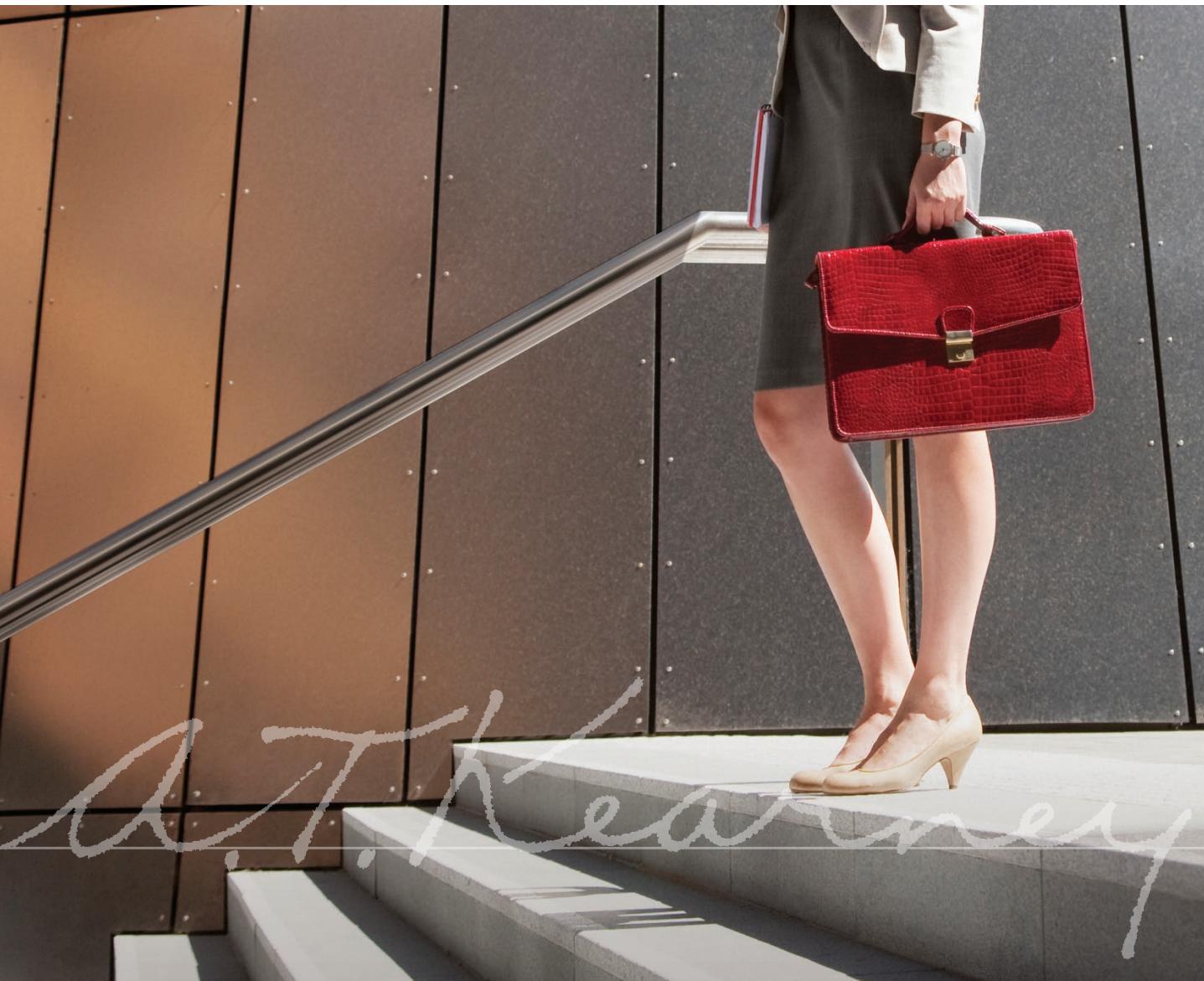


The Rise of the Female Economy in B2B

A Source of Competitiveness for UK Businesses

Women control a growing share of B2B spending.
UK companies can gain a competitive advantage
by successfully connecting with female buyers.



A.T. Kearney has prepared this report in association with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the UK's premier business lobbying organisation, providing a voice for employers at a national and international level. This is, however, an independent report: A.T. Kearney is solely responsible for its content, which does not necessarily represent the views of the CBI or its members.

Executive Summary

Women have long been on companies' radar in the B2C space. Recent developments have also brought women's growing role in the B2B world to the foreground, so we asked ourselves: 'How can UK B2B companies rise up to the challenge of successfully connecting with the increasing number of female decision-makers and becoming more competitive?'

