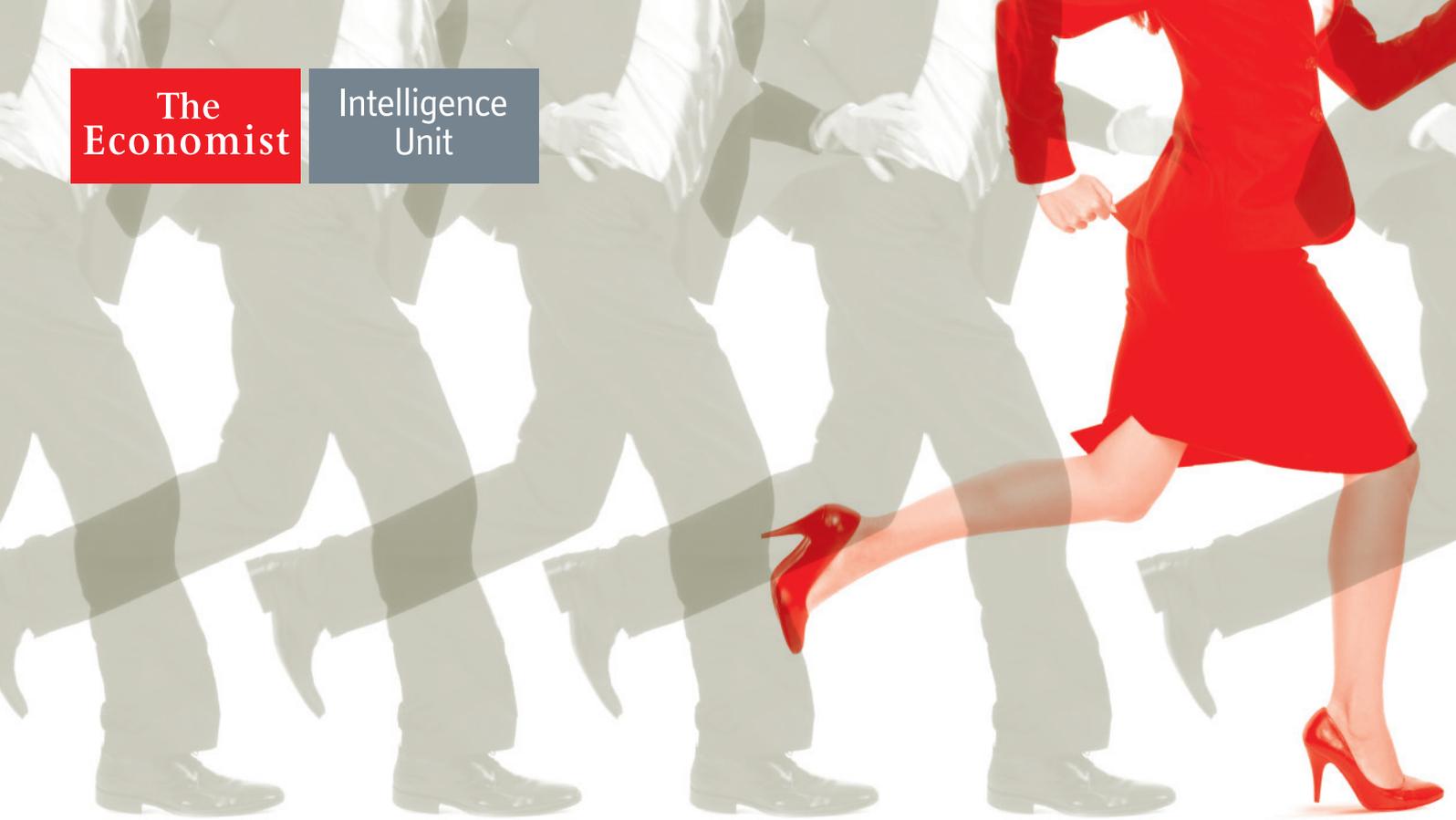


The  
Economist

Intelligence  
Unit



# Work to do

## Women in male-dominated industries in Hong Kong

A report from The Economist Intelligence Unit

Sponsored by



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# Preface

*Work to do: Women in male-dominated industries in Hong Kong* is an Economist Intelligence Unit report commissioned by The Women's Foundation. It examines women's representation in four industry sectors: logistics and transport, luxury, technology, and trading and hedge funds. The report draws upon data gathered separately by The Economist Intelligence Unit and The Women's Foundation, interviews

conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit and panel discussions organised by The Women's Foundation and Bloomberg.

The Economist Intelligence Unit is solely responsible for the content of the report, which may not necessarily reflect the views of The Women's Foundation.

February 2014

# Introduction

The changing status of women in society is an issue that is gaining increasing attention. At one end of the spectrum, development organisations have concluded that educating women and providing them with access to jobs and finance are critical steps in alleviating poverty. At the other end, research has shown that companies with a higher representation of women on the board achieve superior financial returns.

Many industries and organisations are now focusing on how to attract and retain women and help them rise to senior management. There are various motivations for doing so, which depend on the industry in question. In financial trading, for example, studies have shown that female traders produce superior returns to men over the longer term. In the wake of the recent financial crisis, there is also an urgent need to bring different approaches and perspectives to the trading floor. In technology, there are numerous motivations, not least of which is the growing shortage of talent. Many industries, meanwhile, are recognising the increasing economic power of women and realising that they cannot benefit from it, in part because women are not well represented in the management ranks within these industries and hence in a position to influence areas such as product design and distribution strategy.

In the Western world, associations have been formed at the industry level to look specifically at the status of women and to discuss measures to improve their numbers at senior management level. Individual companies in many industries have introduced diversity programmes of varying degrees of sophistication.

In Hong Kong, this movement is nascent but spreading, often led by multinational subsidiaries that are adapting their programmes from elsewhere to their operations in the territory. This report examines the status of women in four traditionally male-dominated sectors that are important to the Hong Kong economy: logistics and transport, luxury, technology, and trading and hedge funds. Where possible, it looks at Hong Kong in a global context. It reports the perspectives of women in these industries with a view to illustrating the realities of working in them. Finally, the report looks at what companies are doing to attract and retain women in these sectors, and the prognosis for their participation in future.

In some of the sectors covered, the issue is not so much a matter of attracting women, but of retaining them and encouraging them to move up the ranks. This is particularly true in the cases of luxury and logistics, where data on the number

of women at various levels of the industries resembles a pyramid—many women are attracted to these sectors but for various reasons to do with workplace culture and work-life balance do not rise up the ranks. In other industries, notably trading and hedge funds, transport and technology, the issue is still one of attracting women in the first place. Here, in addition to making the workplace more woman-friendly, there is work to be done to educate women on the opportunities available and to hold up role models to show them the way.

The trends noted across these sectors include:

- Companies, notably in technology, are focusing on the crucial issue of how to support women through the child-bearing years, introducing such measures as flexible working locations and times and extended maternity leave.
- Those companies with well-formulated diversity programmes realise that in order to help women they need men to support change. They must help men to understand why it is important to attract and retain more women and how they plan to go about doing so. To avoid accusations of unfairness, companies also find it helpful to make policies such as flexible working hours and locations open to both sexes.
- The issue of specific targets for the hiring and promotion of women is controversial but some companies, notably in luxury and logistics, are convinced these are necessary to ensure progress.
- One unresolved issue is how women can network in these male-dominated industries, where important relationships are often formed through male-centric activities such as after-work drinking sessions and golf games. A few companies are trying to create internal opportunities for women to network in an environment in which they feel more comfortable.
- Mentorship programmes and senior sponsorship are viewed as critical to the advancement of women through middle management into leadership positions. Self-promotion and assertiveness do not come naturally to many women in the corporate setting, particularly Asian women, but are skills that can be improved through effective mentoring relationships.

## 1

## Logistics and transport

*Women's representation in logistics and transport in Hong Kong appears low by global standards, notably at the senior management level. The problem is most acute in transport.*

### The need

There are several motivations for increasing women's role in the logistics and transport sector. There is a growing recognition in the industry that diversity at senior management level and in the boardroom is good for business. There is a belief that women have greater aptitude in key skill areas required in the industry today, such as process improvement, organisation and planning, and communication. Then there is the supply and demand forecast for employment in the industry. According to the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in Hong Kong (CILTHK), there will be an additional 24,500 jobs in the sector in the territory by 2018. It notes in a position paper that the combination of an aging population, the growing number of jobs and the rate at which people leave the industry "manpower shortages are likely to become increasingly acute in the sector". It says that this situation could be exacerbated by logistics companies tapping Hong Kong's skills pool to help build businesses on the mainland. While the CILTHK paper does not state as much, attracting more women to the sector is an obvious solution to at least part of the anticipated manpower shortage.

