International Women's Day

8 March 2026

Give to Gain

BDO

Embracing inclusion will help all our people

01

Maximise their potential

02

Ignite their passion and achieve their goals

We all share a common purpose, our why

‘People helping People’

Foreword

This year's International Women's Day theme, #GiveToGain, strongly resonates with both our people and our business perspective.

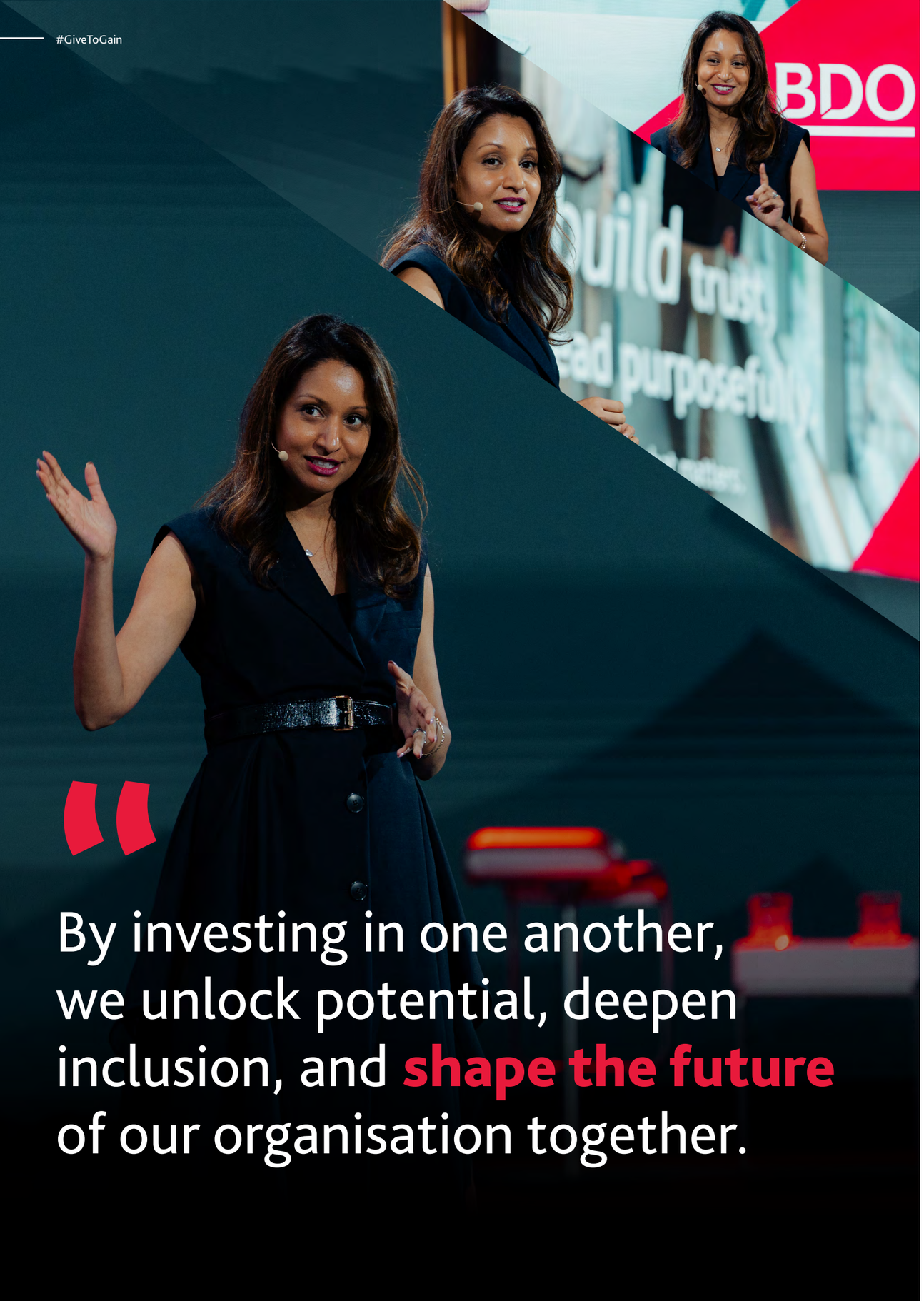
In today's complex and fast-changing environment, success is no longer defined by individual achievement alone. Organisations perform at their best when people intentionally share their knowledge, experience, and understanding.

A culture of giving strengthens collaboration, accelerates learning, and enables inclusive leadership – all of which are essential to long-term growth.

Giving in the workplace is not an abstract idea. It is reflected in how we mentor and coach others, how we build diverse and high-performing teams, and how we create opportunities for our people to contribute, grow, and succeed. When everyone adopts a mindset focused on collective progress, the return is clear: stronger engagement, better decision-making, and increased innovation.

Pat Kramer,

Global CEO



By investing in one another, we unlock potential, deepen inclusion, and **shape the future** of our organisation together.

Foreword

This report brings together the voices and experiences of women across our organisation. Through the perspective of emerging talent and experienced leaders alike, it explores what intentional giving means to them, how it has shaped their careers, and how our culture – grounded in mentoring, collaboration, active listening, and engaged leadership – enables them to thrive.

Their stories are a powerful reminder that inclusion is not only the right thing to do. It is fundamental to innovation, resilience, and performance.

By investing in our people, fostering curiosity, and building a generous culture, we strengthen leadership capability today while shaping the future of talent for tomorrow.

In line with our purpose *People helping People,* we encourage everyone to embrace the spirit of #GiveToGain – to share generously, lead inclusively, and play an active role in creating an environment where everyone can succeed.

Alicia DeFreitas,

Global Head of
People & Culture

When we give, we gain.

- It encourages a mindset of generosity and collaboration.
- Give to gain emphasises the power of reciprocity and support.
- Giving is not a subtraction, it's intentional multiplication.
- Whether through knowledge, resources, visibility, advocacy, education, training, mentoring, or time, contributing to women's advancements helps create a more supportive and interconnected world.

What will you Give to Gain?

Give to Gain

#GiveToGain at BDO

Our greatest strength is our people.

That's why we continue to build on what has always defined BDO, ensuring every individual is empowered to thrive, grow, and make an impact.

At BDO, we shape what matters.

Shaping what matters goes beyond work. It's about our people, their journeys, and the difference we make, as one united team.

We inspire others, to go further.

Our people are encouraged to think beyond the expected, make a lasting impact, but always staying human in everything we do.

We create together, to reach higher.

We are by their side, valuing everyone for their authentic strengths, to shape new ideas and create solutions, together.

We build trust, to lead purposefully.

We want everyone to feel part of an organisation that's trusted, recognised and respected everywhere.

Investing in learning is intentional multiplication

Interview with

Justine Bennett,

Senior Manager, Learning & Development,
BDO Global Office

What is a growth mindset?

A growth mindset is the belief that abilities can be developed through effort and persistence. It sees challenges as opportunities, not obstacles.

For the past year, Global HR has significantly increased its investments in Learning & Development (L&D) for the benefit of all our people. What prompted this shift?

There is a clear and direct connection between the growth of our people and L&D. Everything Global HR does, is anchored in our purpose: *People helping People* and in the three pillars of our vision: *Build a thriving global team. Do the right thing. Focus on tomorrow.*

We deliberately invest in nurturing a place of learning: one that encourages innovation, continuous development, and, above all, a genuine growth mindset.

The pace of change in today's business environment is unprecedented. New expectations, tools, and systems emerge almost daily, and the impact on L&D is significant.

That is why we started with leadership. Building a strong leadership culture is essential to embedding a true growth mindset. When leaders understand how to support their teams and create psychological safety, people feel encouraged to learn, experiment, and grow. Ultimately, our ambition is to get everyone – at every level – genuinely excited about learning!

What changes do you see in learning & development today?

Mandatory training remains necessary – but let's be honest: it was often perceived as long and uninspiring. We took this as a challenge. We revisited the format, condensed our code of conduct, and redesigned the content to be shorter, clearer, and more interactive. The result? Higher engagement and better retention.

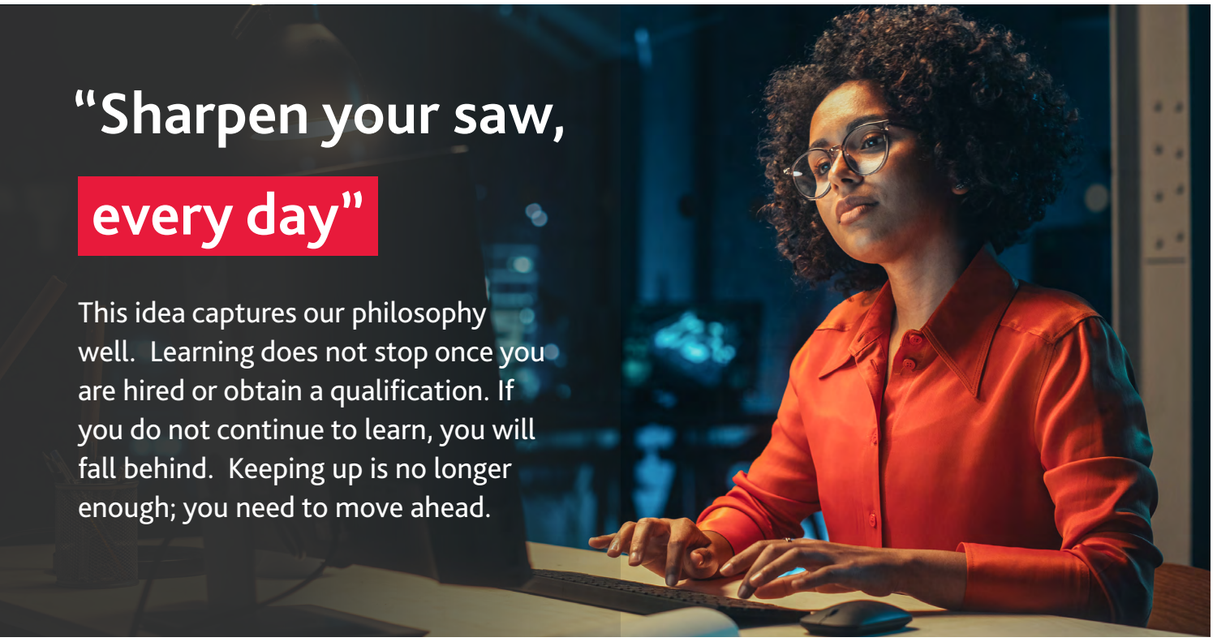
Voluntary learning is where the growth mindset truly comes to life. Learning should be something people want to do.

Our message is simple: You learn, You develop, You grow.

We also challenge the traditional approach to e-learning. That's not how we do it. We prefer online training that is lively, ensuring everyone feels engaged. Instead of passive, page-turning modules, we focus on lively online sessions that actively involve participants. We encourage conversation, use breakout rooms, and design sessions that invite people to "lean forward" rather than "lean back". Engagement is not optional – it is essential.

Alongside this, we are exploring modern, high-quality e-learning formats, and testing how AI tools can support learning where appropriate.