Women comprise an increasing share of the total labour force and populate the ranks of middle and top management in significant, albeit insufficient, numbers. Moreover, they form a majority of university graduates and are starting new businesses at a higher rate than men. Recent regulatory changes across the European Union and inclusion activities in the business world conclude the list of what we call the six main drivers responsible for the increasing significance of the female economy. However, does this matter in the world of B2B selling and buying?

Evidence is emerging that women make decisions differently from men in business, just as they do in the consumer world. But are UK companies capitalising on it? When we asked 200 UK executives and decision-makers in B2B companies and across the public sector, three out of five said a different approach is or may be required to sell to female business customers. Yet, just more than one in five has actually adopted a tailored approach to female decision-makers, and slightly more than one in three has plans to do more in the future.

Comparing amongst the different sectors we surveyed, we found three types of responses: 'Riding the trend', 'Pushing hard, full speed ahead', and 'Focussing on a different destination, for now'.

Our analysis of companies that are actively addressing the female economy revealed that the most advanced ones use four major enablers: leadership commitment, a tailored sales and delivery approach, workforce diversity, and outreach programmes. These enablers can be adopted by others who aim to succeed in the future female economy.

We conclude that the United Kingdom is presently facing a pivotal moment, when business must decide whether to settle for the current go-slow approach that will perpetuate a parallel economy, or opt instead to actively move towards a post-gender economy. The former option, we suggest, will lead to a disappointing future and place Corporate Britain at a disadvantage. The post-gender scenario, on the other hand, will result in a flourishing of high-quality jobs—sparking a virtuous cycle that attracts the best talent from all parts of society—and give British companies the competitive edge they sorely need in the global marketplace.

Catering for women is nothing new. Companies have long known that women are responsible for the majority of daily household purchasing decisions. Increasingly, they are also decision-makers in major one-off family purchases (such as cars), and their participation in the workforce has given them greater wealth and higher disposable income. As a result, consumer-oriented companies tailor their sales approaches accordingly.

B2B companies have to **crack the changing mix** between men and women in **buying and senior management roles**.

Much less is known, however, about women's role in purchasing decisions as entrepreneurs and senior business executives.¹ Nevertheless, the development of six drivers—labour force participation, education, seniority levels, regulation, corporate inclusion policies, and entrepreneurial initiatives—is having a significant impact on the composition of the client base of B2B companies. That is why we are convinced that ignoring the role of women as decision-makers in the business world would be a mistake. As one media and information executive we interviewed told us: 'B2B companies have to crack the mix between men and women in buying and senior roles. It's only a matter of time for women to come through into buying and senior management.'

1. Labour force participation

Labour force participation rates in the United Kingdom and around the world have been declining for men and generally rising or stable for women over the past two decades. As a consequence of this trend, which seems likely to continue, women's presence in the workplace has grown considerably in relative terms: While females accounted for just 36 per cent of the UK workforce in 1971, today the figure has increased to 45 per cent.²

2. Education

Few would argue with the proposition that better education equals better opportunity, and in the academic sphere much of the groundwork is already in place. Fifty-seven per cent of all qualifications obtained at UK higher education institutions in 2011–12 were awarded to women.³ Figures are similar not only elsewhere in the European Union and in the United States, but also in countries as different as Brazil, Russia, Mexico, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. And more women than ever are pursuing degrees in business and management.

3. Seniority levels

Statistics show that women now account for one third of managers, directors, and senior officials in the United Kingdom—far from gender parity, but certainly not negligible.⁴

¹ Select recent publications on the topic include: A.T. Kearney, 'Girl Power and Governance', www.atkearney.com (March 2013); Directorate-General for Justice of the European Commission, 'Women in Economic Decision-Making in the EU: Progress Report' (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012).

