

□ Newsletter june 2010

Opportunity E-zine v/m is OiB's online newsletter. It covers news and events within our network and current issues related to diversity. We hope you enjoy reading this E-zine!

On behalf of the Opportunity team, Lizzy Venekamp, director.

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- **Getting to know Menzis**
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- **Good practice: Achmea supports ambitious women**

□ Opportunity Events

Cross Mentoring: like a stone thrown into a pond

Opportunity in Bedrijf



The 2009-2010 Cross Mentoring Programme concluded on 3 June with a meeting on how to improve the impact of mentoring. The meeting covered such questions as 'How does mentoring affect career development', 'How can mentoring be extended?', and, of course, 'What can your company do to participate in the

programme (again) next year?'

Launched as a pilot project a few years ago, OiB's Cross Mentoring Programme has already demonstrated its value. Some 225 female high potentials have benefited from discussions with their mentors in other companies, from the 'inspiration meetings', and from the peer-sharing sessions. An equal number of mentors have also enjoyed the benefits of the programme.

Those attending the 3 June meeting heard, in a nut shell, what the programme could mean for them personally and for their organisation. Several of the programme participants talked about their personal experience of mentoring. Discussions at the 'theme tables' focused on how mentoring can act as a 'stone thrown into a pond' – and how to increase the number of stones. The tips and lessons learned by IBM, Shell and DNB (the Dutch central bank) proved particularly inspiring.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2010-2011 Cross Mentoring Programme.

For more information: llaurs@opportunity.nl

17 June – Check out our Leadership Programme for Women



Opportunity Advies is organising a late afternoon event on 17 June to acquaint those interested with a unique leadership programme. The event is free of charge and will take place from 4.30 to 6 p.m. The Leadership Programme for Women is based on Opportunity Advies's many years of experience and expertise in promoting effective, strong female leadership and diversity in organisations. The programme was developed for Opportunity network participants and for companies outside the network that have made diversity a priority. It has been carried out in-company with great success at

various organisations, including Ernst & Young and Delft University of Technology. It is held twice a year and registration is open to all.

What makes this programme unique? It gives the participating organisations an effective instrument for promoting the advancement of women, and the participating female professionals an instructive and successful programme for improving and honing their skills, building empowerment and expanding their networks.

The programme is aimed at ambitious women, regardless of cultural background. Bringing them together in a mixed group also gives them a unique opportunity to learn from one another and see for themselves how diversity and diversity management work in practice.

Here's what a number of former participants say:

- *You learn to make your mark, to speak up for yourself, and – above all – to stop being self-effacing.*
- *The programme shows you how women can operate effectively, in their own way, in a masculine environment without assuming the role of victims in the process.*
- *It was a unique experience to share ideas and lessons learned with women from other organisations.*

For more information and to register: evzuilichem@opportunity.nl

Engaging managers in diversity

The D&I professionals network is an Opportunity 'sub-network' within which professionals can look in greater depth at various aspects of diversity & inclusion and learn from one another. On 22 June, the network will be considering the topic of 'engaging men in diversity'. The discussion will cover such questions as 'Which manager profiles support diversity?' and 'Under what conditions do managers actively involve themselves in achieving diversity & inclusion?'

For more information: mberkel@opportunity.nl

Crossing the bo(a)rders

The Opportunity Boardroom Coaching programme began in January of this year. In the programme, thirteen top executives each help a female executive potential in another organisation take the final steps to a senior position. Besides one-on-one meetings between the executive coaches and their potentials, the programme also includes a number of 'inspiration meetings'. The meeting scheduled for 5 July at IBM will focus on the topic of 'successful communication'.



For more information: mberkel@opportunity.nl

For a complete list of Opportunity events and projects in 2010, go to www.opportunity.nl and click on [agenda](#).

□ Good Practices

achmea



Achmea helps women get ahead

After Achmea signed the Talent to the Top Charter in spring 2008, the insurer took a number of steps to increase diversity within its organisation in terms of both numbers and intensity. Its efforts have been successful: the percentage of female directors, for example, increased from 16% to 23% in 2009.

