

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 4

**Promote education,
training and professional
development for women**

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CASE STUDY: GROUPE PSA HARNESSING WOMEN'S POTENTIAL THROUGH A GLOBAL NETWORK

LESSONS LEARNED

- Ensuring that women play a greater role in product and service design generates better business results, fosters innovation, brings companies closer to their customer base and highlights the fact that women have an important role to play in the workplace.
- Establishing a network with a clear and meaningful agenda is a powerful way to make women's skills, talents and leadership visible. It also boosts members' self-confidence and encourages them to have higher career aspirations.
- Having a women's perspective panel which reviews and makes mandatory recommendations about business products and services is an effective way to ensure that women's perspectives are taken seriously.
- Creating a women's forum which provides input on business and operational matters will remain a strategic need as long as companies are not gender balanced at the highest levels and in technical roles.
- Setting up a successful women's network is not a challenging endeavour – most women are keen to participate and see it succeed.

CONTEXT

Groupe PSA is a French multinational car manufacturer. The industry has a culture of traditional gender roles with relatively few women in senior positions. This is despite the fact that women make up a large part of the consumer base: in the US, for example, 62 per cent of all new cars are bought by women and women make up 85 per

cent of those who make car purchasing decisions, according to recent automotive studies. Car manufacturers are increasingly recognizing the importance of women's input to the design and delivery of automotive products and services.

Groupe PSA employs more than 20,000 women and women make up 60-70 per cent of its consumer base. The firm recognizes the importance of women's participation – from design through to sales and has committed to increase the number of women engineers and technicians, including at senior level. It has also pledged to make sure that women are central to its transformation as it serves a more diverse, global market. To make that commitment a reality, ten years ago Women Engaged for PSA was created by around 100 women

supported by senior management. As the company has grown, so too has the network: it now has 700 members in 21 countries and spanning 23 departments. Its current membership is at 58 per cent members strong outside France.

Its focus is two-fold: to increase women's access to all roles, including technical and senior positions, and to make sure that women's perspectives are central to company's international growth plans.

ACTIONS

Women Engaged for PSA historically had a strong presence in France but as the firm has acquired new companies and grown globally, the network has developed an international outlook. Groupe PSA Chairman, Carlos Tavares, has also pushed it to be representative of PSA's international customers.

The network provides a forum to seek insight from women in areas including research and development, automobile design, operations, customer services, and HR. This is particularly important because women hold just 20 per cent of senior managerial roles and 17 per cent of executive roles.

"We have to produce, conceive and sell cars for our customers," said Estefanía Narrillos Roux, Financial Director for Spain, Portugal and North Africa. "The reason why Women Engaged for PSA is so important for the company is because it helps us get closer to our customers."

Women Engaged for PSA is the company's only international network and it plays a unique role, having effectively been a lever for the company's cultural transformation. Unusually for an employee's network, its scope includes contributing to the company's business interests and operations.

The network aims to support the company develop and grow by being offering advice that is innovative, pragmatic and occasionally disruptive. Two years ago, when Group Chair Carlos Tavares suggested the company should consider how to move into the electric car market, Women Engaged for PSA came up with a series of recommendations. These spanned areas including training and developing the entire workforce, alongside practical steps to support employees in making the personal shift to electric vehicles.

Women's perspective panels composed of network members are a mandatory part of all vehicle projects. "We have around 20 women's perspective panels running at the same time, giving advice on car features, marketing, and then testing cars once ready," says Laure Jouffrai, President of Women Engaged for PSA.