### The numbers

Women account for just 22% of those employed in the logistics and transport sector (the official government definition includes transport,

storage, postal and courier services, information and communications). This figure appears to be low by Western benchmarks, although direct comparisons are difficult due to the different definitions used for the sector by various associations. In Canada, the figure for women's share of employment in supply chain industries is 39% and in Australia it is 24%. An inaugural survey by the Women in Logistics and Transport (WiLAT) Hong Kong chapter conducted in 2013 showed that while women's representation in logistics and transport overall was a low 7%, in the logistics sector alone the figure was a much higher 37%. But the survey sample was small and WiLAT itself suspects that the numbers may be somewhat optimistic based on the reluctance of the industry to respond to the survey, suggesting that only companies with a more positive track record replied.

Corporate survey data aside, it is clear that women are not well represented in the senior ranks of the industry. They hold only 9% of senior

### On dealing with sexism, crude jokes

"It's learning what's important and what's not. That goes for men and women when you are progressing in your career. You choose where you want to engage. You only have a limited amount of energy and there are only 24 hours in a day. What should rise to the top of your engagement list? Try to tick off those things first before you get sidetracked by something that maybe could hurt your feelings. You just say hey, it's about them, not me. Just keep moving forward. Sometimes you just have to agree to disagree and move forward. That has served me so well for many, many years."

—**Kersti Krepp**, vice-president, sales and marketing, Asia Pacific, Polar Air Cargo

management positions at listed Hong Kong logistics and transport companies, only 13% of board directorships and only 12% of executive positions on the various industry bodies.

Taking university enrolments as an indicator, there is increasing interest in the sector among young women in Hong Kong. At Hong Kong Polytechnic University, which accounts for 30% of all students studying in logistics and transport-related courses accredited by the CILTHK, women outnumber men in eight of the 15 degree-related programmes. The gender gap in enrolment is pronounced only in engineering and MSc courses. Overall, women accounted for 48% of the students in related disciplines at the university.

### On glass ceilings

“Working women in Hong Kong are likely to be confronted by the glass ceiling. We don’t break through this by complaining but by taking action.”

—**Anna Thompson**, general manager, air crew, Cathay Pacific

### Key issues

The main issues contributing to women’s low representation in logistics and transport are the perceptions that it is not a very feminine industry

and that it is one dominated by men. The latter is an indisputable fact, particularly at the top levels of the industry, based on the data we have collected. In a survey of women in the industry conducted by The Women’s Foundation, half of the respondents agreed that the perception of the industry as unglamorous makes it unattractive to women, although data suggest that more women are entering the industry. Half the survey respondents agreed that the dominance of men in the industry made it difficult for women to advance, but nearly one-quarter of respondents disagreed with this point. Rather, 86% agreed that the advance of technology in the industry has made it easier for women to take on previously male-dominated roles, and 52% agreed that a lack of policies to support women mid-career, when they are trying to juggle family and career, was a huge challenge for women.

“Hong Kong is a little behind the times when it comes to the provision of maternity leave and flexible working hours – especially when compared to many European countries,” notes Anna Thompson, general manager, air crew, Cathay Pacific. “There are only a few part-time positions available at Cathay Pacific, and keeping women on the career ladder and getting them into senior positions remains a challenge. But similar issues exist within other industries in Hong Kong.”

Our research suggests that once women learn more about the opportunities in logistics and transport many do find the sector attractive—especially the international nature of the business, its fast pace and complexity, and the need for constant change.

Jessie Lee, vice-president and head of logistics for Asia Pacific with Esprit, a fashion brand, entered the sector by chance when as a fresh university graduate in search of a job she was accepted as a management trainee at Evergreen Marine, a shipping company. From there she moved through several other positions, including at Kingfisher, a major DIY chain based in the UK, Rubbermaid, a US-based home goods manufacturer, and Flextronics, a technology firm. “There’s just so much to be done in logistics, it’s not just moving a box from Point A to Point B,” says Ms Lee. “The amazing or challenging thing is that there are so many things you see every day that can be done in a different way. I take myself as a change agent. I always have a passion to make things different.”

### The corporate response

Given perceptions about the industry and women’s prospects for advancement within it, the main area of focus for companies seeking to redress the imbalance is education. In the past year there have been several notable initiatives, both on an industry level and within companies themselves. The Hong Kong chapter of WiLAT, an affiliate CILTHK, was formed in 2012 and has launched what is to become an annual survey

# WOMEN IN LOGISTICS & TRANSPORT IN HONG KONG

## Logistics & Transport (L&T) in Hong Kong<sup>1</sup>

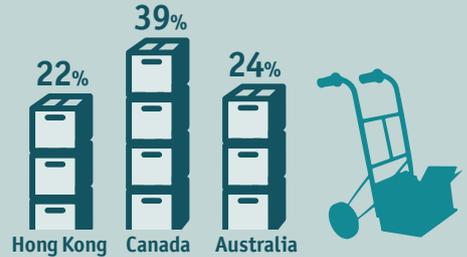
Accounts for **9.6%** of GDP and **11.5%** of all employment in the territory



**1:** Transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications. 2011. Source: Hong Kong Government Yearbook 2012.

## Women<sup>2</sup>

Account for **22%** of all L&T employees in Hong Kong vs **39%** in Canada and **24%** in Australia



**37%** of the staff at surveyed firms in Hong Kong were women, compared to just **6%** in transport

**2:** "2012 HR Study Update", Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council, 2012; "Making Women Visible", Women in Supply Chain; Women in Logistics & Transport (WiLAT) Hong Kong survey of 10 companies, 2013.

## Two of Hong Kong's biggest employers<sup>4</sup>

**MTR** **20%** of **15,200** employees are women



**30%** of key executives are women



**27%** of board members are women



**10%** of train drivers are women



**Cathay Pacific** **61%** of **15,854** Hong Kong-based staff are women



**8%** of senior management are women



**6%** of board directors are women

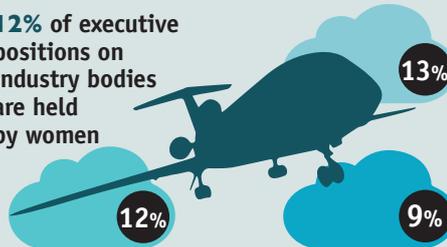


**3%** of cockpit crew are women



## The view at the top<sup>3</sup>

**12%** of executive positions on industry bodies are held by women



**13%** of board directorships at Hong Kong-listed L&T companies are held by women

**9%** of senior management positions at Hong Kong-listed L&T companies are held by women

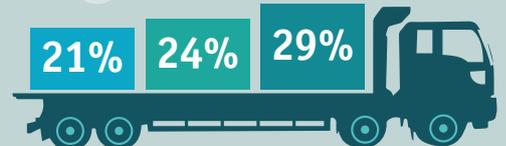
**3:** Company reports (152 directors at 15 companies; 84 senior management positions at 15 companies); Council websites (259 positions at 13 councils)

## In the middle<sup>5</sup>

**21%** of senior managers are women



International logistics companies



**24%** of middle managers are women

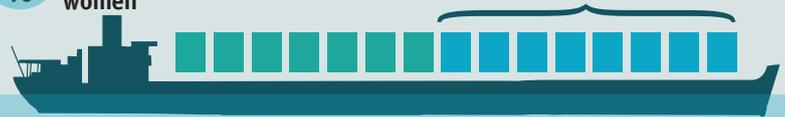
**29%** of entry-level positions are filled by women

**5:** Data from two international logistics companies.

## At university<sup>6</sup>

**48%** of post-secondary students in related disciplines are women

Women outnumber men in **8** of **15** related degree programmes



Men dominant only in engineering and MSc courses in International Shipping and Transport Logistics and Industrial Logistics Systems

**6:** Women in CILTHK accredited courses at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, which accounts for 30% of all such students in Hong Kong.

**4:** Companies.

“The nature of this industry requires dealing with people from all walks of life. It has not been perceived as a feminine industry and hence has been dominated by men.”

Vicky Koo,  
convener of Women in Logistics and Transport (WiLAT), Hong Kong

“The idea that women can be key contributors is still a hard concept to promote in most sectors. Unfortunately this is particularly true in the logistics and supply chain industry, which is still largely male dominated.”

