

## Empowerment Award Entrant: EY



EY's leadership programme to attract, promote and retain senior women managers in the organisation's tax division was so successful it has been extended company wide.

With 85 per cent of participants in the "Accelerate" programme progressing to director, it was an easy decision to extend it beyond the EY tax service line.

EY is one of the world's largest professional service organisations with more than 220,000 professionals globally. In New Zealand, there are almost 800 professionals nationwide, spread across three offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

The programme, which incorporates a structured approach to coaching and development experiences as well as networking opportunities to connect with senior leadership, was designed by EY in-house HR and Learning and Development professionals, who collaborated with the Tax Leadership teams.

The goal of the two to three year programme is to accelerate women's advancement to their next career milestone (Director or Partner).

The programme starts with a Planning Guide and Coach Guide to assist the participant and their coach identify strengths and development areas and create a structured career plan. The women are each allocated a mentor at the end of the first workshop from the Executive Leadership Team, whose role is to provide ongoing support and guidance, and advocate for them, navigate internal processes, but the participants are charged with identifying new 'sponsors' in their internal and external networks who can challenge and support them in different ways.

Accelerate recognises that there are gender differences in working towards the path to partnership, and particularly that women tend to have a narrower network of sponsors to help them get to the next level.

The programme therefore focuses on exposing females to a breadth of sponsors and the roles that each sponsor can play to open doors for their female counterpart.

“While the role of mentor is also important, we found that it was the lack of active sponsors that was really missing from our high performing females’ armory,” says Diversity and Inclusiveness Leader Gina Mills.

Workshop topics include: inner dialogue, personal brand, strategic networking, business development, specific sessions relating to the business unit, overcoming gender specific challenges, preparing a business case for partnership and social media brand.

In conjunction with Accelerate, EY’s Executive Leadership Team and partners have had training on unconscious bias to ensure they are more aware of their own biases and the different perspectives of females coming through the pipeline.

At the start of the programme 18 per cent of partners across Oceania were female. By 2020, EY is aiming for that figure to rise to 30 percent.

EY is committed to continuing the programme. The outgoing EY Oceania Tax Leader championed the programme from the outset to raise its profile and generate a change in the business.

He has remained close to the content and selection process and tasked each mentor with personal accountability to support their mentee. He also ensured he facilitated sessions such as business updates, open discussions and Partner Business case. The programme has also been heavily supported by executive leadership and received notable support from Wellington-based partner Geoff Blaikie (New Zealand Tax Leader and incoming EY Oceania Tax Leader) who has given this initiative significant backing and has invested his personal time to facilitate and coach participants.

The programme also aligns with EY’s external initiatives supporting women such as Entrepreneurial Winning Women, Women Fast Forward, and its internal Network of Winning Women (NOWW) which bring females of all ranks together to network, and attend guest speaker and skills sessions. EY also runs a recognition programme for women at EY called the Lynne Sutherland award, in memory of one of the first female partners.