

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

OCTOBER 2020

## LEADERS IN ACTION

*Jessica Templeton Smith and  
Lucy Pickford  
Partners, OLGA Agency*



## DESIGNING A WORLD WITH GENDER EQUALITY

Jessica Templeton Smith and Lucy Pickford, co-partners at London-based marketing agency OLGA, work with companies in the arts, education and culture sector. The firm uses print and digital media branding and design, providing innovative solutions for clients ranging from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to local councils and universities.

Jessica co-founded the agency in 2016 with a previous partner who has now left; Lucy joined the company as project manager in 2018 and became partner shortly after.

Both Jessica and Lucy graduated from their respective universities during the global economic recession in 2008–2009 and faced a lack of career opportunities.

Jessica thought her degree in modern languages and art history would give her numerous opportunities for a career in the arts, but the impact on the job market post-recession forced her to find an alternative route. Her first job, in publishing and marketing at a large firm, allowed her to discover hidden talents and new skillsets. “I really enjoyed the breadth of opportunity [in marketing], especially working on the agency side,” she said.

While she found her new career exciting, she could not forget about her passion for the arts. “I felt ethically compromised by some of the clients that we had to work for. I thought it was a good opportunity to take my skills that I learned there and think about the next step.”

*She explained: “Ultimately, I wanted to be working with people whose product I was passionate about. At OLGA Agency our focal point as a business is working with nice people who do nice things. This is both for sustainability and also businesses that pride themselves on positive ethics.”*

Lucy, too, found job-hunting hard in a recession. She had studied to become a landscape architect, but finding no opportunities she shifted gears to join the technology industry, leading SMEs in operations. “Working for a three-person startup company was a crash course in running a business,” she said.

She became immersed in working in research and development, marketing and sales, as well as product design, gaining experience in several companies. And she discovered new ways of managing marketing and brand development when she went to Japan to work as an international market lead for a travel and education company.

Both Jessica and Lucy pursued advanced degrees, Jessica in creative entrepreneurship and Lucy in art history, further enhancing their strategic and analytical approaches to brand strategy.

## **Looking to one’s roots for role models**

Jessica said: “Both of my parents worked, and my mother was a good role model for me.” Her mother, a senior architect in a practice, encouraged Jessica to earn money early on, and at the age of 13 Jessica had her first job. “I worked every Saturday. It was a great thing to teach me that I needed to work hard to achieve my aims.”

Lucy, too, had strong parental role models. She said: “I was very fortunate as a child – I had parents that were very encouraging in everything. They also presented me with this idea that I could do whatever I wanted if I worked hard.

“My father was a stay-at-home dad. My mother was the breadwinner... I understood that both roles are important, and one can choose to prioritize career or family, or do both at any time.”

As Jessica and Lucy’s careers and experience grew, they began to see the gender inequality in their respective fields of marketing and architecture, which fuelled their determination to run their own business the way they wanted.

“As I got older, it got to a point where I knew that, if I wanted the opportunity, I had to make it myself. When I met Jess I thought, ‘Let’s be the change that we want to see elsewhere.’” she said.

## **Creating innovative and inclusive solutions**

OLGA Agency works specifically with small business in the arts and heritage industry for both print and digital design, content production and various aspects of brand-related marketing. The company has expanded to work on projects based on sustainability.

Jessica said: “At the onset, the company grew through our clients.” She explained that she found the investment market challenging and not geared to small women-owned businesses like her own, adding: “I have found that, in networking for [investment] opportunities, there is often an expectation that there will be a man involved in the business.”

Instead, she was able to gain clients for projects as a source of funding and found the outcome far more rewarding. The company is now fully funded by client-based short-term projects.

*“Public tenders [in the UK] have been a great opportunity for us because it is an even playing field or, at least, you know it’s set up to be an even playing field. You really have the opportunity to sell yourselves alongside very well-connected people and longer established companies. That is where we have been able to stand out and make some of our first [large] contracts,” Jessica said.*

One of their current projects is working on sustainable tourism for a local camp, with a focus on content production. The project is for a local council, within a European programme, hoping to attract tourism in the low season. Jessica and Lucy say that OLGA Agency’s media work will be “encouraging people to make positive choices, such as buying from local independent businesses and cycling and walking when possible. The project includes a range of media, including video, copy and graphic content.”

They also utilize an inclusive approach throughout their work to make the arts more accessible. Through their arts and heritage clients, OLGA Agency is hoping to be more aware of unconscious bias and how it restricts people’s access to institutions such as the opera or museums. With one client in particular, they are working to ensure youth and the community at-large are included in the strategy for branding and design of the institution’s local tours.

## **Prioritizing gender equality and women’s empowerment**

As a women-led company, Jessica and Lucy are aware they might have an unconscious bias towards choosing women employees, and are prioritizing gender equality in recruiting contract workers and choosing suppliers.

Jessica said: “Whenever we are recruiting, we ensure everyone within the process is fully aware of what the process is; how it’s going to be graded, and of our efforts to make sure we’re not applying our own bias. We make sure job candidates have full awareness of the HR policies on hiring and appropriate work behaviour.”

Jessica and Lucy also ensure contracted employees are adequately trained for their particular project to ensure they “are immersed in the brand and have digested the tone of voice, project aims and, crucially, where their work fits into the project”.

If the project includes events, OLGA Agency “will host training events, ensuring that everybody has an understanding of their role and how it fits with the wider project team, the venue, risk assessments and client, as well as making sure that people have an opportunity to ask questions,” Lucy said.

OLGA Agency wants to ensure their suppliers share their ethics of an inclusive work environment. “We want to make sure that we don’t just go to the cheapest supplier. We [want to be] happy with their policies and the way they run business so that people are paid a fair wage and the hiring process is [fair and inclusive],” Lucy said.

OLGA Agency signed the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) in June 2020 and will use the principles to stay on track for their planned growth and maintaining an inclusive supply chain.

*“It’s really important and integral to our ethics. The (WEPs) give a standardization that people understand, and it gives us a framework for the ideas we already have in mind for our company,” Jessica said.*

## Women's Empowerment Principles



High-level corporate leadership



Workplace HR



Employee well-being and safety



Education and training for women




Supplier diversity & marketing practices




Community engagement



Measurement and reporting

 [weps.org](http://weps.org)

 [weps@unwomen.org](mailto:weps@unwomen.org)

 [@WEPrinciples](https://twitter.com/WEPrinciples)

 [@Empower\\_Women](https://twitter.com/Empower_Women)

Funded by:



European Union

Produced by:



International Labour Organization



Funded by the European Union



In support of:

**WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
PRINCIPLES**

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Union, UN Women, International Labour Organization or the United Nations and their Member States.