The Supply Chain of Womenomics,  
Logistics Executive, CEO Executive Series, Dec 2011

### On finding opportunity

"If you want to really be able to leap, work for a smaller organisation where you have a wider breadth of opportunity to show what you can do and gain the trust and confidence of the owner or senior manager and they will provide you with opportunity. And when that opportunity is presented to you, like on a Thursday afternoon, 'oh would you like a job in Hong Kong, oh and by the way you have to be there by Tuesday', and you're planning to leave on vacation to New York City the next day... when those opportunities present themselves, you need to know it's a fantastic opportunity, you need to not fear it, you need to just walk through that door. So many doors open and it's a question of do you walk through it or do you self-talk yourself 'oh I'm not sure I can do it'. If you just say yes, I can do that and take the step forward, great things will happen."

—**Kersti Krepp**, vice-president, sales and marketing, Asia Pacific, Polar Air Cargo

tracking women's status in the industry. It is also planning a series of activities to draw attention to issues within the industry and offer professional support to women.

In the private sector, there are various initiatives aimed at raising the profile of senior women to act as an inspiration to others and to encourage the recruitment of women into more senior positions. TNT, a logistics company,

introduced its global Women's Link programme to Asia in 2012. Its aim is to equip women with the skills and networks to raise their careers and profiles. In Hong Kong, TNT is starting with a communications programme including short films and radio shows introducing female leaders at TNT. "It is about making senior women visible to act as inspiration," says Elise Kwok, corporate account regional manager with TNT, based in Hong Kong. "This is the first step and easiest way to bring awareness of the possibilities. Ultimately, we want our women to start getting connected, to be more self-aware and know their strengths and to plot career paths rather than shyly waiting in the corner of the office."

TNT believes that issues related to women's advancement should be discussed within the company and that such discussion should include men whose support will be needed to help women advance. As a first step, they will need to understand the benefits of having more women,

and the different perspective they bring into the firm. Hence TNT has a mentoring programme that is open to both sexes.

Havi Logistics, a US-headquartered global logistics firm, has introduced a requirement that there must be at least one woman candidate interviewed for every open position at management level or above in Hong Kong (though the ultimate selection is merit-based). The policy is an extension of what Havi does in the US, where its diversity programme focuses not only on women but on minorities as well.

The company believes that its policy will not only help improve its chances of getting qualified women managers but will also raise awareness. "People in Hong Kong generally believe that they don't discriminate," says Grace Wong, vice-president of human resources for Asia at Havi. "But the way we were brought up and have lived our lives can unconsciously reinforce cultural biases against women. We need to be aware of this."

Some managers caution that companies considering such programmes should ensure they are properly explained to avoid misunderstandings. "When we tried to measure where women were in management we got a lot of pushback," says one manager. "Both men and women in leadership were looking at it as some kind of quota and found it upsetting. It was a good lesson for us."

### Outlook

As the data gathered for this report show, young women are increasingly being drawn to the field of logistics and transport in Hong Kong. The issue is keeping them in the pipeline and encouraging them to advance to management. The first step, which is raising the profile of women in senior management to act as an inspiration to others, has really only begun.

## Women in logistics

**Cecilia Lau**, a logistics manageress at Copex Air, was attracted to the logistics industry when she heard the head of Rhenus Logistics (which owns Copex Air) speak while she was studying European culture at university. Rhenus took her on as a trainee, putting her through a three-year programme in Europe.

### When you heard your boss speak all those years ago, what did you find interesting about the logistics industry?

I had no idea it cost only HK\$3 to ship a bottle of wine from Europe to Hong Kong! Logistics really combines the world. It's not just taking something from A to B, there are lots of tricks and techniques to do things efficiently and there is a lot of organisation.

### What did your parents think of your career choice?

They were a little bit surprised. This is not a popular industry for women and they thought I'd be something like a teacher or take an admin job. But they never opposed it. They were just surprised.

### What does a logistics manageress do?

I worked for key account management before and for the warehouse department, making quotations, meeting clients. Now I am in business development for another brand of Rhenus called Copex. It specialises in certain special cargoes like live animals, plants, valuable goods like cash, and even human bodies.

### What do you like about the logistics industry, now that you work in it?

It's never boring. You meet all kinds of clients from really different industries. Industrial clients, their thinking and requirements are really different from retail clients. You meet people from different countries. It's really lively. It's also very demanding. You have to be very flexible and work very late and your clients

expect you to be reachable all the time. But you are never bored.

### How about your work-life balance?

It's getting better. Before, in this industry, it was common that people worked on weekends. But now many of our customers have stopped working on weekends and our competitors too. People have more free time.

### What are your career aspirations?

I'm still new in this industry. Maybe I'll stay a little longer and maybe work in logistics in a different perspective. Right now I am working with service providers but we can also do logistics from a procurement perspective like selecting service providers for industrial companies. That would also be interesting for me.

### What do you think is the hardest thing about being a woman in this industry?

It depends. I think the situation is quite different between Europe and Hong Kong. In Europe, if you graduated from a logistics management course or studied engineering, the obstacles are not that high. But in Hong Kong the networking is much more important than the degree or qualification you have. The more senior guys in this industry are still male and you need to get together with them to develop a network and that's more difficult if you aren't a man. You have to have some beers and talk about football and be buddy-buddy.

### Would you recommend this industry to other women?

Sure, why not. Women have a great advantage in languages, which are becoming more and more important. It's all about communications and negotiations and, in general, women have a good advantage in these areas. In this industry it also involves a lot of documentation and detail and women are more detail oriented. I think that's why we have so many female colleagues in operations and middle management. ■

# 2 Luxury

*The luxury industry in Hong Kong has no problem attracting women, but a poor work-life balance leads many of them to drop out before they rise up the ranks—leaving very few in senior management.*

## The need

In the luxury sector, the need to encourage more women into the ranks of senior management is based on clear market dynamics: women are the major consumers of luxury. LVMH, for example, says that women represent 85% of its customers.<sup>1</sup> The importance of women to this industry will only increase. Women today control about 65% of the world's annual consumer expenditure and their spending power is increasing rapidly.<sup>2</sup> According to Boston Consulting Group, women will be responsible for adding US\$6 trillion to total global earnings over the next five years.<sup>3</sup> Yet women remain under-represented in the senior ranks of the luxury industry.

overall—figures ranged from 56% to 73%, compared to business overall at 57%.<sup>4</sup> But the figure drops significantly at senior management level, to between 28% and 40% and to between 7% and 27% of group executive committee members.

In Hong Kong, data collected from seven companies, including two of the largest luxury groups representing 6,657 employees, showed that women's representation in the luxury industry broadly mirrors that of the four groups studied on a global basis.<sup>5</sup> There is a similarly high percentage of women among the total workforce in luxury in Hong Kong (63%), but representation at senior management level is lower than the global average.

## The numbers

While women may account for 85% of LVMH's customers, they account for only 11% of its board members and 28% of senior managers. The figures are similarly low for three of the world's other leading luxury groups, namely L'Oréal, Richemont and Gucci Group (now owned by Kering). The issue is one of retention and promotion rather than of women's interest in the industry. Data on the four biggest luxury groups showed that at three out of the four groups women accounted for a higher percentage of the total workforce than is the average for business

## Key issues

While the industry clearly has no trouble attracting women, it has trouble retaining them through to management level. What are the major issues that lead women to drop out? According to a survey of women in the industry conducted by The Women's Foundation, the biggest issue is work-life balance—the amount of after-hours duties and travel required in senior positions makes it difficult to juggle work and family life. Rather than hitting a glass ceiling, women collide with the “maternal wall”. Unfortunately, the prime time for women to

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Luxury Society Report: The Talent Agenda

<sup>2</sup> Coldwell Bankers Preview International 2012 Luxury Market Report

<sup>3</sup> Women Want More, update 2013, Boston Consulting Group

<sup>4</sup> 2010 Luxury Society Report: The Talent Agenda

<sup>5</sup> Data was collected on condition of anonymity.

have children—late twenties and early thirties by today’s norms—coincides with the time they really need to be focusing on moving up the career ladder.

In a perfect illustration of how opportunities can collide with family planning, Sarah Young O’Donnell, chief executive of Hong Kong Seibu/Beauty Avenue/Beauty Bazaar/ Harvey Nichols, China, was offered the chief operating officer position with Seibu when she was five months pregnant with her first child. “Had I listened to everyone around me and everything I read in the media I never would have gone forward with the position,” she recalls. “But I just felt it was a watershed moment.”

