

# WIN Corporate Program

## Inclusion in Action: *Activating Your Resilience*



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*Inspiring Women Worldwide*

## Inclusion in Action:

### *Activating Your Resilience*

The Corporate Program meeting kick-started with [Kristin Engvig, WIN Founder & CEO](#), taking the floor to welcome everyone to the meeting and introduce the topic. With the increased complexity brought on by transformations within society and organizations alike, contributing our very best often requires an extra effort. It also requires resilience. Kristin then invited participants to divide into smaller groups to get to know each other better. The agenda – to open and connect.

*Who are you? What do you do? What is something you have made an extra effort for recently?*

Participants shared stories of juggling personal and professional life after the birth of their child and helping friends connect to the right people while going through a period of unemployment or new career promotions. One dealt with colleagues tarnishing their personal brand through negative publicity, forcing her to work doubly hard to reinvent herself. While many were able to share a story, it was also agreed that it can be hard to call upon these moments when asked, even if we often make an extra effort. There was an uplifting atmosphere as everyone seemed proactive in helping others to succeed and make something extraordinary happen.

Moving on, Kristin introduced us to [Melissa Whiting, Vice President of Inclusion & Diversity at Philip Morris International \(PMI\)](#), who introduced the topic of Resilience in the individual as well as organizational context. Melissa has worked for PMI since 2001, when she joined the company as a lawyer in Australia.

Melissa started with a short video with the famous soundtrack – “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor. She shared with us that when she was younger, her notion of resilience was bouncing back after being wiped out, but over time she understood it more as a proactive process. She defines resilience as the ability to grow, learn and perform in rapidly changing environments. It is the art of learning to thrive despite external factors such as job pressure, career ambitions, demands on us as parents, siblings and partners, as well as other personal and financial goals and commitments.

She then spoke about strategies for resilience – knowing your strengths as well as your weaknesses; opening yourself to support from others and knowing when to ask for help; adopting a flexible perspective and learning from one’s own mistakes and past experiences, and lastly, recovering by proactively managing your personal energy. She also emphasized simplifying larger goals into realistic, smaller goals to achieve your target.

Melissa went on to talk about how putting self-doubt into perspective can be difficult for a lot of people. We tend to ruminate and make our problems seem larger than they are. She talked about how, over time, she has adopted the habit of saying “Oh well, I made a mistake, I am human!”, which helped her to stop worrying over what could have been and shift to thinking about what she can do now.

Next, she moved towards the organizational perspective and said PMI is a very resilient company, briefly pointing out some key events in the company’s journey to become the world’s second largest tobacco manufacturer it is today with 80,000 employees. She recalled that when she joined 18 years ago, friends and family questioned why she would want to work for a tobacco company telling her it was a ‘sunset industry’ given the controversy, increasing regulations and concern over public health. But rather than focusing on whether or not to work for PMI, the more important question for her was, given the consumer

demand for tobacco products, what is the ethical thing to do as one of the world's leading tobacco companies?

The response from the organization is multifaceted: be transparent about the health risks of smoking, do what they can to prevent youth access to tobacco products and work to decrease the health risks of the products themselves. PMI invested over \$4 billion in research and development, hiring scores of scientists and technicians, many from pharmaceutical backgrounds, to develop and scientifically assess innovative smoke-free tobacco products that are likely to present less harm than smoking.

Melissa acknowledged there is understandable scepticism; how ironic that the world's second largest tobacco manufacturer would bet on consumer health and advocate smoke-free products to smokers! PMI understands the scepticism and is not asking people to trust their intentions. Rather their approach is to transparently share their research methodology and results for third party review at each step of the way.

IQOS is the first of PMI's innovative smoke-free products that it began selling around the world. IQOS comprises a device that heats a specially designed stick of tobacco rather than burning it. Because there is no burning, there is no smoke. The device instead releases an aerosol with tobacco flavour and nicotine and is a better choice for adults, who want to use tobacco products, than continuing to smoke. So far, more than 5 million smokers around the world have switched to IQOS.

She said the company wants to get the world's billion smokers to switch to smoke-free products instead of cigarettes, if they don't want to stop using tobacco products altogether. This is the company's vision of creating a smoke-free world in which no one smokes anymore. She said in this way PMI can make an important contribution to improving public health, and PMI employees are extremely passionate about this.

It's vision of creating a smoke-free world means PMI is seeking to transform its entire business and indeed the tobacco industry. Coming back to the topic of resilience, Melissa said with so much change and uncertainty, supporting the resilience of its employees is very important to the company.

Finally, Inclusion & Diversity is an important business strategy for PMI. In the context of the WIN audience, Melissa said PMI is particularly focused on working towards unleashing the full potential of women at work, recognizing that a gender gap is a talent gap. She also said women often spike on strengths in areas becoming increasingly important such as communication, collaboration and trend-spotting. They are investing in personalized career development plans and coaching to help their talented women (and men) achieve their full potential and working on increasing the acceptability of more flexible working solutions. It is their goal to have 40% women representation in management roles by 2022.

After a short break, we resumed the session with [Alexia Michiels, Co-Founder, Resilience Institute Europe](#), taking over. Alexia had lived in China for 5 years where she became a certified professional coach and met Dr. Sven Hansen, Founder of the Resilience Institute, and joined his team. Alexia described her approach to resilience as integral, evidence-based and practical. We need to help people mobilize all the resources they have and be inclusive to themselves in order to be more inclusive to others.

