

EXIT PLAN

Sloane Caetano talks womanhood in the workplace

THERE IS always a sense of competition in the workplace. However, working hard for a promotion as a woman has the obvious conflict: do you stand firm at wanting to progress in your career, thus delaying starting a family, or do you take a step back from a possible job breakthrough?

Female representation in the workplace has vastly shifted as more businesses are supporting this focus. According to a report on gender and small businesses published by UENI in 2020, the number of UK businesses owned at that point by women was 32.37%, showcasing a shift from four years ago, when only 17% of founders were female.

2018 research carried out by law firm Slater and Gordon revealed that nearly one in three UK bosses admit they have or would reject a female job applicant because she 'might want to start a family soon'. This goes against the Equality Act 2010, section 18 states that it is pregnancy discrimination to treat a woman unfavourably because of her pregnancy or pregnancy-related illness.

Employers are still discriminating against women of childbearing age, and according to Helen Letchfield from People Management, the number of working mothers has soared to 74% of women with children who choose to stay in work. This just highlights that the assumption made by employers concerned that women only have the option to stay home after giving birth is outdated.

Danna Greenberg, author of *Maternal Optimism: Forging Positive Paths through Work and Motherhood* reminds all aspiring mothers how easy or difficult it is to integrate work/family will depend more on the organisation you are working for, your direct work colleagues, and your boss - not on the industry you are in.

Local initiatives and research projects in Leeds aim to empower and support women in the workplace. Led by Leeds Beckett University and working with a network of partners - including Edge Hill University and Social Enterprise Yorkshire and Humber, the #WECAN project does just that.

Vanity Fair reported that according to a 2020 survey, three out of five millennials were willing to delay life milestones until they reached a certain job title or level within their career. Establishing yourself within your career path before you embark on motherhood will then create a circle of support from your boss/superior at this phase.

If the company you work for doesn't support your desire to progress in your career whilst pursuing motherhood, understanding your worth to the industry you work for creates the healthy boundaries you can establish with your employers.

The world wants to see more women business leaders, and as they say, "In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders."

