the global voice of the legal profession®

International Bar Association (IBA) Women Lawyers' Committee (WLC) 'Male Champions for Change' Pledge

Why?

Male involvement in gender equity and equality issues is key to further advancing in the field of commercial law for several reasons:

1. **Representation:** Men hold most leadership positions within law firms, making their involvement essential for driving meaningful change and setting the tone for inclusive practices.

2. **Access to resources:** Male champions can leverage their positions of influence to allocate resources towards initiatives that support gender equity, such as mentorship programmes and diversity training.

3. **Challenge norms:** Men are often in a unique position to challenge traditional gender norms and advocate for cultural shifts within the legal profession that promote equality and diversity.

4. **Role modelling:** By actively participating in gender equity initiatives, male champions can serve as role models for other men within the profession, encouraging broader engagement and support for these efforts.

5. **Broader impact:** Gender equity benefits everyone, not just women, by creating a more collaborative and innovative work environment that attracts top talent and enhances overall business performance.

By committing to the 'Male Champions for Change' Pledge, commercial law firms can demonstrate their dedication to fostering a more inclusive and equitable legal profession, ultimately driving positive change within their organisations and the broader industry.

What?

As male champions for change within commercial law firms, we recognise the critical importance of fostering gender equity and equality within our profession. By actively engaging in initiatives to address gender disparities, we can create a more inclusive and diverse legal environment that benefits everyone. Building on the framework provided by the Law Society of England and Wales' 'Male Champions Toolkit', we pledge to:

1. **Lead by example:** We commit to modelling inclusive behaviour and advocating for gender equality both within our firms and in external professional settings.

What might this look like in practice?

- Acknowledge one's privilege, power and sphere of influence. Doing so can help male leaders better understand how they can exert positive and inclusive behaviours in their teams, firms and wider society.
- Acknowledge that, as senior male leaders, they are inherently role models to others, regardless of gender. Leaders need to consider what sort of role models they wish to be and what sort of culture they wish to foster in their firms.
- Commit to being an active bystander. This can involve calling out or questioning instances of inappropriate language or behaviour.

2. **Promote diversity and gender equity:** We will actively support efforts to recruit, retain and allow women to advance in the legal profession, including through mentorship, sponsorship and professional development opportunities.

What might this look like in practice?

- Consider joining internal gender focused networks (sometimes called employee resource groups).
- Take time to listen to female colleagues to understand their experiences and ambitions.
- Participate in mentoring and reverse mentoring schemes aimed at promoting women in law.

3. **Challenge bias, microaggressions and stereotypes:** We will confront unconscious bias in our workplaces and challenge stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality.

What might this look like in practice?

- Educate yourself on gender-based assumptions, stereotypes and microaggressions.
- Challenge yourself, and others, when you witness instances of the above.

4. **Foster flexible work arrangements:** We recognise the importance of work-life balance and will advocate for flexible work arrangements that accommodate the diverse needs of all employees, regardless of gender, to the fullest extent consistent with our institutional objectives.

What might this look like in practice?

Better understand the diverse working patterns and needs of people across the firm.

Role model flexible ways of working. For example, if you have parental or caring duties, share with your colleagues examples and ideas of how you make it work.

5. **A cultural shift:** Examine what practices may need to change to ensure that careers in law enable people, regardless of gender, to reach their career potential.

What might this look like in practice?

- Question how the firm approaches business development. Are those opportunities to engage with clients inclusive for women? For example, what opportunities does your firm provide for junior female lawyers to build their professional networks (beyond more traditional late-night drinks, sporting events etc)?
- Work allocation: does your firm have a system in place to ensure that people have equal access to the best quality client work?
- Examine what more your firm could do to create a safe and supportive environment for women. Does your firm have gender-based safety policies in place (taxi policy, working late policy etc)?

6. **Ensure pay equity:** We will regularly review and address any disparities in pay between genders within our firms, ensuring that all employees are compensated fairly for their contributions.

7. **Create and implement inclusive policies:** We will review and update firm policies to ensure they are inclusive and support opportunities for the advancement of women in the legal profession, including policies related to recruitment, promotion and parental leave.

What might this look like in practice?

- Work with human resources (HR) colleagues to ensure people policies are in line with best practice.

8. **Provide training and education:** We will invest in training and educational programmes to raise awareness about gender equity issues and provide employees with the tools they need to promote inclusion in the workplace.

What might this look like in practice?

- Actively encourage colleagues to participate in diversity and inclusion (D&I)-related training sessions and awareness raising events.
- Provide platforms for women to share their stories (via spotlight features etc).

9. **Measure and report on progress:** We will regularly assess our progress towards gender equity goals and hold ourselves accountable for creating tangible change within our firms. We will define specific gender objectives at leadership level and at other levels and set targets if appropriate.

the global voice of
the legal profession®

International Bar Association
Chancery House
53-64 Chancery Lane
London WC2A 1QS
Tel: +44 020 7842 0090
www.ibanet.org