



**WOMEN IN WHOLESALE**  
INSPIRE • SUPPORT • PROGRESS

**WiW Report 2017**

Six Steps to Nurture, Grow and  
Advance Talent in Wholesale



“

*I am proud to be part of an initiative that supports and develops the next generation of female leaders within our business.”*

*- Julie Tidy, General Manager, Bidfood*

# Women in Wholesale

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## INTRODUCTION TO WHOLESALERS

# There is a need for more women in senior leadership positions and WiW plays a vital role in empowering women through educational networking events.

### FEDERATION OF WHOLESALERS DISTRIBUTORS

The Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD) is the member organisation for UK wholesalers operating in the grocery and foodservice markets.

Wholesale distribution is a thriving sector to work in. Our members generate £2.9bn gross added value to the UK economy each year, which is more than any supermarket, other than Tesco.

It is the FWD's role to protect and promote our members' interests and support the healthy and vibrant growth of our sector. Almost half of employees in wholesale are women but there is a need for more women in senior leadership positions. For the first time in our industry, WiW is playing a vital role in empowering women through its programme of events.

Encouraging diversity is crucial in delivering gender parity, which is why the FWD offers bursaries for learning and development on the basis of match-funding by the employer or individual, with a maximum award of up to £2,500. Apply here: [bursary@fwd-uk.com](mailto:bursary@fwd-uk.com)

Through our members, we are encouraging women in wholesale to take advantage of this opportunity to invest in their talent and to build a successful and rewarding career in our sector.

We are delighted to be working with WiW to promote the industry to a greater diversity of talent and to make UK wholesale an attractive, long-term career choice.



*James Bielby, Chief Executive Officer, FWD*



*Nina Grosicka, In-House Nutritionist and Group Accounts Acquisition Manager at JJ Food Service being awarded an FWD Wholesale Skills & Development Award.*

# INTRODUCTION TO WiW REPORT

**WELCOME TO THE WOMEN IN WHOLESALE (WiW) REPORT, WHICH HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN THE WHOLESALE CHANNEL, REGARDLESS OF RANK.**



## WHY DO WOMEN MATTER?

I've been on the 'wholesale circuit' for a few years now and believe passionately that educational and networking events are essential to positive career and personal development. Yet people often ask me whether the impact of such events can ever be quantified? The answer is yes, absolutely, if my experience is anything to go by.

I set up my own business in 2014 and last year launched the first WiW conference. I have raised support all on the back of networking at wholesale events. Most events in our sector are male-dominated, so I saw the need to create a network specifically for women.

Can you believe that females account for 47% of jobs in our sector, but occupy just 11% of senior level management roles? This compares with the government target of 33% for FTSE 350 companies by 2020.

Wholesale remains behind the curve, despite better gender diversity at a senior level being shown to boost net margin by up to 6%. The result of supporting females through the talent pipeline

\*Research from EY

doesn't just benefit individuals – it's great for business too.

That's a huge opportunity for us to promote, progress and support development.

## WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE

At our inaugural conference last year, 100% of delegates voted for an actionable resource to take away. WiW has responded by producing this six step guide so employers and individuals can, not only consider the importance of gender parity in their organisation, but also feel armed with the right tools to move forward.

As well as being packed with top tips and resources, each chapter is powered by exclusive data from our friends at research consultancy HIM.

I hope this report inspires your business and helps you set goals to satisfy your personal aspirations, too.



**Elit Rowland**, Founder and Organiser, WiW

Email: [elitrowland@newerapr.co.uk](mailto:elitrowland@newerapr.co.uk)



***Men and women think differently and it's beneficial to have a mix in order to achieve a balanced view. The dynamic of our board has certainly changed since I became managing director, very much for the positive.***

- Coral Rose, Managing Director, Country Range Group



## WOMEN IN WHOLESALE AT A GLANCE

Women account for **47%**<sup>1</sup> of people working in wholesale but only **11%**<sup>2</sup> of senior level managers and directors are women.

When you count manufacturers operating in wholesale, this increases to **20%**<sup>3</sup>.

## EXCLUSIVE **him** RESEARCH

WiW's official research partner HIM reveals exclusive channel-specific insight from both wholesalers and the brands operating within the sector.

- Women in your total business **35%**
- Women in senior management **20.2%**
- Women in middle management **29.5%**
- Women in non-management **50.3%**
- Women in field sales **22.9%**

<sup>1</sup> Based on research by the Federation of Wholesale Distributors

<sup>2</sup> Based on figures from 30 leading UK wholesalers

<sup>3</sup> Based on exclusive HIM women in wholesale research, February 2017

# 95%

of women believe that gender diversity leads to better business.

