



## **Why the Music Business Needs to Wake Up and Embrace Gender Diversity (Guest Column)**

*Claire Singers*

Guest Columnist

!@Variety

JULY 30, 2017 | 08:00AM

It's been a big month in the United Kingdom for gender diversity: on July 19, the BBC was forced to declare the salaries of their top earners and, by doing so, revealed its alarming gender pay gap. Concurrently, UK Music, the campaigning and lobbying group representing the music industry in the UK, launched its second Diversity Survey, its findings forthcoming.

Said Michael Dugher, CEO of UK Music: "We need to better reflect the communities we live among. As a creative industry admired across the globe we should be leading by example and setting the bar high for every other industry in the UK."

Tony Hall, the director general of the BBC, has committed

to closing the gender gap by 2020. But in America, so far the music industry has yet to commission its own diversity survey.

The questions remain: why in 2017, are we still lacking females in leadership roles? Why hasn't the digital revolution, which has transformed the music industry, extended to creating a 21st-century working culture, which allows for equal opportunities for all? Why isn't this creative industry leading the way in creating diverse teams of people who will think differently, challenge the status quo and create a vibrant and dynamic business? Why does today's music industry remain pretty much run by the same coterie as it was back in the days of Elvis? Music acts want the diversity of their community reflected in the people that 'work' on their music. As one female artist said, " I get fed up having my music worked by white, middle aged men -- what are they doing with all the women?"

Research has shown that companies that employ women at all levels of their organization, from entry to boardroom, demonstrate tangible business benefits. According to studies, a gender-rich organization consistently outperforms peers that are predominately run by men. Last month, I hosted a session at the Polar Talks in Stockholm titled "A Roadmap for Gender Diversity" and was joined on the panel by executives from Spotify and Ikea: the two companies are actively pursuing diversity and inclusion programs and achieving impressive results. Ikea now has 50-50 gender balance from top to bottom. Both IKEA and Spotify cite the active engagement of the CEO as crucial. Daniel Ek, head of Spotify, recently said on launching gender equality initiative The Equalizer Project that the music industry should "Stop talking [and] start doing." Indeed, Spotify employs a Head of Diversity, based in New York, as do many other companies for whom diversity and inclusion have become key business indicators to be measured and monitored. I am aware of only one such role in a music business company, congratulations Live Nation UK.

The leaders of the 21st century music business need to wake up and realize that they need to engage and retain more senior women to fill the depleting ranks of the baby boomers. To waste half your talent pool is pure idiocy, especially given that the business case is made. It is shocking to note that from 50/50 gender balance at entry level, this dwindles to typically 5/95% at director level. And last year's inaugural UK Music Diversity Study revealed that that the 50% gender split at entry level dwindles to 33% at managerial level.

Women leave the industry for many reasons but familiar themes reoccur: difficulties of juggling a career and motherhood in an often 'hostile' environment; getting fed up with the politics; feeling undervalued; and lack of equal pay. Our careers are marathons, not sprints, as the retirement age moves into the seventies, it's worth noting that it's just a handful of years when women, who chose to have children, need support and an acknowledgement that they are in fact doing two jobs.

In addition, senior women that don't mentor or give a leg up to other women should take a hard look at themselves ask themselves, "Why I am pulling up the ladder?" Women in their late twenties and early thirties, at the point when they're beginning to look for leadership roles, could benefit greatly from mentoring and coaching, but it's rarely budgeted for.

The good news is that, at least in the U.K., most of the heads of HRs that I've met with are committed to gender equality and realize its importance but none have a strategy or timeline in place. There's a lot of piecemeal work, often "under the radar" via programs as parental leave, flex working and creating a more empathetic workplace. But without buy-in from the top man (and it's almost always a he), it lacks any coherence or hope of making a real shift.

If the will among leaders were there, the music industry could be transformed swiftly into a modern, inclusive business that reflects the society it inhabits.

*Claire Singers was a music publicist and MD of a leading UK PR company for 30 years. She currently serves as a gender diversity consultant, executive coach and Associate Consultant of the [EDGE Certified Foundation for Gender Equality](#), which works with 170 organizations in 40 countries across 22 industries.*