Importantly, learning does not end when a session finishes. We actively encourage people to share their learnings with their teams, creating a snowball effect of knowledge and inspiration. Often, the most powerful learning happens informally – through conversations, shared experiences, and exchanging practical tips with colleagues.



"Sharpen your saw, every day"

This idea captures our philosophy well. Learning does not stop once you are hired or obtain a qualification. If you do not continue to learn, you will fall behind. Keeping up is no longer enough; you need to move ahead.

A practical example is our CoPilot sessions. When we launched them about a year ago, there was hesitation - even resistance – around using AI. Fast forward to early 2026, and AI has been widely embraced. Expectations have grown, and so has the demand for deeper, more advanced learning. This perfectly illustrates why continuous learning and regular re-boosts are essential.

A re-boost is not about repetition. It is about fresh inspiration and renewed alignment with today's realities. What you learned one or two years ago may already be outdated. The DISC trainings are a good example: after last year's introduction, we are now expanding them and actively challenging teams to apply that knowledge to build stronger and high-performing teams.

How do we ensure equitable access to learning for everyone?

Our Global Office is exactly that - global. Our people are based in more than 27 countries, many of them working full remote.

To ensure equitable access, all training is offered virtually. Hosting in-person trainings at one location would exclude too many people. Our goal is to make training accessibly to everyone, regardless of location. We also offer sessions at different times, often running the same training twice to accommodate different time zones.

Inclusion is not an afterthought; it is built into how we design learning.

In 2025, we introduced our leadership pipeline framework. This levels-based model helps people understand where they are in their journey, and what skills and competencies are needed for their next step. It also enables us to design learning that is relevant, targeted, and meaningful.

All learning will now be brought together under "Thriving at the Global Office". This includes e-learning, recordings, articles, blogs, podcasts and Ted Talks – aligned to the three pillars of our vision.

With the focus on leadership, are people equipped to coach inclusively?

Yes – and this goes beyond formal training. We provide tools and guidance, but the real impact lies in how coaching is applied day to day. Our diversity is a strength. We work with people from different cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs, and we learn from these differences. At the same time, we are united by a shared foundation: *People helping People*.

Team coaching is not limited to managers. It is a skill for everyone. We encourage a strong one-on-one culture, with regular, informal conversations between people and their line managers about what matters to them. Coaching is not an event; it's a continuous practice.

Tomorrow's Learning & Development

Modern learning should be engaging, inspiring, and accessible. People should want to learn – and feel empowered to seek out what they need, when they need it. If you want to learn something, you should be able to find it. Don't wait for a training invitation. Be curious. Explore. That is the essence of a growth mindset.

Learning today is about learning in the moment. Answers are more accessible than ever – and AI is a perfect example of that. Not matter your role, age, or experience level, there is always something new to learn. And that belief sits at the heart of everything we do.

The future belongs to the learners - and we intend to lead it.

The future of talent

How workforce transformation is redefining how we work, lead, and grow.

The world of work is changing faster than any organisation can rewrite its job descriptions. New technologies, shifting client expectations, global talent mobility, and the rise of AI are creating a workplace that looks very different from the one we knew even five years ago.

But beneath the complexity lies a simple truth: people remain at the centre of everything.

Workforce transformation is not a technical upgrade. It is a human one. And the organisations that thrive, will be those that redesign work with their people, not around them.

What workforce transformation really means

Workforce transformation is the end-to-end rethinking of how an organisation attracts, deploys, develops and engages talent – through skills, supported by technology and anchored in culture.

This shift goes well beyond new tools or improved HR processes. It touches how teams operate, how leaders make decisions, and how staff continually stretch into new opportunities. At its heart, workforce transformation is about creating organisations built for adaptability, learning and human connection.

Several forces are accelerating this change:

Skills over jobs

The traditional "fixed box" job model is disappearing. Work now flows to skills, and skills evolve continuously. Organisations are redesigning roles to be more fluid, opening opportunities for all employees to grow beyond their job titles.

AI-native work

AI is no longer an ad-on. It is becoming woven into the fabric of daily work – supporting thinking, automating routine tasks, and amplifying human capability. The companies winning today aren't using AI for efficiency alone; they're redesigning workflows entirely around it.

Fluid, borderless operating models

Teams are increasingly global, dynamic, diverse and capability-driven. Work happens across regions and time zones, requiring collaboration models that are flexible but deeply human.

Workforce transformation, then, is the strategic response to a world where change is constant and talent is both the differentiator and the limiting factor.

How work is changing – and why it matters

The new world of work blends the best of technology with the irreplaceable value of human insight. AI accelerates productivity, but people provide intuition, empathy, creativity, ethics, cultural understanding, and trust.

To remain authentic and connected, organisations must intentionally design the balance between technology and human experience.

Technology enables – but people elevate

AI can generate insights, recommendations, and content in seconds. But only people can interpret nuance, understand context, build relationships, and navigate complexity. Authenticity still matters – and employees want to feel seen, valued and supported in ways no algorithm can replicate.

Human connection becomes a strategic capability

With AI amplifying the "what" of work, the "how" becomes more relational. All types of collaboration – from everyday teamwork with an organisation to complex cross-border interactions - require cultural intelligence, adaptability, and communication skills that build trust across distance and difference.

Inclusion is what enables these connections to flourish. Diverse teams are a strategic strength, but they thrive only when people feel respected, heard, and valued. Creating a culture that fosters psychological safety ensures that voices from all backgrounds will actively contribute – especially in those cross-border and cross-cultural environments.

Leadership shifts from control to conversation

Data can be informative, but it cannot replace dialogue. Leaders who combine analytical insight with empathy foster higher engagement, stronger teams, and more meaningful work. Inclusive leadership will amplify this shift. Leaders who intentionally seek out diverse viewpoints, listen deeply, and create space for equitable participation help build strong teams that are more resilient, innovative and engaged.

Hiring focus on values and potential – not just credentials

AI tools can scan CVs, but they cannot assess curiosity, grit, or cultural fit. Organisations are increasingly valuing well-rounded individuals who bring initiative, resilience, and drive – qualities that shape not just performance, but the future direction of the company.

The new skill set for the future workforce

As work evolves, so must the skills that define success. The most in-demand capabilities of the future are deeply human:

- **Curiosity**

  The single most valuable trait in a world of constant change. Curious employees explore, question, and innovate.

- **Adaptability and flexibility**

  Work will shift across projects, technologies, and markets. Individuals who welcome change rather than resist it will thrive.

- **Communication and empathy**

  Human connection fuels effective collaboration, especially across cultures and geographies.

- **Grit and perseverance**

  Sports, volunteering, and community involvement reveal qualities that matter as much as technical expertise – commitment, resilience, and heart.

- **AI confidence – not AI mastery**

  Future talent won't need to be AI engineers. But they must be comfortable working with AI, questioning assumptions, and challenging the status quo.

This blend of human capabilities and digital fluency creates a workforce that is both tech-empowered and authentically human.

The future of talent is human

AI will continue to advance, tools will come and go, and operating models will evolve. But the organisations that thrive will be those that elevate human potential – where technology amplifies rather than replaces, where skills matter more than job titles, and where authenticity and connection define the culture.

The future of talent is not about becoming more like machines. It is about becoming more human than ever – curious, adaptable, creative, connected, and courageous.

The curiosity mindset

Ignite personal growth, accelerate team impact

Curiosity: The mindset that powers growth

We've all heard the saying "Curiosity killed the cat". Perhaps that's why curiosity rarely tops the list of leadership and talent virtues. Yet it deserves a place near the very top – right alongside authenticity. Qualities that help everyone within an organisation to learn, adapt and grow.

In a world defined by rapid technological change and global complexity, curiosity is no longer a "nice-to-have". It has become a strategic imperative.

But curiosity cannot thrive in isolation; it needs a foundation of psychological safety - an environment where questions are welcomed, ideas are valued, and mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn.

Why curiosity matters

Curiosity is the spark behind progress and change, challenging the status quo to drive value and transformation. It encourages everyone within an organisation to ask "why" and "what if," and to explore new possibilities.

Research shows that curiosity:

- **Boosts creativity and innovation,** enabling organisations to adapt faster.
- **Improves engagement and retention,** as employees feel empowered to learn and contribute.
- **Builds resilience,** helping teams navigate uncertainty with confidence.

Albert Einstein captured it perfectly:

> The important thing is **not to stop questioning.** Curiosity has its own reason for existence.

Curiosity is about entering every discussion, strategy session or conversation with an open mind and a genuine desire to learn. It calls for listening first, understanding deeply, and responding thoughtfully. When practised well, the results will be quickly felt. It will transform the dynamic in the room – creating openness, trust, and a stronger buy-in from everyone.

The role of psychological safety in the workplace

Curiosity thrives only when people feel safe to speak up, share ideas, and challenge assumptions. However, talented people will not always contribute what they know at the critical moment when it is needed. They sometimes hold back due to interpersonal fear. These 'consequential moments of silence' present risk and hinder learning. Without psychological safety, curiosity entails risks.

The best leaders see knowledge as a crucial source of value. They play an important role in removing the barriers that hold curiosity back.

How can leaders make it happen?

From distraction to presence

Curiosity demands presence. When we're distracted, we miss cues, cut conversations short, and default to assumptions. Active listening – really hearing what is said, being present, and reflecting before responding – creates space for curiosity to flourish.

From the need to be right to open-mindedness

Many leaders feel the pressure to have all the answers. But clinging to "rightness" shuts down dialogue. Innovation rarely comes from certainty – it comes from questions. Having all the answers doesn't foster engagement, motivation of innovation. By asking questions and hearing different perspectives, you build trust and unlock better solutions.

From the virtual wall to real connection

Remote work can dilute openness. Virtual meetings often lack those important informal moments where curiosity can naturally start. Leaders must intentionally create space for casual, curious conversations – through informal check-ins and inclusive facilitation, engaging those that are remote.

Psychological safety also means creating an environment where:

- Questions are welcomed, not judged.
- Mistakes are reframed as learning opportunities.
- Diverse perspectives are actively sought and valued.

When people fear criticism or failure, curiosity is stifled. Psychological safety isn't a "nice to have" – it's the foundation for curiosity, and curiosity is the engine for growth.

BDO's commitment to the curiosity mindset

At BDO, we believe that curiosity fuels innovation, drives engagement, and empowers our people to grow. Curiosity isn't just encouraged; it's the engine of lifelong learning and adaptability. It shapes how we think, how we grow, and how we deliver for our clients.

One of the pillars supporting our global vision is building a thriving globally connected team – nurturing a place of learning and respect, and where people bring their authentic selves to work.

We celebrate openness and bold ideas, while our Workforce Transformation Strategy positions curiosity as a core capability for the future.

At BDO, we actively foster psychological safety through:

- **Inclusive leadership training that promotes openness.**
- **Feedback cultures that focus on growth, not blame.**
- **Collaborative spaces - both physical and virtual - where ideas can flow freely.**

Curiosity is more than a mindset - it is a movement. We encourage our people to question, explore, and innovate, supported by a culture of psychological safety. Together, these principles empower us to deliver exceptional value to clients, communities, and each other. Because when curiosity meets safety, growth becomes limitless.