² Source: Office for National Statistics, A03 Labour Force Survey, summary aged 16 to 59/64

³ Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

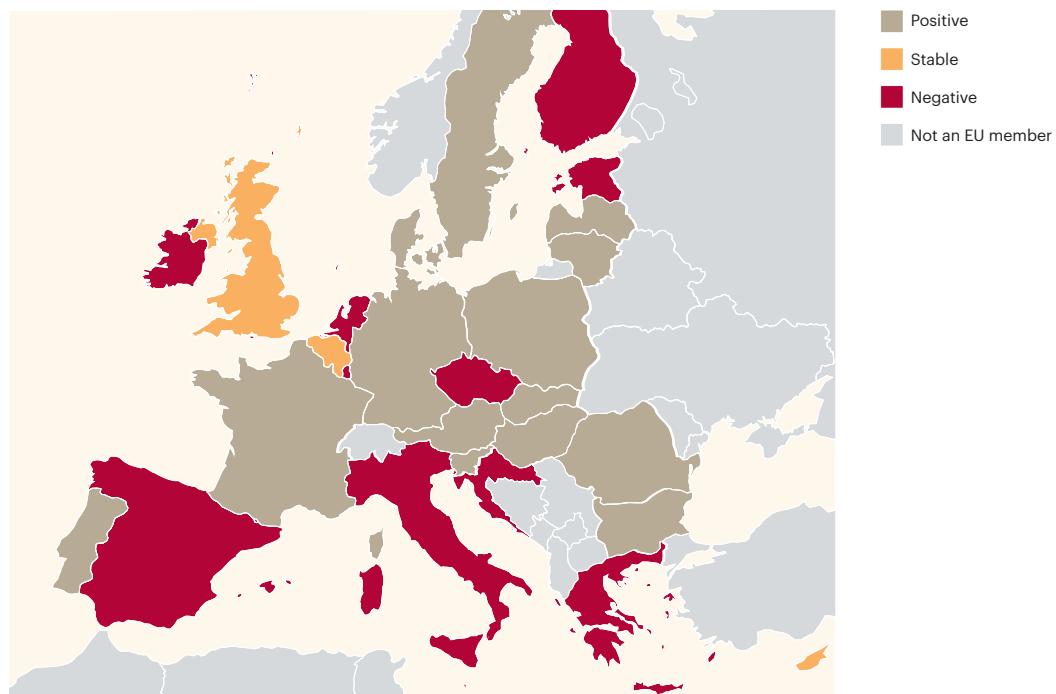
⁴ Sources: Office for National Statistics; International Labour Organisation; Gerry Holt, 'Women Hold Fewer than Third of Top Jobs', BBC News (29 May 2012); A.T. Kearney analysis

Figure 1

The share of female managers is increasing across most EU countries

Evolution of female managers as percentage of total managers

2008–2012



Sources: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Employment by sex, age, professional status, and occupation (based on data for the fourth quarters of 2008 through 2012); A.T. Kearney analysis

In nearly 60 per cent of the EU member states, the proportion of female managers has increased over the last five-year period for which data is available; in Latvia and Lithuania, over 40 per cent of managers are women (see figure 1).⁵

Moreover, women hold a significant share of positions of responsibility in many high-potential UK export markets outside the EU. For example, the number of top jobs held by women in Turkey, ASEAN member countries, and South Africa is approximately 30 per cent.⁶ In China, estimates place the figure at around 40 per cent.⁷

4. Regulation

Currently, Britain has no plans to introduce quotas for female board participation, but what is the impact of quotas in other EU countries on British businesses marketing and selling their products and services abroad?

⁵ Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Employment by sex, age, professional status, and occupation (based on data for the fourth quarters of 2008 through 2012)

⁶ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

⁷ Sources: Grant Thornton International, 'Women in Senior Management: Setting the Stage for Growth', 2013; A.T. Kearney analysis

Three out of five UK B2B businesses say a different approach is or may be required to sell to female customers.

In November 2013, the European Parliament overwhelmingly approved a draft directive to make large companies fill at least 40 per cent of non-executive board positions with women by 2020 (or, in the case of public companies, by 2018). Shortly afterwards, Germany's two largest political parties inked a coalition agreement that calls for legislation to require listed companies and those with works councils to allot 30 per cent of non-executive board seats to women by 2016. France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and most of Scandinavia have endorsed quotas for many years. Norway (not an EU member) imposed a 40 per cent quota in 2003, a target reached in 2009.

5. Inclusion policies

Companies are increasingly adopting inclusion rules and committing to make the workplace more gender-balanced. They do so either as a social imperative or because they genuinely believe that mixed teams achieve better business results. But regardless of what triggered the policies, according to the interviews we conducted the result is nearly always the same: a better-rounded workforce, with improved utilisation of talent and with faster and more even-handed decision-making. As one media executive we spoke with said: 'The more different perspectives we have, the better equipped we are to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse customer base.'