While it is often pointed out that women in Hong Kong are better able to “lean in” to their careers because domestic help is easily available and affordable, the fact remains that the legal minimum maternity leave is a painfully short ten weeks.

Another issue discouraging women is cultural—higher-level business positions within the big European luxury houses tend to be dominated by men and it can be difficult for women to fit in. Joanne Ooi, currently chief executive and co-founder of Plukka, an e-commerce business focusing on designer jewellery, and previously employed at Shanghai Tang (owned by Richemont), describes management at many French luxury goods companies as “extremely chauvinistic”, both culturally and in gender terms. “If you are accustomed to gender equality in the workplace, the world of luxury can be very, very harsh,” she says.

### The corporate response

What are luxury goods companies doing to encourage women to rise up the corporate ladder? Among the large luxury groups globally there is a movement to introduce specific targets and timelines to increase the number of women

in senior management and policies to help achieve this. LVMH in 2009 made a commitment to have 35% female representation on executive committees by 2012, and according to its website it has exceeded this target by one percentage point. This commitment involves ensuring that women are proportionally represented in succession plans and that there is at least one woman on the shortlist for an open position. This policy is backed up by a programme of workshops, mentoring, coaching and training schemes for women.

With numerous maisons of various sizes and cultures, it is impractical to impose policies across groups, let alone across the world. This is why Kering (formerly known as PPR) has set ambitious targets at senior management level but has left the design and implementation of diversity programmes largely to the discretion of individual maisons and their local managers. In 2010 the group’s chairman and chief executive set five-year targets to achieve gender equality at senior executive level, and to have 40% female representation at both management committee and board levels. In order to achieve this it has set targets for recruitment agencies to recommend female applicants, developed succession and mobility plans for women, and introduced training programmes aimed at grooming female senior managers.

In France Kering is implementing an inter-brand and intercompany mentoring programme (mentors can be men). Some group companies have introduced flexible working arrangements with a view to helping staff through the years

### On preparing yourself to move up in luxury

“It is important for women to not silo themselves. There are many women in merchandising, for example, but fewer women get really solid management experience, or experience in logistics or broad-based experience. That is very important if you want to move up.”

—**Sarah Young O’Donnell**, chief executive Hong Kong Seibu / Beauty Bazaar / Beauty Avenue / Harvey Nichols, China

# WOMEN IN LUXURY: HONG KONG

Many women enter luxury...

...but few rise to the top

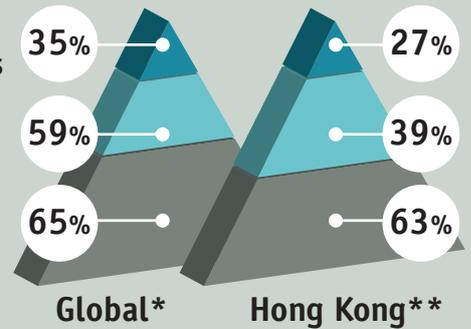
% of entry level positions filled by women



% of female senior managers

% of female managers

% of female employees



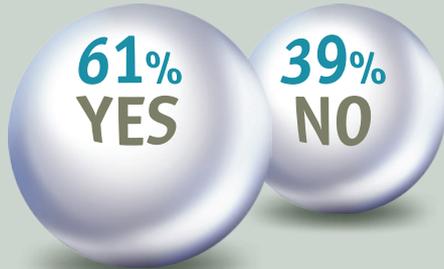
“...I am not sure I see attracting women as the challenge. I think the bigger issue is retaining women and promoting them to the executive level.”

Denise Incandela

Executive vice president and chief marketing officer — Saks Fifth Avenue

Do you agree there is a gender imbalance in the luxury brands industry in Hong Kong?\*\*\*

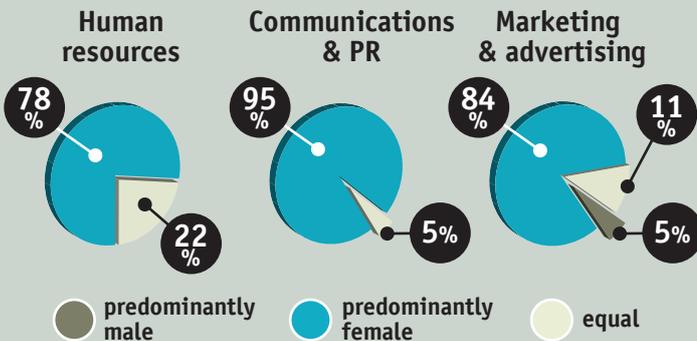
Why aren't there more female senior managers?



According to a survey of companies in Hong Kong, the main reason there are few women in senior roles is the amount of after-hours duties and travel required, which make it difficult to balance work and family commitments.

## Where women dominate

% who believe men dominate leadership roles in creative divisions:



% who believe men dominate leadership roles in business functions:



\* Based on average for LVMH, L'Oreal, Richemont, Gucci Group, reported in Luxury Society Report, The Talent Agenda, 2010

\*\* Average based on data supplied by seven companies (including two large luxury groups with numerous brands and businesses) with a total of 6,657 employees, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit

\*\*\* Based on a survey of 25 female industry executives by The Women's Foundation

when they are starting families.

According to Louise Beveridge, communications director at Kering, how companies can go about helping women avoid the “maternal wall”, where they are tempted to drop off the career ladder, depends on issues of infrastructure and culture in the country in which they reside. France, for example, has a very well-developed support system for working mothers. Company policies, such as allowing home working, simply complement those of the government. In other markets where there is little official support for women and it is culturally frowned upon for women to return to work after giving birth, it can be much more difficult to introduce meaningful support.

Ms Beveridge believes that real progress in improving the gender balance requires sustained action on four key points. Women themselves must realise that they need to take charge of their careers and take action if they want to move up the ladder. Managers need to widen their horizons when assessing talent and ensure they are considering women as well as men. Human resources departments (and the recruitment firms they may deploy) need to broaden their scope when recruiting for management level—at the moment they tend to target those in the 30–35 age range, which is when many women are dropping off the career ladder to start families. Ms Beveridge suggests that talent searches need to look at women in their forties and even fifties. Finally, top management needs to talk openly about the issues and their support for programmes to address them, and provide role models for women to follow. “It really is like turning a tanker,” says Ms Beveridge.

## Outlook

Regardless of official diversity programmes, senior women in the luxury industry in Hong Kong believe that much has changed that should smooth the way for women to establish themselves and rise in the industry.

“In today’s global economy there is a great reliance on data and analytics and you are able to monitor consumer retail with a magnifying glass,” notes Ms Ooi. “There is much greater transparency and statistical results are undeniable. That very much militates towards outcomes that are going to put women at the forefront.”

Ms Young O’Donnell concurs. “For women it is paramount to get yourself into a position where performance is easily quantifiable,” she says. “If you can do that and the performance is good, then I honestly think that issues of gender recede to a great extent.”

Outside of established luxury companies, the rise of online commerce has opened up a new avenue for female luxury brand entrepreneurs to get a start in the market. While the investment required may not be much lower than for a traditional bricks and mortar operation, there are no other barriers to entry such as those that might be found when trying to join or rise within an established luxury business. The flexibility afforded by running an online business without physical store locations and being in charge of their own time is attractive to many women. Besides Ms Ooi of Plukka, Hong Kong is home to several other successful female luxury brand entrepreneurs such as Fiona Marin of Kotur and Adrienne Ma, who started several successful luxury ventures are leaving Joyce Boutiques, the luxury retail business founded by her mother.

# 3 Technology

*With technology a factor in nearly every industry today, demand for technology skills is rising rapidly, both globally and in Hong Kong. While more women are showing interest in Internet-related careers, few are being attracted to technology creation.*

## The need

The motivation for companies to recruit and retain women in technology-related roles is crystal clear: a skills shortage that is forecast to worsen as the number of technology-related jobs grows rapidly. In the US, it is estimated that the technology industry will be able to fill only half of its available jobs by 2018.<sup>6</sup> Interest in the field has been declining across the board since the dotcom bubble burst in 2001, but more so among women—the percentage of women among computer science graduates in the US has dropped from 37% in 1984 to just 13% today.

In Hong Kong, there are no officially compiled statistics on technology skills shortages in general, or on students in related disciplines, but data show that employment in IT services, for example, grew by just under 5% between 2012 and 2013, and the vacancy rate has remained steady at about 4%.<sup>7</sup> With technology so heavily embedded in nearly every industry today there is no doubt a growing need for such skills. Various surveys by recruitment firms indicate there is already a shortage. Randstad's World of Work Report 2012/2013, for example, says: "As for skilled jobs in demand, topping the list are business development, technical and sales roles to drive customer relations and digital and social media skills to evolve e-business models and customer engagement."

