

Diversity in management in the region of Drammen.

The NHO – Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises and its regional association in the county of Buskerud have initiated two different projects under the umbrella of the “Diversity in management” project. One is the Female Future project a programme for developing female talents and for recruiting more women to management positions but also to positions in the boards of enterprises. The other one is the Ethnic Future project, an initiative that is a spin off of Female Future and aims at raising the awareness in companies and enterprises as to managers and potential future managers with an immigrant background.

Short about the NHO – Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises

The NHO – Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises – is the main representative body for Norwegian employers with a current membership of over 18,500 companies ranging from small family-owned businesses to multinational companies. The mission of the NHO is to assist the companies on employer related issues. For more information, see www.nho.no/english/

Short about the county of Buskerud

The businesses of the county of Buskerud range from tourism to more traditional industries. 19% of the population in the county (the region off Drammen) is of immigrant origin while only 9,7% of the national population as a whole. 50% of the population of the county of Buskerud is female.

Female Future

The “Female Future” project (initiated in 2003) was implemented and carried out on a national level. The duration of the programme was one year and the participants received a course certificate at the end of the programme. The background for Female Future was the introduction of a new law obliging companies to see to it that at least 40% of the members of the boards in Public Limited Companies are women. In the aftermath of this law it became clear that it was important to promote role models and to focus on the role women could play in business life.

The participants in the programme were recruited from a variety of enterprises and comprised employees in public institutions and organisations as well as entrepreneurs. The perspective was that all kind of competences are an asset to company boards. Also young managers of youth enterprises were invited to take part in the programme. The background for this was that 50% of the managers of youth enterprises are girls and it is important to recruit them and to motivate them since the drop out rate among these girls is quite high.

The programme was financed by NHO and their partners in this programme (Innovation Norway, departments in Norway and the department of Buskerud in particular).

The content of the programme

The main content of the programme was development of management skills and networking. Development of management skills is very often linked to the general development work in own organisation or company and this was also the way it was done in this programme. On this background "Female Future" was organised in a way that encouraged enterprises/organisations to consider the programme as long term work.

Enterprises, companies and organisations were recruited as participants in the programme and had to sign individual contracts with the promoter of the programme and to oblige themselves to the programme. The management of the participating enterprises and organisations then selected the employees they considered as talents and potential managers and members of boards in the future. The participants were employees that the enterprises and organisations wanted to invest in and to develop further.

The participants were individually tested and interviewed and they were then put together in small, permanent groups, the purpose being that they support each other, help each other and contribute to elevate each other. All participants developed their own, individual learning objectives and received feedback from own organisation on their learning objectives. It sometimes happened that the learning objectives were changed during the process and the programme period.

All participants took part in a course on developing competences in order to be member of companies' boards. The participants also followed a course in rhetoric.

All participants participated in a course on networking and the questions below were followed up in the participants' groups:

- Why is it important to have a well functioning network?
- Which factors promote or impede the building up of networks?
- How do you develop a network?

A general aim of the programme was to provide the participants with a better self insight, motivation and energy to pursue their ambitions.

There were three regional gatherings and one to two conferences each year for all participants. In addition all participants were invited to regional conferences and meetings.

Results

Buskerud was the county with the best results in 2006:

- More than 50% of the participants had received offers to be board members and 76% of these meant that the participation in "Female Future" was the reason
- More than 30% have got a management positions or have advanced to a higher management position

There was also emphasis on measures to make work in business attractive for women. A study carried out by the Work Research Institute on the relation between work and leisure showed that especially women find it important that there is a balance between work and private life/leisure.

A study carried out by the Work Research Institute among the women taking part in the Female Future programme showed that flexibility in the daily work and at the work place were important factors for women. Another important finding was that the feeling of joy and excitement was a very important motivational factor. In addition, the study revealed that women need someone to support them and to cheer them in their work and that this can be family, friends and colleagues. The study showed that the male boss was less important in this context.

Ethnic Future

After the "Female Future" programme, the question arose as to where are the immigrants? According to statistics, 19% of the population in the county of Buskerud (the region of Drammen) is immigrants, but they did not seem to be visible. There was also concern since there is a lot of negative focus on immigrants or people of immigrant origin in the media.

On this background and as a spin off of the "Female Future" programme, the NHO decided to initiate a new programme targeting immigrants although this was a programme with mixed participation (immigrants and native Norwegians). A condition for taking part in this programme was that the participants were willing to be profiles in the media and also in the whole region. It was also a condition that the participants were able to communicate in Norwegian. From the immigrants' point of view, taking part in the "Ethnic Future" programme was interesting only if it was based on their competence and potential and not that they were invited because they were immigrants. An important factor was the composition of the participant groups: they had an equal number of men and women and 40% were of immigrant origin.

The content of the Female Future programme was adapted to this new "Ethnic Future" programme. The tool used for individual testing in "Female Future" had to be adapted to the new target group. The course promoter collaborated with one of the participants in order to adapt the testing tool. There is still some work to be done on the testing tool.

The participants had to define their own needs and challenges and some of the challenges stated by the Norwegian participants served to open up the horizons for the participants with immigrant background. Many of the Norwegian participants also learned things they had not been aware of as to the challenges that envisage immigrant employees and could bring their experience back to their companies or organisations. There was reciprocity as to getting deeper knowledge about each other and more insight into the challenges each group faces.

Diversity in Management

The programme aiming has been running continuingly since 2003. From 2003 to 2007 it was called "Female Future". From 2007 the focus was on "Ethnic Future". From 2009 and onwards it is called "Diversity in Management".