6. Entrepreneurial initiatives

Entrepreneurship among women is growing too. In fact, according to the UK Office for National Statistics, the number of female entrepreneurs has increased by 6.1 per cent over the past two years, versus just a 1.8 per cent rise for men.⁸ And an official task force study published in late 2009 calculated that women's enterprise accounts for £130 billion (US\$210 billion) in turnover and £70 billion (US\$113 billion) in gross value added every year.⁹

Taken together, these six drivers make a compelling argument for B2B companies to decisively take on and adapt to the female economy.

Women and Men Make Decisions Differently

Research tells us that, in the B2C space, women and men in the aggregate approach buying very differently. In the United Kingdom, EDF Energy turned this knowledge into actual results: It refashioned itself as the 'feel-good energy provider' and the 'energy company to love at last'—and achieved net promoter scores of +10 for women as opposed to +1 for men.¹⁰

⁸ Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Statistics, November 2013

⁹ Source: The UK Women's Enterprise Task Force, 'Greater Return on Women's Enterprise', November 2009

¹⁰ Net promoter scores measure the difference between the percentage of customers likely to recommend a product to their acquaintances and those likely to counsel against a product.

We see emerging evidence of the same differences in buying behaviour in the B2B space. A recently released study of more than 600 board directors in Canada found that women were more inquisitive than men and more likely to consider the interests of multiple stakeholders. At the same time, it reported that women attach less importance than men to rituals (such as being wined and dined by top executives) and feel less constrained by rules, regulations, and traditional ways of doing business.¹¹ US research found that women in purchasing are more attuned than men to particular aspects of the sales and customer management process, especially the frequency of buyer-seller communications.¹²

Against this backdrop, we surveyed 200 companies and interviewed 35 executives (female and male) amongst B2B enterprises and across the public sector (see appendix: About the Study on page 13). Nearly 60 per cent of the companies we studied said either that female decision-makers already comprise a large part of their customer base or that there has been a 'significant' or 'some' increase in the number of women they are selling to (see figure 2). A similar proportion of companies recognises that a different approach 'is' or 'may be' required (17 and 41 per cent, respectively) to sell successfully to women.

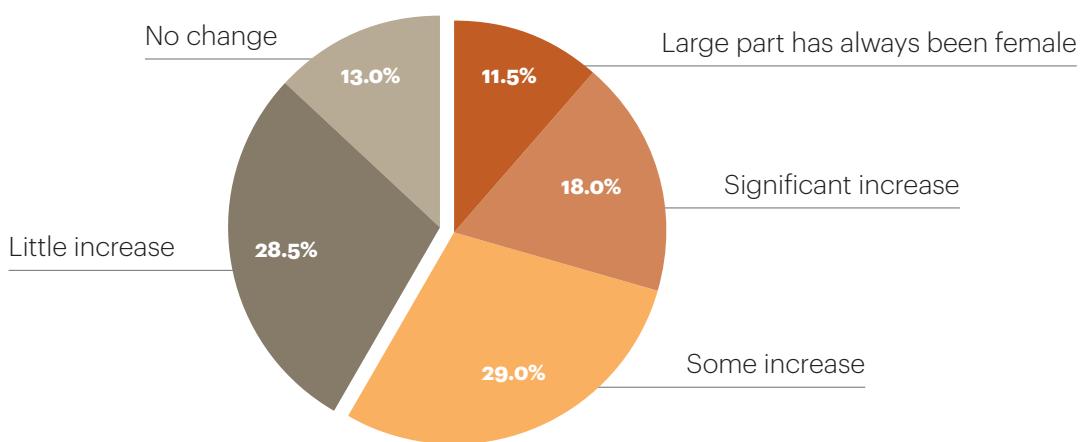
Most British B2B companies have done little so far to tap into the female economy

Although most companies acknowledge that a different approach is required to account for women and express satisfaction with efforts to date, just one in five actually tailors the way it sells; the most popular strategies are to add more women to the sales team, change internal processes, and adapt the negotiation approach (see figure 3 on page 6).

Figure 2

Female decision-makers account for an increasing share of the customer base at B2B companies and in the public sector

How have female decision-makers evolved as a share of your customer base?



