

Utility Week Awards winner case study

Winner's comments



"The return on inclusion research with Equal Approach has focused our minds on the activity that

will have the biggest impact on growing a more diverse workforce at SSE. It's taught us that reviewing the inclusivity of every process, from how people join to how they exit, will pay back much more than spending time on one-off interventions that may simply feel like the right thing to do."

ROSIE MACRAE, INCLUSION, ENGAGEMENT AND HR COMPLIANCE LEAD, SSE



"The return on inclusion research identified a clear and tangible measure of

SSE's progress on its inclusion journey. Following this, SSE has started embedding the principles of inclusion and diversity holistically throughout its business in order to create a truly inclusive culture and environment.

"Since winning this award, SSE has completed a follow up return on inclusion review to assess the impact that moving from a diversity focused strategy to an inclusion strategy has had over the last 12 months, and it has been fascinating to measure the development and progress that SSE has made in a short period of time."

DAWN HURST, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EQUAL APPROACH

Inclusion pays a big dividend

SSE won the 2018 Utility Week Diversity Award for its work with Equal Approach to measure the business benefits of diversity and inclusion. Here's why the judges thought they deserved the accolade.

"A diverse workforce is critical to the future success and sustainability of utilities businesses."

SSE says it is focused on building inclusion into the way it does things as a business at every point in the employee life cycle – from attracting new talent, through to people exiting the company.

It takes this approach in place of a "series of one-off interventions" because it believes that building stronger foundations will bring "sustainable cultural change".

SSE was recognised for championing diversity at every level of the organisation. The Diversity Award was one of four new categories for 2018, which were introduced to recognise a wider breadth of achievement within utilities.

A diverse workforce is critical to the future success and sustainability of utilities businesses. The category aims to shine a light on businesses that have gone above and beyond the call of duty in fostering diversity at all levels, whether through support networks, mentoring, HR and recruitment policies or other measures.

In its award submission, SSE gave a list of examples of some of the actions it had taken to promote inclusivity, such as:

- Inclusive hiring manager training as mandatory;
- Weaving inclusive leadership through all management development training;
- Embedding a "working differently" ethos – advocating

home working, compressed hours and different start and leave times;

- Enhanced parental leave;
- Sponsorship of the Women's FA Cup;
- Mentor training and mentoring programme;
- Career site review with gender bias language review;
- The introduction of shadow boards to bring different thinking to business issues;
- Personal belief coaching for its senior team to help them articulate their personal want for more diversity;
- Researching the accessibility of back office and functional roles in its network business with a view to attract more candidates with disabilities;
- Publicly set gender targets in response to the Hampton Alexander request for 33 per cent female representation at executive level.

Key drivers

SSE says there are three key drivers which encourage the business to achieve greater diversity.

First, the company recognises it needs different ways of thinking to innovate enough to meet changing customer demands, from smart meters to electric vehicle charging. It says it cannot "simply apply the same routine thinking" to address these new challenges.

The second key driver is the realisation that 47 per cent of



SSE and Equal Approach on Awards night, with guest host Sue Perkins (left) and *Utility Week* acting editor Suzanne Heneghan (right)

those in the technically qualified and specialist roles in the industry can retire in the early 2020s – which will leave an industry shortfall of 1.8 million roles.

The final focus is how more diversity, specifically at senior levels “brings better business results”. According to the company’s award submission, even having one woman on a board “reduces the chance of a company going bust by 20 per cent”.

SSE wanted to understand two things:

- The economic return of the investment made in gender diversity over the previous three years;
- To learn more about the specific actions it needs to take to increase the diversity across the whole organisation

In 2017, SSE engaged inclusion specialists Equal Approach to conduct a return on inclusion study.

A total of 81 data points over 20 categories were reviewed, using qualitative and quantitative research, focus groups, interview feedback and public domain information.

The research scored SSE 67 out of 100 “aspiring”, which showed progress and areas for development.

It also revealed for every £1 invested by SSE in gender diversity there was a £4.52 return. Through the return on inclusion study, SSE learnt that by chang-

ing its inclusion and diversity strategy its financial return could increase to £15 for every £1 spent.

SSE will continue to invest and re-run the inclusion modelling tool for the next two years so it can see any year-on-year shifts, which will allow it to re-shape its strategy if needed.

Benefits to the workforce

Female graduates attracted to SSE increased by 17 per cent to 40 per cent over the course of one year, while of SSE’s hires across all directorates last year 39 per cent were female – almost 20 per cent up from when it started recording the information in 2013/14.

The company’s intake of BAME employees (black, Asian and minority ethnic people) has increased from 4 per cent in 2013/14 to 9 per cent.

Meanwhile, it received a 16 per cent higher employee engagement index score for those working differently.

SSE’s efforts resulted in the company being placed on the Bloomberg global gender equality index and Equileap’s top 200 gender equality ranking.

The benefit of diversity is “being harnessed throughout the business” by influencing the way the company does things, much “more broadly” than from simply what is being driven through the HR agenda.

What the judges said...

Judges were impressed with SSE’s “clear and systematic approach” to championing diversity at every level of the organisation

Diversity Award

Award winner:

SSE and Equal Approach

- Annual company turnover: £32.1 billion
- Employees: 20,000
- Customers: 5.88 million SSE Energy Service customer accounts; Four million homes and businesses looked after by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks; SSE Business Energy delivers for 500,000 business customers and SSE Airtricity has 750,000 homes and business customers in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Entry criteria:

1. Provide a brief outline of how your business has promoted diversity
 2. Quantify the scale of ambition of your entry, in relation to your company size and size of your customer base
 3. Demonstrate how you have embedded a sustainable culture of diversity within your business
 4. Outline how you have measured the success of your work on diversity and how this measure is verified
 5. Provide details of how your approach to diversity has benefited individuals within your workforce
 6. Demonstrate how you have harnessed the benefit of diversity throughout your business and how you can quantify this benefit
5. Evidence of going beyond business as usual

The Utility Week Awards are held in association with Capgemini, CGI and Microsoft



Other shortlisted companies in this category were:

- UK Power Networks
- UK Power Reserve

► The 2019 Utility Week Awards will be opening soon. Sponsorship opportunities are available – contact Utility Week business development manager Ben Hammond on benhammond@fav-house.com or call 01342 332116 for more information.