Practical tips: How to cultivate curiosity at work

- **Ask "Why?" and "What if?" regularly** – Challenge assumptions and explore alternatives.
- **Don't allow yourself to engage in the conversation unless you've come up with at least one or two questions**. The result: you are more present and the conversation become more dynamic.
- **Schedule learning time** – Intentionally set aside time each week for learning - to read, watch, or listen to something new.
- **Engage in cross-team conversations** – Broaden your perspective by connecting with colleagues outside your immediate area.
- **Embrace mistakes as learning opportunities** – Share lessons learned openly.
- **Use AI tools and resources** – Experiment – responsibly - with digital assistants and platforms to discover new insights.

Alicia DeFreitas,

Global Head of People & Culture

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Curiosity is the fuel for innovation. At BDO, we encourage our people to question, explore, and learn - because when curiosity meets psychological safety, growth **becomes limitless.**

Women at BDO

25%

Global average female partners

50%

Global average female professional staff

65%

Global average female admin staff

Give to Gain

Firms with 20%+ female partners[1]

EMEA

Austria	24%
Belgium	24%
Bulgaria	100%
Croatia (Fed Bosnia Herzegovina included)	71%
Cyprus	26%
Czech republic	22%
Estonia	71%
Finland	27%
France (French Guiana included)	34%
Georgia	27%
Germany	20%
Greece	22%
Hungary	22%
Ireland	23%
Israel	23%
Italy (San Marino included)	20%
Kazakhstan	33%
Kenya	23%
Latvia	40%
Lithuania	57%
Luxembourg	26%
Mauritius	22%
Norway	23%
Poland	41%
Portugal	30%
Romania	27%
Rwanda (Burundi included)	33%
Serbia (Republic of Srpska included)	30%
Slovenia	56%
South Africa	39%
Spain	20%
Sweden	39%
Turkey	23%
Ukraine	36%
United Kingdom	26%

Americas

Argentina	42%
Canada	30%
Chile	27%
Colombia	24%
Costa Rica	25%
Dominican Republic	57%
Ecuador	35%
Jamaica	80%
Mexico	20%
Panama	33%
Peru	29%
U.S.A.	27%

Asia Pacific

Australia	24%
China	30%
Fiji	80%
Hong Kong (Macau included)	43%
Indonesia	23%
Malaysia	38%
New Zealand	30%
Singapore	40%
Sri Lanka (Maldives included)	50%
Taiwan	63%
Thailand	54%
Vietnam	33%

1. Data (excluding alliance firms) for the year ending 30 September 2025)

Parity in action

Six years of continued progress

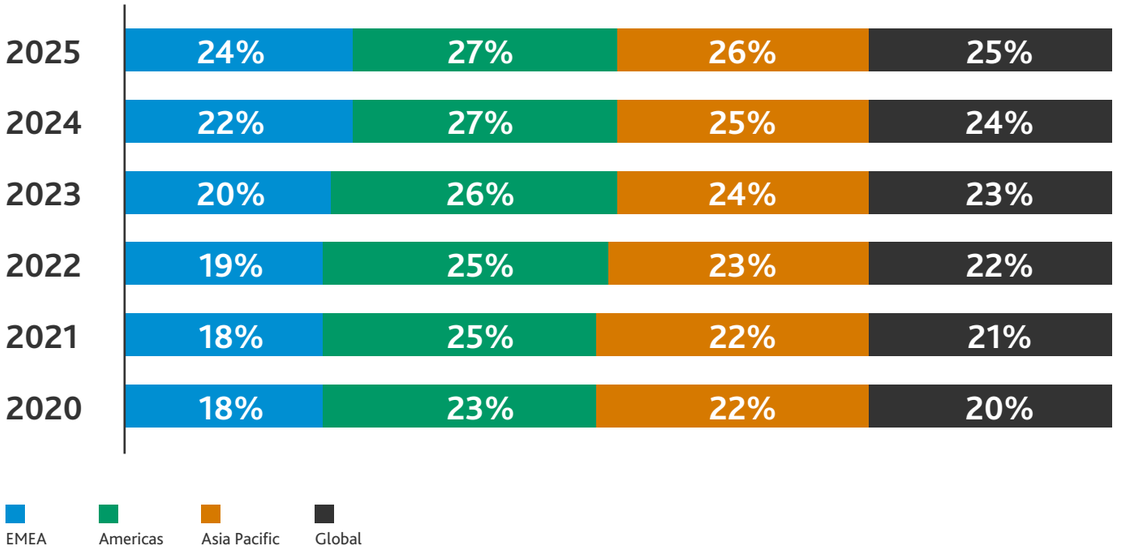
Our greatest strength is our people, and the diversity they bring.

That is why we continue to build on what has always defined BDO, creating an environment of learning, respect and equal opportunity, where every individual is empowered to thrive, grow, and make a meaningful impact.

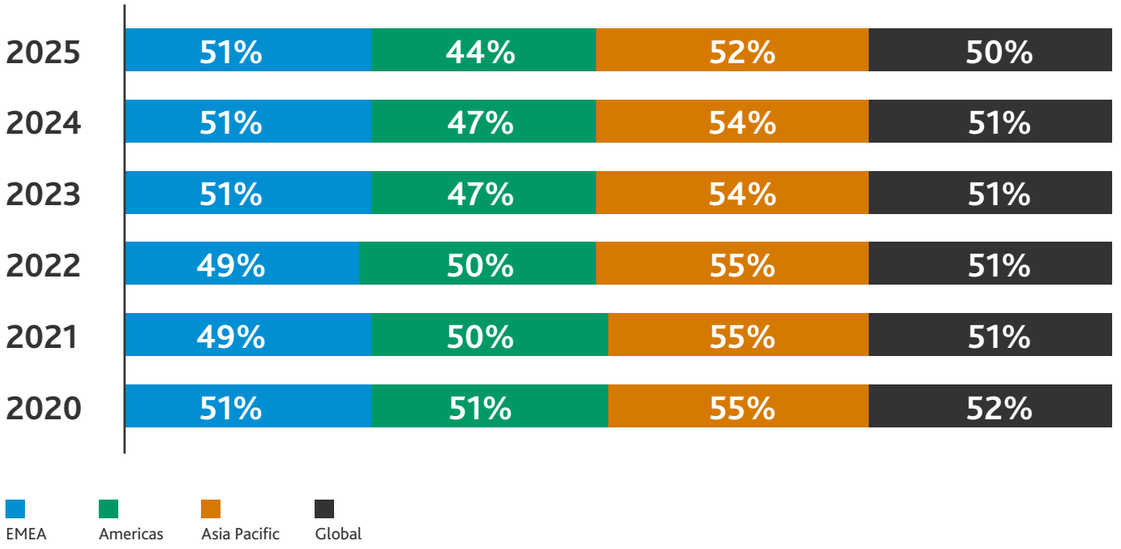
Year after year, we see growth in the number of female partners, across all regions. Our firms have launched various initiatives to support female talent, creating a workplace where women feel encouraged and supported in pursuing their career journey and becoming their very best.

Today, we have a strong pipeline of young female professionals, eager to grow. With this momentum, we are confident in our ability to continue building a truly balanced and inclusive leadership.

Female partners



Female professionals



Parity in action

Highlighting outstanding growth milestones

- BDO Poland
- BDO Malaysia
- BDO France

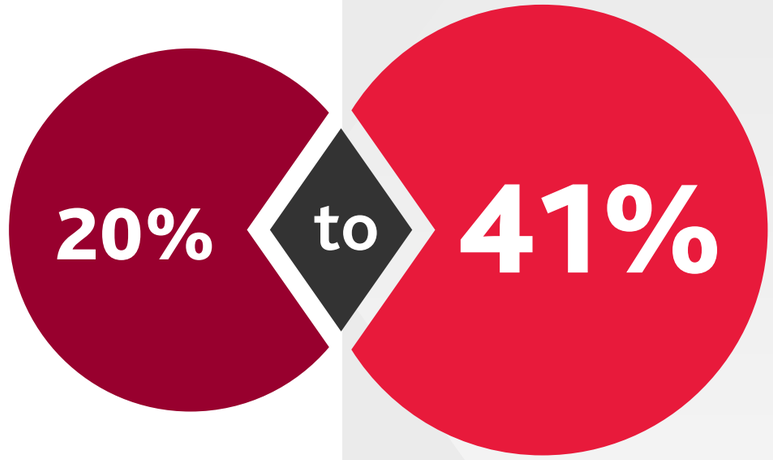
Joanna Gładecka,

HR Manager,
BDO Poland

BDO Poland has recently observed a notable increase in the number of female Partners. This development can be attributed to changes in our organisational structure and the expansion of the partnership group. In appointing new Partners, BDO Poland's primary focus has been on selecting individuals with strong competencies, demonstrated commitment to the firm's growth, and clear leadership potential. Many of these qualified leaders are women.

Growth over the past 6 years:

female partners at BDO Poland



It is important to note that women now comprise nearly 70% of BDO Poland's workforce. Additionally, women constitute the majority within our second-largest business line, Business Services & Outsourcing (BS&O), and several newly appointed female Partners have advanced from this division, which is a source of pride for us.

BDO Poland remains committed to supporting the advancement of women in leadership positions. The firm provides leadership development training, soft -skills programmes, and DEI-focused initiatives for employees. Furthermore, BDO Poland's hybrid work model facilitates the balance of professional and personal responsibilities - a benefit highly valued by our teams and women leaders alike.

Bonnie Tham,

Head of People & Support, BDO Malaysia

In October 2024, we promoted seven female directors to partner level at BDO Malaysia. Each of them has been with the firm for several years, steadily progressing through the ranks. The group includes one partner from Audit, two from Tax, one from BSO, and three from Business Support.

In January 2026, we further strengthened this pipeline by adding another female partner from Audit.

These individuals are high-performing talents, who have consistently demonstrated strong contributions to the firm's growth. They represent our next generation of leadership, with most of them in their mid-30s to early 40s. As a growing firm, BDO Malaysia is committed to creating partnership opportunities for capable young professionals, both to support their continued personal and professional development and to build a strong succession pipeline.

Notably, three of the seven female partners promoted in October 2024 come from our Business Support functions: Marketing & Corporate Office, People & Culture, and Learning & Development. This highlights the firm's recognition of Business Support as strategic partners who play a critical role in driving sustainable growth.

Laetitia Amoros,

Head of Human Resources, BDO France

BDO France continues to strengthen its commitment to professional equality between women and men, with a clear focus on building an inclusive workplace and offering meaningful career opportunities.