Source: A.T. Kearney survey of 200 UK companies in B2B and public sector (December 2013)

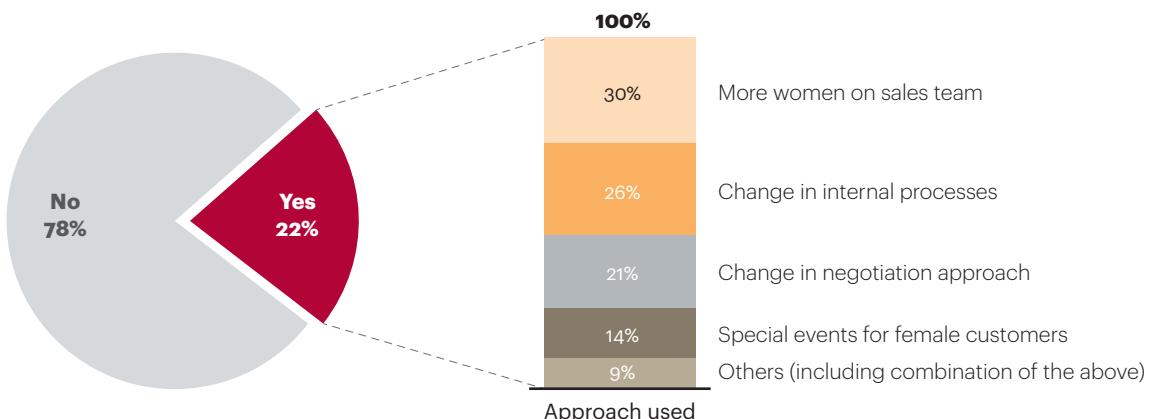
¹¹ Source: Chris Bart and Gregory McQueen, 'Why Women Make Better Directors', *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics* 8, no. 1 (2013): 93–99

¹² Source: Brian N. Rutherford, Nwamaka A. Anaza, and Adrienne Hall Phillips, 'Predictors of Buyer-Seller Firm Conflict', *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 20, no. 2 (2012): 161–171. For another interesting perspective on this topic, see Ellen Bolman Pullins, David A. Reid, and Richard E. Plank, 'Gender Issues in Buyer-Seller Relationships: Does Gender Matter in Purchasing?', *Journal of Supply Chain Management* 40, no. 2 (2004): 40–48.

Figure 3

Few companies tailor their approach to female decision-makers

Does your company tailor its approach to female business decision-makers?



Source: A.T. Kearney survey of 200 UK companies in B2B and public sector (December 2013)

Looking ahead, more than one in three respondents said that their companies will do more to address the female economy in future—though mostly in the form of longer-term plans to diversify the workforce, rather than focussing specifically on selling to women. One interviewee's remark was typical: 'We have it on our CEO agenda,' he told us, 'but under a wider umbrella.' Finally, two out of five responded that their companies have no intention of doing more to tap into the female economy, as they believe other issues are more important—perhaps a short-sighted approach given the growing number of female decision-makers.

Comparing the different sectors, we can see three degrees of progress (see figure 4 on page 7):

- **Riding the trend:** The manufacturing industry, for example, comments that it tailors its approach to female buyers, with practices that are in sync with the evolution of its customer base. Furthermore, manufacturing companies seem to be anticipating a greater presence of women decision-makers in coming years, as 54 per cent of respondents say they have plans to do still more.
- **Pushing hard, full speed ahead:** Women buyers of construction services have traditionally been rare, but that is changing quickly—with one in four of the construction executives we surveyed noticing a significant recent uptick and a further 35 per cent reporting 'some' increase. Yet despite being a recent phenomenon, already 41 per cent of the companies use a differentiated sales approach for women. And two in five intend to do still more to cater for female buyers.
- **Focussing on a different destination, for now:** Amongst this last group, the pharmaceutical and health sector is unique. The customer base of companies in this industry includes a large number of women. Almost half of businesses we surveyed in this sector said that a large number of customer decision-makers have always been or now are women.

Women already represent half or more of their employee base. And yet, just 15 per cent employ a differentiated sales approach. Meanwhile, fewer than one in three pharmaceutical and health firms intends to do more to target female buyers. Companies in this group appear to be either focussing on other priorities or leaving the female economy to be addressed in the longer term.

Main Building Blocks to Tackle the Female Economy

Our research highlights that those companies that take concrete steps to address the female economy use four main building blocks or enablers.

1. Leadership commitment

Some of the companies we interviewed began to take the female economy seriously after receiving a wake-up call: Sending an exclusively male team to make a sales pitch to an all-female buying team was a commonly mentioned trigger. However, nearly all spoke of a particularly forward-thinking business executive as a main force behind change. That leads us to conclude that strong drive and sustained senior leadership commitment is the most important enabler of all to successfully address the female economy. Without this vital ingredient, all other initiatives are destined to fail.

Some sectors are **riding the trend**, others are **pushing hard**, and yet others seem **focussed elsewhere** for now.

