



EMBRACE

# #EMBRACE EQUITY

International Women's Day  
8 MARCH 2023

#



**BDO**

Embracing diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) will help all our people:

# OUR PURPOSE



**Maximise their potential**



**Ignite their passion and achieve their goals**

We all share one common purpose,  
**OUR WHY:**

**PEOPLE  
HELPING  
PEOPLE**

DE&I must become an integral part of the BDO culture. Collectively, we can all play our part in creating a gender-equal world.

# FOREWORD

## Nurturing a positive environment

Having read through these inspirational, personal stories from women across our organisation, I feel privileged, as the new global CEO, to introduce the 4th edition of our International Women's Day Report.

International Women's Day is an important annual event globally, and an opportunity to push diversity, equity and inclusion forward. This year, it's a moment for all of us to better understand, reflect and raise awareness of what equity, this year's central theme, means in practice – and what we can each do to make our own environment more equitable.

Put simply:

“Equality is giving everyone a shoe; equity is giving everyone a shoe that fits<sup>1</sup>”

To truly align with our core purpose, *People helping People*, it is essential that we all #EmbraceEquity - to identify the individual needs of everyone in our organisation, create opportunities and provide the necessary resources to help them achieve their goals.

Equity goes hand-in-hand with Diversity and Inclusion (DE&I), and when this becomes a priority, it simultaneously generates a broad spectrum of other benefits across the entire organisation. Delivering DE&I brings different people, each with unique skills and outlooks, together; providing broader perspectives, driving innovation and ultimately improving the way that we engage with each other and our clients.

I encourage everyone to take the time to carefully read and explore the topics, information and guidance in this report and take steps to actively #EmbraceEquity in the year ahead.



GLOBAL CEO

PAT KRAMER

<sup>1</sup>@NaheedD on Twitter 2/10/2021. (Dr. Naheed Dosani, a Canadian palliative care physician who cares for homeless and vulnerably housed individuals)

# #EMBRACE EQUITY



International Women's Day

WE CAN  
ALL TRULY  
EMBRACE  
EQUITY

It's not just something we say.



It's not just something we write about.



It's something we need to think about,  
know and embrace.



It's what we believe in, unconditionally.

EQUITY MEANS CREATING  
AN INCLUSIVE WORLD.



EXPLORE

# WHAT IS EQUITY?

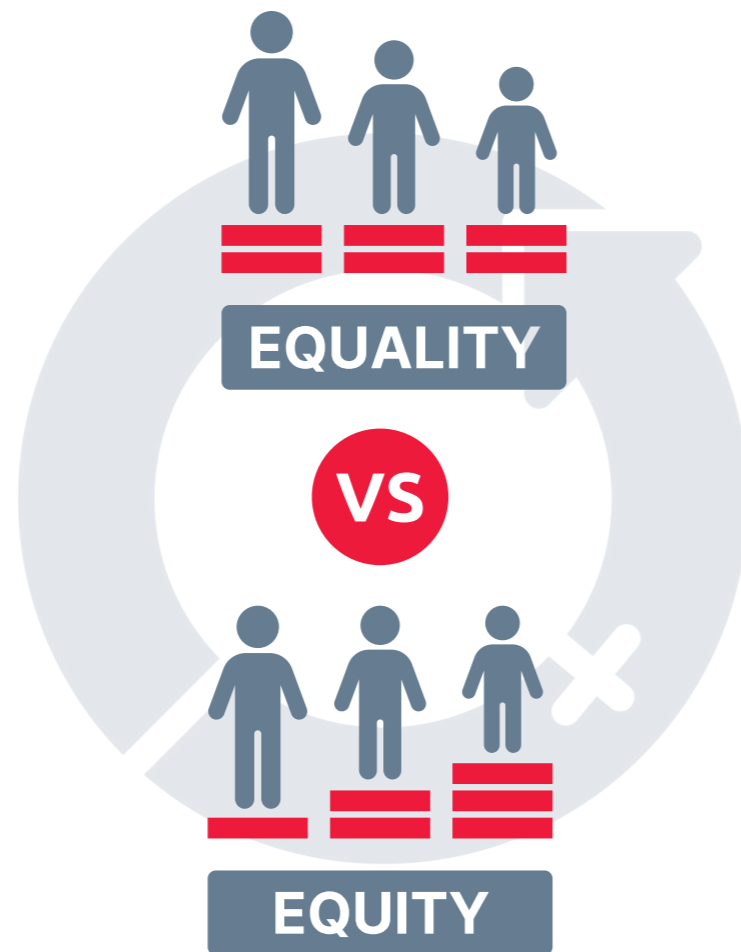
It's a word that's often interchanged with equality - but it's important to understand the difference.

## Equality

means that each individual or group of people is offered the same resources or opportunities.

## Equity

recognises that equality alone - a 'one size fits all' approach, doesn't always deliver a fair or equal outcome, or the best result for everyone, because we each have different needs and circumstances. To achieve equity, we need to acknowledge diversity and intentionally, purposely and consciously offer everyone resources, support and opportunities specific to their individual needs, to allow them to fully participate (drive inclusion) and help them reach an equal outcome.



As the E in DE&I, equity is intrinsically linked to diversity and inclusion. Inequities are often rooted in historical, social, economic, demographic and/or geographic differences - and therefore affect a wide spectrum of individuals, including people of colour, disabled people, the economically disadvantaged, the LGBTQ+ community and members of other marginalised groups. Gender adds an additional intersectional level of inequity in the workplace for women.

To address inequities, organisations need to review their norms, practices and policies to ensure that being part of any of these groups is not predictive of an individual's workplace opportunities or outcomes.

# TEN TIPS TO #EMBRACEEQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

01

**Understand and promote the importance of equity** throughout the organisation. Start the conversation, collect feedback, identify the issues to address.

02

**Evaluate existing practices.** Collect qualitative and quantitative data to benchmark the current status.

03

**Establish short and long-term goals for improvement.** These should focus on areas including recruitment, training, promotion, attrition, and engagement. Monitor results and continue to solicit feedback.

04

**Communicate targets and share progress** to keep employees informed (and keep you and your organisation accountable). This will demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equity, which will in turn help to drive continued buy-in and participation from across the organisation.

05

**Make wage equity a priority.** It is impossible to truly achieve equity if colleagues are being paid drastically different wages to do the same jobs.

06

**Prioritise equitable representation.** Make diversity in senior leadership a priority.

07

**Assess equity in recruitment.** Are diverse candidates given an equal opportunity to be hired? Audit job descriptions and recruitment adverts. Consider switching from credentials-based to skills-based hiring, to attract candidates who didn't necessarily go to the best schools. Strive to remove bias from the recruitment process to ensure that personal opinions don't cloud judgement, through the use of structured interviews, blind shortlisting, and collaborative hiring.

08

**Review and upgrade your onboarding.** Often, onboarding will be standardised for all employees, which doesn't account for different individual needs. Consider creating an early and late-stage onboarding process. Early-stage onboarding can be standardised to ensure that all new employees receive the same experience. Late-stage onboarding, on the other hand, can be tailored specifically to the needs of the individual.

09

**Make resources accessible.** Equitable access to resources is critical to 'level the playing field' for all employees. This means ensuring that all employees are able to access the same development material, whilst providing targeted resources for specific demographics and roles in addition.

10

**Create a mentorship programme.** This will provide an opportunity for minority employees to match with more senior leaders, based on their goals and areas of focus, who may share their background or experiences.