She explained that in physics, resilience is the ability of an object to come back to its original state after a shock. She illustrated how we sometimes fall into a negative spiral. For instance, when returning from vacation, we may feel overwhelmed with too many emails, too many meetings, too many things to do.

Concentration declines and we might be disengaged. Trying to catch-up, the risk is to disconnect from interactions that are precisely a source of energy. When we start neglecting our own needs, we become vulnerable. At some point, if we keep ignoring the process, our body starts sending signals that may be painful. Being resilient, Alexia explained, is not always about being happy but about being flexible - which means managing one's resources (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) and feeling well equipped to handle pressure.

This gives rise to the question - is there a gender difference with regards to resilience? According to the 2018 Resilience Diagnostic Global Report, men have some advantages when it comes to resilience. They tend to be strong in areas such as focus, assertiveness and optimism, which are critical resilience factors. Women tend to be strong in areas such as connections, compassion and health awareness. As a watch-out, Alexia highlighted that women tend to be too self-critical, which does not support bouncing back from adversity. The good news is that women are also quick learners: when they are conscious about areas for improvement, they progress fast and their personal resilience increases.

Alexia then introduced us to simple practices in daily life to activate our resilience. First and foremost, exhaling, which even more than inhaling, can quickly and effectively calm the body and mind. Secondly, regular exercise. Many of us now lead sedentary lives and long periods of sitting can reduce our productivity and energy. Exercising also produces proteins that travel through the blood to the brain to act against stress and coat the brain cells. This in turn helps to increase the grey matter, increase the flow of serotonin that helps us think faster and produce new brain cells in the hippocampus that store memories. Electric activity in the pre-frontal cortex area of the brain also slows down during exercise, making it easier to absorb information after exercise.

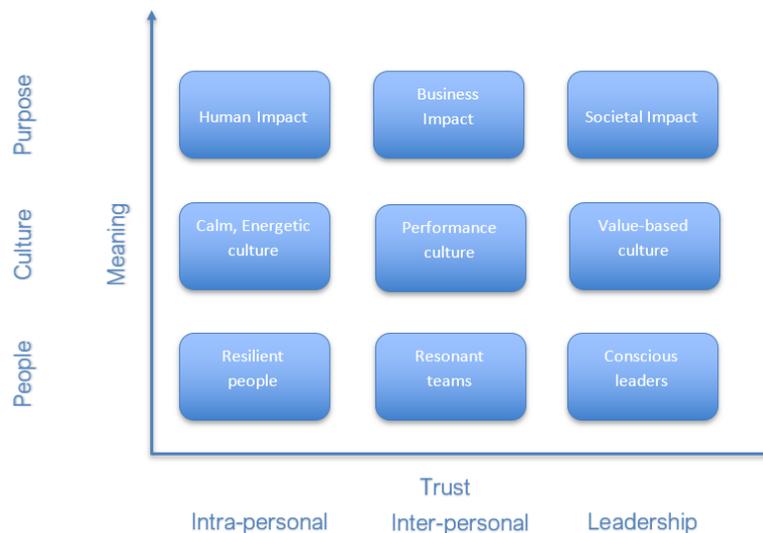
Thirdly, consider having walking meetings whenever possible, which research shows can be more productive than sitting meetings. Another practice is active listening as providing undivided attention and parroting back what someone has said is key to developing empathy. Words after all make up for only 7% of listening, with body language and non-verbal cues constituting the remainder.

Next, it is important to take notice of facial expressions in all kinds of situations to perceive a broader range of emotions and allow you to better understand and connect with others. The sixth practice is to take time to admire nature. Research indicates that the ability to be amazed and dazzled by nature tends to increase life satisfaction and self-esteem.

Seventh, Alexia introduced us to the concept of "info-besity" - being exposed to more information than the brain can process. Research shows that we are exposed to as much information in a day than people in the 15th century were exposed to in their entire lifetime. It is important to watch our info-diet on a daily basis and decide how much information you want to consume. For instance, she advises us to refrain from checking social media updates, work emails for the first hour after waking up in the morning and the last hour before going to bed.

Eighth, she explains the concept of "going to the balcony" and practicing mindfulness to bring our attention to the present moment. Thinking about what we are doing - in the present moment - greatly improves our happiness and our productivity, as does cultivating relationships. Alexia shares that researchers followed a group of people over a period of 70 years to identify criteria for health, longevity and happiness, and overwhelmingly, the quality of relationships was the most important factor. Given the amount of time we spend at work, it is of prime importance to cultivate healthy relationships at work.

The last strategy suggested by Alexia is to be a responsible actor. She reminds us that even small changes - all together - bring about a big impact. She concluded sharing how resilience - both individually and collectively - can support trust and meaning, essential factors to building a sustainable, high-performance organization.



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The Corporate Program is a reference for leaders and companies committed to creating diverse and inclusive organisations, where business flourishes and people thrive.

**Why?**

- Share best practices, learn new skills and discover new opportunities with like-minded people
- Stay up to date with presentations from expert speakers and forward-thinking companies
- 4 to 6 half-day events per year of interactive meetings with approximately 50 attendees
- Contribute and share in an optimistic and joyful setting
- Once annual Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Forum

**Where?**

- Meetings take place at member offices in the Lake Geneva region with occasional meetings in Bern, Basel and Zurich.