The figures for enrolment in technology-related disciplines are on some measures better in Hong Kong than in the US, but are still poor. Just 29% of students enrolled in related courses at Hong Kong Polytechnic University are women. But at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology there were no women at all in two undergraduate computer science programmes. This in part explains the gender gap in the workplace and according to many observers it requires urgent attention. "If Hong Kong is going to thrive, we need all hands on deck," says Marissa Dean, a researcher and lecturer at the University of Hong Kong who specialises in globalisation and IT trends in Asia.

As well as filling overall skills shortages, within the technology sector there is also the desire for a diversity of views that can help foster innovation and, perhaps most importantly, address the fact that since women are major users of technology more of it should be designed with their interests in mind. According to the Entertainment Software Association, for example, some 47% of video game players in the US are women. The percentage for mobile game players is as high as 60%, according to various reports.

According to Ms Dean, women tend to have a broader, more macro view of technology, focusing on what it can be used for. That is precisely what

<sup>6</sup> Women in IT: The facts, National Center for Women & Information Technology, April 2010

<sup>7</sup> Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics June 2013, Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

the talent market is looking for, says Catherine Zhu, a consultant at Egon Zehnder, an executive search firm. “The bias today is for females, particularly Asian women with a technology background and consumer insights.”

### The numbers

In assessing women’s representation in “technology” we looked at a broad range of technology-related roles, from the IT department to tech start-ups to large software companies and Internet giants. As might be expected, representation varies by field. In IT departments, a survey of 57 companies in Hong Kong showed that 88% of IT directors are male and women represent less than 10% of IT staff at more than half the companies. The data on women among tech entrepreneurs in Hong Kong are similarly discouraging. At Nest, an incubator that invests mainly in lifestyle-related businesses, most of which are based on Internet technology, only five of the 200 applicants at its recent pitch day event were women. None of the 15 companies it has funded to date were founded by women. At Cyberport, a facility set up by the Hong Kong government to encourage the clustering of digital content and technology talent, only 17% of the 203 projects that are in or have gone through its incubation programme were founded by women. The corresponding figure is 26% among the 86 companies to have received seed funding from the Cyberport Creative Micro Fund.

Other fields, however, such as large software companies and Internet firms, report little trouble attracting women. Oracle, for example, says nearly 50% of its entry-level staff in Hong Kong are female. Some of these women are not involved in technology roles, however, and work in finance and human resources, for example.

Indeed, there is broad consensus that there are very few women involved in the “creation of technology”. This is supported by the small numbers of female entrepreneurs and women

studying related disciplines at university.

### Key issues

Why are so few women attracted to the creation of technology? The standard, stereotypical answers are that in general women do not have the same innate abilities in maths and science as men, and/or that they have a fear of or lack of interest in technology. Those who have dug a bit deeper behind these stereotypes have shown that the answers are not so simple. The fact that girls tend to veer away from maths and science in schools may have to do with the learning environment. Girls studying in mixed-gender schools, for example, may feel discouraged from pursuing maths and sciences. A study in the UK showed that girls studying in single-sex schools were nearly two and a half times more likely to study physics at A-levels (the UK system of qualification for completing secondary education) than they were if they studied in mixed-gender state schools—49% of which had no girls undertaking the subject.<sup>8</sup> Those women who do go on to study technology fields at university find themselves in classes where they are often alone in a group of men, with few female teachers to serve as role models or mentors. “It’s a very challenging course and to think you are on your own and possibly shouldn’t be there doesn’t help,” says Daisy Jiang, product head at Decision Fuel, recalling her study for an engineering degree (see box on page 14).

According to Ms Dean, a further problem is the way in which the world measures women’s engagement with technology. “When you look at why young women are not engaging in technology it is not necessarily due to differences of interest or ability or motivation, but more the differences with approach,” she says. “Women approach technology from a very macro level. They like to ‘do’ with technology. Males, on the other hand, approach technology at a very micro level. Computer coding is very important when you’re talking about technology, but so is the

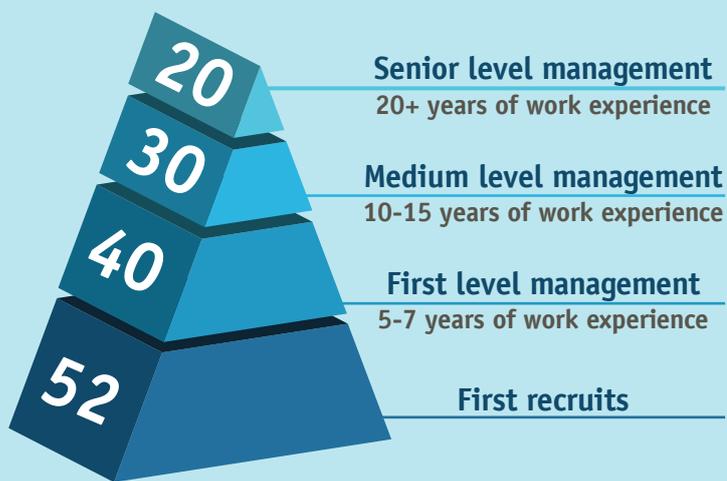
<sup>8</sup> “It’s Different for Girls, The Influence of Schools”, Institute of Physics, October 2012

# WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY IN HONG KONG

“ Being a researcher and innovator is a dream life. And women will enjoy it just as much as men do. But it’s like a secret magical world not being revealed to girls. ”

*Pascale Fung, professor in the department of electronic & computer engineering at Hong Kong University of Science & Technology*

## % of women at Hong Kong-based operations of Oracle



## Women tech entrepreneurs

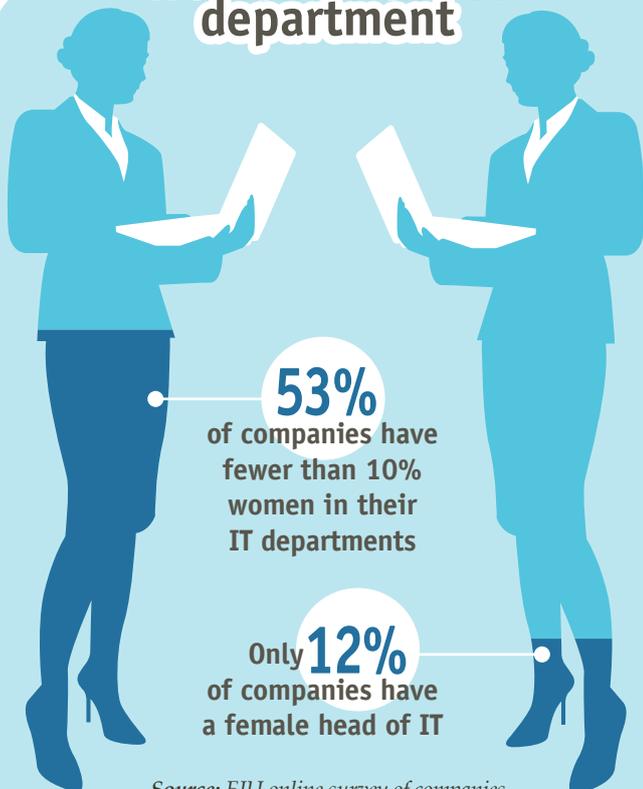


17% of companies/projects in Cyberport's incubation programme are founded by women

26% of companies/projects availing of the Cyberport Creative Micro Fund (seed capital) are founded by women

2.5% of participants in a recent pitch day held by NEST, a private-sector incubator, were women

## Women in the IT department



*Source: EIU online survey of companies in Hong Kong.*

## Women studying technology



0% of students enrolled in the BEng in Computer Science (Information Engineering) and BSc in Computer Science are women



15% of students enrolled in the BEng in Electronic Engineering and BEng in Computer Engineering are women



At Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 29% of students in related disciplines\* are women

\* Includes computing, e-commerce, enterprise information systems, information technology, software technology

broader perspective that women bring. And right now, that is simply not valued and simply not acknowledged. If we are able to acknowledge this difference in approach, and harness this difference, it would become our asset.”