# REASONS TO #EMBRACEEQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

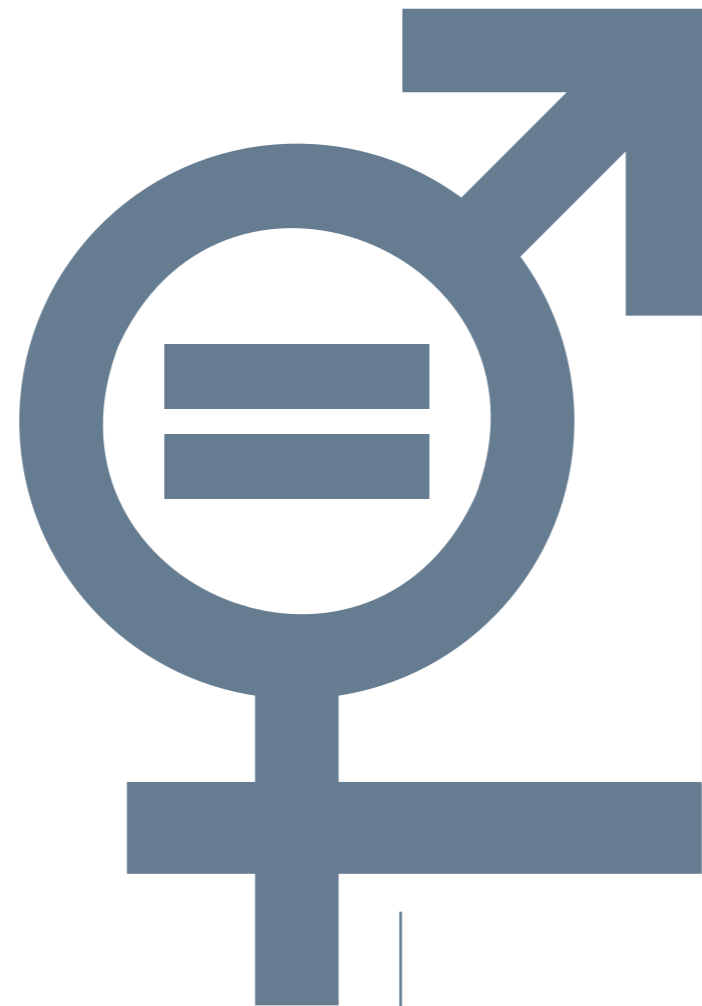
Improved ability to serve the needs of a broader range of clients.

Greater diversity in leadership leads to increased agility, resilience to market changes, and innovation.

Targeted upskilling. Equity-focused training helps to make all employees future-ready by identifying and addressing their unique needs.

Increased employee engagement and satisfaction, and reduced employee turnover. All employees feel 'seen' and valued, and that they belong.

Strengthens and builds the appeal of the brand in the labour market. Equitable organisations are sought after in today's competitive talent landscape.



# SUMMARY

At BDO, we aim to inspire, educate and lead an unstoppable movement for sustainable business practice in our markets and in our organisation, and the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion to global sustainability is recognised by the inclusion of the topic in the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Equity in our workplace is about opening doors, fairness, and empowerment, whilst recognising and understanding individual needs and delivering targeted support. This is an ongoing process that requires dedicated effort and ongoing commitment from everyone within the organisation, but the rewards are clear.

Read more about how our firms globally are demonstrating their commitment to DE&I in some of the examples below:

# HAVING A DEDICATED CHIEF DEI OFFICER



BERNIE PIETERS  
CHIEF DEI OFFICER AT BDO USA

## A recipe for success

As BDO in the USA's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and People and Culture Principal, Bernie oversees and helps drive forward the firm's DE&I strategy, spearheading key programmes to create impact, foster change and continue to build a sustainable, inclusive culture. Additionally, she leads the people and culture talent acquisition and field teams nationwide - with the goal of leveraging the firm's culture and values to enhance the employee experience.

Bernie describes herself as a child of humble beginnings, born in South America as the first of four siblings. Her parents made a lot of sacrifices to give their children a better outlook on life, making the bold decision to move to the US. They were raised with one important message: "When you see no limits, there are no limits." That has become Bernie's mantra, both in her personal life and in her career.

### What is the role of a Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer?

The concept of diversity in itself is not new, with former U.S President J.F. Kennedy addressing the importance of diversity in one of his speeches in the 1960s. What is still fairly new, though, is for companies to appoint a dedicated person to drive DE&I strategy in the workplace.

The fact that BDO in the USA decided to take this step sent a strong message to the firm - demonstrating that

our leadership cares about our people and that they understand it is important to have this topic as a regular item of discussion at the executive level. I also want to point out that my appointment was not the start of our DE&I journey. Many of our firm's efforts began more than a decade ago, with our **first strategic advisor** on DE&I being hired in 2007.

At the start, I would explain my role as someone committed to helping our operational leaders create a diverse workplace that works for everyone, every day. Today, however, I believe it goes beyond that. My role is to empower each person to bring their full, authentic self to work. The employee experience is central to diversity. We define the employee experience as everything an employee encounters and the quality of emotional connection that the employee has within the company. It is shaped by their interactions with people, policies and processes, especially during significant moments in their career

journey. It is very much about connectivity, being able to connect with others in moments that matter.

Together with our various teams, we challenge ourselves to make our environment inclusive for all. This includes how we mentor, how individuals are selected to work on particular projects, and the way that we attract candidates and go to market. We consider, challenge and adjust all the various intricacies.

### You recently launched a video series called *Blank Canvas*. Tell us more about that...

When I started in this role, I thought it would be helpful to hear from professionals in our firm, as well young people, about what fostering a diverse and inclusive culture means. The *Blank Canvas* video series is an outcome of those conversations; it shares the idea that our future is a blank canvas, one of limitless opportunities. When we envisage the future we want for our firm, one thing is clear. It is a future we must design together, through intentional connection, mutual respect and true understanding.

That environment is fostered through ongoing conversations that are thoughtful and complex, often involving feelings of vulnerability and even discomfort. For example, the global health crisis, along with social unrest following tragic events such as the shooting of George Floyd, created a lot of anxiety around the realities of DE&I. Our executive team members recognised that they needed to understand what our people were feeling. They went on a purposeful listening tour, to engage with our people and ask, "How are you feeling? What can we do for you?"

As a result, with the help of an external consultant, we assessed the landscape of our diverse population, their views and their needs. We analysed what we were doing well and what opportunities we had to make changes.

### WATCH THE VIDEOS



### BLANK CANVAS Unspoken Conversations

Bernie speaks with six BDO professionals about the challenges they've faced and how conversation can lead to progress

## Mentoring is an important part of your work. Can you talk more about how you see mentoring and how it relates to equity?

Each person is different. Each person has unique needs. Life and events are constantly changing. It is important that our people feel understood, heard and supported, so mentoring is crucial. At BDO in the USA, we are working on what we call intentional mentoring.

I may view mentoring a bit differently than others, so let me share how I think it can be used as a powerful tool. While formal mentoring programmes between a mentor and mentee are certainly beneficial, I believe mentoring can happen in any of our professional relationships at any moment of time where we are intentionally seeking to learn from someone and also be vulnerable in how we want to be seen and heard. It's a process of asking deep questions, truly listening to what someone else needs and how they want to show up in this world, while doing our best to honour that request.

While formal mentoring programmes are wonderful, I want to dispel the notion that mentoring is only something that can happen during a regularly scheduled interaction with someone you admire. I want mentoring to be something we use in our day-to-day interactions with our colleagues. It is a powerful way to lift one another up using the platinum rule – treat others how THEY want to be treated.”