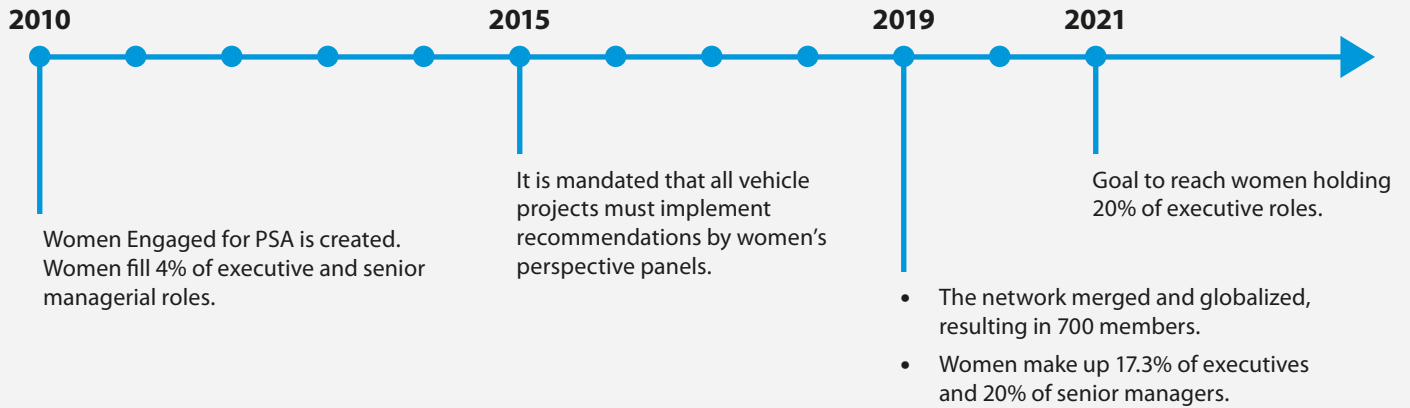
The network is open to any women employee who wants to join. Applicants write a statement explaining their motivation for joining and then attend an informal interview to discuss the network's goals. Most members are managers, although an increasing number of women technicians are joining. Globalization of the network means membership now stands at 700, up from 430 two years ago.

While the network operates independently of HR, there is strong collaboration between the two. Network leaders meet regularly with HR executives and Group Chair Carlos Tavares also plays an active role, but the network identifies its own priorities.

"We have the freedom to choose the topics we want to work on," said Jouffrai. "It is an interesting, agile relationship with HR and senior executives."



TIMELINE



CHALLENGES

Globalization of the network presents opportunities and challenges. While some topics are relevant to women everywhere, the local context needs to be considered. Network members are tasked with tailoring activities and tools to make sure they apply everywhere. In China, for example, 'mystery shoppers' are a popular way to test products or services but do not work everywhere. In Spain, a programme of breakfast events with women role models has been very successful but has gone down less well elsewhere.

Another challenge is to keep women active in the network. It is informal and voluntary, so members have to do network activities outside of working hours. To make it easier for members, activities and communication have increasingly gone online and events are now live streamed and then stored online.

The global merger of networks in other countries was much easier than anticipated. "It was so obvious that we should be working together," according to Network President Laure Jouffrai. "The will and ease with which the women work together is really interesting."



RESULTS

Women's perspective panels have proven to be a very effective method of seeking women's input to the company's car designs. Up to 90 per cent of the networks recommendations have been implemented at Peugeot Citroën DS since 2014 and since 2018, they have been implemented in all programmes at Opel.