Achmea's policy is twofold: 1) to raise management awareness and promote changes in management behaviour, 2) to support and encourage talented women. Within the context of the latter aim, for example, the company has launched a Female Development Programme. The programme is aimed at women in senior positions who have 5 to 15 years of work experience and would like to advance their careers within the Achmea organisation. In addition, Achmea organises network meetings, and several of its female senior managers have recently developed a workshop, 'Just Connected', to help boost the success of Achmea women. Senior female executives at Achmea make an active contribution to the workshop.

Achmea recently launched a new initiative specifically for pregnant women and young mothers: Maternity Coaching. The programme supports women during pregnancy and motherhood through a combination of coaching, peer-sharing and workshops. Achmea wants to encourage and help such women achieve their ambitions and find a comfortable work/life balance.

Last but not least, Achmea is also participating in OiB's Cross Mentoring Programme. The programme supports the company's twofold policy: the participating mentors (managers) and mentees (female high potentials) all benefit.

□ Opportunity thinks...

Dutch politicians should make a firm commitment to promoting women to senior executive positions during the next Government term of office.

Dutch women are making only agonisingly slow progress in their climb to the top of the corporate ladder. The Netherlands is lagging behind other countries in this respect, even though diversity is a proven success factor and will become even more important in future as the Netherlands makes its mark as a knowledge-driven economy.

Executive diversity will not happen on its own, however – that much has become more than clear. That is why there is growing support for the idea of setting compulsory targets and introducing quotas, if only temporarily. According to the UN Women's Rights Convention, which the Netherlands has signed, such quotas are permissible.

The Dutch Parliament has now passed a bill proposed by MP Paul Kalma stipulating that by 2016, 30% of the executive positions at large companies must be filled by women. Experience shows that specific targets and mandatory accountability help accelerate the process. Putting too much pressure on companies can be counterproductive,* however; what is required is genuine commitment, concern and patience. Let's make sure that the next Government gives this issue the attention and action it deserves.

The Netherlands is making good progress when it comes to the number of women in politics (Parliament, the Government, political parties). This is certainly due, at least in part, to commitment and a quota-like strategy (for example in the Dutch Labour Party), and to setting targets and maintaining 'special' lists of candidates. Politicians therefore know better than anyone that these methods work. Now we need to convince businesses and government organisations too!

* *Women on Board. Does forced diversity hurt firm performance? 9 February 2010*

News from the Opportunity network

Every person counts: diversity & inclusion at Menzis

Menzis, a Dutch health and insurance company, joined the Opportunity network six months ago. 'Every person counts' is the motto of the company, which has more than two million policyholders. Menzis's concern for people is obvious not only in its approach to clients, but also in the way it deals with its employees.



Menzis's aim is to make the motto 'every person counts' tangible within its own organisation. It wants both clients and employees to feel welcome and at home, regardless of age, gender, origins, nationality, religious beliefs, disability or private circumstances. In other words, it wants to offer its employees an inclusive working environment. It hopes this will give rise to a richly varied, diverse organisation, one in which everyone works together pleasantly and productively and that enables Menzis to respond effectively to the needs of its equally diverse clients. Menzis is in fact using its strategic client positioning to shape its internal policy.

The percentage of women in executive positions at Menzis has increased in the past few years, thanks to specific action on the part of the organisation in recruitment and selection and in management development. With a view to increasing this percentage and extending the level of diversity in its ranks, Menzis joined the Opportunity network in late 2009. Since then, it has already undertaken a number of initiatives. For example, CEO Roger van Boxtel is taking part in the Boardroom Coaching Programme, which, like the Cross Mentoring Programme, offers an effective supplement to Menzis' own mentoring and management development programmes.

Opportunity also carried out a Diversity & Inclusion scan at Menzis to determine whether the company's corporate culture is in line with its strategy and policy. The scan focused specifically on identifying positive and negative factors on the road to becoming a more inclusive organisation in which everyone's talents are recognised and utilised. Based on the scan results, Menzis has decided to work on increasing its commitment to diversity and making its efforts in this area more goal-oriented. In addition, it aims to increase the percentage of minority groups on staff by starting a trainee programme early next year focused on achieving more staff diversity and by appointing role models to key positions. Finally, the organisation will be taking a more professional approach to talent management in 2011.

'Once Menzis employees see that they matter, that they're appreciated for their special qualities and talents, then they can put the concept of "every person counts" into practice,' says P&O Manager Monique Kelder.