Therein lies one of the biggest areas of opportunity we have with regard to equity: understanding what someone else requires to succeed and learning how we may be able to help them on their journey. It is also an opportunity for us to educate others on the same.

**The journey is never complete.**

## What is success in DE&I?

Another word for success is progress. So, what does progress look like? It's taking steps forward in all of the areas highlighted above – to be open-minded about what our workplace and workforce could and should look like in the future.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

I recently wrote a letter to my younger self; a letter I will share with my daughters who are now becoming young adults. It contains advice I would have given myself at the time.

The most important pieces of advice?

Don't hurry to accomplish everything you feel you want to accomplish. In hindsight, I wish I would have taken the time to enjoy some of those precious moments more.

Question yourself more.

Why are you doing what you are doing? If you make a career move, are you running toward a new experience or running away from something? It is important to pause, self-reflect and understand what it is you want in life - what generates your personal 'return on investment.'

Try to imagine what your future should look like.

Where do you envisage yourself being? Whatever steps you take, take them consciously and remain true to yourself.

Finally, look at things with an open and positive mindset.



**Once again, I come back to the wisdom of my parents: If you see no limits, there are no limits!**



# MEET DAPHNA SMUCKLER

## BDO's new Global Head of Audit and Assurance

On 1 September 2022, Daphna Smuckler was appointed as BDO's Global Head of Audit and Assurance. Daphna has spent most of her career at BDO in Canada, gaining over 25 years' experience in audit, management and business assurance services and serving a wide range of clients in North America, Europe and Asia. Formerly the Managing Partner of the assurance and accounting practice and member of the executive leadership team, Daphna also held a variety of other positions, such as Chair of the BDO Canada Board, Public Company Leader and Industry Group Leader.

Daphna describes herself as both career and family focused. She is the mother of two young adults - a daughter aged twenty and a son aged eighteen. She loves to travel with her family, to enjoy adventures and create new and precious memories.



**Daphna Smuckler became the first female Global Audit and Assurance leader and second female member of BDO's global leadership team. Let's find out more about Daphna and what drives her...**

### Change drives growth

"Change is part of life, and progress is not possible without it. It was just the right moment to make this move" says Daphna, when asked what made her decide to leave BDO in Canada and join the Global Office. "When my son left for university, my husband and I became empty nesters. At the same time, I had multiple conversations with Chris Smith, my predecessor, who was about to retire. It was a natural opportunity that could not have come at a better time. The decision was not a difficult one to take.

I have always loved working for BDO in Canada. With this move, I don't feel like I am leaving them behind, yet it provides a fantastic opportunity to expand and grow. Personal and professional growth has always been important to me. I have always focused on what was best for the firm and how my personal contributions would benefit them most. In this new role, I will do the same, but on a global scale. I am very grateful for the trust that BDO has bestowed on me in this new challenge.

### People are key

I didn't grow up in the same circumstances as my children and am very grateful for the opportunities our family now enjoys. My children have always been my biggest motivator. I wanted to show them what you can do with the possibilities that are available, whilst recognising that not everyone is fortunate enough to have access to the best education or environment.

People are my key driver. Those around me have never ceased to motivate and positively challenge. I've been blessed with the best mentors I could have wished for and a great support system. To feel stimulated and empowered to take the next step, to get to that level and know that your leadership and peers believe you can do more - it's the most rewarding feeling in the world. Because of them, I have always tried to be the best I can be - in every new step I take.

### Walking the talk

I have always led by fostering an inclusive culture, and will continue to do so. I truly believe in recognising everyone for what they bring to the table, and the importance of understanding individual differences. Fairness is important. We are all unique, and leveraging those differences is the key to success.

Open and transparent communication is essential. I'm fairly direct in my own communication. I personally believe that speaking candidly (not cruelly) is a crucial part of psychological safety in the workplace. By communicating clearly and openly, we can all be more effective and more productive, with the confidence to speak freely and the knowledge that we will be heard.

My team is now the global team. As a global leader, I aim to build on our individual and cultural differences and bringing them together. No doubt it will be an interesting learning curve.

When it comes to equality and equity, we must 'walk the talk' - not just say the words because it feels like the right

thing to say. Actions speak louder than words. Say what you are going to do and do what you say you are going to do - and be genuine. Only then will we see positive change.

### My advice to young talents at BDO

Embrace flexibility. Within BDO we are offered so much flexibility - use it to your advantage. Throughout my own career this flexibility has been a tremendous help, especially in the years of early motherhood. Yes, the work and hours demanded were still there, but the flexibility I had in the way I organised myself was a lifesaver.

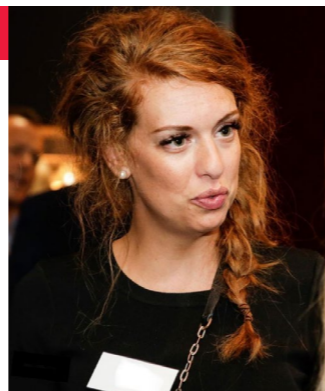
Take initiative and accept your obstacles. It will help you to be more proactive. Don't wait for someone to offer solutions or promotions, voice what you need/want to achieve.

Build relationships and trust. Find mentors and supporters and make sure they get to know your authentic self, not just in the workplace, but on a personal level too."

# DRIVING DE&I TOGETHER

## BDO in Belgium and the Netherlands

At BDO in Belgium, we believe that the more diverse and inclusive we are, the more able we will be to offer answers to the challenges of modern society. As such, we're now working with an external consultancy partner, UPOP, to help us shape our plans and make real progress in this important area. As one of our initiatives to create awareness and drive inclusivity, we've developed a 'Keys to Growth' programme, in which all our partners are now participating - either as a learner, an amplifier or a mentor - to ultimately create a more equitable organisation where everyone feels like they 'belong' and has the opportunity to grow to their full potential.



**Tessy Martens**  
ESG Services Lead  
BDO IN BELGIUM

### MENTOR

**WHY:** Helping to break down the (perceived) barriers of women in leadership within BDO  
**HOW:** Reverse mentoring between women and equity partners

### AMPLIFIER

**WHY:** Participate in actions to boost the inclusive diversity culture within BDO  
**HOW:** amplifying the defined ID actions

### LEARNER

**WHY:** Curious about the what, why and how of inclusive diversity  
**HOW:** Learning circle

Our internal research indicates that people are leaving our firm in their mid-20's to mid-30's, due to the challenges of combining working with family life. Women are most adversely affected, as they often carry the greater burden in terms of household responsibilities and childcare. This is clearly reflected in the pyramid of roles in the organisation, with the representation of women declining dramatically

as seniority level increases. Currently, only around 20% of the partners in our firm are women and less than 15% are equity partners. We want to understand why, so we conducted research directly in our firm, bringing together fifteen equity partners and forty-eight women in a reverse mentoring programme, to explore the topic.

The biggest potential barriers facing women in our organisation were identified as follows:

- 01** **Bias.** Affinity bias is an unconscious bias that draws people to those who are similar to them, in terms of background, interests, lifestyle, and culture etc. This unconscious 'preference' affects the promotion of individuals, and also affects the recruitment process. Candidates don't see 'people like them' represented in the organisation, so assume that the company and/or the profession is not for them.
- 02** **Work-life balance,** including parenting, particularly affects women as they often carry the greater burden for household responsibilities and childcare.
- 03** **Imposter syndrome** also affects a disproportionate number of women. Our research shows that women tend to doubt and underestimate their abilities - and only push forward once they have all the boxes ticked, because they feel that they don't have the right to do so otherwise.
- 04** **The 'ideal leadership'** model. Research shows that the 'ideal' leader is still often seen as someone who is visible, outgoing, has an entrepreneurial personality, likes to take the stage, and works long hours, etc. Such a leadership model is an obstacle for those who don't match this description or do things differently, but who are perfectly capable of taking on the role. Women often fall into this category, along with introverts and other 'different' personality types.
- 05** **Lack of mentoring support.**

Clearly diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) is a broad topic. It isn't limited to gender – it can also include personality, nationality, age, and many other factors.

