

Alstom UK & Ireland deep dive into gender-balance – a Case Study

Alstom, the UK & Ireland leading supplier of new trains and train services, recently partnered with balancetogether to gain insight into the existing good work that they are already doing to support women in their workplaces and to achieve their gender-balance target.

Balancetogether specialise in understanding how men and women experience cultures differently, focussing on practical solutions so that men and women can thrive equally. Balancetogether and Alstom were introduced through the Women in Rail Corporate Partner membership.

The balancetogether survey uncovered which of the many initiatives and practices to support women that were not being experienced equally, or as intended. With the data from the diagnostic, Alstom are now in a better position to prioritise the programmes that are going to deliver the most impact, from simple quick wins to longer-term ambitions.

However well you think you know your people, or however many gender-balance initiatives you have in place, the perspective of an external partner can highlight angles that had not been evident internally. As an external provider, we were able to reassure Alstom employees of the confidentiality of the survey and the anonymity of their responses.

How we conducted our diagnostic work

Following an initial meeting with Alstom stakeholders, we understood where Alstom were on their gender-balance journey, what their targets and UK&I goals were, and how they were already approaching these. They were aware of some inconsistencies and were determined to understand these in more detail.

In today's labour market they were also keen to understand how to attract more females to their business, as well as retaining them.

The balancetogether diagnostic online survey provides an independent, confidential way to gather accurate, relevant information on the behaviours, opinions, satisfaction, needs and potential gender-related issues inside an organisation.

The survey was sent to all Derby-based staff and met with positive engagement. Of the total respondents, 68% were male and 32% female. The key areas of focus in the survey include Organisational Culture, Organisational Development and HR Practices.

Our diagnostic goes out to all employees, regardless of gender, as it's imperative that we understand their different experiences of the workplace.

What our diagnostic work revealed.....

Alstom has some well-established gender-balance initiatives, which are well-known and appreciated by many employees, and we were able to give them confidence around what was working well and what needed improvement.

- 83% of respondents are confident in Alstom's Diversity and Inclusion strategy.
- The majority of respondents believe that Alstom's UK&I Leadership Team actively support women to progress.
- 65% of respondents agreed that men and women are given equal opportunities to take responsibility for high profile work and projects.
- There was a lot of praise for Alstom's Voices of Women programme, and how it actively supports and encourages female career progression.
- 84% of men and 75% of women say that parent-returners are well-supported.
- The majority of men and women felt that Alstom's flexible working practices fully met their needs.

We also identified several areas where Alstom could improve:

- Over half of the men surveyed were not aware of any inappropriate gender-related remarks or behaviours occurring, which significantly contrasted with the women, where a similar percentage said that they had experience of this. This is a common finding across sectors.
- 36% of women disagreed that 'workplace housework' is shared equally with their male colleagues.
- There are inconsistencies in the way Line Managers manage and embrace flexible working needs.
- Considering job-design and flexible working before new roles are advertised would attract more female applicants.
- Clarifying why gender-balance initiatives are key to level the playing field for women, and are not the same as positive discrimination in favour of women, will significantly improve men engaging in gender-related actions

Next steps

Based on our feedback and diagnostic work, Alstom are able to identify emerging trends, prioritise and plan short- and longer-term activities and action critical needs. They are looking to run balancetogether's diagnostic across its other UK&I sites, and to communicate results and raise awareness of why this work is important.

The Head of Talent said: *"With diversity and inclusion already well embedded in the organisation, this additional diagnostic work allows us to finetune our D&I Roadmap and ensure agreed actions are specific and deliver value."*

Site Quality Director/Voices of Women Chair said *"It was great to work with balancetogether. The value for me was their knowledge when designing the survey and then their independence when summarising the results. They also brought a great objective view point to the discussion as we went through the results. I look forward to working on the recommendations and furthering Alstom's journey to full equality and inclusion."*