2. Tailored sales and delivery approach

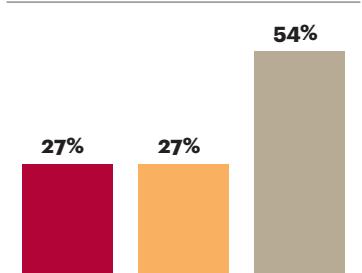
British business services group Rentokil Initial employs a tailored approach to sales and delivery, using different ‘selling stories’ based—amongst other factors—on whether decision-makers are male or female. For example, they have found that when selling hygiene and facilities services, men are typically highly responsive to facts and figures, whilst many women find visual evidence is a more compelling sales argument.

Figure 4
Industries display varying degrees of progress in adapting to female customer decision-makers

Percentage of respondents

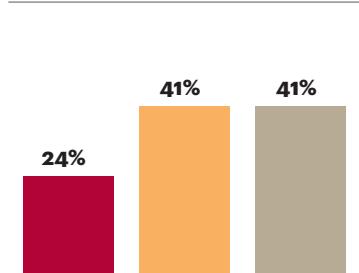
Manufacturing

Riding the trend



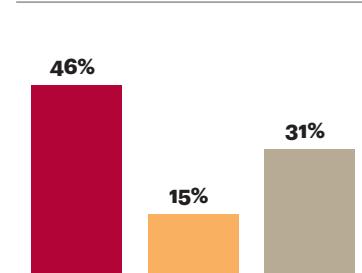
Construction

Pushing hard, full speed ahead



Pharma and health

Focussing on a different destination, for now



■ Large number of female client decision-makers ■ Use of tailored approach to female decision-makers ■ Plans to do more in future

Source: A.T. Kearney survey of 200 UK companies in B2B and public sector (December 2013)

Executives elsewhere sensibly cautioned about the need to take care not to generalise, as the key to establishing and maintaining a long-term relationship is to connect and build empathy with the customer as an individual. Though gender marketing may be thought of as an evolution of mass marketing, it is no more than a blunt tool of segmented marketing and just a stopping point on the journey to one-to-one marketing. And in fact, an increasing number of B2B companies are shifting the emphasis of sales training programmes from product knowledge to relationship-building and behavioural analysis. This trend, which we have observed most notably in the manufacturing, engineering, and professional services sectors, is sure to lead to higher awareness and the development of finer-grained, tailored approaches for selling to female decision-makers.

3. Workforce diversity

Many argue that diversifying the workforce is a more natural way to address the multiplicity of groups—including women—that increasingly make up the universe of buyers:

- Google's vision is to make information accessible to everyone—regardless of gender, culture, age, or race—and believes that having as diverse a workforce as possible helps the company to better fulfil its customers' needs. Of course, as a relatively young company, Google has found it easier than others to build a staff that more closely reflects society's make-up. One noteworthy initiative that has emerged from this rich mix of backgrounds is Women on the Web, aimed at helping female-owned businesses to build their online presence, collaborate effectively, connect with their customers, promote their organisations, and track their efforts. The programme is currently available in India and will be extended to Latin America, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East.

Leadership commitment, a tailored sales approach, workforce diversity, and outreach programmes are **four essential components to tackle the female economy.**

- AkzoNobel's Amsterdam-based corporate leadership placed diversity on the agenda more than three years ago, including targets to reach a minimum percentage of women in executive positions. In some geographies and divisions, women already account for more than 30 per cent of the workforce—no mean feat for a paints and coatings company and a speciality chemicals manufacturer—although the manufacturing area continues to fall short.

As internal benchmarks show that mixed-gender manufacturing units deliver better results, thanks to greater compliance with internal processes and more agile decision-making, AkzoNobel is determined that women comprise at least 25 per cent of the workforce at its new UK manufacturing plant in Ashington (versus less than 3 per cent at the plants the factory is slated to replace). The company has already reached the 10 per cent mark amongst recruits for Ashington, and it is focussing on conveying a positive image to potential employees, creating parent-friendly shifts and a vision of 'manufacturing for the future' as part of its strategy.

- The BBC also holds that a diverse workforce, comprising a nationally representative sample of the viewer population, is essential to understand and connect with its numerous audience segments. The state broadcaster has placed particular emphasis on creating an attractive working environment for women, accompanied by high-profile promotions and awareness-building programmes to showcase diversity and signal its importance to the entire organisation.

Although gender representation varies widely across the entity, women are well represented at many levels, accounting for 50 per cent of the trustees and 42 per cent of the executive board. And while women hold just 37 per cent of senior manager positions, they represent 53 per cent of promotions to senior manager level.