Following our research into these root causes and barriers, we worked with the women and the equity partners involved to explore potential solutions and prioritise the most relevant actions to implement.

## We want to remove barriers for everybody – not just women.

One of the actions will involve organising events to address these defined barriers and embed more empathy and empowerment in our organisation. One example will be a 'living library' of women sharing their stories. In our experience, these face-to-face initiatives really bring to life what academic studies report, and make the topic so much more meaningful for participants.

Having a supporter or 'sponsor' to guide development and raise the profile of women really helps to break down barriers and 'even the playing field.' We will therefore pilot a programme designed to support all our leaders to develop or enhance their role as sponsors.

All our initiatives will have a positive impact on other groups and indeed the entire organisation. Within these initiatives, language is important. We're careful not to exclude anyone. For example, in our reverse mentoring discussions, we don't focus on 'women in leadership' – because women at all levels in the organisation face barriers. Instead, we talk about 'women in business.'

## PARENT JOURNEY

When focusing on the impact of the parent journey and work-life balance, we liaised with BDO in the Netherlands, as they had already done excellent work on the topic. Then, working with a local university, KU Leuven, we began with a survey and focus groups, to understand how challenging our people find being a working parent, what the root causes of these challenges are, and the most critical points in the parent journey. We identified key 'stress points' including deadlines, workload, the challenge to disconnect, lack of resources, and productivity/budgetary pressure.

We discovered that providing policies and information was considered to be particularly important, to provide a clear understanding of the vision of BDO and explain the possibilities and best practices available to be a career-loving parent. This information could also include advice from colleague 'parent ambassadors' about how best to survive parent/work challenges and maintain a healthy work-life balance, whilst at the same time recognising that each person has their own unique circumstances.

A further action involves supporting our leadership to develop 'conversation starters' in the different stages of the parent journey. The support of leaders during the parent journey is critical for parents, but they are sometimes unsure of what to say, what is appropriate to ask/discuss, and how to go about it. To address this we're developing 'conversation starter' guidance, which will be followed by training, to encourage open conversation.

## KEY PROJECT TAKEAWAYS

1. Switch from being reactive to proactive. Encouraging an open culture to talk about parenting plans and challenges is essential.
2. Integrating work and life is difficult for working parents. A tailored and personal approach is required to allow each person to find their own balance.
3. The future of work: there is a trend towards working from home and using other flexibility programmes on a more permanent basis.
4. Lack of clarity (written procedures, guidelines and policies) is a significant barrier – and these materials should recognise and include diversity. Information about maternity and paternity leave, parental leave and other types of leave (related to medical issues, breastfeeding etc) should also be provided under this topic.

It's important to understand that our approach in Belgium might not be the same approach required in other countries, due to cultural, societal and practical differences. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution unfortunately – although there will undoubtedly be some common threads.

There are still some people who believe that inclusive diversity is all about victims and villains – 'them' and 'us,' discrimination and racism, or statistics. But it really is just about removing barriers and creating empathy and empowerment. It's essential to have ongoing conversations to keep the topic front of mind for all.

Now, at BDO in Belgium, we talk about 'career-loving parents.' We aim to support our colleagues to find a balance that works for them, create equity in our organisation, and remove any barriers to their ongoing success.

**It's a process. We know that we're not 'there' yet, but these initiatives will start to make a difference, so in time the barriers that currently exist in our organisation will be removed and DE&I will be fully embedded in our corporate culture and our processes.**

We're monitoring our inclusion index via employee engagement surveys too, to add a further depth to the statistical results.



**Helen Gleis**  
Project Lead, Diversity & Inclusion  
BDO IN THE NETHERLANDS

Our experience in the Netherlands is that the period between the ages of 28 and 35 is critical. It's still very common that once a family has children, it is the mother who reduces her hours – or leaves the workplace. We want to raise awareness of the fact that it is possible for women to stay in high performing work environments, such as the financial world and BDO. At the same time, we also want to support fathers to play their part in this transition. In August last year, the Dutch government extended parental leave for birth partners from two weeks to almost six weeks, but research tells us that men fear being perceived as uncommitted or unambitious if they choose to take it or work part-time.

Like BDO in Belgium, we've found that conversation is key. We're providing guidance to help remove discomfort around important topics such as breastfeeding, health issues, taking time off, and other challenges, so our leaders and managers can engage and offer the necessary help and support without fear of 'saying the wrong thing' or making the other person feel uncomfortable. Having these conversations regularly 'normalises' them as part of our working routine.

We're also working on ways to remove bias from our assessment and promotion processes, which should then reduce our gender pay gap. This has been an eye-opening process for many, as we wrongly believed that our processes were already fair and equitable. The data has been really powerful – we are mainly accountants, so numbers are a language that we can all understand!

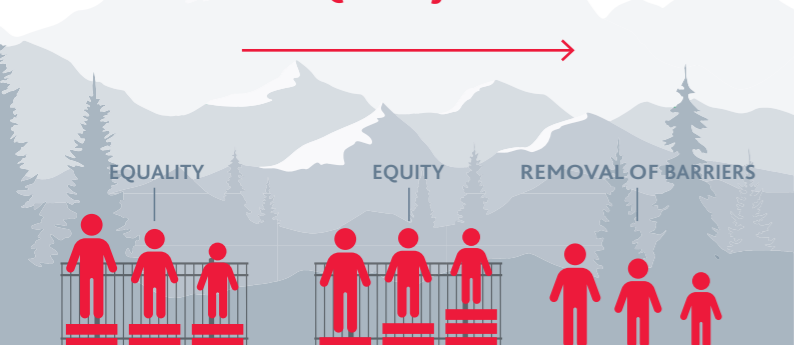
The outcomes have been incredibly positive so far. We know that the majority of people don't deliberately exercise bias, but we're making everyone more aware of how this happens

unconsciously, what the impacts are, and how to avoid it. Our efforts are seeing positive, tangible results. We've seen a distinct increase in the number of women remaining in the workplace after having children – even after having multiple children. It's fantastic to see this retention of talent. All these efforts make BDO in the Netherlands a much more attractive place to work for young people - the parents of the future.

Ultimately, we expect to see a lot more women in management and leadership roles in the future.



