

Case study: Reverse Mentoring Pilot

After successfully piloting a Reverse Mentoring programme in 2019, Wellington will roll it out more broadly in EMEA in the coming months. With a focus on gender diversity for the pilot, the programme provided mentoring to senior male Wellington employees (the mentees, who were Managing Directors and Partners). The aim was to increase their awareness of how women can experience the work place, by pairing them with a female volunteer from a cohort of mid-to-early career talent (the mentors). Through a series of informal catch ups over nine months, the pairs shared their personal work stories, both at Wellington and elsewhere. The key premise was to foster greater understanding and inclusion between the different groups and explore any unconscious bias that came to light during their discussions.

The success criteria for the pilot, which will form key building blocks for the next iteration of the programme, include: senior firm support; a formal kick-off meeting with all programme participants and subsequent check-in mid-way; a library of materials to read and watch ahead of pairing meetings such as Ted Talks and books, which were educational and importantly acted as ice-breakers for the conversations; and finally resources being made available to help with logistics and meeting scheduling.

Reverse mentoring is a two-way street, and Wellington found that the mentees benefited from the valuable insights the women shared and were also able to provide support to the mentors through describing their own relevant experiences. The value to the mentors was equally apparent. As one observed, "I was mentoring a senior leader of the firm, and so it was a rather strange dynamic to start with! But it very quickly turned into a fruitful and enjoyable working relationship. We gave each other permission to be completely honest, so the barriers came down and we shared a lot and learnt a lot between us. Some of the experiences I shared as a woman in finance shaped views and policies that have been put into action; I also got a great insight into his world, helping to demystify his role and position. It was fun, interesting and mutually beneficial. I would recommend others to give it a go!"

Not only did both parties in each pairing learn from each other but Wellington was also able to make improvements to procedures more broadly due to the increased awareness that might not have resulted from other employee engagement initiatives. The firm will be looking at Diversity through a broader lens with the wider rollout. We expect it to foster greater understanding, forge new relationships and help us to recognise systemic unconscious biases as we continue to enhance Wellington's inclusive and collaborative culture.