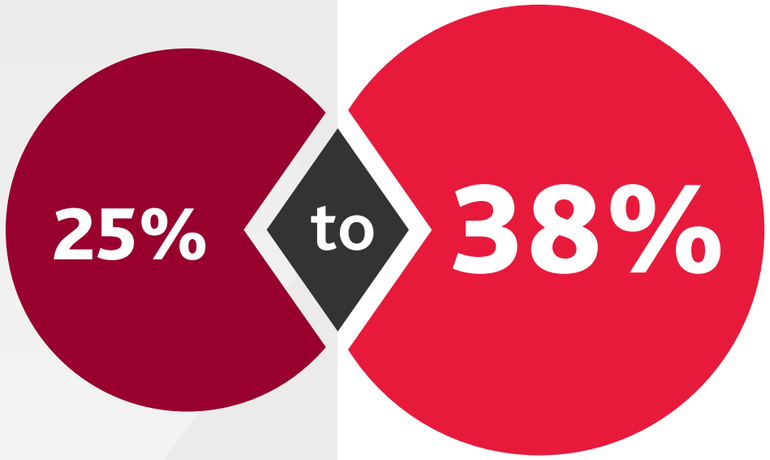
The firm has made remarkable progress in recent years, including a significant increase in the number of female partners between 2024 and 2025, a development that reflects both determination and long-term vision.

This momentum is driven by a culture that values fairness, transparency, and the potential of every individual. By investing in supportive initiatives and fostering an environment where women can grow, lead, and thrive at every stage of their career, BDO France is shaping a future where equality is not just an objective but a lived reality.

Read more

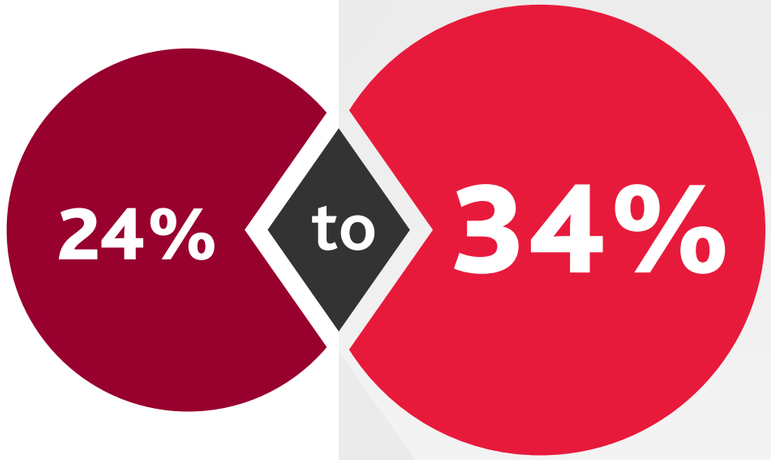
Growth over the past 6 years:

female partners at BDO Malaysia



Growth over the past 6 years:

female partners at BDO France



BDO Initiatives

Some examples of how our firms are demonstrating their commitment to DE&I

UK

Gender equality

Read more

The Netherlands

BDO Ladies Circle

Read more

Australia

Inclusion Networks

Read more

Interamericas

B-Women

Read more

Canada

WISE Awards

Read more

BDO UK: Gender equality is not a single initiative or campaign

Dr. Zaheer Ahmad MBE

Head of Inclusion and Belonging, Citizenship & Social Mobility

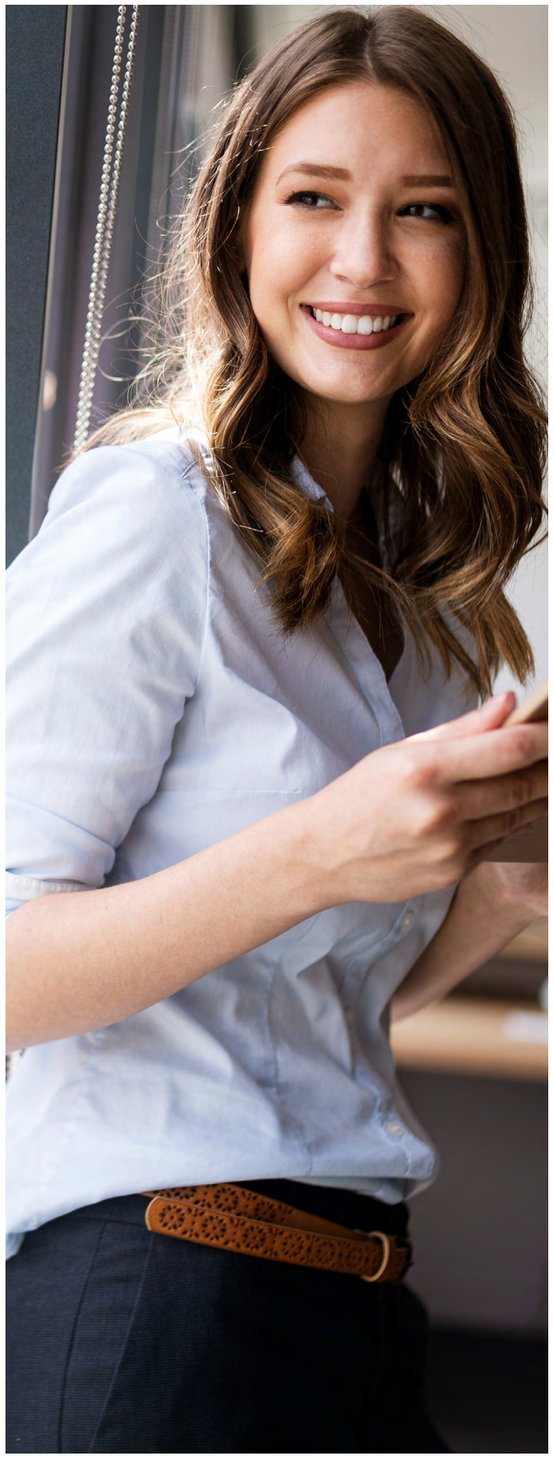
At BDO UK, gender equality is a long-term, steady commitment to being an organisation where women can join, stay, lead and thrive without having to adapt who they are. When women feel they belong, the whole organisation performs better: decisions are richer, teams are stronger and clients receive better outcomes.

Our approach to supporting and developing women is deliberately holistic. We combine targeted action to accelerate women's progression with wider cultural change that benefits everyone. This means addressing structures such as recruitment, promotion and pay, while also shaping everyday behaviours: how meetings are run, whose voices are heard, and how caring responsibilities are respected.

The starting point for our gender agenda has been listening directly to women. We have held dedicated listening sessions with women across grades and business areas and actively sought feedback from our Gender Network, **"Inspire".** Women spoke openly about confidence, progression, flexibility, caring responsibilities and the barriers that still exist in professional services. This insight has played a key role in shaping our new **Inclusion & Belonging strategy** (I&B) and our roadmap for gender equity.

That roadmap includes ambitions to increase the representation of women in partnership, director and senior manager levels and to continue closing the gender pay gap through fair progression, transparent reward processes and targeted development. We have strengthened governance, so these commitments are owned at the highest level. The People, Culture & Purpose Executive and the I&B Delivery Group, chaired by senior leaders, track progress and hold the business to account.

We are clear that the burden of changing the system cannot sit on women. Real progress requires everybody to be active participants, not bystanders. For that reason, allyship sits at the heart of our approach.



Over the past year, we launched a firmwide programme on **Allyship and Active Bystander skills.** This equips colleagues, to challenge stereotypes, share opportunities and call out behaviours that hold minorities back. More than 600 colleagues have completed the programme, and feedback shows a tangible shift in confidence to act.

Alongside culture, we have invested in direct, practical support for women at key career stages. **Our mentoring and sponsorship programmes,** including **"Moving Ahead",** have connected women with senior advocates who open doors and provide honest guidance. Inclusive recruitment practices, diverse shortlists and fair assessment processes are helping to remove bias at entry and promotion.

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A firm where **women thrive** is a firm where **everyone thrives.**

We know that many women carry a disproportionate share of caring and health-related responsibilities. Over the past year we have strengthened family and wellbeing support so that careers do not stall because life happens.

We introduced neonatal care, domestic abuse and gender identity leave, increased paternity provisions, and expanded menopause support with access to specialist nurses. Guidance on menstruation, fertility and shared parental leave is helping to remove stigma and provide practical help at the moments that matter. Flexible working is treated as a normal way of operating, not a concession. These policies are designed to be simple and accessible because support only works if people feel safe to use it.

Progress for women is tracked with the same discipline as any business priority. We monitor representation, promotion rates and pay gaps, and link senior leader accountability to outcomes. Transparency keeps us honest about where we are and where we need to go next.

We are making steady progress on increasing women in partnership, and our gender pay gap continues to narrow as more women move into higher-paid roles. These results are encouraging, but we know there is more to do, particularly to support women at mid-career where many still face competing pressures.

Central to this work is **"Inspire",** a network that connects women across the firm, provides peer support, and gives senior leaders direct insight into what works and what needs to change. Through Inspire we have hosted development programmes, confidence and career workshops, events on menopause and fertility, and conversations with senior female role models who speak honestly about navigating career and life. The network also engages allies, recognising that gender equality is not a "women's issue" but a leadership issue.

Inspire's voice has influenced practical changes, from how we design flexible roles to how we communicate parental leave. It has helped normalise conversations that were once difficult, and it has created visible pathways for women who previously could not see people like them at the top.

What makes our approach different is that it is co-created. **Women at BDO UK are not passive recipients of programmes; they are architects of change.** Inspire members sit on steering groups, help design initiatives and challenge the firm to be braver. This collaboration has built a culture that feels more human, where success is defined broadly, where caring is compatible with ambition, and where leadership looks and sounds more diverse than it did a few years ago.

International Women's Day reminds us that progress is not inevitable; it is built through daily choices. Each year, our Inspire Network holds a flagship event, inviting the whole firm to attend. We also hold annual International Women's Day awards, where we invite people to recognise women and change makers for the great work they do for gender balance.

We will continue to listen, to measure, and to act, engaging colleagues as partners in change, ensuring we work, thrive and win together. At BDO UK we believe that a firm where women thrive is a firm where everyone thrives. That belief guides our strategy, our culture and our commitment to the future.

IWD award winners 2025

Global Inclusion List 2026

BDO Netherlands: BDO Ladies Circle (BLC)

Growing together. Connecting. Leading with impact.

At BDO Netherlands, we believe that progress begins when people come together, strengthen one another, and dare to build something greater than themselves. This year's IWD theme - #GiveToGain - aligns seamlessly with the essence of our own BDO Ladies Circle (BLC). Because it is in giving knowledge, opportunities, time, support, that we unlock collective growth. That is what the BLC represents: a movement that connects people, stimulates leadership, and empowers women across all levels of the organisation to achieve their ambitions.

In the Netherlands, our BLC has been active since 2019. What began as a small initiative driven by committed colleagues, has grown into a solid platform with a clear mission: to strengthen female talent within BDO and create space for future focused, inclusive leadership.

Our history: a movement that grew organically

The BLC was founded on a simple yet powerful observation: talent is everywhere, but opportunities are not always equally distributed. Within BDO, we saw more and more women rising into key roles, but we also recognised certain barriers — visibility, confidence, networks, role models. It was time to address these challenges collectively.