## THE EQUITY JOURNEY



# WOMEN AT BDO

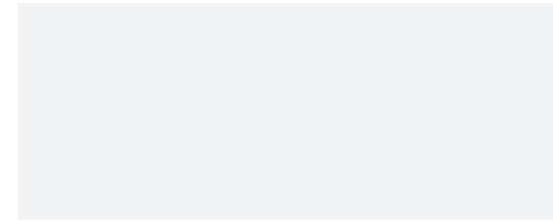
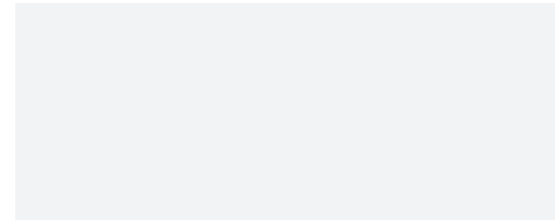
## KEY STATISTICS

### Firms with >25% female partners<sup>1</sup>



# BDO WOMEN

## Interviews



Audit & Advisory Partner  
BDO IN PAKISTAN

Managing Partner  
BDO IN PERU

Senior Marketing Manager & Team Head  
BDO IN HONG KONG

Director, Financial Services  
BDO IN UK

Tax Director  
BDO IN NORTHERN IRELAND

# #EMBRACEEQUITY

# INTERVIEW



Partner  
Audit & Advisory  
BDO IN PAKISTAN

## Who is Iffat Hussain?

I am an Audit & Advisory Partner in the Islamabad office of BDO in Pakistan. I qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1994 and, after completing my training with A.F. Fergusons & Co (a member firm of PwC). I joined BDO in 2004, starting as a Manager in Audit & Specialist Advisory. Five years later I had the opportunity to become Partner, a role which still gives me tremendous energy, even after fourteen years!

I am a proud mother of two. My son inherited my passion for numbers and is also a Chartered Accountant. My daughter is an architect. Between them they have blessed me with four beautiful grandchildren.

## A woman of many firsts

It wasn't until two years ago, in 2021, when the CA Women Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan decided to publish a report called [An inspiring journey of CA women](#), that I realised I had unconsciously paved the way for many women to follow the same career path.

READ HERE



Back in 1984, starting out as a young accountant, I entered a profession that was almost entirely male. After completing my internship, I became the very first female CA student of Islamabad, Capital city of Pakistan and the first woman to become a Chartered Accountant of Islamabad.

In Pakistan, managing the household and raising children is very much the responsibility of women, and family pressure cannot be underestimated. Consequently, when both my children were very young, I decided to leave PwC and focus on their education. However, during those four years I didn't entirely give up my passion for the profession. I started teaching accounting subjects as a visiting faculty member in several universities and institutions in Islamabad.

In those days, there was nearly no concept, nor plans, for young mothers with ambition to develop a career. When my children were a bit older, I wanted to return to work, albeit with some flexibility. But flexible working did not exist back then. I decided to have an open discussion with the partner of the BDO Islamabad office, informing him that I could only join the organisation after terminating my

## What does equity mean to you?

Equity – even though the word didn't mean a lot to me at the time, is exactly what I needed when I wanted to return to work. It's about creating opportunities for people to suit their (different) circumstances. In my case, it was about the company embracing a new concept - flexibility.

#EmbraceEquity is extremely important. Female CA's in Pakistan have made significant progress, especially the last 6 years, with a remarkable increase of 147% (!) in female students.

Nationwide, 9% of all chartered accountants are now women. Continuing to create awareness and actively supporting women in their career remains important.

tutoring assignments, if he would allow me to work part-time whilst my children still needed care. To my surprise, he accepted – another first in the profession!

I have faced many obstacles and gender disparities on the way. However, with unwavering effort and relentless drive for the profession, I was able to succeed and become the first female Partner in Pakistan.



I am proud of what I have achieved, but I am even more proud that many young women now have the chance to pursue their career aspirations.

I am a strong believer in diverse and well-balanced teams. A diverse team composition should not be optional, nor should the concept of equity.

At BDO in Pakistan, we still have a predominantly male workforce, but change is happening. Over the last five years, our female talent pool grew from 11% to 15%, and young women who do want to grow in the organisation are offered the opportunity to do so.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

There may be hurdles along the way, but with hard work, commitment and passion, everything is achievable. Voice your concerns, dare to ask for support and believe in your capabilities.

# INTERVIEW



**Director**  
**Financial Services**  
BDO IN UK

## Who is Sasha Molodtsov?

**I am different and proud of it.** I am Australian born and of Ukrainian descent. I speak Russian at home and am part of a Jewish family. If that's not different, I don't know what is! As well as identifying with a variety of cultures and religions, I also come from a diverse socio-economic background. My family arrived in Australia as refugees and my mother has always been the breadwinner of the household. All those different influences have provided me with a multidimensional lens on how I look at things, and most importantly, how I interact with people.

I have been with BDO for over 11 years and have gradually grown, thanks to support from amazing mentors, into my current role of Client Engagement and Markets Director within the Financial Services team, a job I really like. Outside of BDO, I am passionate about the community and regularly volunteer with organisations such as the [Prince's Trust](#) and the [Salvation Army](#), as well as setting up [UKUA Together](#) - an initiative to support Ukrainian refugees find homes and safety in the UK.

## Different is better

Every person is unique! Inevitably, each person has their own challenges, whether professionally and personally. What I've always tried to do, particularly in my current role, is to create a culture where we each understand our differences. That understanding is crucial, as it ultimately allows everyone to be their authentic self. With understanding, comes education. I encourage our people to educate one another and discuss backgrounds, beliefs,

traditions and customs. As well as acknowledging different religious festivities such as Christmas, Diwali, Lunar New Year, Chanukah or Eid-Al-Adha, it's important to also understand why these days are so important to those who celebrate them. This gives people the freedom to wear their traditional dress, to fast, or request time off on particular days of the year.

## What does equity mean to you?

For me, equality and equity are two words with an entirely different meaning. Equality is all about the law. It's a framework that gives everyone the same opportunities. But that doesn't mean that everyone has access to them. That's what equity is all about.

Let me use a real-life example. When a meeting finishes and a plate of sandwiches remains, we might put it on the kitchen counter and say to the team 'help yourself.' But if a colleague is a wheelchair user, they might not be able to reach them – so although we offered the sandwiches to everyone, the wheelchair user may go hungry.

When talking about gender equity, accessibility is key. It's very easy to say that promotion is open to everybody. But is it really? In many ways, Covid has been a real eye-opener. When everyone was forced to work remotely during the healthcare crisis, technology enabled working from home, or even from another country. Yet although women and men had equity in access, we saw a huge percentage of women with multiple caring responsibilities (e.g. looking after the elderly, managing the household, raising children) drop out of the workforce. This in turn creates significant economic and social disadvantage.

It results in an interesting paradox for equity and women. At BDO in the UK, we have parity in terms of the total number of male and female employees early in career grades, but only around 22% female partners. Clearly we need to continue our journey of understanding, educating and acknowledging that to achieve true equality, we need to resolve the equity gap first.

## Equity in leadership



**Diversity impacts culture, decision-making and profitability, so it's not just a nice to have, it's imperative**

As a leader, I think it's important to consider who's not in the room - and who should be. Consciously thinking about blind spots, involving and engaging with everyone in the team, will create a truly inclusive environment. Psychological safety will lead to open conversations, and process change will lead to positive action - which in turn will lead to an equitable environment.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

**I have three pieces of advice:**

1. Find a mentor and sponsor, someone that will advocate for you when you are not in the room.
2. Don't put any limits on yourself. Do not make assumptions of what you can or cannot achieve and dare to think big. If there was ever a time to challenge the current norm – it's now! People are now so open to different ways of working, to diverse talent and different approaches. So do not waste this incredible opportunity to bring new ideas and solutions to the table.
3. Finally, be confident in your choices and advocate for yourself. I think as women we are sometimes afraid to ask for pay rises, promotions, time off or a different way of working. Ask yourself this question: What is the risk/cost to me if I don't ask?

# INTERVIEW



Managing  
Partner  
BDO IN PERU

## Who is Liliana Córdova Mejía?

Just over one month ago, I became the new – and first female – Managing Partner of BDO in Peru. I still have a lot to learn in my new role, but with the support of our leadership team, I am confident that I will do a good job and make my firm proud. I have had a long career with BDO, having joined more than 30 years ago – all thanks to one of my professors at The University of Lima, who was also a partner in the firm. He saw my potential and gave me the opportunity to join the company on completion of my studies. Over the years, BDO has continued to create new opportunities to grow, and I am honoured to be part of this amazing organisation.