# 81%

believe that gender diversity is a larger issue in wholesale than in other grocery and retail industries.

# 24%

believe their companies are not doing enough to support gender parity.

## Views on gender in the workplace:

95% believe that gender diversity leads to better business



24% believe companies aren't doing enough to support gender parity



81% believe that gender diversity is a larger issue in wholesale than in other grocery and retail industries



71% said that setting quotas is not a good way to help gender parity



48% have experienced gender discrimination in the workplace



## Views on the biggest challenges women face when working in wholesale:

52% said lack of flexible working



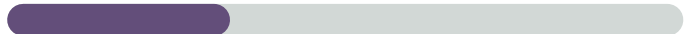
43% said lack of a defined career path



38% said lack of respect



38% said lack of opportunities



## Views on the biggest area of work that women need support with:<sup>4</sup>

51% said personal career development



34% said feeling motivated and inspired



24% said managing people



27% said understanding the market



*"This is a ground-breaking piece of research – the big outcomes for me are the opportunities for development, particularly through flexible working and more defined career paths, which were voted the greatest challenges for women. This research and report will help to lay the foundations needed to give all employees equal opportunities to develop and grow within their chosen field."*



**Blake Gladman,**  
Research and Insight  
Director, HIM

<sup>4</sup>Based on a live poll conducted at the WiW 2016 conference

# Six Steps

Our speakers identified certain areas where they have motivated, inspired and developed talent within their businesses. We've hand-picked six key themes.

## 1. ATTRACTIVE CAREER PATHS

### THE CHALLENGE:

43%<sup>3</sup> of women in wholesale said that personal career development was their biggest challenge.

### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS:

Wholesale tends to operate a culture whereby staff are promoted from within, and ground-level jobs such as order pickers and forklift drivers are not traditionally attractive to females. As a result, the talent pool can be male heavy for some businesses.

This is not helped by the fact that women are less likely to put themselves forward for promotions, despite academically outperforming men at school. A girl born in 2016 is 75% more likely to attend university than boys, according to a 2016 BBC report.

Despite thriving academically, confidence plummets in the workplace. Employers can overcome this by supporting staff to identify skills and development opportunities.

Innocent Drinks launched the 'Your Future' campaign after employees cited 'a lack of development path' as their key reason for leaving the business. The initiative involves holding regular career development discussions with individuals to provide clarity on their career path, together with identifying coaching and mentoring opportunities to arm employees with the right skills to progress.

The brand has introduced a Future Development Toolkit, which helps staff to think about what energises them. The kit includes questionnaires that address career aspirations, leadership capabilities and learning and development requirements. As a result, the initiative has helped to focus attention in the right places, drive change and increase talent retention.

### ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- Introduce opportunities to discuss career aspirations
- Build career paths with formalised goals
- Use surveys to assess career progress
- Support progression with on-the-job learning and training
- Listen to all employees – not just the ones that shout the loudest

### ADDITIONAL READING:

*The Motivational Value of Career Paths*, Forbes | *The Nine Types of Employees and How to Motivate Them*, The Guardian  
*Why do More Women than Men Go to University?*, BBC



Wholesaler viewpoint:  
Julie Tidy, General Manager,  
Bidfood

“We invest in programmes, policies and strategies to ensure that career progression is open to all. As part of this, we provide on-the-job training, mentoring and one-to-one review meetings. It's also important to recognise that not everyone seeks further career progression so we focus on assisting our people to be the best they can be in whatever role they choose.”

<sup>3</sup>Based on exclusive HIM women in wholesale research, February 2017.





## 2. FLEXIBLE WORKING OPPORTUNITIES

### THE CHALLENGE:

52% of women in wholesale said that a lack of flexible working options is holding them back from progressing<sup>3</sup>.

### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS:

We need to change the negative perception of flexible working and job shares – measuring staff on results achieved not hours put in.

91% of workers believe they get more work done when working remotely and those working flexibly are almost twice as likely to work beyond a standard 40-hour week.

Flexible working can bring higher levels of productivity, which can lead to increased output at no additional cost. It supports staff retention, reduces turnover and the cost of

re-training. It helps to attract the best talent, too. Advances in technology such as cloud-based software and Skype have made it easier than ever to work remotely.

Many of the world's best companies embrace flexible working. Last year, travel company Expedia was voted the no.1 UK company to work for. An anonymous employee review said that a 'flexible working environment' enabled them to cope 'easily' with having children and was one of the key benefits. Flexible working is a key selling point in any recruitment campaign.

### ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- Identify remote-working friendly jobs
- Map out how to measure performance
- Conduct a 'trial' period
- Review productivity and employee feedback
- Highlight flexible working as a selling point in your recruitment campaign

### ADDITIONAL READING:

*Are Remote Workers Happier and More Productive?*, Forbes | *Revealed: The Top 10 UK Companies to Work for in 2017*, The Telegraph

“Being a family-owned business, we fully understand the need to juggle work with family commitments, which is why we offer flexible and remote working options, where possible. This is working well for us in marketing, sales and customer service roles and has helped to inspire great loyalty and commitment from our employees.”



**Wholesaler viewpoint**  
Terry Larkin, Group General  
Manager, JJ Food Service

<sup>3</sup>Based on exclusive HIM women in wholesale research, February 2017.

### 3. NETWORKING AND EDUCATION

#### THE CHALLENGE:

40% of women said that WiW was their first wholesale conference. Many women are missing out on important educational and networking opportunities<sup>4</sup>.

#### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS:

Consider sending a mixture of management and aspiring (male and female) leaders to events to support career development.

85% of people who attend networking events say they help to build more meaningful business relationships. 75% say that they enjoy the social interaction and ability to bond with co-workers. Despite this, the average wholesale conference has an average of just 5-10% female representation.

One organisation that is helping to address this imbalance is the [LEAD Network](#) (Leading Executives Advancing Diversity) whose mission is to attract, retain and advance women in the retail and consumer goods industry in Europe. The LEAD UK Chapter regularly run free seminars and networking events.

Education is also an area in which our sector needs to develop – 28%<sup>4</sup> of women in wholesale said a lack of investment in this area is one of their biggest challenges.

To support this, the FWD last year announced a training bursary specifically for women in wholesale. A goal is now in place for 50% of training bursaries to be given to females by 2018.

For more information visit [www.fwd.co.uk](http://www.fwd.co.uk)



#### ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES:

- Identify key educational and networking events (go to page 15)
- Build a case on why your employer should invest in sending you
- Show the value of attending by reporting back on outcomes
- Sign up to FREE networking organisations such as LEAD

#### ADDITIONAL READING:

[I Owe Every Job I've Had to Networking](#), Fortune | [The Importance of Networking \(And How to Do It Well\)](#), The Huffington Post



**Wholesaler viewpoint:**  
Simon Hannah, Managing Director, JW Filshill and Craft Beer Clan of Scotland

“Any environment that creates a platform for like-minded individuals to talk openly and share experiences is going to be positive. Not all networking is about sales or leads. For me, it’s about positioning and deep relationship building. It is also about having fun with people who I have lots in common with. Networking has benefited me and my business immensely.”

<sup>4</sup>Based on a live poll conducted at the WiW 2016 conference

## 4. CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

### THE CHALLENGE:

34% of women in wholesale said they need support to feel motivated and inspired at work<sup>4</sup>.

### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS:

The beliefs and behaviours that determine how a company's employees and management interact are known as its 'corporate culture'.

Company culture has shown to play an important role in shaping employee motivation and performance. A strong organisational culture – which embraces gender diversity and inclusion – is critical to success.

Not every business clearly defines its culture. Instead, it's something that develops over time from the cumulative traits of the people that the company employs.

Google prides itself on an open culture in which everyone is a hands-on contributor and feels comfortable sharing ideas and opinions during weekly meetings with execs. Microsoft actively seeks diversity and inclusion to develop 'better ideas, better products and happier customers' in its culture statement.

Whatever form it takes, corporate culture is believed to play a big role in how well businesses perform with a positive culture dramatically boosting performance.



### ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- Use employee workshops to build a vision and aspirations
- Define a clear route and dedicate resource to achieving that vision
- Display your mission statement clearly for all employees to see
- Recruit new staff with personal values aligned to the company

### SOURCES AND USEFUL READING:

[Ten Examples of Companies With Fantastic Cultures, Entrepreneur](#) | [The Relationship Between Corporate Culture and Performance, The Wall Street Journal](#) | [Six Components of a Great Corporate Culture, Harvard Business Review](#) | [Culture: Why It's The Hottest Topic in Business Today, Forbes](#)



**Wholesaler viewpoint:**  
Caroline McMenemie, HR  
Director, Bestway

“You can teach and develop skills but you can't teach values. They are already part of our DNA. Bringing new talent into a strong, culturally combined team, particularly if their core beliefs or background is different, can be very difficult. We are focusing on re-developing our core values to be more inclusive, making our business more forward-thinking and an attractive, long-term career choice for employees.”

