

PRESS RELEASE 6 July 2011



Green shoots but construction companies fail to reap the full benefit of diversity

Announced today is the publication of a report into good practice and the impacts of equality and diversity in the construction sector.

The report recognises the competitive nature of the sector, with high value contracts at stake and urges an industry wide effort to raise standards through greater impact of diversity programmes.

Building on pockets of good practice and business values in places such as the Olympic Park **the report urges the sector to collaborate on a respect campaign**. The principle should be embedded into site training and induction programmes and all companies should sign up to achieve the respect mark.

Based on what really works in practice, the recommended framework for action is presented in a practical and relevant way that will add value to construction businesses' bottom line. Strong leadership from the industry trade, training and accreditation organisations could yield unprecedented engagement and collaboration across the industry is what is needed. This report is a powerful force for positive change.

Funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (The Commission) this report offers the first exploration of the costs of diversity initiatives for the sector. Important challenges for the industry are revealed in tackling areas of diversity where the research shows it is struggling: disability, gender, race and age.

The Katalytik team found exciting examples of good practice, but in too many cases the reporting and evidence in annual reports and on websites was hard to find. Few companies were undertaking evaluation and had little idea of the full costs and impact of their efforts to address diversity. These gaps led us to develop a new model to help businesses small and large develop a strategic approach to diversity.

The construction sector, is perceived by many as being macho, dirty and stuck in the old ways of doing things and not open to change. The success and impact, to the public, of the considerate contractors' scheme shows that change is possible.

"Jan Peters, Director of Katalytik said: ' The goal of this research was to bring together an illustration of the costs of delivering diversity with an outline of the benefits. We found lots of exciting and innovative ideas as well as potential for further action, especially with the sector joining up to share knowledge, research and success.

For a sector that is so focused on where every penny goes, we would like to see companies learning from those making most progress. To treat diversity like other business change initiatives. To see the metrics relating to the impact of programmes being shared.

Co-author and associate Melanie Allison, of Embankment Consulting, added that the way ahead was now clear.

“ In the report we have proposed a simple four point plan to help companies get started on building a great place to work. And underpinning all this, we have recommended a clear, no nonsense sector-wide campaign to get through the message that equality and diversity isn’t political correctness. It’s a straightforward, clear and businesslike message based on mutual respect for each and every individual.”

Dr Peters concluded by looking ahead on a positive note:

“Construction companies seem caught up in competition, when the reality, hard as it may seem now, is that over the next few years there will be massive skills and labour shortages. Engaging with more diverse communities will open up new talent pools and enable companies to build better relationships with the communities in which they are building.”

Notes for Editors

Contact Carol Rothwell of Katalytik

E: info@katalytik.co.uk W: www.katalytik.co.uk T: 07810547712

The full report can be downloaded from <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

A summary can be found at www.katalytik.co.uk

About Katalytik. Katalytik specialises in equality and diversity and is about making projects and partnerships work across boundaries. Recent work includes research report Different Women, Different Places, about inspirations and strategies for success of black and minority ethnic women leaders, commercialisation opportunities for high precision sensors and developing resources on leadership for undergraduate engineers.

Managing Director Dr Jan Peters has championed women’s participation in science and technology since a postgraduate at the University of Southampton. She is also President of the Women’s Engineering Society and holds a number of appointments on equality and diversity committees. She was the UK National Expert on women in science from 1999 to 2002

The work was supported by CIOB and ICE.

About the CIOB. With over 42,000 members the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is the international voice of the building professional, representing an unequalled body of knowledge concerning the management of the total building process. CIOB members are skilled managers and professionals with a common commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest possible standards. www.ciob.org.uk

About the ICE. The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) was founded in 1818 to ensure professionalism in civil engineering. It represents 80,000 qualified and student civil engineers in the UK and across the globe. The ICE has long worked with the government of the day to help it to achieve its objectives, and has worked with industry to ensure that construction and civil engineering remain major contributors to the UK economy and UK exports. Visit www.ice.org.uk to find out more.