

WOMEN IN BUSINESS - SMART RECRUITMENT SLIM THE SEX GAP

Thirty years on from the Sex Discrimination Act the Equal Opportunities Commission reports that women are only 11 per cent of Directors at FTSE 100 companies, 20 per cent of MPs (with only two ethnic minority women) and 16 per cent of local authority council leaders. The pace of change remains painfully slow. *

However, on the shores of the south coast, one proactive and forward thinking company has over half its management team as women.

Helen Stacey, Director of forward thinking Smart Recruitment comments, "In Britain today, women now make up almost half the workforce, and this percentage is set to grow. In the South West unemployment is at 1.7%, and generally unemployment throughout 2005 was the lowest in the UK for the last 30 years. This trend calls on employers to be flexible and accommodate the needs of the work force accordingly. Since most of the parents that look after children at home are Mums, employers are being forced to offer flexible packages to accommodate women in business."

Smart Recruitment itself offers a case in point. One third of the Directorship at Smart Recruitment is female and over two thirds of the management team are also female. Moreover, some of the female managers are looking after traditionally male roles, such as Amanda Gunn who manages Smart Construction, the construction division of Smart Recruitment.

Helen continues, "Research shows that an increasing amount of women are entering the engineering and construction industry. With increasing evidence of skills shortages, male dominated barriers are being broken down and employers need to be more flexible. We have members of staff who work part time; one works 4 days a week and others work from home. When good candidates are in short supply it is imperative to be flexible to ensure you appoint the best staff for the job whatever their personal situation or gender. We do have situations where we have placed women in traditional 'male' roles and vice versa. For example we have had a male PA nominated for our PA Awards by his female boss for the past two years. Similarly we placed a female CNC Operator with a company locally too. It works both ways but the very fact that we still refer to roles with traditional gender bias means there is a lot of work to be done in the business world.

Helen concludes, "Women working in Dorset are officially being paid less than men whom, on average, earn £11.27 an hour compared to just £9.64 for women.** However, with companies having to be more flexible due to factors such as woman making up nearly half the workforce, skills shortages and an all time low unemployment rate in the South West, we hope this region will lead by example and continue to narrow the gender gap by recruiting even more women in business."

Smart Group Recruitment Solutions service a catchment area which encompasses all corners of Dorset. The company has a network of five branches, four in Dorset and one in Yeovil, and currently employs more than 50 staff.

The Smart service is broad covering a diverse range of products, services and industries. Candidates and clients benefit from the company's branch network which is technology driven through the Smart database; this links to every desk in every branch, providing instant access for candidate skill matching, availability and positions available.

For further information on any of the services provided by Smart Recruitment call 01202 629000 or visit www.smartgroup.co.uk to find your local branch in Poole, Bournemouth, Dorchester, Christchurch or Yeovil.

~ENDS~

*Source – EOC website.

** Source – Office on National Statistics



Caption: - Women in Business at Smart Recruitment.

Back Row from L to R;

Amanda Handy, Debbie Francis, Tina Flooks

Front Row from L to R;

Rachel House, Amanda Gunn, Helen Stacey.

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