4. Outreach

The fourth and final enabler successful companies employ is to deepen relationships with women by reaching out and by organising external events with female buyers, female influencers, and opinion leaders of either gender:

- HSBC is another company that realises the strategic advantage of having a diverse workforce. Around 50 per cent of its workforce is female, and female representation at senior levels is on the rise. Its target by 2015 is 25 per cent. But as Group CEO Stuart Gulliver says, ‘Our destination is the point where we are making full use of everyone’s talents—25 per cent is just a milestone along the way.’

Mr Gulliver said at The Women’s Foundation event in Hong Kong in November 2013: ‘To discriminate against women is to discriminate against talent. It’s unfair. It’s wrong. And it’s a really poor business decision. So being inclusive is the right thing to do. But this is not about being cuddly—it’s about competitive advantage. This competitive advantage applies to gender. It also applies to ethnic background, religious belief, disability, or sexual orientation.’¹³

But HSBC has taken its commitment one step further, placing diversity on the agenda of key influencers and opinion leaders. For example, it led a symposium in the House of Commons that brought together members of Parliament, small and medium-sized enterprises, and external lobbying groups. Its UK programme to support the next generation of female leaders won a national award, and in Hong Kong it was the first financial institution to be named ‘best company for women’. HSBC’s firm belief is in creating a society and workplace where everyone can fulfil her or his potential.

- As a B2B company, media and information firm Thomson Reuters is all about increasing its relevance for its customers and staying at the top of their minds. Given the evolution of its customer mix, the company complements its product-centred approach with relationship marketing and networking activities that specifically target women.¹⁴ Amongst other activities, it has sponsored tailored events as part of London Fashion Week and the Chelsea Flower Show, organises fortnightly networking opportunities for female executives from Thomson Reuters and its largest clients, and hooks up women’s networks from different clients. One executive we interviewed explained the rationale: ‘Connecting with women across the organisation promotes our business indirectly and drives usage on our platform.’

¹³Stuart Gulliver, ‘Women in Work—Unlocking Talent’, remarks prepared for delivery at The Women’s Foundation, Hong Kong, 7 November 2013

¹⁴A number of people we interviewed, including several female executives, explained that traditional networking activities often cater for predominantly male interests (such as sport), are organised around large group interactions with few women and in venues where they tend to feel less comfortable (such as pubs), or conflict with time reserved for the family (for example, at breakfast or supper).

A Pivotal Moment for British Industry

Our survey and interviews suggest that the question is whether British businesses will fail to grasp opportunity and perpetuate an economy that does not fully capitalise on women's talent or appropriately tailor engagement to them. Or, will they opt instead to actively drive towards a commercially competitive, inclusive, post-gender economy.

The following two scenarios represent possible outcomes associated with the development of the UK female economy. These scenarios are not predictions. They are thought-provoking, plausible futures that businesses can use to stress-test existing strategies and challenge current practices (see figure 5).

Parallel economy: disappointing future

If the current state of affairs persists, we will witness the intensification of a parallel economy. Despite the rise in the number of women studying business and management, most will still gravitate to traditional subjects, and female engineering students will (as now) be under-represented. Women will increasingly occupy positions of responsibility, but in sectors that

Figure 5
Two plausible futures

	Parallel economy	Post-gender economy
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women outnumber men at universities, but continue to choose traditional subjects• Education has a deep focus on specific subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women's choice of subjects is balanced, largely thanks to positive role models and collaboration between industry and education• Multidisciplinary approaches blur boundaries between traditionally male and female subjects
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulation requires companies to adhere to quotas for women on the board—but with little impact on the number of women in middle and top management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Businesses have multiple incentives to promote gender equality across ranks and functions below board level
Inclusion and work models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Companies fail to fully embed diversity and inclusion in their processes• Technology is available to enable flexible working and reduced travel, but traditional thinking and career progression models penalise those who use it• Working from home one day per week is acceptable• The pipeline of female talent is healthy in lower ranks, with a bulge before women reach middle and top management• Companies' investment in diversity and inclusion in their recruiting and leadership development programmes for women fail to show benefits, as women leave the corporate world before rising up the ranks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Companies reach their diversity and inclusion targets and go beyond, across all sectors, functions, and levels• Companies embrace new technologies as a means to reduce travel demands and face time, thus helping to attract, retain, and promote the best person for the job• Virtual working becomes the norm• The pipeline is well filled; women go all the way to the top
Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women leave the corporate world and start their own businesses• Start-ups are usually small and lack funds to grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start-ups cover a broad range of sectors, and some quickly achieve notable size
Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talent is difficult to attract and retain, as more and more women turn their backs on Corporate Britain• Women outnumber men in senior positions in education, public sector, and not-for-profit organisations• Women are successful, but on their own terms• B2B companies rarely market to senior female decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Companies can draw on a rich and diverse talent pool and are able to attract and retain the best person for the job• B2B companies are frequently selling to gender-balanced teams• Companies using a tailored approach are better able to service their diverse clients