Lack of exposure to technology fields is also an issue—many girls and young women have simply never considered technology as a career and are unaware of the opportunities that are available to them. “I’ve always been more interested in creating than consuming,” says Pascale Fung, professor in the department of electronic and computer engineering at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. “Being a researcher/innovator is a dream life. And women will enjoy it just as much as men do, but it’s like a secret magical world not being revealed to girls.” According to Professor Fung, the female intake in the programme which she teaches jumped after HKUST held a special summer camp for girls and launched its Women in Science & Engineering scholarships.

Alice Lin, vice-president of finance at Oracle Asia Pacific, based in Hong Kong, points out that women may also fail to realise that technology can offer the type of flexibility that those planning families desire. “Technology and programming are the perfect jobs for a mother logistically,” she says. “It’s the perfect job for flex hours, flex locations, multitasking and independent work. In fact, now with social media you can actually program with a group of people.”

While women may not be attracted to technology creation roles, many technology firms say they have little problem attracting women in other roles. But, as is the case in other industries, retaining and promoting them, particularly through the difficult child-bearing years, is the issue. Oracle may find a level gender balance among entry-level staff, but the proportion of men to women at senior management level is 80:20.

## The corporate response

Larger technology companies, particularly Internet-based businesses, are making serious efforts to promote and retain women and are focusing specifically on how to provide the flexibility that will encourage women to stay in the work force when they become mothers. The belief is that women who are supported through this phase of their lives will be loyal employees. eBay is a good example. Kerry Wong, senior director, global operations OE Asia Pacific region with eBay (based in Hong Kong), says the company’s Women’s Initiative Network (WIN) grew out of what has been a culture of inclusion that has been part of the firm’s DNA since its founding. Its WIN was officially launched three years ago and is driven by the chief executive, John Donahoe, who told the company’s first global Women’s Summit in 2011: “A powerful lineup of women at the top of eBay should be a source of competitive advantage.”

eBay’s initiative started with a mapping exercise to examine the number of women leaders within the company and where they are located, as well as attrition rates. This was followed by the introduction of programmes and training to raise awareness of the issues women face. The policies subsequently introduced, focusing heavily on flexible working, apply to all employees, not just women. Ms Wong says that a lot of new mothers in the Hong Kong workforce avail themselves of the opportunity to work part-time or from home but some male employees have also taken up the opportunity when their personal situation requires more flexibility. It is up to individual teams to determine how to manage such arrangements. The company also holds a global women’s summit every year. This year it invited senior male leaders to attend.

Some of the more traditional technology companies are also moving in this direction. Oracle permits some flexible working

arrangements but Ms Lin's hope is to see these become the norm rather than the exception.

### Outlook

Women today are exposed to technology from a very young age. In theory this should mean they are free of the "tech phobia" of previous generations of women. The number of women being drawn to Internet-related businesses

suggests this is true. But whether more women will venture into the actual creation of technology remains a matter of doubt. Until there is greater effort on the part of schools and parents to expose girls to the world of technology and its possibilities, and to make the requisite maths and science courses more accessible, it seems that little is likely to change.

## Women in technology

**Sharon Lui, head of group planning, control and IT operations at CLP Power Hong Kong**, started her career with Lee Kum Kee, a sauce manufacturer, as a production controller and then became a marketing executive with the company before working in supply chain management. Her interest in IT began when the company chose her as a core member of a business process re-engineering team and then as leader of the team that implemented the company's first SAP module.

### You did not come from a technology background. Has that been an obstacle in your career?

I went from a business background to technology. But I went on an SAP academy course and self-studied other modules. But the technical understanding is really just the foundation. The important thing is stakeholder management. You have to understand business and talk in senior management's language. Most technical people are afraid of business processes and especially of financial figures. You have to understand financial figures very precisely and talk to management in those terms. Because I did an MBA, which included a finance course, that helped a lot. I've always thought that you have to do a marketing campaign to show others the value of IT's work. People think of you as a cost centre so you have to show the benefit to the company. I think this way because I've worked in marketing.

### In all of your jobs, have you seen many women in technology?

I can see more women now than when I first started out but they are still greatly outnumbered by men.

### Why do you think there are more women now?

When I was young there were still some people who thought that women were not very capable, they still thought women should do lower-level work. But Hong Kong has changed quite a lot. A lot of women are quite successful in a lot of sectors and there are a lot of opportunities. Women today are more assertive. Girls always work better in school so if they become more assertive in their career they will be successful.

### How do you find it being one of only a few women at your level?

I always tell myself don't think of yourself as a woman when you have meetings. If you do, you lose already. In a lot of cases in my past I was the only woman in meetings. If you think, 'I should behave in a certain way' or 'I should not talk about something' you won't do good work. Be yourself when you're talking about work. You have to let them know you come for a meeting, for a purpose. Just focus on the business.

## Women in technology

**Daisy Jiang is product head at Decision Fuel**, a start-up which has developed a platform to conduct market research using mobile devices. She has a bachelor of science in electrical engineering and a master's degree in management information systems, both from the University of Arizona. She began her career as a member of the technical staff at Hughes Aircraft Company and subsequently moved into software and product management in Silicon Valley before moving to Hong Kong.

**You are one of those rare women with an engineering degree. How did you get interested in this area?**

My father was an engineer. He always told us "maths is a universal language". He stressed science and maths and was a tiger parent, always checking our homework and making sure we were up to speed. So there was my father's influence. But I thought for myself that it looked like a growing field and it certainly couldn't hurt to have an engineering degree, though I wasn't quite sure what I'd do with it.

**You've done a lot of different jobs in technology and have gravitated towards the Internet. What inspired you to move?**

While I was at Hughes, in hardware engineering, the Internet was really born. I felt I was missing out. During my time at Hughes I went back to school and got an MS in management information systems, which led me to work at HP in Silicon Valley. That's when my eyes were really opened to the possibilities. It was okay and even desirable to be young—in fact it was a "new boys club".

**Some say that women tend to take a more macro view of technology, that they want to work with technology in a broader sense and not be in the engine room so to speak. It seems that is the way you have gravitated in your career.**

My day-to-day work has changed but it is still quite technology focused. A product manager oversees a product from its inception to market strategy to technology development. You have to work with many different functions. You don't get into the decisions on which

technologies to use in a product—that is where the engineering department comes in. But you work with them. Product managers come from different backgrounds and bring different strengths. Since I am an engineer I have a very good relationship with the engineering team because I understand how they think. I do find it very satisfying to be creating something.

**What do you think needs to be done to attract more women to technology?**

There are lots of things that need to be done. First, we need a wider pipeline at the initial stages, the educational foundation. We somehow need to get girls to see science and maths as girl friendly. I think a lot of it starts at home. If it's always dad doing all the technical stuff and helping with the maths and science homework then that kind of perpetuates the thinking that it is not attractive to women. My father taught us, but he encouraged me as much as my brother.

Second, I think there needs to be a lot more support at college level. When I was in engineering I didn't have a single female engineering professor and in the junior and senior years I was the only woman in my class. It's a very challenging course and to think you are on your own and possibly shouldn't be there doesn't help.

Third, there needs to be change from a career perspective. In technical areas such as coding there is a very macho culture which isn't attractive to women. Then there are career interruptions related to family. Women drop out of the funnel at every stage.

**Do you think the digital native generation will be different, that girls today are more comfortable with technology so will be more likely to pursue it as a career?**

There is a gap between using technology and developing technology and being part of deciding what happens with technology. With digital natives, there is still this chasm to be overcome between using it and creating it. But I'm hopeful that it will draw a larger pool that will go beyond power user to creator. If you think about it, there are people who are running large technology companies with no formal technology background.

## 4

## Trading and hedge funds

*Women's representation on trading desks appears higher in Hong Kong than in other major financial centres but it is lower than financial institutions would like. Though many large institutions have introduced programmes to attract and retain them, many women continue to be deterred by a lingering perception that trading is a "man's world" in which they cannot succeed.*

### On juggling it all

"A lot of women come up to me and ask 'how do you do it, how do you juggle it all?'. I ask them about their situation and they say 'oh I'm not married, I don't have kids, but I can't imagine doing that in five years time'. I think some of them sort of mentally psych themselves out. In *Lean In*, one of the things Sheryl Sandberg pushes on is 'don't leave before you leave'. At least try. You can't know what your threshold is or how much you can juggle until you put your mind to it and try. I've been near the brink many times. I was nine months pregnant when we did the world's biggest IPO (at the time). At times it seemed unbearable but once I actually got through that it was such a sense of achievement. We women are tougher than we think. Try before you say no."