'Many organisations pay lip service to gender and other forms of diversity,' adds MD adviser Mieke Veeninga. 'But Menzis has shown that it actually practises what it preaches by appointing women to senior positions, for example. Our challenge over the course of the next year will be to continue along these lines and keep pursuing a broad policy of diversity.'

'Me-Marketing' workshop for ambitious women

'Me-marketing' workshop

Opportunity Advies offers a range of different training courses and workshops. Each one is tailor-made and focuses on a different target group, specifically senior managers and female high potentials. The Me-Marketing workshop offers ambitious women a goal-oriented approach to making themselves more visible and effective at work. Lizzy Venekamp and Annemarie van Iren held the workshop for a group of women on 17 May at WomenInc.

'For years, I thought that just by working hard and excelling in my profession, I'd move up the corporate ladder. My work was appreciated, but I never got promoted. I saw men who had started

at the same time as I did passing me by. I finally realised that I had to show another side of myself if I wanted to make progress in my career.'

At the start of their careers, highly educated men and women are equally ambitious. The difference is that women are more concerned about the substance of their work and about being a good team player. They are far less concerned about the way they influence others, their personal reputation and displaying their ambition, even though careers increasingly depend on it. On top of that, ambition requires a public arena. It must be recognised and encouraged. Our personal growth depends on being appreciated for our achievements.

In this solutions-driven workshop, participants examine the effectiveness of their current marketing strategy and the role that gender plays in that strategy. They also learn how to make a bigger impact on their working environment and get more credit for their work. The Opportunity trainers draw on their many years of experience and the insights they have gained within numerous organisations and leadership training courses for both women and men.

'Recognition leads to understanding' Workshop



On 27 May, Opportunity consultant/trainer Dirk Hamaker and two professional actors headed a workshop for ambitious women. The workshop was part of the 'Lead your Life, Live your Ambitions' event organised by Lof (a cross-media platform for working mothers) and De Baak (management and business training and expertise centre).

Participants were shown a number of film clips and took part in a role-playing session highlighting the differing communication styles of men and women. The actors acted out a scene drawn from real life, in this case a conversation between a male manager and his female subordinate. The workshop

participants directed the scene and told the actors what behaviour would be effective in achieving the stated target and what behaviour would prevent or encourage diversity.

The group was naturally intrigued, especially when the role-playing revealed the gender patterns and their impact. It also showed how to deal with these patterns once they have been recognised.

[More information about Opportunity Advies workshops and training courses](#)

News Round-up

Percentage of female senior executives growing, but influx slowing down

On 27 April 2010, 26 new organisations signed the Talent to the Top Charter, voluntarily committing themselves to a long-term policy of appointing more women to the senior ranks of their organisations. That brings the total number of Charter signatories to 134, representing approximately 8% of the total number of employees in the Netherlands.

The signing ceremony took place on the day that the Talent to the Top Monitoring Committee presented its annual report to HRH Princess Máxima of the Netherlands, Dutch Minister for Economic Affairs Maria van der Hoeven, and Dutch State Secretary for Education Marja van Bijsterveldt. According to the report, the percentage of women appointed by Charter signatory companies to senior executive positions rose in 2009 by 1.7% to 18.4%.

The Monitoring Committee is concerned about the average percentage of women being hired by and leaving organisations. Relatively speaking, fewer women are entering employment than the number leaving their jobs. The Committee believes that organisations must do more to actively recruit and retain women.

Opportunity participants Achmea, the Dutch Ministry of Defence and KPMG are among the organisations that recorded the best results in the past year. The Committee believes that they set a good example of how an organisation can cultivate female talent.

The Charter signatories have a much higher percentage of women in senior executive positions than the average in Dutch trade and industry. Opportunity's TopCounter f/m shows that the percentage of women in the very highest echelons of the 500 largest companies is less than 4%. Government organisations are doing somewhat better: more than 18% of senior civil servants in national government are women, while 19% of municipal executive councillors and an equal percentage of mayors are female. There is a worrisome trend here as well, however: there has been no increase in the percentage of women in the government and public sectors for quite some time.