Our earliest gatherings were small, including inspiration sessions, lunch meetings, and open discussions where colleagues shared experiences and ambitions. The energy that emerged immediately showed how strong the need was for a platform that unites women. From that foundation, the BLC has become a nationwide network with programmes, partnerships, and a structured yearly plan.

Each year we define a set of priority projects. For 2026, our priorities are centered around strengthening inclusive leadership, deepening community engagement, and enhancing visibility across BDO.

One of the key initiatives for the coming year is the continuation of information and inspiration sessions related to the Nominations Advisory Committee. These sessions, organised by BLC, provide colleagues with valuable insights into BDO's nomination procedures and requirements, helping them to better understand the pathways and expectations for leadership roles.

Looking ahead, our 2026 plans focus on four main pillars:

Empowerment & visibility programmes

We will introduce new inclusive leadership initiatives, improve development tools, and apply a more structured approach to talent identification, supporting colleagues in their growth and progression.

Strengthening our community

We aim to deepen our internal connections through more regional events, national gatherings, and thematic circles around key topics such as sustainability, digitalisation, and personal growth.

Expansion of the sponsor partner programme

With multiple new cohorts launching, we will broaden the programme's impact and strengthen its alignment with BDO's strategic ambitions.

Inspiration and thought leadership

Through cases, interviews, and best practices, we will highlight the impact of inclusive leadership on individuals, teams, and the wider organisation — fostering a culture of learning, inspiration, and shared success.

Launch of the Sponsor Partner Programme

One of the most meaningful steps toward gender equality is breaking down silent barriers. The sponsor partner programme pairs talented women with senior leaders within the organisation — not just as mentors, but as active sponsors who open doors, create visibility, and accelerate career development.

Expansion of the Women Empowerment Platform

With our digital platform, the BLC has created a central space for knowledge sharing, inspiration, success stories, and practical tools.

Rosanne de Groot,
Chair, Partner A&A

"

Ladies Circle is about connection: **inspiring and empowering each other** — personally and professionally.

Our themes for 2026: Growing together. Connecting. Leading with impact.

In 2026, the BLC continues building a culture where women help one another advance by offering:

- Interactive learning paths focused on personal development
- Peer circles that support each other with career and leadership challenges
- Networking events for sharing insights, challenges, and successes
- Cross-functional projects designed to break down silos and promote collaboration

The core remains: when we invest in each other, everyone grows.

Leadership with impact

As the world changes, leadership evolves. The BLC aims to contribute to a new kind of leadership at BDO, to be:

1. **Inclusive**
2. **Collaborative rather than competitive**
3. **Value-driven**
4. **Focused on long-term, sustainable impact**

Give to Gain: what we give — and what it creates

Within the BLC, this means:

- We share knowledge, helping others grow faster.
- We demonstrate leadership, so the next generation can find its path.
- We build networks, making opportunities visible.
- We create space, allowing diversity and inclusion to thrive.
- We celebrate success, ensuring talent is recognised and valued.

In giving, we truly gain: a stronger BDO, a richer culture, and a new generation of leaders ready for the future.

from left to right,
Rosanne de Groot, Krista Boere, Sabine Content, Daisy Kramer-de Beijer, Linda Rooijakkers en Helen Gleis.

In closing

The BDO Ladies Circle is not a project or a temporary initiative. It is a movement. A movement that

connects women, stimulates leadership, and strengthens BDO for the future.

In 2026, we will continue building — through collaboration, through commitment, and through the belief that we all gain when we choose to give.

Give to gain. Grow to impact. Lead to inspire.

BDO Australia: Inclusion Networks

Our BDO inclusion networks connect and support our diverse workforce. These networks reflect our commitment to building a workplace where everyone feels seen, valued, and empowered. Our networks are open to all our people and are led by national and local committees that drive engagement and action, recognise and celebrate moments of significance, and strengthen local office communities.

Women@BDO

Women@BDO supports and empowers women at all levels of the firm to build connections, knowledge and skills to achieve their career aspirations.

Led by local committees, the network actively promotes gender equality, community building and allyship.

Key highlights and activities include regular leader spotlight series, networking events, women in leadership panels and workshops on topics such as financial planning and personal branding.

Families&Careers@BDO

Families&Careers@BDO is committed to supporting our people in balancing work, family, and caring responsibilities. It provides a forum for connection, resource and experience sharing across all offices. The network is open to all our people, regardless of caregiving status or gender, and actively contributes to BDO's inclusive culture by hosting national and local events, sharing practical resources and storytelling.

BProud@BDO

BProud@BDO is dedicated to promoting inclusion and visibility for our LGBTIQ+ community while fostering genuine allyship across BDO. A key focus is increasing awareness of LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the workplace and creating a supportive environment where our people feel confident, respected and empowered to be themselves at work.

WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality

DCO Inclusive Employer
Diversity Council Australia
2025 – 2026

BDO in Australia is currently recognised as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). This citation recognises our commitment to addressing the drivers of gender inequality in the workplace and our continued efforts to improve gender equality outcomes.

BDO in Australia is also recognised as an Inclusive Employer 2025-2026 by the Diversity Council Australia (DCA), an independent not-for-profit leader in diversity and inclusion research, education, and advocacy. This achievement recognises our strong commitment to inclusion in the workplace, with results exceeding key national benchmarks in DCA's Inclusive Employer Index

Sally Whenman,

Tax Partner, Corporate & International Tax

"

Supporting one another, sharing experiences and investing time and energy in others may seem like small actions, but their impact is significant. Through the network, I saw firsthand how collective support creates **momentum, confidence and opportunity.**

B-WOMEN: Female leadership that strengthens the future of BDO Interaméricas

from left to right,
Claudia Camargo, MP of BDO Colombia, **Claudia Palacios,** Colombian journalist and newscaster, **Paula Giraldo,** MP of BDO Venezuela.

At BDO Interaméricas*, we believe that female leadership is not just a value. It is a strategic force that contributes to the transformation of organisations, connects with communities, and builds a sustainable future.

This conviction inspired the creation of B-WOMEN. Developed by Claudia Camargo, Managing Partner of the Colombia office, the initiative aims to make the talent of our professionals more visible, stronger, and ready for the future.

It offers a space that celebrates the strategic thinking, creativity, and vision of our female leaders and collaborators, supporting their growth.

Its name emerges from the essence of BDO. Beyond its place in the BDO name, the letter B highlights the qualities that define and inspire us in our daily work: brilliance, balance, and boldness. **"Each of these attributes reflects how, through the joint work of women and men, we strengthen a more diverse, closer, and more conscious culture that is prepared for today's challenges,"** says Claudia Camargo.

Launched in 2025, the programme is built on five strategic pillars that allow us to grow from the core of our business toward the holistic development we promote across the region.

Strategic pillars of B-WOMEN

1. Relationship building

This pillar focuses on building collaboration networks that enhance business opportunities, innovation, and growth.

From here, we seek to open doors that allow us to connect, learn, and share knowledge based on our experience. We also aim to connect our professionals with national and international networks to broaden their horizons.

2. Communications

B-WOMEN provides a platform that amplifies the voices of our female leaders and helps position them as role models in their fields.

We understand that leadership is more impactful when it is visible. For this reason, we highlight their stories and trajectories to strengthen our brand positioning and connect with the market through more human and diverse perspectives.

3. Development

To continue strengthening our teams, we must promote continuous learning. This pillar seeks to provide tools and capabilities that empower our female colleagues to grow their careers. By doing so, we prepare for emerging challenges and ensure that we remain competitive and at the forefront of the sector.

4. Impact

Female leadership must extend beyond our teams and clients. It must also generate impact in communities and inspire new generations. Through this pillar, we reinforce our commitment to sustainability and connect with junior talent.

The success of BDO is not just measured in numbers. It is also reflected in our ability to generate positive change in our surroundings and remain consistent with our social purpose.

5. Recognition

This pillar was created to highlight female leadership within BDO and in the corporate sector, sharing achievements and spotlighting innovation. By recognising talent, we not only attract outstanding professionals but also strengthen our reputation as strategic partners for clients who seek collaborators who are diverse, authentic, and modern.

A movement that builds the future

B-WOMEN is the bridge between who we are today and the firm we aspire to become. It does not only amplify voices or create new spaces, it strengthens a culture where diversity fuels innovation and where every action contributes to a shared purpose.

By promoting female leadership, **the individual grows, the team grows, and the firm grows.** When we move forward together, the organisation transforms, and it transformed for the better.

> the letter B highlights the qualities that define and inspire us in our daily work: **brilliance, balance,** and **boldness.**

*BDO Interaméricas is a cluster of firms made up of BDO member firms in Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela.

BDO Canada: WISE Awards

Women in Search of Excellence

Introduced in 2022, BDO Canada's Women in Search of Excellence (WISE) Awards were established to mark International Women's Day and to recognise the extraordinary contributions of women across our firm. The awards celebrate individuals who actively support and promote excellence within BDO Canada and in their communities—whether through leadership, mentorship, advocacy, or by fostering inclusive environments where women can be their authentic selves and thrive.

At the heart of the WISE Awards is a shared understanding of excellence: creating cultures where women are empowered to participate fully, overcome barriers, and succeed at every stage of their careers. Each year, colleagues from across the firm are invited to nominate women whose actions uplift others, challenge bias, and contribute meaningfully to a more equitable workplace. The stories shared through the nomination process highlight the diverse ways excellence shows across roles, service lines, and communities, reinforcing the collective responsibility we all hold in advancing gender equity.

The WISE Awards have become a cornerstone of BDO Canada's International Women's Day programming and broader Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility efforts.

By recognising and amplifying these contributions, the initiative not only honours individual achievements but also inspires continued action, reminding us that when women are supported and positioned for success, the impact extends far beyond the individual and strengthens the firm as a whole.

WISE Dinner 2025

BDO Women Interviews

Ysabella Poblete,
BDO Global Office
Director, International Business Strategy

Kimberley Symon,
BDO New Zealand
Business Advisory Partner

Threenuch (Connie) Bunruangthaworn,
BDO Thailand
Legal Partner, Mergers & Acquisitions

Sally Whenman,
BDO Australia
Tax Partner, Corporate & International Tax

Ameenah Ramdin,
BDO Mauritius
Managing Partner

Kirsten Konst,
BDO Netherlands
CEO/Chairman of the Board

Synne Ekrem-Hansen,
BDO Norway
Chief of Marketing & Communications

Interview

Ysabella Poblete,

BDO Global Office

Director, International Business Strategy

Ysabella's personal journey

I was born and raised in the Philippines. As a young girl, I dreamed of becoming an astronaut. I was endlessly fascinated by the universe and exploring what lies beyond what we know. Like many childhood dreams, that one eventually met reality. Becoming an astronaut is a path open to very few.

So, I chose another way forward. After completing my bachelor's degree in science in Manila, I embarked on a journey at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where I studied financial markets, later completing an MBA at HEC in Paris.

My career didn't follow a straight line. I began in investment banking in Southeast Asia, before moving into consulting and strategy roles across Europe. These environments were demanding and high-pressure, with high stakes and little margin for error. They pushed me to develop rigor and discipline early on, but they also taught me something just as important: how leadership behaviour truly shows up under pressure.