—**Christina Ma**, managing director, securities division, Goldman Sachs

In other sectors the need or desire to attract and retain more women is generally driven by talent shortages, the belief that a more diverse management team will help drive innovation, and/or the need to better cater for female customers. In the case of hedge funds and trading, the key motivation is often the bottom line. Research suggests that women are talented investors, bringing higher average returns than men over the longer

term. The first such study, of 35,000 brokerage clients in the US in 2001, showed that on average women investors earned a full percentage point more in annual returns than men. In hedge funds, a study by Bloomberg and the National Council for Research on Women in the US found that between

2000 and 2009 hedge funds run by women delivered annual returns nearly double those of funds run by men (9% vs 5.8%).

Another motivating factor for financial institutions to hire more women is the memory of the financial crisis of 2008. In its wake, there has been much soul searching about what needs to change in the world of finance in order to reduce what is viewed as an entrenched culture of reckless risk taking. Many believe that at least part of the answer is to increase the number of women in the trading profession. There is some science to support this belief—it falls under the broad categories of neuroeconomics and behavioural finance. At least one study has looked at the impact of testosterone (naturally higher in men) and cortisol levels on risk-taking behaviour in male traders. It suggests that under certain conditions these hormones can have an impact on the ability to make rational choices, particularly among young men.<sup>9</sup> "We know that opinion diversity is crucial to stable markets. What no one talks about is endocrine diversity, a diversity of hormones. The billion-dollar question is how to achieve it," one of the study's authors, John Coates, told *The Observer*.

<sup>9</sup> "Testosterone and high finance do not mix: so bring on the women", *The Observer*, June 19th 2011

## The numbers

There is very little data available on women's participation in hedge funds and on trading floors. According to EurekaHedge, an independent data provider and research house, just 4% of the hedge funds registered in Hong Kong have women fund managers, while 12% of funds are run by a combination of men and women. This compares with global averages of 4% and 7.3% respectively. Interviews with industry players in Hong Kong suggest that women are more commonly found in the roles of chief operating officer or legal counsel, though no compiled data is available.

In trading, the figures for Hong Kong are slightly more encouraging. Based on data provided for nine dealing rooms or individual trading desks (excluding sales), the average representation for women was 16%, but figures ranged from 0% on two desks to 31% for one dealing room overall. For trading desks the data varied depending on the type of trading—from higher figures in equities or foreign exchange to no women at all in distressed debt. The figures are not bad when compared to the trading floors of stock exchanges—women are believed to account for only 3-4% of traders on the stock exchange floors in London and New York.<sup>10</sup> But the number of women is still far lower than many financial institutions would like.

Ironically, those who have worked or are working in the sector believe that it is one in which women should be able to excel because the benchmarks for performance are very clear. "This job really is very good for women, because from very early on you are being evaluated on whether you can make people money, you can make the right recommendation, so it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman," says Lan Xue, who, after years as a research analyst on the sell side of trading with a large investment bank moved to set up her own Hong Kong-based hedge fund, Trivest Advisors.

Christina Ma, managing director of the securities division of Goldman Sachs, concurs. "It's actually perversely a very good profession for women because at the end of the day, the numbers speak louder than anything else. You have your performance and you have your numbers. It doesn't matter if you are in or out with a boss, you have numbers to prove that you're good. From that perspective, once you can get past the boys' club and all the sort of peripheral noise, I found it to be a great place for me to succeed and to grow and to learn as a person."

## Key issues

Why are there so few women actually trading? The main answer is a lingering perception that trading is a "man's world" that is inhospitable to women. In Hong Kong, a survey conducted by The Women's Foundation found that 69% of 52 women polled agreed or strongly agreed that the male-dominated culture of the industry makes it difficult for women to advance.<sup>11</sup> More than half (51%) agreed that sexual harassment, discrimination and/or inappropriate behaviour towards women is common on the trading floor. No one viewed the low numbers as an issue of competency—86% agreed that the main challenge was attracting women to join and remain in the sector.

Leading women from the industry who spoke about their experience at an open forum

## On male-centric behaviour

"You've got to start figuring out how to think like the people that you are trying to work with. That doesn't mean you have to be men. But I can promise you if you are invited to a cocktail party or you've got to represent your firm, most of the career-focused men that would go with you would already know why they want to be there. They would have figured out who they want to meet, they would have strategised how they are going to use that cocktail party. For some reason, as women, we seem to miss that step, in fact some are annoyed that they have to go. Most women go to these functions slightly irritated and they do something called rockpiling. They hang around together, hope they see a friend and cling to the friend and watch the time until they can make an exit. Most career-focused men don't do that. There are three or four people in the room they want to meet, they meet them and then they go home."

—**Elsbeth Renshaw**, director, Asia Pacific Talent Management

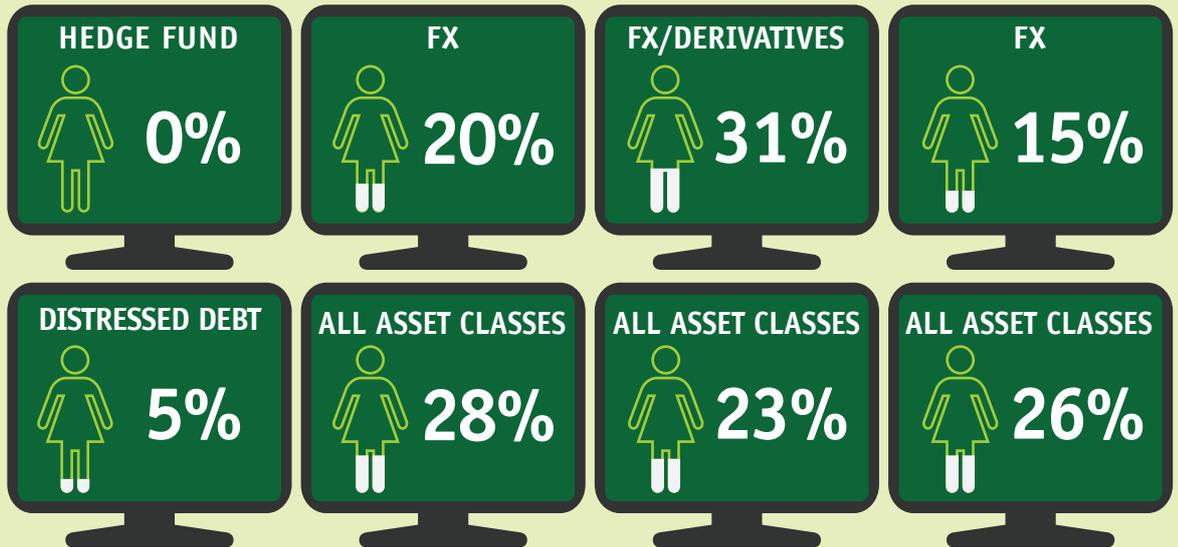
<sup>10</sup> "The Bell Tolls for the Big Board", *New York Magazine*; "Testosterone and high finance do not mix: so bring on the women", *The Observer*, June 19th 2011

<sup>11</sup> Survey respondents were participants at a public forum held to discuss women's participation in these sectors.

# WOMEN IN TRADING AND HEDGE FUNDS IN HONG KONG

## Women on trading desks

Percentage of women on individual trading desks in Hong Kong



Source: Individual traders, institutions

Estimated % of women among traders on London and New York stock exchanges: **3-4%**

## Perceptions of the trading industry

Percentage who agree that...

The low number of women in the industry is not a competency issue, it's about attracting women to join and retention



Sexual harassment, discrimination and/or inappropriate behaviour towards women is common on the trading floor



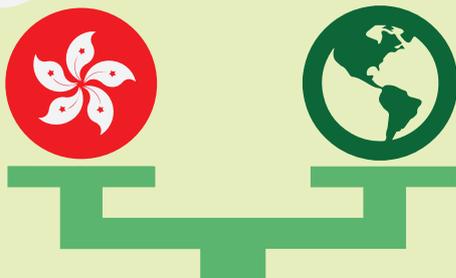
Women are more risk averse than men in their approach to trading and investing



Source: The Women's Foundation survey of 51 participants at a public forum discussing women's participation in trading and hedge funds.

## Women in hedge funds

**4%** of hedge fund managers in Hong Kong are women, on a par with the global average



Source: EurekaHedge

**13%** of the executive committee of the Alternative Investment Management Association are women



Source: Alternative Investment Management Association website

organised by The Women's Foundation and Bloomberg did not try to gloss over the realities. Although the atmosphere in the industry has improved over the years, women are still confronted by male-centric behaviour such as crude jokes and socialising that revolves around alcohol and sport—behaviour which it is admitted can be a critical factor in forming the bonds that can lead to advancement within the firm.