(Sources: Press release: 'Talent naar de Top, 27 april 2010'; Toptelling v/m, Opportunity in Bedrijf 2009; Binnenlands Bestuur, 28 May 2010)

Jesse Jackson: diversity is like a bowl of vegetable soup

Jesse Jackson was recently in the Netherlands for a three-day visit. We selected the following quotes from Ralf Knegtman's interview with Reverend Jackson, a famed human-rights activist, in the magazine Management Team:

'You never know where talent will come from... A four-room home with six boys, two girls and two parents might suddenly house a Michael Jackson. If we exclude categories, we run the risk of missing out on a genius. For that reason alone, we ought to embrace diversity. We need all the talent we can muster to meet the challenges of our time.'

'Be aware of the common denominator, but also of the differences. To use another metaphor: diversity is like a bowl of vegetable soup. You put in peas, beans, maize and carrots. You draw out a bit of the flavour of each one. The final result makes a better dish. Each is very identifiable and adds to the texture and a better result.'

(Source: Management Team, 31 May 2010)

People don't trust what they don't know

A remarkable study* from an unexpected source shows that the use of quotas can be an effective tool for breaking out of patterns of homogeneity.



In India, there is a government scheme in which 30% of villages must elect female mayors. The villages concerned are assigned by lot. Male candidates are excluded in the relevant years. Villages that had elected their first female mayors had a lower opinion of them than of their male counterparts. However, villages that had had female mayors before judged female and male mayors as equally effective. Although they take some getting used to, female leaders are eventually accepted and appreciated.

More remarkable still were the results of a follow-up study exploring the elections subsequent to those restricted to female candidates. In the follow-up elections, in which both male and female candidates ran for mayor, the chance of a woman being elected was five times higher (21% as opposed to 4%) than in villages that had never had a female mayor.

(Source: Management Team, 26 May)

* Rikhil R. Bhavnani: *Do electoral quotas work after they are withdrawn? Evidence from a natural experiment in India.* Stanford University, 9 February 2009

□ Opportunity congratulates

Opportunity has taken note of the following appointments of female senior executives (in alphabetical order):

Jaska de Bakker – Managing Director, DHV
Pamela Boumeester – Supervisory Director, Heijmans
Bernadette van Buchem – Director, Dutch Consumer Authority
Myrthe Ferwerda – Managing Director, Management Development Advisory Group, Berenschot
Ien van de Goor – Professor of Individual Prevention Effectiveness
Louise Gunning – Chairperson, Health Council of the Netherlands
Katinka Habermehl-Reuling – General Director, ASA Student
Alexandra van Huffelen – Interim Manager, De Publieke Zaak
Carla Koen – Professor of Technology Management and Entrepreneurship, TiasNimbas Business School
Leontien Koens-Betz - Managing Partner, Accuracy Netherlands
Fieke van der Lecq – Supervisory Director, Delta Lloyd
Annelies Mirani – Manager, Risk Management Group Actuarial & Risk Management, Delta Lloyd Group
Tanya van Nieuwstadt – Partner, Boontje Lawyers
Jolanda Poots-Bijl – Executive Director, Dutch Construction and Infrastructure Federation
Eva Remerie - Healthcare Commercial Director, Accenture Netherlands
Marjolein Sol – Director, Syntrus Achmea Asset Management
Erica Terpstra – Supervisory Director, Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC)
Wilma Toering – Managing Director, GGN
Herna Verhagen – Supervisory Director, Nutreco
Marianne Vermijs – Commercial Property BU Director, DHV Consultancy and Engineering
Jolanda Wiezer - Business Professionals & Executives Director, Van Lanschot Bankers
Marlies van Wijhe – Dutch Businesswoman of the Year 2010
Susi Zijderveld – General Chairwoman, CBR
Marleen Zuiderhoudt - Supervisory Director, Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC)

□ More information

For more up-to-date information and good practices, go to:

www.opportunity.nl

OiB is an expertise centre and national network of leading organisations that aim to achieve an even balance between male and female managers/executives. Opportunity Advies is a consultancy allied with OiB. Basing itself on the same philosophy, **Opportunity Advies** works on putting the associated policy into practice. It does this by guiding changes in corporate culture, providing training courses and advising clients on diversity and leadership issues. Opportunity is also associated with the **Netherlands' national diversity management network (DIV)**, focusing on cultural diversity in SMEs and government.