Over time, I realised I was most motivated by **helping organisations navigate change and growth - not just by designing strategy, but making it real.** Each transition came with uncertainty, but also with growing clarity about the kind of leader I wanted to become.

Working and living in Paris also brought challenges of its own. I was offered an exciting role at a French bank, on the condition that I would master French in just four months. If my level wasn't sufficient by then, I would have to leave. It was a daunting moment – but also a defining one. When I commit to something, I fully commit. I made it happen. France grew on me, and – ten years later – I consider France my home.

Years spent in investment banking, shaped by international experience and fast-paced environments, have deeply influenced how I see people, problems, and leadership. These roles have taught me **resilience, focus, and the importance of staying grounded – especially when expectations are high.**

Outside of work, I find balance in the ocean. I'm a licensed scuba diver, freediver, and sailor. I also reset through sport like horse riding and skiing, and through music - having trained classically in piano for 15 years. I admit I'm also a bit of a gym enthusiast; rest days are negotiable. These passions are anchors for me. They keep me connected to myself, which I believe is essential to leading with clarity and purpose.

#GiveToGain

To me, **#GiveToGain** means sharing time, trust, and perspective without expecting immediate returns. **I apply it by mentoring, advocating for others in rooms they're not yet in, and making space for honest conversations.** Over time, that generosity builds stronger teams and better outcomes - for everyone.

In my own career, I have been fortunate to have received that same kind of support. Managers trusted me before I felt ready. Mentors offered honest advice. Colleagues shared opportunities instead of competing for them. I wouldn't be where I am today without that generosity.

I'm motivated by **creating impact beyond my own role.** I enjoy helping teams and leaders turn ideas into something tangible, while creating space for others to grow along the way. For me, leadership is about responsibility far more than recognition.

Now, in a leadership role myself, I try to lead with clarity and fairness. I set high standards, but I also make room for learning and mistakes. Having experienced both supportive and difficult leadership styles, I'm very intentional about fostering an environment where people feel respected, trusted, and encouraged to grow.

Challenges and perspectives

When I reflect on the broader landscape, women still face challenges in their growth journeys. High-pressure environments can amplify existing inequalities - especially for women. Expectations around toughness, visibility, and leadership style are not always applied evenly, and women often have to work harder to be heard or trusted.

Consistent sponsorship, fair access to opportunities, and leaders who are genuinely open to different perspectives make a real difference. Growth thrives in environments where people feel seen, heard, and trusted - not boxed in.

What is a generous culture?

A generous culture is one where people share credit, make time for others, and offer help without being asked. It's when success isn't a zero-sum game, and growth is something you build together.

Having been with BDO for a year and a half, I've been genuinely impressed by the culture. BDO creates opportunities through mobility, leadership development, and a growing focus on inclusion and belonging. What I value most is the openness to dialogue and the willingness to evolve - DE&I is approached as a journey, not a checkbox.

Advice to young talents

Trust your pace, your voice, and be clear about your values and boundaries.

Learn everything you can by observing the leaders around you - and remember that how you lead yourself today shapes how you'll lead others tomorrow.

Confidence grows with experience. You earn it step by step.

> Trust your pace, your voice, and **be clear** about your values and boundaries.

> Growth thrives in environments where people feel **seen, heard, and trusted** - not boxed in.

Interview

Sally Whenman,

BDO Australia

Tax Partner, Corporate & International Tax

Sally's personal journey

I began my career as a tax graduate at a Big Four firm. After my first professional experience, I took a career break to live and work in London, before returning to Australia and continuing along a similar path.

Following the birth of each of my children, I took one year of parental leave. Those pauses were intentional. I chose to be present during those early years, working part-time (three days a week) and allowing my career to flex around my family, when they needed me most. After returning to work following the birth of my youngest child, I realised something needed to change. The pace and pressure no longer felt sustainable. That was the moment I decided to join BDO - just over eight years ago now. **It remains one of the best decisions I've ever made.** Today, as my children have become more self-sufficient, I work four days a week and **I truly feel able to thrive, both professionally and personally.**

Work-life balance remains a constant juggling act. My husband and I both have demanding roles, and with three children aged 14, 13 and 10 – plus a lively puppy – our household is always busy. **It takes organisation, flexibility and teamwork to make everything fit together.**

Outside of work, I play soccer and basketball with a wonderful group of women. It's a space where I can switch off, recharge and reconnect with myself. As a family, we also love to travel, particularly in Europe. One of my most memorable holidays was a sailing trip along the Croatian coast, hopping from island to island – an experience I'll never forget.

There are inevitable moments of give and take. I have missed the occasional school assembly or sports day because of work commitments. At the same time, **BDO offers a lot of flexibility and trust that allows me to show up for my family when it matters most.** That balance is something I deeply value.

#Give to Gain

About 18 months ago, I was given the opportunity to chair the Sydney committee for BDO Australia's **Women@BDO** network. At the time, I was contemplating whether partnership was the right next step for me. Being invited into this leadership space and into the conversations that matter made all the difference. Supporting one another, sharing experiences and investing time and energy in others may seem like small actions, **but their impact is significant.** Through the network, I saw firsthand how collective support creates momentum, confidence and opportunity.

That experience helped me to clarify my own ambitions. I realised I wanted to continue my growth journey, to become a partner, and to actively contribute to shaping an inclusive and supportive culture. Over the past 18 months, we've launched meaningful initiatives, including mentoring groups, panel interviews on topics for women, and networking events.

To me, **#GiveToGain** is about intentionally investing in people and in teams. When individuals feel supported, encouraged to share ideas, and given room to grow, the benefits compound, resulting in stronger collaboration and a more resilient organisation.

Women@BDO

Empowering women through connection, development and allyship.

Women@BDO is a national inclusion network that supports and empowers women at all levels of the firm to build connections, knowledge and skills to achieve their career aspirations. Led by local committees, the network actively promotes gender equality, community building and allyship.

Key highlights and activities include leader spotlight series, women in leadership panels, networking events, 'walk & talk' recharge meetings in Melbourne, personal branding workshops in Brisbane and Adelaide, group mentoring in Sydney, and public speaking sessions in Perth.

One of the most valuable investments in my own career has been **having a strong support system.** I've been fortunate to benefit from both formal and informal mentors, who generously shared their time and experience. I also participated in a pilot sponsorship programme, which was incredibly impactful. Just as important are the informal mentors - partners from different service lines who believed in me, opened doors, and helped build the self-confidence we all need to take the next step.

Challenges and perspectives

As women, we can still experience moments of self-doubt more frequently than our male colleagues, questioning whether we're ready for the next move. **Having people who actively champion you – who remind you of your strengths – makes all the difference.**

Real change happens when leaders understand the unique challenges women face throughout their careers. At BDO, inclusive leadership training equips our partners with tools to better support their teams, build psychological safety and lead with empathy and awareness.

Change doesn't always need to be fast or dramatic. Often, **it's built through consistency**: retaining women as they progress, providing visible role models who show that combining a career with family life is possible, and ensuring that every voice is heard. These are the foundations of lasting impact.

What is generous culture?

It means putting the needs of the team first and investing in one another, whether by referring work to the colleague best suited to the client, or by taking time to mentor someone's growth.

It's about encouraging people to stretch beyond their comfort zones, while also giving them the support they need to succeed.

I see that culture within BDO every day – one where people support each other, where everyone is given a fair chance, and where it's safe to be yourself.

Advice to young talents

Invest in meaningful relationships and take time to genuinely connect. As you build your career, human connections are just as important as technical skills, which can always be learned and refined.

When you have a supportive team and mentors who encourage you, it becomes safe to grow. And yes, it also becomes safe to fail. No one gets it right from the start, and that's exactly how learning and growth happens.

Interview

Ameenah Ramdin,

BDO Mauritius

Managing Partner

Ameenah's personal journey

I am the eldest of four daughters, raised in a warm family and a household of strong women. When I was young and thinking about my future, my first dream was to become a stylist. I loved fashion and imagined myself one day working as a fashion designer.

It was my father who gently guided me in another direction. He saw a different strength in me and encouraged me to pursue accounting – something he believed I had a natural talent for. I followed his advice and studied Accountancy in the UK.

I returned to Mauritius, got married, and later become the proud mother of a daughter, who has just completed her own master's degree in the UK. Watching her step into her own professional journey has given me a renewed perspective on the aspirations and challenges young talents face today.

When I returned from the UK, I joined DCDM, which became part of the BDO network in 2007. I have spent my entire career at BDO - **from Junior level to Managing Partner** - and I am incredibly proud of that journey. Growing within the same organisation has helped me understand our people at every stage of their careers, and it has shaped the leader I am today.

I became a Partner in 2008, and gradually took on leadership of the financial services team, acting as engagement partner for several of the largest banks in Mauritius, and across the region. In 2020, I was appointed Head of Audit, and in 2022, I stepped into the role of Managing Partner of BDO Mauritius. It felt like a natural progression – one supported by trust, teamwork, and shared ambition.

I would describe my leadership style as **deeply empathic**. Each day, whether on my way to or from home, I reflect on how I can best support my team. I like to understand the **why** behind everything we do, and when an issue arises, I don't let go until it is fully understood and resolved. I believe this attentiveness and persistence is something many women bring to leadership – we take things to heart, and we work mindfully and with care.

To disconnect from work, I enjoy taking care of myself - a massage, a quiet moment, long walks on my own – brings me joy and helps me recharge. I also like reading, even if time doesn't always allow as much of it as I'd like.

#Give to Gain

#GivetoGain is about generosity in all its forms. It means sharing knowledge, values, and experience – and never stop learning along the way. Leading by example is essential: showing others not just what to do, but how and why.

Give to Gain is also about recognition. Everyone wants to feel valued. Taking the time to say thank you – no matter how small the contribution – makes a real difference. **When people feel respected and appreciated, they are motivated to grow and to give their best.**

At BDO Mauritius, we strongly believe in continuous learning & development for everyone. Technical skills are important, but learning goes beyond that. We invest in soft skills that help our people grow as professionals and as individuals – such training on how to effectively communicate with clients – which has been well received. We will continue to invest in this kind of development.

Team building is an activity which I feel is equally important. I always ask our people what they would like to do and encourage everyone to speak up and share their ideas. Creating an environment where everyone feels included, heard, and part of the organisation is something I deeply care about.

Challenges and perspectives

Ensuring a healthy work-life balance is a challenge for everyone. Our people, both men and women, work hard and continually strive to find that balance, especially when raising young families.

In Mauritius, we are fortunate to be a small island where help and support from Family is one step away which may not be the case in bigger countries and I value this opportunity and support and I never take it for granted.

For me, **balance is also about being present.** I may work long hours, but I make time for quality moments – holidays together, going to the movies, or simply sharing time with the family. That connection is essential.

What is a generous culture?

I often think of and believe in the saying: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

That, to me, captures the essence of a generous culture where everyone feels the sense of belonging, **they feel accepted, understood and valued.**

It is not enough to say a culture is generous – people must truly feel it. They need to know they are not alone, that they can rely on each other for support, motivation, and encouragement.