offer more flexible career paths—for example, the public sector, education, and charities. Others will work as freelance contractors or set up their own businesses on terms compatible with their broader life goals.

Companies in traditionally ‘high-powered’ industries will find it difficult to recruit talented women, much less retain them long enough to keep the pipeline filled with qualified top-management candidates. Businesses will comply with quotas for female board members, with a limited cadre of prominent businesswomen monopolising seats on multiple boards. However, women in middle and top management will be the exception, not the rule, as corporate human resources policies apply a one-size-fits-all approach to employees of all ages and circumstances and penalise those who avail themselves of flexible work arrangements.

Will businesses opt to drive towards an inclusive, **competitive post-gender economy?**

If a parallel economy is allowed to develop, Corporate Britain will be at a disadvantage. Companies will struggle to fill vacancies in specialities such as analytics, programming, and science, as the number of male university graduates decreases and women continue to shun those fields. Furthermore, limited diversity will hurt the quality of decision-making, giving rise to a vicious cycle that makes it increasingly difficult for businesses to compete—particularly those that sell overseas or to companies where women have a significant presence in decision-making.

Post-gender economy: a source of UK competitiveness

Another, more promising scenario is possible. Under this alternative, women will not be confined to traditional subjects. Instead, forward-thinking companies will team up with schools to encourage female students to enrol in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) subjects. Successful women in these fields will act as role models and engage with girls at primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, multidisciplinary approaches to academic studies will blur the boundaries between traditionally ‘male’ and ‘female’ subjects.

Online education, some of it free, will make it easier for women to upgrade skills and re-enter the workforce after a career break. Flexitime, telecommuting, and online collaboration will be the norm, with little office presence required for most white-collar jobs. South East England will be transformed from a ‘Nappy Valley’ into an e-commuter belt, and women will be less tempted to choose self-employment as an alternative to the corporate rat race. Female-led start-ups will cover a range of products and services, and many will quickly achieve critical mass.

Women will eventually achieve comparable representation across sectors, functions, and seniority levels, and B2B companies will find that they are frequently selling to gender-balanced teams.

In this post-gender economy, Corporate Britain will have embarked on a virtuous cycle, as it attracts the best talent from all parts of society. This inclusive model will lead to a flourishing of high-quality jobs and give British companies the competitive edge they sorely need in the global marketplace.

To bring about the post-gender economy, British society as a whole—businesses, educators, and government—will have to work shoulder to shoulder. Businesses have the most at stake and should be the natural leaders in raising the issue, proposing solutions, implementing approaches, and keeping up the momentum. Government can support UK businesses by enacting policy changes in the areas of education, inclusion, regulation, and entrepreneurial support. Educators will have to intensify outreach programmes and deepen links to businesses to ensure a balanced gender mix across disciplines.

We, of course, support this post-gender scenario, where business as usual is not a viable option. Acting as though businesswomen are simply men in trouser suits will leave open a window of opportunity that more agile players, British or foreign, will be only too happy to take advantage of when competing in the war for talent, diversity of thinking, and ultimately, innovation and growth.

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Appendix

About the Study

A.T. Kearney surveyed 200 UK executives and decision-makers in B2B companies and across the public sector in December 2013. We complemented the survey with 35 interviews. The company sample represents a broad cross-section of industries, including educational services, technology, construction, manufacturing, and business services. Eighteen per cent of the companies surveyed have annual turnover of more than £500 million, 24 percent invoice between £10 million and £500 million, 18.5 percent sell between £2 million and £10 million each year, and 39.5 percent bill less than £2 million.

About 18 per cent of our study sample report rough gender parity amongst their staff; 21 per cent have a majority of women employees, while men outnumber women at 50 per cent of the businesses we analysed.¹⁵

Men outnumbered women amongst survey respondents by a ratio of 2:1.

¹⁵ Another 12 per cent did not know the approximate gender mix of their company's staff.

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