



Diversity brings new ways of thinking

Catherine Williams, Executive Director speaks about Diversity and Inclusion at MSD after receiving a 'Highly Commended' Communique Award following an ambitious project which addressed gender diversity in the workplace.

"At MSD we are deeply committed and pride ourselves on fostering an inclusive environment that embraces different perspectives and values the contributions of each individual. We actively encourage our employees to 'bring their whole self to work', to be who they are.

I feel extremely fortunate to be part of a company which embraces diversity and inclusion and have personally always believed that gender diversity is not just a 'women's issue,' it's something we all have a responsibility to address. Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions - all day, every day.

The gender diversity project not only achieved a Highly Commended recognition at Communique this year but its impact is, still being felt across a range of industries which took part.

It all started when leading medical journal, *The Lancet* announced plans to publish a special edition on women in science and medicine. This announcement inspired myself and my team together with communications agency Aurora, to initiate an event to proactively drive progress in gender diversity and encourage others to do so.

As a bio pharmaceutical company that is passionate about diversity and inclusion, we were motivated to drive change and reach out to a wide audience who would make a real difference.

The event was attended by a range of guest speakers from a variety of sectors and industries, all of whom had a desire to debate key issues related to gender diversity but also importantly to look to network and collaborate with each other. MSD was a key driver in this, leading the way to enable the networking and collaborations to take place.

The majority of participants also said that they would want to attend future events such as this, which reinforces the need organisations have for collaboration on gender diversity across a range of professions and workplaces.

The event and engagement received following the supporting social media campaign showed that we can actively choose to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate women and men's achievements.

It sought to move from platitudes to proactivity in the realms of equality and initiated a cascade of connections and actions, sharing our gender diversity objectives organically and creating real change.

We are delighted to have been shortlisted and received a Highly Commended Award at Communique, but rather than sing our own praises for doing this, the best legacy from it can be to spread our learnings and ensure that businesses adapt a culture to:

- Call out inappropriate behaviours
- Ensure everyone has a voice and is listened to
- Set diversity goals that are meaningful
- Instil gender diversity into all your actions

To date, at MSD, we believe we have made great progress internally with gender diversity and inclusion and are always seeking ways to do more. We and I believe that diversity brings new ways of thinking and leads to opportunities for growth, learning and collaboration. Having a globally and locally diverse workforce makes us a more innovative and agile company — and one better attuned to the needs of our customers, health care providers and patients who ultimately use our products. After all, women make up half the world and so it's important our business is reflective of that.”