This is what makes BDO special. It's not limited to BDO Mauritius - we truly are one firm. As a Managing Partner, I know that when I need advice or support, it is only a phone call away. That sense of closeness, shared experience, and mutual support is powerful.

Advice to young talents

I would give young talents the same advice as I always give to my own daughter: Believe in yourself.

Be resilient. Every journey comes with challenges, learning, and moments of doubt – not everything will always go smoothly. Take time to look back and be proud of what you have already achieved and draw strength from that.

Don't be afraid of failure. If something doesn't work out, start again. You never start from zero - you start with a new experience. Failure builds resilient. And above all, never give up.

> "If you want to go fast, go alone. **If you want to go far, go together.**

Interview

Kimberley Symon,

BDO New Zealand

Business Advisory Partner

Kim's personal journey

I am a Partner in our advisory team located in Christchurch, the second largest office in BDO New Zealand's network and one of the largest offices of any accounting network in New Zealand's South Island. I am one of 14 local BDO partners and lead a Business Advisory team that represents about half of the office population. It's a demanding job – one that challenges me every day – and one I truly value.

I have been with BDO for five years – a period that has been both fulfilling and formative. My career began in 2008 as a graduate at KPMG, which soon after merged with EY in Christchurch. That was a challenging environment for a young joiner. In 2021, I made the move to BDO – **a decision that marked an exciting new chapter.**

Alongside my career, I am a mother of three. My oldest is 22, and I have two young daughters aged 6 and 7. I had my first child while still at university. At the time, I didn't fully appreciate what I was building – resilience, adaptability, and confidence – but those early years shaped the way I lead today. Flexibility was limited back then, particularly in a Big Four environment. I worked through it, and completed my chartered accountancy two years after starting my career.

In 2011, the Christchurch earthquake struck. It was a devastating event, and the years that followed were incredibly demanding, both professionally and personally, while raising a young family. **But when you are young, you just do it – you find a way forward. You don't overanalyse – you move, adapt, and keep going.**

Despite the challenges, I recognise how fortunate I have been to work alongside a strong female partner early in my career. For nearly a decade, she showed me that **leadership and motherhood were not mutually exclusive.** She understood the realities of family life and created space for trust and understanding. That visibility mattered. It showed me it was possible.

Support systems are everything. At work, yes – but equally at home. I have an incredibly supportive husband who has consciously chosen to step back from full time work, so he can be there for our children: school pick-ups, after-school activities, homework. With that shared responsibility, we are able to make it work and remain flexible.

Flexibility is what holds it all together. There are moments, where work needs more of me, and moments when I know I've reached my limit – and I need to step back. Those are the times when I purposefully choose family, an evening together, or a full weekend away from work. And, I've learned the importance of re-energising. I've taken up hot yoga and try to go twice a week. I also walk our dog every day – small routines that help me reset.

#GiveToGain

For me, Give to Gain starts with **permission**.

Permission to pause, to say no, and to set boundaries. Many women struggle with this. Even when we say no, we still often find ourselves doing it anyway. Giving, in this context, is not about doing more. It's about knowing you are allowed the space to pause, to reflect, to gain clarity, and to move forward with intention. That is a true gift.

It is also about **generosity towards others.** I want to be a leader who is present and accessible, whether someone wants to talk about their career ambitions, their challenges, or what success looks like for them.

Related to this, it's important to me as a leader to front issues and initiatives which demonstrate BDO's purpose 'People helping people' – and bring important value to our clients. Sometimes this can mean being brave and stepping out into the spotlight, something that has not always come easily for me.

A great example of this has been taking on the opportunity to become the public face of the BDO Business Performance Index nationally. This has involved me fronting media interviews, videos, national advertising and client seminars – sharing important tips for business leaders in navigating their priority issues highlighted in the biannual survey. What has been truly rewarding here has been the sense of value in being able to give back to our clients and business community through sharing our insights – reflected by the ongoing positive feedback received regarding this initiative.

What matters deeply to me is recognising that no two careers are the same. Each person has their own path. My role is to support and guide my team members to become the best version of themselves. Not who I think they should be, but who they want to be. When they reach this point of clarity, my role becomes one of facilitation; creating the conditions for growth, confidence, and momentum.

We have a structured manager programme, where leaders are trained to coach and develop their team. While performance is part of the conversation, we also spend time talking about aspirations and longer-term goals. With my team members, I prefer conversations that go beyond their immediate role. Where do they see themselves in the next five years? And **what can we do, together, to help them get there?**

Challenges and perspectives

As women, we often still have to push harder to reach leadership or partnership roles. Many women reflect longer before stepping forward. The questions are often bigger – considering the impact on family, balance and timing.

For me, having a role model who showed that it was possible, made all the difference. While progress is being made, we still need more visible female role models. They help others build the confidence to advance their career.

In our Christchurch office, strong parental leave policies support young families, and locally, Government-funded leave is extended.

What matters most is what happens next. Parental leave should not pigeonhole women or limit their growth. Yes, it may mean taking a longer-term view, but a pause does not mean an opportunity is lost. You have time. Plus, parenthood also brings valuable new perspectives. Many of our clients are family-owned businesses, and being able to connect on family-related topics often strengthens relationships and builds trust.

What is a generous culture?

A few years ago, BDO New Zealand refreshed its national values, inspired by pepeha - the Māori way of introducing yourself, and reflecting the uniqueness of our people, and our collective spirit. Two values in particular are strongly linked to a generous culture: Whanaungatanga (it is people, it is people) and Manaakitanga (open and welcoming). They embody the inclusive, people-centred culture we have at BDO in New Zealand - a place of belonging, generosity, and responsible leadership.

For me personally, it is also about being open to possibility, being present, and being generous with your time, knowledge and experience.

Advice to young talent

I would encourage young professionals **to be open to opportunities,** and take advantage of every learning moment.

BDO is very much a place where you can learn and grow – not only technically, but personally. Take the time to better understand who you are and what drives you. Many young people are still figuring that out at the start of their careers.

Most importantly, **find your support system:** peers, mentors, coaches, and role models. **No one succeeds alone.**

Interview

Threenuch (Connie) Bunruangthaworn,

BDO Thailand

Legal Partner, Mergers & Acquisitions

Connie's personal journey

I have a Thai Chinese background. My grandfather migrated from China to Thailand, and we are now the third generation, living and working here. Thailand is very much home for us. Like many Chinese families, my family ran a small business, and so I grew up surrounded by conversations about work, responsibility and entrepreneurship, occasionally helping with small errands. From an early age, that shaped my mindset, and I naturally assumed that my studies – and later my career – would be rooted in business.

But when it became time to choose my university path, however, I made a decision that surprised my parents, and perhaps even myself. I chose to pursue law school. While my parents weren't immediately convinced, I felt strongly that law would allow me to understand how businesses truly function and grow. I later obtained my Master's degree at UCLA, majoring in Mergers & Acquisition and security regulation. During that time, I realised that law and business are deeply connected, and that I could **combine both disciplines in a meaningful and practical way.**

After returning to Bangkok, I joined ZICOLaw, which at that time was a small affiliate of their Headquarters in Malaysia. Our Bangkok office consisted of just three people: one partner, one junior lawyer – me - and a secretary. It really felt like we were pioneering, building something from the ground up. As a junior lawyer – I supported the firm across all areas of its work, from corporate and direct investment matters to employment, banking and M&A. That breadth of exposure gave me a strong foundation and helped me identify the areas of law I was most passionate about.

As the firm continued to grow, ZICOLaw later collaborated with KPMG Thailand, where I became Director of the legal team. More recently, I joined BDO as a legal Partner. The role gives me the opportunity to focus further on corporate M&A, while also contributing to the expansion and development of the entire legal practice. It felt like a logical next step – one that allows me to bring together experience, leadership and long-term vision.

To find my balance after a long day at work, I enjoy spending time outdoors. I like running and golfing, and I also practice yoga. It helps me clear my mind, distract from work, and return with renewed focus and energy.

#GiveToGain

Give to Gain, to me, means **leading with trust, openness, and genuine commitment to developing others.** I make sure my team can learn a lot from me and that I am always available to support them when challenges arise. I want every individual in my team to feel encouraged to grow, strengthen their capabilities, and progress with confidence. When I see that someone has the ability to do the job well and consistently delivers good quality work, I am comfortable placing responsibility in their hands. Trusting others not only empowers them, but also creates space for new opportunities – both for the individual and for the team as a whole.

I also strongly believe in developing people beyond technical expertise. For lawyers, communication and management skills - including commercial and practical awareness - are essential, so I place particular emphasis on **helping my team build their soft skills alongside their legal knowledge.**

Mentoring plays an important role in the growth of our people. Every team member will be mentored by a more senior level, and once you reach manager level, directors or partners continue to coach them. We have monthly conversations, which can cover both professional and personal topics. These discussions allow us to connect, address challenges, and talk openly about aspirations and future goals.

Challenges and perspectives

In Thailand, female talent has strong and equal opportunities to succeed. Looking at the gender balance at BDO Thailand, we currently have more women than men, particularly in the tax and legal departments.

It is also relatively easy for young mothers to combine motherhood with a career. Our hybrid working model – working from home three days out of five – is based on trust and works very well for our people.

In addition, the Thai government has recently extended maternity leave to 120 days, adding an extra month compared to the previous system, and introduced childcare leave entitlement for newborns with medical complications or disabilities up to 15 days which further supports working families.

What is a generous culture?

Though I have only been at BDO Thailand for a relatively short time, I really feel the generous culture that exists here. In some firms, people's contributions are measured solely through KPIs. While performance matters, it is not enough on its own. We also need to be empathetic and mindful of the personal circumstances that people may face. When we take time to understand these situations and accommodate or facilitate support, it has a significant impact. Actively helping someone overcome an issue creates trust and security. When people feel supported, they are more confident, more engaged, and will ultimately do better.

For me, a generous culture is one where people feel safe to speak openly, and where trust and understanding are built through genuine human connection.

Advice to young talents

I always tell young professionals to take the time to truly understand their role. Experience the job fully – discover what you enjoy, and also what you may not like as much. After a year, reflect, evaluate, and talk about it. Find your passion!

Most importantly, don't give up. **Embrace your job and every opportunity that comes your way**. Even in your junior years there is value in everything you do. Every experience will have an impact on your future career.

Build a strong foundation first. The lessons you carry forward will stay with you throughout your professional journey.

Interview

Kirsten Konst,

BDO Netherlands

CEO/Chairman of the Board

Kirsten's personal journey

I live in Amsterdam with my partner and our dog. We both have busy professional lives; my partner is an entrepreneur who runs a family business, so life is always full and fast-paced, but always rewarding.

Outside of work, we enjoy everything life has to offer. We enjoy spending time with family and friends, and immersing ourselves in the rich culture, energy and openness that Amsterdam has to offer. It is a city that reflects many of the values I hold dear. I would describe myself as a deeply people-centric leader. Finding the right balance between performance and people has always been essential to me. A mindset rooted in my family history.