<sup>4</sup>Based on a live poll conducted at the WiW 2016 conference

## 5. FINDING A SPONSOR OR MENTOR

### THE CHALLENGE:

Mentoring initiatives have been shown to have a positive impact on developing careers and contributing to business success. At the WiW 2016 conference, delegates said that they would benefit from a channel-specific mentoring scheme in England. Until now, there hasn't been one available.

### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES:

Take advantage of existing initiatives such as the Scottish Wholesale Association's (SWA) programme (if you're north of the border) or join the new WiW Mentoring Scheme.

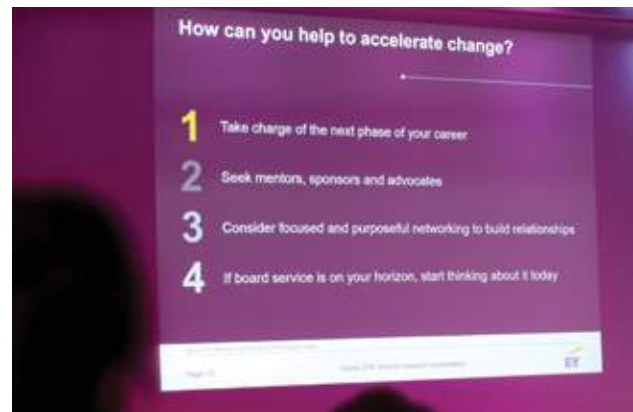
93% of SMEs acknowledge that mentoring programmes can help staff to succeed but only 28% of them make use of business mentors. 61% of women see lack of mentoring as a barrier to career development.

In wholesale, we know that mentoring works. The SWA's [Mentoring Scheme](#) has been hugely successful and helps aspiring talent, male and female, to work with the most successful people in the industry.

Forward-thinking wholesalers also have developed their own internal mentoring schemes, such as Costco, which

has its 'Journeys' initiative. Costco Marketing Director Sue Knowles also stresses the value of identifying an informal sponsor in business, rather than a mentor, to make you visible to leaders and connect you with career opportunities.

Following requests for a channel-specific mentoring scheme in England, we are currently looking into an official WiW initiative. If you would like to join the scheme as a mentor or mentee, please register [here](#) or visit: [www.newerapr.co.uk/women-in-wholesale](http://www.newerapr.co.uk/women-in-wholesale)



## ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES:

- Consider the value of internal mentoring
- Promote diversity within the 'mentor pool' – they can be men as well as women
- Encourage the use of free, external mentoring schemes like WiW and SWA
- [Register your interest](#) to be a WiW mentor or mentee now!

### ADDITIONAL READING:

[How to Find a Sponsor Instead of a Mentor](#), Forbes | [A Guide to Setting Up a Peer Mentoring Programme](#), Nesta  
[The Men Who Mentor Women](#), Harvard Business Review | [A Guide to Mentoring](#), Sage



Supplier viewpoint:  
 Clare Bocking, Director,  
 Immediate Impact

"I have been a coach and mentor (officially and unofficially) to many women in wholesale. The one piece of advice I always stick to is that we have the gift of choice. We can choose how we feel every day; embracing challenges as opportunities and celebrating progress not perfection!"

## 6. MEASURING PROGRESS

### THE CHALLENGE:

Only 52% of companies measure progress on improving gender diversity in leadership teams, according to research from global accountancy firm Ernst Young.

### A SOLUTION FOR EMPLOYERS:

Would mandatory quotas in wholesale advance the progress of diversity in senior level management? A resounding 71% of WiW said no<sup>3</sup> asserting that finding the right person for the job, regardless of gender, matters more.

*One anonymous interviewee said:*

“Quotas can cause resentment in the total workforce as it imposes and encourages positive discrimination. Importantly, it does not guarantee the best person for the job, and potentially sets the chosen candidate up to fail – both of which could create an adverse commercial performance for an organisation.”

Whether you want to see a better gender mix at the top or provide better training, support and opportunities for employees (or for yourself), it's crucial to have a starting point and set realistic, achievable goals. Keep a record of your pipeline – how many women come in at entry level and how many are progressing? Where are they dropping out and why? What gets measured gets managed.



### ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- Consider the Six Steps and set goals for development
- Map out how to achieve those goals and allocate the resources required
- Inform relevant employees so everyone has one vision
- Monitor progress and what 'good' looks like
- Shout achievements from the rooftops!



**Supplier viewpoint:**  
Lisa-Jayne Hanson, Director  
of Wholesale, Sales Out

“The UK wholesale sector is a diverse landscape where entrepreneurial skill and diversity have created a market that delivers way beyond any supermarket. The WiW conference provides an invaluable opportunity to meet a wide range of people and make networks in a relationship-driven market, sharing best practice, mentorship and sometimes great reality checks.”

