

READING (20 points)

DIVERSITY: WOMEN MAKE PROGRESS IN CLIMBING THROUGH THE RANKS

A For decades, professional services firms have been concerned about the absence of women in leadership roles. But over the past decade, consulting firms have taken firm steps towards fixing that problem. From networking groups and 'mentoring cafes' to leadership seminars and extra financial support for women returning from maternity leave, consulting firms are experimenting with different ways to support and retain the female part of their workforce.

B Over time, they have made the industry a leader in using flexible work arrangements and are competing for the best and the brightest women and men in 'Generation Y', the 20-somethings who have put work-life balance at the centre of their demands.

C In most consulting firms, for example, female representation remains quite low: while 40 per cent of Deloitte's graduate intake is female, only 18 per cent of those at senior levels are women. At KPMG, 48 per cent of managers are women but this drops to 13 per cent at the partner rank.

However, people who support and encourage workforce diversity say they see progress, both in attitudes and in numbers. The proportion of women in the senior grades is growing. The change is slow, but it is in the right direction.

D Accommodating female employees in the workplace is not simply an act of kindness. In fact, many firms see retaining trained consultants as a business necessity. Losing valued and skilled managers not only results in a waste of training time and resources, but it harms the recruitment process in the next generation.

E 'We're really talking about talent issues. The traditional groups of the population that companies used to look to for new recruits are shrinking, so we need to think about how we are going to be able to recruit from diverse groups,' says Isabel Naidoo, Head of Diversity for Accenture in the UK.

F Some firms also recognise that women can offer different skills. 'Women are quite good at aspects of management, managing diversity and working in teams. These are things we must encourage if we are going to add value,' says Judith Halkerston, Managing Director of Energy, Utilities and Telecoms at Logica.

G That has led to programmes such as PA consulting group's decision to boost the salaries of newly returned mothers temporarily so that they can afford to work fewer hours without sacrificing pay in the first few months. Deloitte has emergency childcare on call. IBM lets all employees - not just parents - buy up to two weeks of extra leave, which many consultants use for childcare. KPMG invests heavily in state-of-the-art teleconferencing, which makes telecommuting and other flexible arrangements more possible.

H Clients, on the whole, have been supportive of the efforts to accommodate a variety of work arrangements. Consulting firms say there has been no so resistance from clients and sometimes you hear them say: 'Well, I only work three days a week and it works for me'. Says Accenture's Ms Naidoo, 'Clients want a job done and with quality by a certain deadline, but it's up to us how we manage that.'

FT

I. Read the article and decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F).

1. Professional services firms have been worried about the lack of men in senior positions for years.
2. Consulting firms are not interested in changing that situation.
3. The number of women in senior positions in consulting firms is growing rapidly.
4. There is a business rationale for helping women to stay in the workforce once a company has spent time and money training them.
5. The traditional workforce base is now too small for companies' needs.
6. Clients do not like female consultants to work part-time.

II. Choose the best option to complete each statement.

1. Consulting firms are trying different work arrangements in order to ...
 - a. save money on office space.
 - b. help more women to stay in their firms.
2. They have developed flexible work arrangements in order to ...
 - a. attract the cleverest men and women in 'Generation Y' to work for them.

8. Kimura's sales last year were _____. a) \$0.9 million b) about \$5 million c) nearly \$9 million
9. Most of Hightree's sales are _____. a) domestic b) export c) direct
10. In the past three years, Hightree's profits have _____. a) remained flat b) skyrocketed c) slightly increased