My mother was born in 1940 in what was then Czechoslovakia, as part of the German-speaking Sudeten German minority. During the war, her family was caught between Russian and German occupiers. They were farmers whose only wish was to take care of their land and family. After the war, they were forced to leave everything behind. They were not welcome in Germany, which was struggling to rebuild itself, and when my mother eventually moved on to the Netherlands, she did not receive a very warm welcome there either – simply because of the language she spoke. Those prejudices marked her deeply. Throughout her life she faced bias and exclusion, yet she transformed those experiences into something powerful. She used them to teach my brother and me what truly matters in life, **to persevere, support others, avoid judging too quickly and always look for the human behind any prejudice.** That guidance has stayed with me and is at the core of who I am as a leader. I started my career in consultancy and later spent many years at one of the largest Dutch banks, where I was responsible for client service and led complex organisational and leadership changes. More recently, I felt ready for a new chapter - a career move towards a more entrepreneurial environment. That search led me to BDO, where I joined as Chief Transformation Officer just over a year ago. From day one, I was convinced. In this role I discovered so much of what I am passionate about - contributing to strategic, organisational and leadership development in a professional yet very personal way. I also saw how much untapped potential there was.

Clients consistently confirmed this experience. They value BDO's professionalism, but equally value working with people who are genuinely interested in them and what truly matters to their business. When the Chairman of the Board announced his retirement, I didn't hesitate. BDO feels like home to me. I love the people, the organisation, and I felt supported by the partners. Two months ago, I was appointed the next Chairman of the Board – an honour I carry with great pride and responsibility.

#GiveToGain

For me, **#GiveToGain** means **investing with intention today to create long-term value.** It means deliberately building the conditions in which our people can grow, ensuring they have the tools, confidence and skills to advance their careers into more senior roles over time. We monitor our gender diversity data closely. While progress has been made, we realised we were still losing too many talented women along the way. The question became: why?

One key moment where women tended to leave was when they became parents. This insight led to the creation of our Parent Journey programme, which supports both female and male employees. We organise dedicated sessions about expectations, flexibility and the support BDO offers. By talking openly, we remove uncertainty – and as a result, women are far less likely to leave.

Another pivotal moment is the appointment process for director or salary partner roles. These trajectories can be perceived as opaque and somewhat intimidating. Many talented women questioned whether they should even enter the process. By demystifying the journey – explaining what to expect, how interviews work, and what comes next – we remove unnecessary tension. This transparency has already encouraged more women to step forward with confidence.

> Don't wait to be chosen – **choose your own path.**

Challenges and perspectives

Many women still believe that exceptional performance automatically leads to recognition and the next step. Unfortunately, that is a misconception.

Opportunities often go to those who actively express their ambition. My message to women is therefore clear: **build self-awareness, invest in your development, and when you feel ready, raise your hand and ask to be considered.** Don't wait to be chosen – choose your own path.

My second call is to those who support female talent - **don't just be a mentor or coach, be a sponsor.** Make potential visible, advocate for them, and help open doors.

BDO is committed to this journey through long-term policies and initiatives that foster an inclusive culture: from hiring practices and equal pay to employee networks such as the Ladies' Circle and diversity committees.

What is a generous culture?

A generous culture is an organisation where you feel at home - not only as a professional but as a person. A place where you are encouraged to bring your authentic self to work, every day.

Advice to young talents

Invest in your professional and personal development. Be curious, every day.

Especially for our female talents - dare to step forward with confidence.

A career is a journey – **rarely a straight line.** It's a path of growth, learning and self-discovery. Embrace it and enjoy it!

Interview

Synne Ekrem-Hansen,

BDO Norway

Chief Marketing & Communications

Synne's personal journey

I am married, and the proud mother of two children, aged 11 and 13. Family life is an important part of who I am, and it naturally shapes how I think about work, leadership, and balance.

Growing up, I always aspired to become a journalist. I started with a bachelor's degree in economics and media at BI Norwegian Business School, later completing it with an executive master's in management. And journalism is exactly where my career began. For several years, I worked as a journalist for Dagbladet, Dagsavisen and Finansavisen, some of the largest Norwegian newspapers.

I truly loved journalism. It is a dynamic profession – every day brings a new story. But after around six years, I made a conscious decision to move into the media and communications field, working both as a consultant and as an in-house communications advisor. I wanted to work on the longer lines: communications with a longer shelf life, greater strategic depth, and the opportunity to shape how organisations think, communicate, and evolve.

I joined BDO now almost 4 years as Chief of Marketing and Communications for Region East, and in August 2023, I stepped into the role of CMO. Today, I lead a team of 15 people. What attracted me to BDO was the clear potential to make a real difference.

Outside of work, much of my time is spent with my children, who are very active in both handball and football. I also make a deliberate effort to stay active myself through running and cross-country skiing. Staying in shape gives me renewed energy – it's essential for my mood, my wellbeing, and for being able to give my best, both at work and at home.

#GiveToGain

When I first heard about this year's theme, I immediately connected with it. It is powerful, and to me, it is fundamentally about **generosity and trust.** I strongly believe in sharing knowledge, offering support, and creating a space for others to grow - without expecting an immediate return. In practice, this means being accessible as a leader, seeing people for who they are, highlighting their strengths, and investing in relationships.

My experience is that **what you give often comes back, sometimes in unexpected ways, but always with great value.** Last year, our team experienced a particularly challenging period. In moments like these, it becomes even more important to mindfully invest in relationships – to truly see colleagues, acknowledge their efforts, and makes sure they feel appreciated. It's not enough to say people are doing a good job; they need to feel that their contributions are seen and valued.

I am convinced that when people feel valued, they perform better. Leadership, to me, is largely about relationships and the ability to connect well with others.

Challenges and perspectives

Despite progress, I do believe women still face challenges in their growth journeys. In Norway, we have generous parental leave, which is something to be proud of.

At the same time, when women take the majority of the leave over multiple pregnancies, it can unintentionally affect career development over time.

Although we are seeing positive change – with fathers taking on greater responsibility than before – women still tend to carry a larger share of family responsibilities. This inevitably influences both opportunities and the pace of career progression, particularly in certain industries.

At BDO Norway, we take this seriously. We have a national diversity & inclusion framework with clear goals for gender balance and pay equity across the entire employee journey – from recruitment to leadership, and this is systematically followed up. In addition, we have an employee driven diversity network that actively builds awareness, inclusion, and support across the organisation.

We also consciously put female role models in the spotlight - sharing portrait interviews internally and externally – to demonstrate that growth is not only possible, but encouraged. Access to mentorship programmes further supports people at different stages of their careers. A safe and fair system is essential for everyone to grow: clear career paths, strong mentors, flexibility, and a culture where different perspectives are valued and used.

> What you give often comes back, sometimes in **unexpected ways,** but always with **great value.**

What is a generous culture?

A generous culture, to me, is built on **trust**. That is the keyword.

It is all about psychological safety – feeling safe enough to speak up, to bring your true self to work, and to fail without fear. It's a culture where people support one another, share knowledge openly, and give honest, constructive feedback. When that foundation is in place, our people can really thrive.

Advice to young talents

Even when uncomfortable, dare to say yes to opportunities and challenges. That is often where the greatest learning and growth happen.

And find a mentor or coach, someone who can guide you, challenge and support you, through the more difficult moments along the way.

Give to Gain

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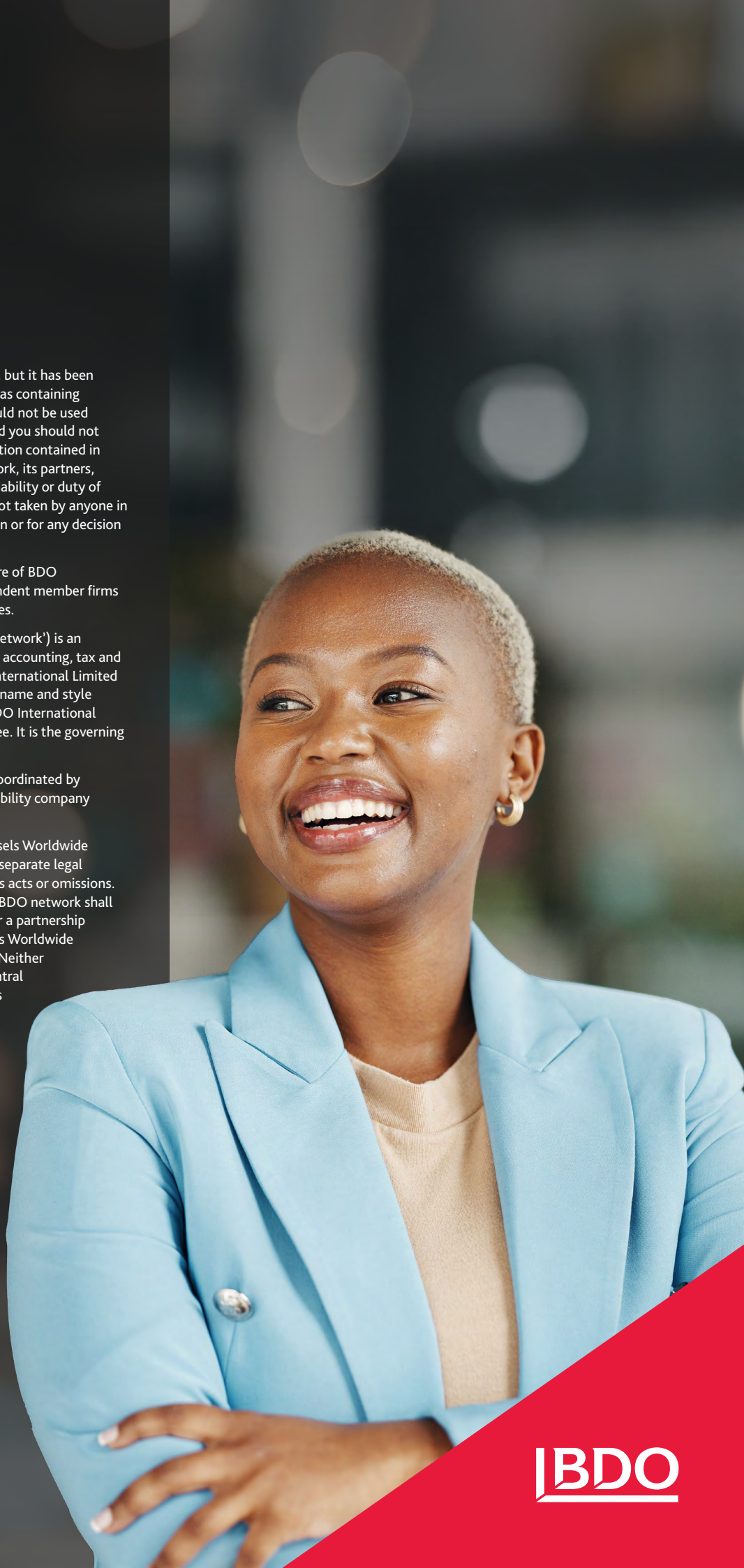

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