I am also a mother, although my children are now adults. A healthy work-life balance has always been important to me. You can find me at the gym at 6 am, 3 times per week. It gives me the energy I need to stay focused.

## Juggling work and family responsibilities

In Peru, women are still the primary caretakers in the household. Although an increasing number of female graduates are seeking to build a professional career, gender inequality is still very much part of Peru's culture.

For me, combining a career with managing a household and motherhood, especially when the children were still very small, was not easy – particularly during audit season. It was a real challenge to make it all work. I was lucky that my mother was always willing to help out, but without a doubt, women are masters in multitasking.



## Women in the workplace

Let me give you an example of workplace inequality. Women in Peru have 90 days maternity leave when they become mothers. In contrast, men obtain a maximum of ten days to support the family at home. That difference alone nourishes inequality and reinforces the unspoken expectation that it must be the woman that stays at home to take care of the children. As very few women have a support system when they become mothers, this often causes our female talents to pause, or even entirely stop, their careers. Also sometimes, when women do return to the workplace, there is no guarantee that they will still have the same job, or even the same salary.

In Peru, we almost have parity in terms of our total population, with 50.5% women. The salary gap however is considerable, with women earning on average 25% less. During the pandemic, this salary gap even grew bigger. Why? Because many employers argued that women were less productive working from home, as they also had to spend time home-schooling the children, taking care of the elderly etc... in addition to their usual household duties. You would assume that the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing everyone to work from home, has helped to overcome some of those challenges, but the reality for many women was quite the opposite.

The Peruvian government has issued a labour law that obligates companies to eliminate gender inequality and remunerate women fairly. However, many companies still have not complied with it. There is still a lot of work to be done.

## What does equity mean to you?

Equity means respect for everyone, despite their differences. It means addressing any inequalities that limit a person's ability to access the same opportunities as others. Gender equity is a tool to achieve effective equality.

At BDO in Peru, we really are a purpose-driven organisation. Our WHY, *People helping People* is very much at the heart of everything we do. We take the time to understand the needs of our people and want to make sure that everyone can achieve their goals.

We hire people based on their capabilities – not on gender – and we truly embrace diversity, because diverse teams perform better and are more effective. We also remunerate our people based on their skill set; not their gender, so there is no pay inequality between men and women.

My appointment as the first female Managing Partner is a testament to our culture. We currently have 19 Partners at BDO in Peru. Only 3 of them are women. It came as an entire surprise to me that the leadership team nominated me. They believe that as a woman, I will lead differently, and I will bring new ideas to the table. I will do my best to prove to them that I deserve their trust and that I am deserving of the task.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

Set personal and professional goals and then work hard to achieve them. Become a true team player and look for support within your team, the youth have a lot to contribute. Complement your professional development with other (soft) skills, so that you stand out. Nobody should be afraid to bring new ideas to the table or express their opinion. Everyone has the right to be heard.

Finally, while it may not always sound easy, try to establish a healthy balance between work and personal life. I recommend scheduling time to practice some sport. These precious moments will help you clear your mind and increase your energy



# INTERVIEW



## Who is Lorraine Nelson?

At the start of my career, I trained as a general accountant in a small firm in Armagh, a place known as the cathedral city of Northern Ireland. After gaining membership of the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants, I realised I had a passion for tax. I then qualified as a Chartered Tax Adviser in both the UK and Ireland, and also completed my Advanced Diploma in International Tax. For the past few years, I have focused on corporation tax, particularly for large corporates and growing global companies, and specialised in the implications of Brexit - advising clients on both the UK, EU and Northern Ireland rules that apply. Before joining BDO last November, I worked for Grant Thornton in Belfast for almost 9 years.

First and foremost, I am a wife and mother of two; a daughter of 18 and a son of 16. On Wednesday nights, I play netball and you can find me rowing down the river every Sunday morning. It has only been in the past few years that I realised I need these activities to wind down and re-energise.

**Tax Director**  
BDO IN NORTHERN IRELAND

## A hard lesson to learn

I am a country girl. I grew up with my two siblings in a very small town with only 1,600 inhabitants – out in the countryside. At a very young age, we lost our mother. It was a key milestone in my life and has really defined the person I am today. As the eldest of three girls, I had to grow up quickly, and develop independence and resilience. Between us, we had to manage the household, doing the cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing before and after school. None of our friends had to plan like we did.

Consequently, when I became a mother at the age of 16, whilst still in school, I was already well prepared for the task. Two years later, my son was born. The hard work ethic I learned at a young age has helped me to overcome many challenges. My husband and I had to work out practical solutions, alternating so we could both do what we needed to do. We both worked during the day, and I then went to classes two evenings a week. When there is no other way, you have to get creative. When I got my very first contract in a small accounting firm and started my accountancy training, my husband switched to night shifts. It was a puzzle, but we made it happen. There is never a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. As children grow up, they too need different care. I simply continued to re-invent myself and remained open-minded to opportunities. Despite always working full-time, my evenings remained very much focused on studying. People sometimes asked me how I got everything done. I'll be honest – sometimes there really were not enough hours in a day.

## What does equity mean to you?

I always felt I had to work twice as hard as my male colleagues. For a long time, the profession was very male dominated. There were quite a few women in the team, but from senior manager level and upwards, it was all men.

When I was 16, a neighbour once told me: 'Lorraine, women always need to be one step ahead of men in the corporate world. But when you have children, you need to be three or four steps ahead.' This is something that kept popping into my head during my career and always spurred me on to pushing myself to be better.

**To me, equity means recognising that some people may need different/more support than others.**

There are so many variables at play - family background, support system, personality and more. To me, social mobility is a crucial factor in achieving equity. For example, in my own life, coming from the countryside, I didn't have the opportunity to build the same professional network as some of the other young graduates from different backgrounds who had studied in big cities etc., so I always felt I was playing catch-up from a networking perspective.

## Giving back – Lean In

Looking back at the start of my career, I would have liked to have had a mentor - someone who would give me a steer when I needed it. Having made it to where I am today, I feel it is important to help out other young people in this respect.

The [Lean In](#) organisation helps women achieve their ambitions and helps companies build inclusive workplaces where all women feel supported and empowered. The organisation provides different 'lean in circles' or 'tribes', that is, groups of women working in a similar sector. The women in each particular circle give each other advice and support.

I have joined one of these circles, the 'women in finance circle' - a group of women working across the various accounting organisations and financial institutions. We often meet for coffee, discussing various topics of interest. It's a great place to build up your network and find the support you need. I am also on the committee of the Lean In Belfast Network, of which I am currently the chair. It's the umbrella organisation that all of these circles sit under. We regularly organise events around topics of interest to all members, allowing everyone to expand their network and gain additional knowledge.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

My mantra has always been: Be so good that you cannot be ignored. Try to be the best you can be, come up with new ideas and, most importantly, get your male colleagues to support you. Know where you want to land and work towards it.

Despite all of this, imposter syndrome did (and does) sometimes kick in. I think most women have experienced it at some point. We are sometimes too hard on ourselves. We do bring a lot to the table – we just bring it differently.

So be brave, be bold, be curious and dare to voice what you need.

