

Closing the gap at EY

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When it comes to fixing the gender pay gap, facts are your friends, says EY's People Advisory Services Partner, Susan Doughty.

"Unless you do an analysis of the current state of the organisation, you will not be able to make meaningful changes. Research first, then you can build targeted plans around it."

That's EY's remuneration expert Susan Doughty's advice to any organisation looking to close its gender pay gap.

EY's focus on the gender pay gap is part of the company's global diversity and inclusion strategy embracing all forms of diversity including gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQI.

"Team dynamics definitely improve and it's good for the bottom line. That's proven in terms of better decision-making and how we manage relationships. There is also a hidden benefit as staff are more engaged if they feel that they are working for a good employer."

"According to last year's figures, our gender pay gap is approximately 0.7. We measure this by looking at jobs like for like, so it's not necessarily the overall pay gap. What's important for us is that through all our levels we treat people fairly and consistently," says Susan.

A passionate advocate for pay equity, as Chair of the Auckland YWCA, Susan also helped establish that organisation's annual Equal Pay Awards. "I got involved because I wanted to encourage and recognise those organisations who were starting to address the pay gap. It raised the profile of the issue in a positive way and has encouraged other companies to take action."

She is also involved in a number of internal and external diversity initiatives and is a mentor to young women.

"I have put time into these things because I feel I should use any influence I have to help others. That's my big driver. I strongly believe that everyone, particularly women, should be able to realise their full potential whatever that may be."

She says the causes of the gender pay gap are complex but fixable. One being a need to have more women in senior roles and a work environment that respects family life, something that Susan as a parent well understands.

"There are so many pressures on women's lives; they still take on most of the family care, including elder care. At EY we make sure that when a woman is on parental leave they are still reviewed, and their salary keeps pace. When they get back they are given all the support and everything they need in order to keep progressing."

Unconscious bias is harder to tackle. All EY managers carry out unconscious bias training, so when it comes to promotions, performance reviews, recruitment or pay rates, they are more sensitive as to how hidden biases might impact upon their decision making.

In Australia, where it is mandatory for companies to reveal their gender pay gap, there is more action on these key issues, she says.

"We also see a greater focus on pipelining more women into senior roles – a key factor in closing the pay gap."

Would she like to see more transparency here?

"Absolutely, targets mean that what gets measured gets done. When you have increased transparency it is not possible to hide behind process and policy. You become exposed very quickly, so organisations are encouraged to get on board."

