

Randstad Recruitment Announce Female Under-Representation in Retail Management

Sector lags behind law where 50 per cent of full time professionals are women. 94 per cent of female business people say mandatory quotas are not the best way to ensure women get ahead.

LONDON, ENGLAND, February 01, 2013 /24-7PressRelease/ -- **Just 42 per cent of Full-Time Retail Managers Are Women: Is the Self-Confidence Quota the reason?**

- Sector lags behind law where 50 per cent of full time professionals are women
- 94 per cent of female business people say mandatory quotas are not the best way to ensure women get ahead
- 73 per cent of women say self-doubt holds women back in business

Women make up just 42 per cent of full time retail managers, according to research carried out by Randstad Retail, the specialist recruiter. In comparison, [Randstad Business Support](#) who recruits for positions such as secretary jobs and administrative assistants receive a high proportion of female applicants for their vacancies, where women can account for the vast majority of positions filled.

Of the 308,000 retail and wholesale managers employed full-time in the UK in 2011, just 129,000 were female. The [retail jobs sector](#) lags behind law where 50 per cent - 56,000 out of 113,000 - of full time professionals are women.

But at a recent round table event, "High Achieving, Inspiring Women", hosted by Randstad UK, a panel of high-powered women - including the Williams F1 Team Development Driver, Susie Wolff and Beverly Hodson, a non-executive director of Randstad UK and former retail managing director of WHSmith plc - said quotas are not the answer to their underrepresentation in industry. 94 per cent of the attendees also echoed their belief that quotas were not the best way to ensure women get ahead in sectors like retail. However, when asked if women should actively promote other women, 50 per cent of those polled said they should.

Peter Shrimpton said, "Quotas are certainly a hugely controversial option but while everyone should be hired and promoted on the basis of skill, not gender, that's not necessarily happening. Many people believe that quotas could become a necessary evil as other measures fail to even the playing field. My personal view, and the view I hear echoed by many women in the retail sector is that they would prefer to get there on their own merit. Nobody wants to be a token hire just because of their gender. Perhaps the bigger issue around quotas is the smaller 'share' of self-confidence women seem to have compared to men to aim high in the first place."

The panel touched on some of the reasons why women are not better represented in business, including whether women at the top good are good at guiding other women to follow the same path. When asked if this was the case, 58 per cent said women at the top were good at guiding other women up the ladder.

As part of the discussion, the audience also listed what they thought the key attributes that women brought to the business world. 61 per cent said that empathy was the greatest strength while another 16 per cent said teamwork. Just 6 per cent said sensitivity and 2 per cent caution. 14 per cent of those polled said men and women brought the same attributes to the table.

The participants were polled on supposedly female traits that they thought held women back. 73 per cent listed 'self doubt', while 18 per cent said 'emotion' and 8% 'too nurturing'.

Peter Shrimpton, managing director of Randstad Retail said, "The majority of our participants don't think women at the top are failing to help others up the ladder. If there are female traits holding women back, the participants clearly think it's a lack of self-confidence. Having seen men and women in action in interviews I know that if a woman has experience of five of the six requirements on a job description, she will often focus on explaining why she can't do the 6th. Men on the other hand tend to be better at emphasising their experience of the other five."

FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE

Beverly Hodson said: "When I started in retail in the early 70's, there were few women in senior positions. Lots and

lots of them were shop assistants and few if any were female store managers. I was lucky because as an only child, I was my father's substitute son, my mother ran her own business, and my grandmother was a force to be reckoned with! As a consequence, it never occurred to me that there were any ceilings, let alone a need to break them!

Today retail is very much a meritocratic industry and women can get to the top by showing excellent management and leadership skills, absolute customer focus, good understanding of different markets and developing trends (spotting the winners and avoiding the dogs!), and the ability to make money by buying well and selling profitably.

Things have changed hugely for the good in terms of opportunity, but the pressure on women has not lessened. In my day it was not unusual for women who focused on their careers not to marry or have children. Now you're expected to do and have it all: amazing hair, impeccable dress, several children, wonderful full life style, gorgeous homes and husbands. So whilst there are potentially more opportunities and more role models in retail, expectations of success are higher and that may explain why there seems to be a growing feeling amongst women of "this is going to be impossible to achieve."

SUSIE WOLF

Susie Wolff talked about her experiences in Formula 1. Over the history of F1, only five women have entered a grand prix - compared to 822 men. But the arrival of Susie Wolff onto the test driver rosters continues a gradual shift towards increased female involvement in F1. Louise Evans has been the CFO of Williams since November 2011 and Frank Williams' daughter Claire Williams took up a position on the board of the team in April. In October, Monisha Kaltenborn became F1's first woman team principal when she took over the running of the Sauber F1 Team.

Susie Wolff said: "There are still stereotypes about women in the workplace and in the driving seat. I've faced many obstacles and being a female in a man's world is very tough. Equally, I've also enjoyed support. I have a passion for racing and a determination to be the best driver - not the best female driver. You have to keep on fighting for your ultimate goal and for that self-belief is vital."

The Randstad group is one of the leading recruitment & HR services providers in the world with a top five position in the UK and a top three position in fifteen countries including the US, France and Germany.

In the UK, Randstad's business lines serve the public and private sectors across Accounting and Financial services; Business Support; Construction, Property and Engineering; Education; Health and Social Care; Interim Management and Search; Human Resources; IT; Legal; Retail; Sales, Marketing and Creative; Student and Worker Support and In-House and Managed Services.

At the end of 2011, Randstad had 1,930 corporate employees in the UK, working in 255 locations. UK revenue in 2011 was EUR789 million. Randstad was founded in 1960 and is headquartered in Diemen, the Netherlands. Randstad Holding nv is listed on the NYSE Euronext Amsterdam. For more information see <http://www.randstad.co.uk>.

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