



EQUALITY
G R O U P

CONNECTIONS AT WORK

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Equality Group has commissioned nationally representative research that investigates social mobility following a KPMG report that found that the financial services sector suffers an above average percentage of 'nepotism' with low levels of social mobility as four in 10 (41%) of those working in financial services expressed that they had parents working in the sector. In light of this, Equality Group explores the truth about how people are securing their jobs and aims to understand the relevance of having a strong professional network.

Results show that 21% of people in the UK say that their network of personal and professional relationships was more critical in securing their first job than their academic achievements which means that candidates are being employed based on who they know rather than their capabilities.

By not assessing candidates only on merit, companies are limiting their talent pool to just those who have the opportunity to network with the right or elite crowd - leaving many diverse candidates at an unfair disadvantage. Making friends with the boss has its benefits too as 51% say that there are people in their place of work who are progressing further due to their personal relationships with decision-makers, despite being less qualified, experienced or skilled.

Double the amount of people surveyed aged 18-24 (30%) compared to those aged 45-54 (15%) felt that their network of personal and professional relationships were more helpful in securing their first job than their academic achievements which means that the younger generation today are expected to be even more social than before if they want to succeed.

Dobbin and Kalev suggest in their report "Why Firms Need Diversity Managers and Task Forces" that an important factor in increasing diversity lies in reducing managers' resistance and getting them on board. This can be achieved by engaging them in championing inclusion and diversity efforts in ways that feel more empowering than prescriptive. An example of this could be combining clear diversity targets and a transparent hiring process to get more diverse pools of candidates. Another approach is creating mentorship and sponsorship programmes that ensure that minority groups receive structural support, boost in confidence and develop professionally. Reverse mentoring pairs people who would not normally come together and these relationships are often profoundly transforming for both partners. Harvard Business Review in "Why Reverse Mentoring Works and How To Do It Right" states that reverse mentoring can increase employee retention, encourage the sharing of skills, drive culture change and promote diversity.

Organisations must evolve to think that leaders can be more proactive about reaching out to people that are different to them in order to bridge the divide between them and employees throughout the company which will allow the company as a whole to thrive.

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Key Statistics

- 71% say that their parents don't have a social or professional network significant enough to contribute to their career
- 55% do not know how to or have not been successful at combining personal and professional relationship to further their career
- 51% say that there are people in their place of work who are progressing further due to their personal relationships with decision-makers, despite being less qualified, experienced or skilled
- 47% say that one of the biggest demotivating factors at work is watching less productive, less skilled workers progress faster due to their personal relationships with decision-makers
- 44% say that, despite going over and above their employers' expectations, building robust professional relationships and excelling in academic and professional development, there are others at work that have progressed faster due to nepotism and none of the previously mentioned attributes
- 21% of people in the UK say that their network of personal and professional relationships was more critical in securing their first job than their academic achievements
- 16% wouldn't have secured their current or previous role if they didn't have an inside connection or influence within the organisation
- 12% don't need to work as hard as their colleagues to sustain or progress their position at work due to their strong personal connections at work
- 9% say that their parents' social network has been pivotal in building their career

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Hephzi Pemberton, Founder and CEO of Equality Group

"Our Connections at Work Report shows that the traditional form of nepotism, where family members or family friends, would open doors for you has broken down to a great extent. We only see 9% of people say that their parents' social network has been influential in their career. However, there is a high percentage of people who have managed to create meaningful connections at work that straddle the professional and the personal space and who have found it meaningfully benefitting their career progression. This is why mentoring is so critical to inclusion and diversity because, without those close professional connections that operate in the personal and professional zone, people aren't able to advance as quickly. Our data shows that many people don't know how to or don't have the opportunities as much as others for various reasons. If companies could create opportunities for mentorship more equally, for people to benefit from having more meaningful relationships at work, then they are going to see a more diverse leadership set progressing and a more meritocratic and inclusive culture."

About Equality Group

Equality Group is a data-driven consultancy which harnesses the power of diverse leaders through Executive Search, Strategy Consulting and Inclusion Training. We partner with Finance and Technology businesses who put their people first and realise that "culture eats strategy for breakfast". Our Strategic Consultancy helps companies cultivate more inclusive cultures and our Executive Search attracts high performing diverse leadership talent.