<sup>3</sup> Based on exclusive HIM women in wholesale research, February 2017.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

How can we attract and develop female talent in wholesale?

*Exclusive insight provided by WiW's official research partner HIM.*

“We need to take gender off the table as a point of debate. However, until we have an environment that allows equal opportunities regardless of gender (and race for that matter) we won't be able to do that. So the target is to achieve this first and foremost and let the rest fall into place naturally.”

“We need a mentoring programme, to demonstrate career paths and to showcase more successful women.”

“Gender diversity is relatively good on the supplier side. The issue is within wholesale work forces. Research has shown that people frequently recruit and promote people who they believe are similar to them, which means middle-aged men can be more comfortable recruiting or promoting middle-aged men.”

“We need flexible working at senior levels. This seems to be easier to accommodate at a junior level, but harder in senior and field-based roles.”

“Wholesale needs to become less of an old boys club and more inclusive of women in, and outside of, the office. More women from all hierarchies should attend networking events and be encouraged to integrate.”



## ONE-PAGE PLAN: CHECKLIST

- 01 **Create attractive career paths**  
Does your business offer career progression – what does this look like? If you're an employee, have you discussed your career aspirations with your line manager?  
Completed

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- 02 **Introduce flexible working opportunities**  
The best UK workplaces are adapting to flexible and remote working – is this something you can offer and promote? If you're an employee, have you asked for it?  
Completed

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- 03 **Invest in networking and education**  
Are you sending a good mix of male and female managers and aspiring talent to key networking events? If you want to attend more – have you put yourself forward?  
Completed

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- 04 **Foster an attractive corporate culture**  
Company culture is more important than ever before – how are you making your business an attractive place to work internally, as well as do business externally?  
Completed

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- 05 **Support mentoring – internally and externally**  
The benefits of mentoring schemes are undisputed in the business world yet many are still underused. Which initiatives could you or your employees get involved in?  
Completed

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- 06 **Have goals and measure everything**  
Even if you take one thing away from this report, set realistic goals and have a clear vision – whether acting as a business or an individual.  
Completed

## 2017 EVENTS CALENDAR

- **MAY 11TH** | HIM CTP Awards, London | [www.him.uk.com](http://www.him.uk.com)

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- **JUNE 9-11TH** | Scottish Wholesale Association Conference, Perthshire  
[www.scottishwholesale.co.uk/events](http://www.scottishwholesale.co.uk/events)

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- **JUNE 29TH** | FWD Annual Conference & HIM Awards, Burton-on-Trent | [www.fwd.co.uk](http://www.fwd.co.uk)

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- **JULY 6TH** | HIM Wholesale Unveil, London | [www.him.uk.com](http://www.him.uk.com)

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- **JULY 13TH** | Better Wholesaling Summit, Birmingham | [www.betterwholesaling.com](http://www.betterwholesaling.com)

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- **SEPTEMBER 5TH** | LEAD UK Networking Event, London | [www.lead-eu.net](http://www.lead-eu.net)

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- **SEPTEMBER 6TH** | IGD Wholesaling Conference, London | [www.igd.com](http://www.igd.com)

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- **OCTOBER 19TH** | WiW conference, London | [www.newerapr.co.uk/women-in-wholesale](http://www.newerapr.co.uk/women-in-wholesale)

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- **NOVEMBER 30TH** | FWD Gold Medal Awards, London | [www.fwd.co.uk](http://www.fwd.co.uk)

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- **DECEMBER 5TH** | LEAD UK Networking Event, London | [www.lead-eu.net](http://www.lead-eu.net)

## GET YOUR TICKETS FOR THE WiW CONFERENCE 2017



The WiW conference is an educational and networking event for women of all levels working in wholesale as well as male managers and middle managers.

**Date:**  
Thursday 19th October

**Time & Venue:**  
9:30am-4pm  
The British Library, London, NW1 2DB

Full day conference and networking  
Lunch and refreshments provided

Tickets will be available from  
April 2017

**Cost:**  
Wholesalers: £100 +VAT  
Manufacturers: £130 +VAT

**Register online:**  
[www.newerapr.co.uk/womeninwholesale](http://www.newerapr.co.uk/womeninwholesale)

**Contact:**  
Email: [elitrowland@newerapr.co.uk](mailto:elitrowland@newerapr.co.uk)  
Tel: 07956 030 804



**WOMEN IN WHOLESale**

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Thank you to Coral Rose, Clare Bocking and Ellie Krupa, and all our sponsors and supporters, for your help and input in producing this report – *Elit Rowland*.