

EDITION #95 Autumn 2024



KATE RAMSAY AND THE **AND** COACHES WELCOME YOU TO OUR STAYING IN TOUCH NEWSLETTER.

First, a little bit of history: given my late partner Des Ryan and I formed AnD Consulting in 1994 and wrote our first newsletter early that year, the Value Adding newsletter is now in its 30th year! In **Learning Moments** in this edition, we first challenge the need for having to make a business case for diversity in organisations; then we look at self-compassion as a healthy attitude to oneself. In **Did you know?** we reveal the economic cost of gender inequality to the Australian economy and then connect this to an update of Kate's recently launched book about achieving gender equality at work. **And to close** we quote Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations about gender equality.

## Learning moments

### The fairness case for diversity

Kate writes: Over my many years as an equal opportunity (EO) consultant during which I facilitated dozens of EO awareness seminars for managers and leaders I always believed that, to be plausible, I needed to put the business case for a gender diverse workforce. This was, and is, that organisations can best meet their customers' needs by having a workforce reflecting the population in which they offered their goods and/or services. And, given 51% of Australia's population is female, organisations should therefore match this throughout their ranks. I struggled for, but never found hard dollar data to support this argument, and I suspect my case usually fell on deaf ears.

I was therefore heartened when a colleague sent me links to 2 *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) articles challenging the need to argue the business case for diversity.

In the first, dated November-December 2020, written by Robin J Ely and David A Thomas from the Harvard Business School, is headed *Getting Serious About Diversity: Enough Already with the Business Case*.

Ely and Thomas tell their readers that they published an HBR article in 1996 titled *Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity* in which they recommended a 'learning and effectiveness

paradigm toward diversity'. However, in their 2020 article they say:

*The problem is that nearly 25 years later, organizations have largely failed to adopt a learning orientation toward diversity and are no closer to reaping its benefits.*

These authors then write:

*Abundant research has now made clear that increasing the numbers of traditionally underrepresented people in your workforce does not automatically produce benefits. Taking an 'add diversity and stir' approach, while business continues as usual, will not spur leaps in your firm's effectiveness or financial performance.*

The second HBR article, dated June 15, 2022, is headed *Stop Making the Business Case for Diversity*. It was written by Oriane Georgeac from the Yale School of Management and Aneeta Rattan from the London Business School. They started with 2 definitions:

- *The 'business' case for diversity: a rhetoric that justifies diversity in the workplace on the grounds that it benefits companies' bottom line.*

- *The 'fairness' case for diversity: a rhetoric that justifies diversity on moral grounds of fairness and equal opportunity.*

They then cite their research that shows that making the business case for diversity doesn't appear to be the best way to attract underrepresented job candidates. Why? Because they found that a majority of these

candidates did not want to be the token female or black to enable their prospective employer to achieve their diversity targets.

The authors then explored what organisations should do instead and found in their research that arguing the fairness case halved the negative impact of the business case. They concluded:

*It may seem counterintuitive but making a case for diversity (even if it's a case grounded in a moral argument) inherently implies that valuing diversity is up for discussion. You don't have to explain why you value innovation, resilience, or integrity. So why treat diversity any differently?*

Why indeed I ask myself and encourage our readers working in inclusion and diversity to do likewise.

## Self-Compassion

Kate writes: I have just re-read and enjoyed an article from the January 2023 *Annual Review of Psychology*. Written by Kristin D. Neff from the University of Texas. It is titled *Self-Compassion: Theory, Method, Research, and Intervention*.

Neff describes self-compassion as:

*Being supportive toward oneself when experiencing suffering or pain – be it caused by personal mistakes and inadequacies or external life challenges.*

In her conclusion, after a lengthy article citing lots of research by both her team and others, Neff gives the reader a very simple way to be self-compassionate:

*It simply requires taking the skill learned over the years of being compassionate to others and doing a U-turn.*

I was particularly interested in Neff's exploration of gender differences in self-compassion. Her research shows that men reported slightly higher levels than women. She suggests this could partly be caused by women's tendency to internalise negative feelings more than men; and also because of what she calls 'female gender norms of self-sacrifice' tending to work against self-compassion, whereas what she calls 'male gender norms of entitlement' tend to encourage it.

I also appreciated that one study Neff cites found that self-compassion peaks at around age 77 because of the 'increasing wisdom, life satisfaction, and self-

acceptance often experienced by the elderly'. It seems there are some advantages in getting old after all!

## Did you know?

### 1. The cost of gender inequality

Kate writes: I woke to an alarming statistic from the *Sydney Morning Herald Digital Edition* on October 23 last year. It was that barriers to women fully participating in the workforce are costing the Australian economy \$128 billion. This figure had been calculated by the Women's Economic Taskforce that was appointed by the government to examine why most Australian women are not economically valued.

The taskforce consisted of prominent senior businesswomen including some economists. They recommend a suite of changes including more investment in early childcare and education, ensuring the minimum wage is enough to be considered a living wage and finding new ways to encourage older women back into the workforce.

The taskforce confirmed a statistic for me that I'd heard anecdotally: that currently an average 25-year-old woman who has at least one child will earn \$2 million less throughout their employment lifetime compared with a 25-year-old man who fathers a child.

### 2. A hell of a lot of glass – achieving gender equality in the workplaces of Australia - update

Kate writes: I launched my book in the same week that this taskforce submitted their report to the government. I'd been fearing that my findings drawn from research, interviews and my own experience could be past their used by date. Although it gave me no joy to read some of the grim findings in their report, I was relieved that my book well and truly still has a shelf life. For more go to [www.ahellofalotofglass.com](http://www.ahellofalotofglass.com).

## And to close

Kofi Annan, former Director General of the UN:

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building new governance.