“These sectors are not for the faint of heart,” says Elspeth Renshaw, director, Asia Pacific Talent Management, who has worked in the sector with several institutions. Notes Ms Ma, “I can't help ignorance from the other side. All I can do is create the right environment on my team. You have to have thick skin and just hope the dinosaurs get phased out.”

What does it take to succeed in this environment? According to Ms Ma, it takes good mentors, perseverance and a passion for the job. Some women, she says, “psych themselves out” before even trying the job to see if they like it. Some still don't believe that women can be good at trading and investing, despite increasing data to the contrary (see above).

### The corporate response

Many larger financial institutions today have programmes to attract and retain women. Though these programmes are not aimed at specific departments, trading is acknowledged as a black spot. Typically, women who are convinced to join the trading profession drop out when they reach associate level, often at an age when they are getting married or contemplating a family (this trend is also evident in other high-stress positions within the financial sector). “I doubt there is a financial services firm today that doesn't worry about the loss of women,” says Ms Renshaw.

Corporate programmes take many forms and often begin with the establishment of a women's network within the organisation, as well as

learning and development programmes. There is a broad consensus that mentoring is critical for convincing women to stay and helping them move up the corporate ladder. Mentors do not need to be women—in reality, given the smaller numbers of women, mentors are often likely to be men—but role models who can discuss the ins and outs of managing both family and career are probably more effective.

For programmes to have impact it is necessary to define and confront specific issues that are encouraging women to leave or holding them back. In many sectors—this one in particular—women often lack access to senior leaders because it is not natural for them to attend traditionally male bonding sessions that typically involve golf or after-hours drinking. One major investment bank has developed a programme to address this issue by creating opportunities for women at senior vice-president level to interact with top management in more comfortable settings such as roundtables or lunches. The same bank has also focused on the fact that fewer women have senior sponsors recommending them and has developed a so-called hot seat programme where managers are pressed to take responsibility for their female staff and their path within the organisation. This can be important in an area like trading, where results may be visible to clients and the sales team but not to management.

### Outlook

Despite major efforts on the part of investment banks to attract and retain women, in trading, at least, the impact has been limited, as our data shows. Major change is likely to come only with critical mass. Neuroscientists believe that it is necessary to have women in at least 30% of senior management positions in order to change corporate culture. There is no similar benchmark for the trading floor but assuming it to be the same, the sector has a long way to go indeed.

## Women in trading

**Jeong-Jeong Chu and Carolyn Ellis** are Hong Kong-based buy-side traders with Capital Group, a US-headquartered financial institution.

### How did you get into trading?

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** This has been my life since I graduated from college. I worked in finance in a variety of roles and I've always been fascinated with trading. Back in 2000, I got the opportunity to work on a trading desk. I like that you are exposed to a lot of different things, different industries, different personalities, politics. I like the fast movement of trading and being part of the investment process. I like the idea of helping people with their retirement money and that's what Capital does. We come into contact with a lot of interesting people both in the corporate world and internally.

**Carolyn Ellis:** I was an Asian studies major in college. When I came out of school in 1991 jobs were scarce. My mother's friend was in finance and he told me if you are looking to travel to Asia it might be a good stepping stone to get out there. He introduced me to the man that hired me a year later. I started as a junior on the desk doing everything like photocopying, just to learn. Before I knew it the desk grew, the business grew, the markets changed, we got someone in to be my junior. I just kind of stuck with it. I got in at the right time and had the right mentors.

### Have you worked with many women in trading?

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** We have three traders on my desk, the other two are male. It's a very male-dominated sector. But there are a lot more women than when I first started out. It depends on the kind of trading. The trading floor on the NYSE is still very much dominated by men. But there is a distinction between buy-side and sell-side shops. Ours is a buy side. Because of the hours and the length of the day it lends itself to more women joining this side and having a longer career as opposed to the sell side.

**Carolyn Ellis:** I worked on the sell side for about 15 years before I joined Capital Group. I think the local Hong Kong desks have more women than international desks. This is just my observation. This is possibly because the hours may be a little bit better. On the international side you have to talk to New York and London, whereas on the local Hong Kong desk you'd only work Hong Kong hours. Maybe that's why you seem to see more women there.

In international sales trading desks the women I know have left mostly to have babies. Sadly, it's a situation where you

can't have a good work-life balance. You can't do it part-time or time share that job so women are faced with that big decision.

### How do you think men in the industry perceive you?

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** Even now, you run into situations where people may treat you differently or not respect you in the same way as if you were a guy. I am talking about external people. I think when you are younger you just take it and you don't really care. But now I am a seasoned person working in this business, you still get that in a meeting where they [brokers] just speak to the guys and not to you.

### What about all the stories you hear about your industry—about sexual harassment and crude jokes, etc?

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** We don't have a problem here. But in the industry in general most guys want to test you and if it irks you it will escalate. If you just pretend you're not hearing anything, it's not going to last too long.

**Carolyn Ellis:** It's different on a small desk because you know everybody and you know each other's buttons and if you press them you are doing it for fun. It's different on a big trading floor where there are more than 100 people.

### What skills do you need to become a trader?

**Carolyn Ellis:** A lot of our job is relationship building and people skills. You can't really learn that from a textbook. That is one thing I tell the women I talk to. You can't be shy. You need to put yourself out there and have confidence.

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** I think you have to have a certain personality to work in trading. You've got to have really thick skin. I was called an idiot when I was first starting out because I just didn't know what I was doing. I was inexperienced, not an idiot. But then there are a lot of very successful people in this business who don't even have a degree, they are just street smart. You have to have people skills. There are really nice people but also a lot of big-headed people that you just have to deal with. It takes a certain personality. The ones who are really shy don't last. I think we all have big personalities in our own ways.

### What advice would you give young women who want to get a foot in the door?

**Carolyn Ellis:** I've had women who have been in the business and been let go for cost-cutting reasons. They feel they deserve to come back in the exact same position. To me that is sort of short-sighted. What I've said to these women is times

have changed since you left that firm. Perhaps you could come back in a different role, maybe not as senior, but I would take a job just to get back in and then work your way back. I'm not saying sell your soul but if it's a job that is interesting, would it hurt you? Our business is such that if you leave it for too long you get lost in the shuffle. It's always easier to find a job when you have a job.

**Jeong-Jeong Chu:** I would say, thinking back from my experience, that you really have to work twice as hard, be twice as smart, in trading. Be prepared for that. Especially in Hong Kong, spend time networking. It's critical. It's one

thing to get a mentor working in the same office but that comes with time and trust. Networking is key. Through that you can meet a lot of people who can be very helpful and resourceful. In this business there is a boys' club—after work they go out for drinks, etc, and they don't include the women because they want to talk about things they don't think are relevant to women. You have to figure out other ways to do that. It's hard if you are just starting out in the business and you wonder what you can contribute to the conversation. The worst thing that can happen is they don't respond or they say no. Nobody is going to laugh at you.

# 5 Conclusions

The four sectors under study in this report are among those acknowledged as having very low participation rates for women, particularly at management level. Changing this reality will not be easy. As this research has made clear, there is no single issue which, if rectified, could raise participation rates across sectors. In some cases, such as luxury, women are attracted to the industry but drop out at a certain level of seniority. This often coincides with the time that they are planning to start a family, and many find it too difficult to balance children with a demanding schedule of after-work duties and travel. In other cases, such as technology, the problem seems to stem from false assumptions made on many fronts—that women are not interested in technology, and that they have less aptitude for maths and science. In other sectors, such as transport and trading, the fundamental issue is one of reputation—women believe that these sectors are unsuitable, or even hostile for them.

Improving women's participation in these industries will require action on all fronts. For companies, the first step is a self-assessment. Where are women within the organisation and if they are not rising to management ranks, why not? The answers must be followed by a commitment to change and a detailed action plan. This should include the enlistment of senior women as role models and mentors.

The government has a role to play as well. It could begin by acknowledging that current provisions of parental leave are insufficient—maternity leave is too short, and paternity leave does not exist. A concerted effort to expose more girls to opportunities in the technology sector, and to encourage them to pursue maths and science, would seem to be urgently required.

While companies in the sectors covered here seem to be increasingly aware of the benefits of diversity, clearly there is work to do to make it a reality.

## About the sponsor

The Women's Foundation (TWF) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in Hong Kong through research, community programmes, and education and advocacy. The research presented here is connected with TWF's Leading Women Speaker Series, which is supported by the following partners:

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