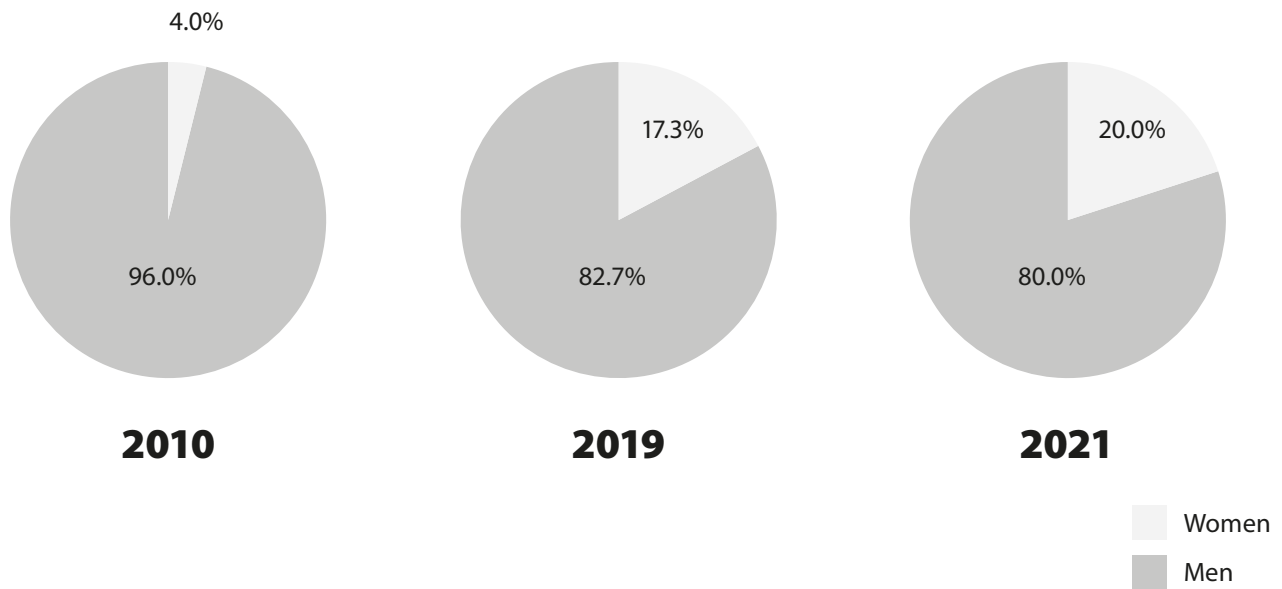
When Women Engaged for PSA started in 2010, very few women worked at the company. The executive leadership and senior managers were only four per cent women but by 2019, 17.3 per cent of executives and 20 per cent of senior managers were women. The current goal –and a fundamental target for the network– is to also have women in 20 per cent of executive roles by 2021.

The network has played a major role in making female talent more visible. It has highlighted the significant role women have to play in the workplace and shown the business value they add. It has also boosted the self-confidence of its members and encouraged them to aim higher with their careers.

All of the women in the company's upper management and leadership roles are part of the network. They promote women's perspective panels, encouraging women to have the confidence to make suggestions and demonstrating the business impact of their input.

"The strategic need for the network to advise on business and operational matters will remain until we have 50 per cent of women throughout the company. We will be here until there are enough women in senior positions to be providing that advice and making decisions as part of their day jobs," says Laure Jouffrai.

WOMEN IN SENIOR OPERATIONAL POSITIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

“It is important for the private sector to understand that diversity and gender balance are not romanticism. As our CEO Carlos Tavares often says, it is a matter of business,” says Xavier Guisse, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager.

“When I see all the work done by this network, I understand how women manage complexities. It sheds light on the potential of women. This is why this network is crucial for the future transformation of the Group,” he says.

According to Financial Director Estefanía Narrillos Roux, the business value women add is original and innovative. “It is very interesting when you go to a women’s perspective panel: the originality of the advice. The way women think is completely different from male engi-

neers and male marketing managers. Women’s advice reflects their perceptions and expectations from a car, which can be completely different from that of men.”








Narillos Roux also highlights the power of networking, particularly when it comes to identifying hidden talent. “In every country I go to extend the network, I discover some talent which would otherwise have not been visible,” she says.


What makes this network especially successful is the women who participate and the support of both the Group Chair and HR leadership. “If the message is not top down, it is often missed in the organization,” says Laure Jouffrai.

THE ROLE OF WEPs


The Women’s Empowerment Principles have helped Groupe PSA to evaluate and assess its practices, projects, and policies for gender equality. They have helped to identify action plans


consistent with the company’s commitment to gender equality and have taken PSA’s efforts to empower and advance women to a global level.

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
PRINCIPLES**

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