

Reflections on International Women's Day

With **Amandeep Kaur**, HR Leader – ASEAN & ANZ

Why do you think International Women's Day is important?

Amandeep: Taking the time to pause on International Women's Day (IWD) allows me – and I hope many others – to reflect on the contribution of women everywhere in the world. Overall, I see IWD as time of reflection, celebration and action.

It's about **reflecting** that women have come a long way from where we first started **celebrating** this day more than a 100 years ago; about celebrating all the great accomplishments women have made during this time; but it's also a **call for action** because we still have a long way to go. At the current rate, it will take us at least a 100 more years to achieve gender parity.

We need to acknowledge the progress made, and actively pursue further advancement.

Particularly in Asia, the representation of women in senior leadership positions is still limited, ranging from 37% in the Philippines to 19.4% in Thailand and 15.4% in Japan¹.

Reflecting on what allowed you to keep growing in your own career, which advice would you give other women?

Amandeep: I'd highlight two factors that played a big role in my ongoing growth.

First of all, I was fortunate enough to have women mentors early on in my career. Mentorship does not happen by chance. I sought out mentors to guide me, and they opened doors and provided both access and opportunities.

Having those role models was critical in allowing me to define my own work style and over time, to develop those leadership traits I have today. I'd recommend women embarking on their career to identify these role models. Take the time to reflect on leaders' attributes that resonate with you and motivate you. And then adapt them to find your own voice because role modelling does not mean imitating. You can certainly forge your own style, be your authentic-self whilst learning from others.

Secondly, be daring. Whether it was taking up an undergraduate degree in Mathematics, doing first-of their-kind projects such as



Amandeep Kaur

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Skills-mapping for IT-ITeS Industry in India, or Leading HR Post-merger integration, I embraced a lot of firsts. Even if I had not done all of it before, I was ready to learn both on and off the job. Creativity, resourcefulness, the ability to engage others, those are skills that are worth developing early on. Many technical skills can be learnt.

In other words, if an opportunity interests you, and you have many of the skills, just go for it.

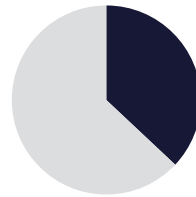
What can our male colleagues do to progress this agenda?

Amandeep: The leaders of today – and the greatest majority are men - have a role to play to bridging that gap.

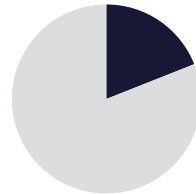
As you know, I'm an HR professional, so I have a few suggestions in this field.

- 1 Understanding and awareness of unconscious biases** is an obvious one, especially in Recruitment. Affinity and social biases can be common. Not until we are trained to recognise that bias, and understand the benefits of a diverse workforce, that we will become more likely to overcome that bias and recruit for diversity and skills complementarity - rather than because a candidate is "like" us.
- 2 Make sure that there is a sizable proportion of women in the screening pool.** Statistically, if there's only one woman in your candidate pool, the chance she'll be hired is also low. Ensure diversity at initial screening. And review job ads with unconscious bias in mind
- 3 Be an ally** – Sponsor and mentor female colleagues. Find at least one woman to mentor proactively. Create occasions to share power and decision making and encourage other colleagues to do so, through actions and words. It's not enough to have a woman in the room, we need to make sure the opinions are heard and counted.

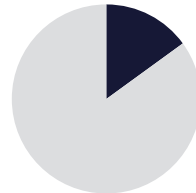
In Asia, the representation of women in senior leadership positions is still limited, ranging from the Philippines ranking first with 37% of all senior leaders being female...



...down to 19% in Thailand...



...and 15% in Japan.¹



References

1. "Female senior leader proportion Asia 2019" (November 2019, Statista)
2. <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>

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