as well as equal representation.



INDUSTRY-WIDE ACTIONS

- Collaborate with fellow CEOs to set up industry-wide initiatives, like cross-company sponsorship programmes. Consider providing leadership to one of LEAD Network's functional chapters (sales & merchandising, digital, supply chain).
- Share personal insights and experience with other CEOs and leadership teams, to spread best practice and demonstrate how D&I progress can be achieved.
- Ask the Consumer Goods Forum and the European Work Council to increase female representation.
- Encourage more men to get involved in LEAD Network. Having committed and vocal male advocates makes a huge difference.



FEEDBACK

This was our most successful CEO Roundtable ever, receiving an overall satisfaction score of 4.8 out of 5. Ninety seven percent of participants said the session had given them new ideas and insights relevant to them or their organisation.



Very practical ideas were shared in the small group discussions which I can implement in my company.



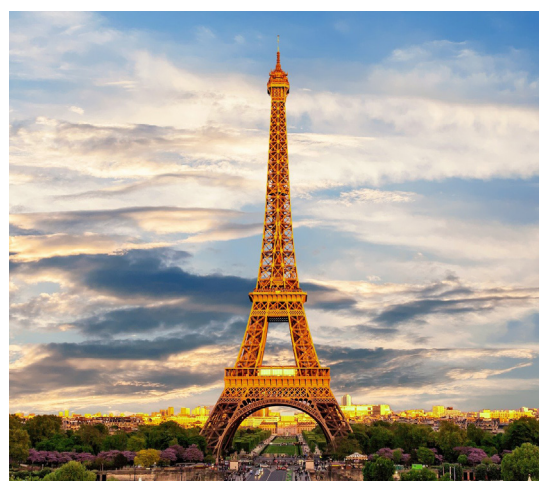
The self-assessment made CEOs reflect in advance on unconscious bias and their role to interrupt it. This made the discussion with the other CEOs very honest and easy.



It was a wonderful and inspiring experience. Looking very much forward to the in-person session in October. I truly believe LEAD Network can make a difference.

JOIN OUR NEXT CEO ROUNDTABLE IN PARIS

We urge you to stay connected and continue the conversation. Our next CEO Roundtable takes place as part of the LEAD Network annual conference in Paris on 13 October 2022. This will be our first in-person CEO Roundtable since 2019 and we look forward to welcoming you there. In the meantime, if you have ideas for future topics we should cover, please email Judith Kuiper, Chair of LEAD Network's CEO Engagement Team, on judith.kuiper@nielseniq.com



BACKGROUND TO THE CEO ROUNDTABLE

The CEO Roundtable was started by Frans Muller, CEO of Ahold Delhaize, in 2017. Since then it has become a unique forum for senior executives within the European consumer packaged goods and retail industry, bringing together retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers and service providers.

Our aim is to build a dynamic community of CEOs and regional presidents who are not only committed to making diversity and inclusion a strategic priority at every level of their organisation, but who want to steer the whole industry towards gender equality.

Meetings of the Roundtable typically involve individuals from around 40 different companies. In a 'safe haven' environment, participants talk frankly about their personal challenges and successes, with a focus on practical actions that others can put to good use within their own organisations. Learning takes place at three levels:

- 1 Individual – Taking personal action to listen, learn and adjust. Being a role model for your team and company in the area of D&I.
- 2 Institution – Adopting company-wide changes that improve D&I across all business processes (not just HR).
- 3 Industry – Acting collectively with other CEOs to make industry region-wide progress on inclusive policies, making our industry more attractive to diverse talent.

The CEO Roundtable is run largely by volunteers, with support from LEAD Network staff. If you have any feedback on the latest CEO Roundtable or ideas for future CEO activities and events, please contact Judith Kuiper on judith.kuiper@nielseniq.com

Progress on the CEO Pledge

To make an even greater impact on the industry, we want as many companies as possible to sign the CEO Pledge. We recently welcomed two new signatories: **Rafael Oliveira**, International Zone President, Kraft Heinz and **Vincent Warnery**, CEO, Beiersdorf.

You can play a key part in helping us attract further signatories:

- Tap into your network and encourage friends, colleagues and contacts to sign. If all current signatories did this, we could quickly double our numbers.
- When negotiating a contract with a supplier or manufacturer, request that they sign the CEO Pledge. This is already common practice in certain areas such as sustainability.

If you would like more information about the CEO Pledge, please contact Mick Broekhof at mick.broekhof@lead-eu.net



CEO ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

Andrea Young President, Global Customer Experience, **Advantage Solutions**

Aline Seifert CEO of Alliance Healthcare, Germany
Alliance Healthcare

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Paola Pomi CEO, **Sinfo One**

Kari Daniels Former CEO, **Tesco Ireland**

MODERATORS

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Mick Broekhof Co-Founder & Secretary of the Executive Committee of LEAD Network

Sharon Jeske Executive Director of LEAD Network

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