## The diversity mark

Although BDO in Northern Ireland has already naturally embedded a DE&I culture, our leadership team believes it's important to formalise, visualise and measure it. As such, the firm has recently signed a DE&I charter, called the [Diversity Mark](#). As part of this process, an external consultant will visit the firm to assess the current level of diversity, (gender) inclusion and equity, analyse and improve existing policies, and monitor progress. We choose this process because registering isn't just about getting the badge and ticking a box – it is about setting solid foundations that will help us build a better workplace environment, where our staff feel valued, are treated fairly and have equal opportunities.

The Diversity Mark accreditation framework and process will help us set realistic targets for the future. We are planning to expand our focus in the coming years and bring in other variables, such as social mobility and disability inclusion.

# INTERVIEW



SALA LO

Senior Marketing  
Manager & Team Head  
BDO IN HONG KONG

## Who is Sala Lo?

I joined BDO in Hong Kong in 2011, after the firm's business merger with Grant Thornton, where I had been working since 2005. Both at Grant Thornton and BDO, I have always held various marketing positions.

I am married, I'm a city girl and I love shopping. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else than in Hong Kong - I consider it one of the greatest multicultural cities in the world. However, to maintain a healthy work-life balance, I regularly like to escape the buzz and take long walks in our beautiful parks. This helps me to recharge.

## Working through gender bias

Prior to joining the accounting industry, I was a sales representative in a construction company that primarily builds recreational facilities – such as playgrounds etc. I was the first and only female within an entirely male workforce, and it was there that I had my first experience of gender bias.

The construction industry in Hong Kong (and China) is still very male dominated. When I joined the company, it immediately became evident that my male colleagues didn't like it – for no reason, other than the fact I am female. At first, they refused to work with me, arguing that I would not be 'strong' enough to be taken seriously and that it would be 'too strange' to visit a construction site with a women, because then they would need to take extra care of me.

I had to work very hard to prove them wrong, and show that as a woman, despite having a different way of approaching my job, a different mentality and work ethic, I added value to the team. I would look at the needs of the customer with a different mindset and a different level of attention to detail, asking 'What would children really like?' and 'Are all the necessary safety precautions in place?'

It took around two years to earn the respect I deserved and to really feel part of the team.

## What does equity mean to you?

Let me first talk about equality. Although gender inequality in Hong Kong has improved a lot over the years, it is still present. In the more traditional families, sons are still considered to be more important. As such, they get priority when it comes to education and opportunities to develop.

In Hong Kong, the female population accounts for 55% and we currently have more female than male students. Yet in the labour market, there remains a considerable imbalance in the remuneration packages of each.

Flexibility is not very common yet. Smaller companies often don't have the means or resources to support it. Despite this, we do see growth in the number of young women who wish to continue to work, rather than pausing their careers following motherhood. For this reason, it is quite common in Hong Kong for people to hire help in the household, mostly foreign domestic workers from the Philippines or Indonesia.

## Equality and equity at BDO in Hong Kong

At BDO in Hong Kong, we are quite advanced in terms of gender equality and flexibility. 38% of partners are female, and women make up 55% of the total organisation<sup>1</sup>. Our leadership listens to the needs of employees and ensures that everyone – regardless of gender or background – can grow in the organisation. We are hired, assessed and rewarded based on our capabilities, not our gender.

To support young parents, the firm now offers paternity leave, to ensure that young fathers can support their wives after giving birth. We have also set up a lactation room for the mothers in our team.

## My advice to young talents at BDO

Be more aware of your own strengths and capabilities.

Demonstrate the added value you bring to the table. Women and men work and think differently, and to be successful, an organisation needs both.

Be open about what is important to you and what your needs are.

Never stop being curious and continue to learn.

If you experience (gender) inequality or discrimination, stay calm and have the courage to discuss it with your manager.

Finally, a healthy work-life balance will help you to stay focused.



Sala at Pat Sin Leng Country Park

<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong (including Macau), year ended 30 September 2022.

# INTERVIEW

## Who is Christy King?



"It has taken me a while to really figure that out" Christy starts, "but I am by no means done. I believe it will continue to be a journey for me, as a true advocate of life-long learning."

I joined BDO over 20 years ago as a web designer. Somewhere along the way I discovered what I am most passionate about – coaching and helping people grow – and was fortunate to have opportunities that helped me transition from building the first e-learning programmes to my current role of People & Culture Senior Director responsible for the National Leadership Development function.

While I cannot imagine ever retiring, when I do I hope to continue doing what I'm most passionate about. Continuing to move, be involved and engaged is what I hope will help me live a long and happy life."

**People & Culture Senior Director,  
National Leadership Development  
BDO IN USA**

## The importance of self-awareness

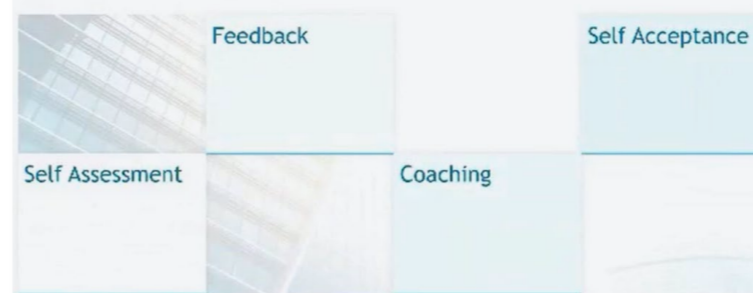
Starting as a web designer, I was quite introverted. I wasn't interested in building relationships or working my way up the ladder, but I was good at my job and got recognised for the quality of my work.

As a result, I was asked to transition into e-learning. I was eventually promoted to become a manager, even though I had never envisioned myself as a leader of people. But here I was, expected to develop others, build relationships and think strategically. I got a real wake-up call when one of my team members was brave enough to give me some very direct feedback about the impact I was having on my team and others.

At first, I tried to navigate their feedback on my own. Unfortunately, like so many others, I didn't have a mentor or coach, or even someone who had done the job before me to shadow. I had to be self-reliant. It wasn't until I looked inward that I realised I was trying to be what I thought people would want me to be, and that never works. By doing various self-assessments and getting 1:1 professional coaching, I became aware that the only thing I have control over is my own choices. I was the one who needed to choose to show up more authentically, to improve my relationships, get more buy-in on my ideas, and positively influence others.

I got a lot of valuable feedback that I listened too. That is key: you must actually listen to what people say and do something with it. Through coaching, I learned to embrace my introversion as simply the way that I recharge, not as a problem or something that I needed to fix. Self-acceptance was key.

### THE JOURNEY



I became very self-aware and subsequently connected to what drives me and what I am most passionate about. I started showing up as my authentic self, which worked because my relationships suddenly felt easier, I was obtaining buy-in to my ideas, and I was being asked more for my opinions and expertise. That gave me the confidence to take up more leadership responsibilities and challenges, and eventually to ask my leadership team to allow me to establish the leadership development function.

The key takeaway is the importance of self-acceptance and self-awareness – to understand what drives you and how your presence impacts others.

## Equity in leadership

Equity is something different to everyone, depending on what you need in life and in your career. Every person deserves to be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and express what they need to succeed.

Where in the past we have perhaps not always been overt in our conversations around equity, it is very much woven through our leadership curriculum.

At key milestones in the career progression of our leaders, we intentionally offer learning programmes on how to avoid unconscious bias. We are in regular communication with our colleagues from the DE&I function to make sure it's addressed in everything we do, from coaching to giving feedback and other key leadership skills.

In my experience, women sometimes still seem to need a bit more coaching and encouragement to speak up, share their ideas and truly believe they deserve to be where they

are. Quite recently, we have piloted a programme around courageous leadership, which resonates with both men and women. It addresses the concepts of being vulnerable, of being brave and of being more self-aware.

