



Bradken: Listening in action

NAWO Lever for Gender Balance 1: Unwavering leadership commitment to inclusion & diversity



INTRODUCTION

Bradken is a leader in the design, manufacture and supply of wear solutions for mining equipment. From modest roots planted in Alexandria, Sydney, in 1922, Bradken has grown into a global network of foundries, manufacturing facilities, and sales and service centres.

We asked Sean Winstone, Bradken's CEO, Andrew Fisher, Bradken's Executive General Manager People and Culture, and Louise Weine, NAWO's CEO, to share some of their insights on Bradken's journey towards better gender balance using NAWO's Nine Levers framework.



DIVERSITY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

“How do we solve the increasingly complex problems and take the increasingly complex opportunities that a global organisation has to take when we're excluding 50% of the population?”

● SEAN WINSTONE, CEO, BRADKEN

Bradken's commitment to innovation has been instrumental in its growth, with its workforce – predominantly male like many in this sector – playing a crucial role in continuously driving transformative solutions for its customers. However, acknowledging that innovation is a continuous process, Bradken has recognised that a lack of diversity could potentially hinder its capacity for future innovation. A key insight for Bradken in addressing this has been the connection between organisational culture and performance. As Andrew puts it,

“Organisational culture is an enabler.”

An inclusive company culture drives positive social and economic outcomes and lays the foundation for achieving better gender balance. It ensures a diversity of perspectives, skills, and experiences, leading to better problem-solving and innovative thinking; as Andrew says,

“We know that highly inclusive and diverse teams make better decisions, they innovate better (and) there is a significant business benefit in our performance if we can cultivate more inclusive teams.”

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

“The rigour and methodology of NAWO's Nine Levers for Gender Balance made sense for us.”

● ANDREW FISHER, EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Bradken recognised that achieving gender balance is a significant organisational challenge. NAWO's Nine Levers framework, which provides an evidence-based, actionable roadmap to building a more inclusive and gender-balanced workplace, resonated with the organisation because, as Andrew explains,

“Driving gender balance is probably one of the more ambiguous and uncertain organisational challenges and we needed a maturity model. The rigour and methodology made sense for us and suited the culture of our organisation where we could have a really objective process.”

Bradken was clear from the outset that it was critical to get, as Andrew says, “The executive team aligned and on the same page.” Unwavering leadership commitment to inclusion and diversity (Lever One of the Nine Levers framework) is critical because it underscores the transformative role of leadership in driving change. As Louise explains,

“Leaders set the tone for organisational culture and behaviour. Their commitment to inclusion and diversity sends a strong signal about the organisation's expectations, values, and priorities and advances a workplace environment that respects and values diversity.”

Many of Bradken's employees have been with the company for a long time, and it was important for Bradken to lay robust foundations for the work to come. As Andrew explains, 'All employees went through training, we focused on leadership development (and) making sure that the policies and the systems are pulling in the right direction, not working against what we're trying to do when it comes to parental leave, and flexible work,

and all the basics'. Bradken acknowledges that it took a little time to get traction, but, as Sean says,

“Once we hung our hat on the Nine Levers, it was amazing how much consensus we could get pretty much straight away.”



TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN

“Bradken committed to respecting participants and addressing the things that came out of the consultation, and then made changes based on this.”

● LOUISE WEINE, CEO, NAWO

Understanding the experience of women employees is a crucial step in the journey to gender balance. Listening to its women employees has been integral to Bradken's journey towards gender balance. As Sean says,

“We took the opportunity to actually ask the women in our business what it's like to work for Bradken... we want to hear your experience and your stories. And we want to do that in a way that's non-confrontational (and) we want to be better.”

To hear first-hand women's experiences, Bradken commissioned NAWO to conduct focus groups with women across its global locations and survey those unable to attend. The resulting 'We are Listening' report found that while many of Bradken's female employees felt supported and able to work to their full potential, the report also identified opportunities for improvement. Bradken has taken these insights on board, integrating them into their forward action plan.

The process of bringing women together also created an opportunity for women employees to connect and support each other. As one participant said,

“I'm glad to have spoken and heard the stories of others. Kudos to Bradken for organising this.”

SEEING THE RESULTS

“We hope that Bradken's journey will inspire others in similar sectors to take a proactive stance on gender balance and cultivate an environment where everyone can thrive.”

● LOUISE WEINE, CEO, NAWO

An essential benefit of the Nine Levers for Gender Balance framework is the underlying methodology, which supports organisations in tracking and measuring their progress towards gender balance. Bradken's investment into establishing the right performance metrics has paid off because, as Andrew puts it,

“We naturally got into understanding what we do well at Bradken, what we measure we manage.”

The organisation is already seeing positive results and outcomes from its work. As Sean says,

“We are starting to see the early entry into some very male-dominated parts of our business (and) we now have female operators and engineers where we've never had them before.”

The organisation is sharing its success stories through initiatives such as 'Voices of Bradken', which launched on the company's website in late 2022 and, as Sean says,

“It's really inspiring. Bradken has never done this before.”

Louise Weine believes that the progress Bradken has made under the determined leadership of Sean, Andrew and others is inspirational and serves as a beacon of change and a blueprint for other organisations. The leadership team's commitment to advancing gender equity is also a testament to the power of allyship, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors. As Louise says,

“Inclusive leaders, like those at the helm of Bradken, are instrumental in accelerating the pace of change. They challenge the status quo, engage in conversations about gender balance, and drive actions that lead to substantive change. Their unwavering commitment sends a powerful message - achieving gender balance is not just a women's issue; it's an organisational and societal imperative.”

Bradken is committed to continuing its journey towards gender balance and is confident that the groundwork they have laid will enable them to achieve their goals. Andrew says,

“A lot of the work we've done over the last two years has been about getting that fundamental piece right, the leadership commitment right. And then once you put those two things together, you can then start to build scale as you go forward.”



● BRADKEN'S FEMALE WELDING TEAM

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We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations people of Australia and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn, work and connect.

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