

BOARD OF NO PIPELINE?

Let's look at the stats: in 2016, women held just 4 per cent of chief executive roles and 11 per cent of chief financial officer roles globally. In the UK alone, women made up 29 per cent of hires to UK boards last year—a 2.6% drop from 2015.

Not only has executive level recruitment of women slowed, it's actually going backwards.



The [Global Board Diversity Analysis Report](#) does not make for light reading, nor optimistic at that. But while it's easy to blame a decrease in momentum of those seeking to hire, Juggle believes there is something much more

worrying at play—a lack of visible talent in the pipeline. To be clear, that is not to say the talent is not there, simply that those looking, are doing so in the wrong place.

Women who have taken a career break and wish to return at board-level are being stifled or blocked at every turn. Whether it's a lack of opportunity, inadequate work / life balance or low confidence, [research](#) shows that women are disappearing at an unprecedented rate into lower-paid jobs for which they are drastically over-qualified. This grossly underrepresented group are the structure, support and flow, of a senior management pipeline that should be readily feeding into businesses. But where cracks once appeared, there are now gaping holes; the female executive-level workforce is effectively being leaked in all directions but the right one.

So what now? The founders of 'She's Back' have penned an excellent advisory [piece](#) on hiring women and offer practical tips on how businesses can address the problem. Notably, one of the crucial points of their strategy is not only to ditch the fear, but to actively embrace flexible working. Juggle agrees, however concrete flexible working opportunities must be provided, not simply smoke-and-mirror-promises offered by companies during recruitment, that turns out to be anything but, once the employee has started. [Evidence](#) is overwhelming—most people want to work flexibly. And it's been proved time and again that the concept is more than such; it is a ground-breakingly effective way of working that reaps numerous benefits for businesses, from [increasing gender parity to improving employee engagement](#). This in turn leads to boosts in profit; win-win.

As the 'She's Back' founders say, businesses need to be guided in the search for these skilled professionals. However the process is binary; in addition to a targeted hiring drive, there needs to be an actual pipeline. With flexible

working identified as a [key component](#) for retaining women in the labour pool, employers, recruiters and job-seekers alike need to jump on the bandwagon sooner rather than later. Doing so will speed-up the market shift away from the standard 9 to 5 and ensure that women who are returning post-career break are visible *and* accessible. When they are able to go back in at executive level with minimal effort, the pipeline will go from being a vital (wo)man-made conveyor belt to integrated revolving doors.

Unfortunately, while some businesses have embraced the change, many remain dragging their feet and a lot of ground work still needs to be done. Like 'She's Back', the Fawcett Society and many others, Juggle are pushing to not only reshape the dialogue around pipelines and flexible working, but actively create the changes they want to see happen. If you too, want to be part of the movement visit www.juggle.jobs for more information or email romanie@jugglejobs.co.uk