As a leader, I encourage all voices to be heard. I don't typically lead from the front. I prefer to allow others to speak first. Listening with curiosity is very important to me. I know I don't have all the answers and allowing all voices to be heard makes our solutions that much better.

Many of us are familiar with the saying 'treat others the way you want to be treated.' Some call it the golden rule. I recently heard about the platinum rule 'treat others the way they want to be treated.' Isn't that what equity is all about?

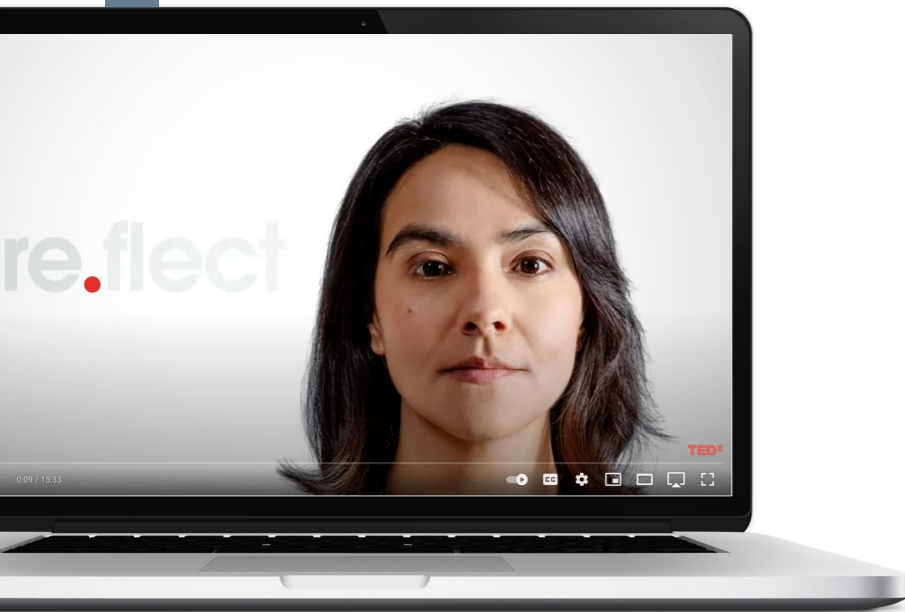
## My advice to young talents at BDO

My advice is to be curious. People sometimes hesitate to ask questions, as they don't want to come across as not knowing how to do their job. When you lean in and listen with curiosity you gain information that can only serve to help you influence people with your ideas and provide better or different solutions.

Avoid self-imposed pressure and stress. Imposter syndrome is not uncommon among female professionals. Ask yourself where that pressure is coming from. Do you really need to do everything you are doing?

Finally, it's flexibility. Take advantage of the flexibility that is available to you and advocate for what you need to have better wellbeing and balance in your life. The amount of flexibility BDO in the USA offers really helps our professionals navigate work + life fit. As a working mother myself, I have a great sense of responsibility to my kids as well as my career. While I still feel guilty when I have to travel for work or arrive home late from an important meeting, someone once told me 'they won't remember those few times you had to go on a business trip, but they will remember the role model you were'. After all, don't we want our children to grow up and show passion for both their personal and professional lives? Why wouldn't we want to model that behaviour for them?

# RESOURCES



## 01

### TEDx by Paloma Medina

Lets stop talking about diversity and start working towards equity

Paloma Medina challenges our paradigm of diversity in the work place and in society with this eloquent, humorous talk. We need to do a “find and replace” in our vocabulary challenging the concept of diversity vs. equity.

#### WHO IS PALOMA MEDINA

Paloma Medina is a scientist and artist based in Santa Cruz, CA. Paloma holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Scripps College and is currently a Ph.D. student in Biomolecular Engineering at UC Santa Cruz. Paloma is interested in evolutionary genomics, bioinformatics, and creative mediums to explore sex and gender diversity in nature.

[VISIT HER BLOG](#)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## 02

### Courses for Embracing Equity

Skillsoft

The growth and success of a business depends upon embracing inclusion and eliminating bias and discrimination in the workplace.

Skillsoft offers more than 27 courses, 15 books and 30 audio-books on driving diversity, equity and inclusion.



## 03

### McKinsey & LeanIn.org Report

Women in the workplace 2022

Now in it's eighth year, the McKinsey 'Women in the workplace' report (conducted in partnership with LeanIn.org) presents the largest study of women in corporate America on the topic of intersectional biases and barriers.

The report reveals that women are demanding more from work, and they're leaving their companies in unprecedented numbers to get it. Female leaders are switching jobs at the highest rates ever seen, with serious implications for companies who fail to make meaningful and sustainable progress toward gender equality.

## 04

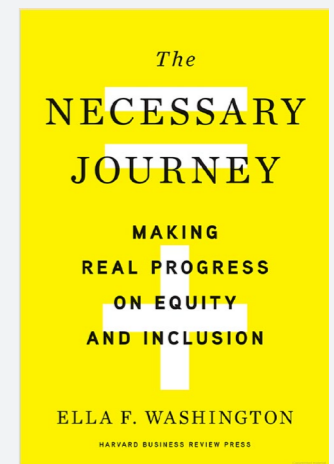
### Harvard Business Review: webinar

Making real progress on equity and inclusion

“What does a workplace utopia look like to you?” This is the question Ella F. Washington of Georgetown University asks company leaders, and often she hears about an ideal vision of an organisation that values diversity and inclusion and wants employees to bring their whole selves to work.

[WEBINAR](#)

[READ MORE](#)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

When I joined BDO in Belgium 14 years ago, I quickly realised that BDO is an organisation like no other, where 'a unique culture' is not just words on paper, but something you experience. To me, it was demonstrated in the real, unvarnished personality of the firm, the 'vibe' I got when I walked in: human and diverse, with values I could relate to and with motivated colleagues who will go above and beyond, for each other and for our clients.

From day 1, I felt supported and trusted by leadership. They allowed – and positively encouraged me – to grow, to develop my full potential, and to 'dare' to step outside my comfort zone. Consequently, there have been many occasions where I have had to remind myself, 'You can do this!'

Being allowed to be my authentic self, knowing there is always a sparring partner around, and experiencing that strong sense of meaning and belonging, I was able to grow and become the best version of myself. It's easy to think that 'what works for me, must surely work for everyone else,' but that isn't the case. Each person is unique and has different needs, in different moments of their journey.

Around three years ago, I moved to my current role at BDO's Global Office. Whilst creating the first edition of our IWD report in 2020, I discovered that (as a global organisation) we had an almost equal number of male and female employees, but only 19% female partners. This came as quite a surprise!

Since then, over the past 3 years, our annual IWD reports have sought to explore the challenges of DE&I, spotlighting BDO women internationally and showcasing strong in-firm initiatives to inspire change. Yet there is still more work to do. In 2023, our statistics show that 22% of our partners worldwide are female – demonstrating year-on-year growth of 1%.



DIRECTOR, GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS  
GLOBAL OFFICE


*THERE IS A  
SOLUTION  
FOR EVERY  
CHALLENGE*



This year's central theme #EmbraceEquity is the key to driving change. To succeed, we need to understand the roots causes of our DE&I challenges and address them differently.

I'll close with a quote from my father: 'there is a solution for every challenge.'

Change cannot happen overnight, but creating awareness and embracing equity is a necessary first step. We each have a personal responsibility to play our part. It is something we can and must accomplish together.



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