



TOWARDS A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AGENDA

Construction and development firm Skanska is increasingly active on the international scene, making a culture of diversity and inclusion all the more vital.

By Katarina Grönwall

When thinking of the construction industry, diversity and inclusion is probably not the first thing that comes to mind. For years, the construction industry has been an industry with strong local presence and known for an ethnically homogeneous workforce dominated by men. With rising international competition, migration within EU and across the globe, increasingly ethnically diverse populations in the EU and US, growing number of women engineers as well as growing number

of women and ethnic minorities in public decision-making positions, the industry needs to change. If not there is an overwhelming risk that it becomes out of touch with the society in which it operates, the talent it wants to attract and the clients it serves.

One company that has faced this brutal fact, and has embarked on a change journey, is Skanska. Founded in 1887 in Sweden, Skanska has

Photos: Skanska (2)



Responsible for such sustainable buildings as the Swiss Re UK office (left), Skanska launched its Diversity and Inclusion Vision in 2013

been an international business since 1897. It has 60,000 employees and 10,000 ongoing projects, and its revenues for 2013 were 136 billion Swedish krona. It is also a member of the UN Global Compact.

BACKGROUND TO THE LAUNCH OF A NEW VISION

Although diversity and inclusion has been on Skanska's agenda for some time, by the end of 2013 Skanska's senior executive team launched the Skanska Diversity and Inclusion Vision, the starting point for a more systematic and strategic approach to diversity and inclusion within the company. However, prior to this, some important steps had already been taken. In 2011 Skanska decided to make "managing diversity" one of its core competences in the new Skanska Leadership Profile. The Leadership Profile is used in annual performance assessments and development of all "white collar" positions globally.

Another important step was taken at the end of 2012, when Pia Höök was recruited to the position of full time global diversity manager. Prior to Skanska, Pia was an associate professor in organisation, management and gender at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. She has also worked as the diversity director for Volvo Group. The need for a vision communicated by our senior executive team became obvious to her when she, as a new Skan-

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ska employee, traveled to meet employees and managers in different markets, and was continuously asked: "So what does the senior executive team have to say about this? Why more diversity? Why is this important to us?"

RAISING THE COLLECTIVE AWARENESS Once back in Sweden Pia began to work with the senior executive team on creating a vision. More than a matter of writing a few statements, this process aimed at increasing the collective awareness of strengths, weakness, opportunities and challenges related to diversity and inclusion. It consisted of individual meetings, assignments and joint workshops.



The vision that the senior executive team finally decided on states that “Skanska aims to be recognised as a leader in diversity and inclusion in all home markets. We mirror the diversity in society on all levels of our organisation. Our leaders are excellent in fostering an inclusive culture.”

SELLING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY Compared to Skanska’s previous diversity approaches, the present strategy put much stronger emphasis on inclusion. An inclusive workplace ensures that the talents that are recruited also stay and develop with the company. It is through inclusion that the benefits that come with diversity – increased engagement, creativity, agility – can be leveraged. And although many Skanska business units have put lots of resources into attracting and recruiting efforts targeting diverse candidates, inclusion has still been a challenge to many. With this new approach there is an increasing understanding of the interdependence between attract, recruit, workplace culture and employer brand.

As Veronica Rörsgård, Skanska’s executive vice president of human resources and information technology, explains: “Our strong employer brand, moving us up from number 15 to seven on the list of most attractive employers for engineers in Sweden, and being the most attractive employer among women engineers in Poland, is partly due to our diversity and inclusion work. Talents prefer companies that contribute to societies and where diversity and inclusion is part of that value foundation. Using our diversity and inclusion work in branding helps us to recruit the best from a larger pool of talents”

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In addition to the focus on inclusion, the new vision and strategy put strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion as a competitive advantage in the marketplace. This is also in line with recent changes in the EU strategy regarding public procurement.

Skanska’s chief executive officer, Johan Karlström, says: “We see a growing interest for our diversity and inclusion work among our clients. Thus we have also come to use the vision, strategy and film in meetings with clients and in procurement processes. We foresee that this trend will increase with the new EU strategy in place, which makes it possible for public organisations to make social sustain-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Offering opportunities for all

- ➔ Founded in 1887 in Sweden, Skanska has been an international business since 1897
- ➔ With revenues of 136 billion SEK in 2013, Skanska has 10,000 on-going projects and 60,000 employees
- ➔ The Skanska Diversity and Inclusion Vision strengthens the relationship between attracting, recruiting, workplace culture and employer brand
- ➔ Externally, diversity is also increasingly important to Skanska’s clients

ability a part of evaluating business partners and tenders in public procurement”.

AN ONLINE VIDEO HIT The vision and strategy was launched at an annual meeting for the senior executive team and the business unit presidents. Part of the launch consisted of a three-minute-long film with senior executive members explaining why diversity and inclusion is important. After the formal launch the film was shared on the global intranet as well as in internal and external social media channels, quickly becoming one of our most shared YouTube post.

According to Pia Höök, “The response to the film was amazing! We received lots of positive messages and mails from within and outside Skanska. When we showed the film internally people were visibly moved and said it made them proud to work for Skanska. The clear commitment and the positive response created a great momentum within the company. We were also approached by

external consultants working in this area who told us they used our film in training with other companies. We see this as an acknowledgement of our work and in line with our vision to be a leader within diversity and inclusion”.

Internally the film was immediately used in global training programmes and in internal/external presentations. A short one-minute version of this film was put on the corporate website www.skanska.com/diversity. Moreover, to really show the senior executive team’s commitment, the film was shared at all business unit management meetings in 2014, reaching Skanska’s top 5,000 leaders. To build on

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the success of the first film Skanska decided to reuse the interviews as well as new parts featuring Veronica Rörsgård and Pia Höök, and created a 10-minute educational version of the film. In addition to being inspirational and stating the business case, this film introduces some of the research behind the arguments and goes deeper into the “why?”. This film has not yet been shared with an external audience but has been used as individual training video for senior managers.

To drive the process, all business unit presidents were asked to appoint an inclusion advocate, a senior line manager that takes ownership of the process moving forward on business unit-level. Each unit has then made a thorough diversity and inclusion analysis using a template departing from the strategy.

The analysis addresses four focus areas of the strategy: 1) attract and recruit from a diverse pool of talent; 2) secure an inclusive workplace; 3) develop and promote from a diverse pool of talents; 4) use diversity and inclusion in the marketplace. In addition to these four focus areas there is a fifth – management skills, awareness and commitment – but business units don’t need to assess this since it is something they all should work with irrespective of any analysis result.

To quote Pia Höök again: “Management commitment is incremental in any change process, and even more so when it comes to diversity and inclusion as these change efforts address historic stereotypes and status hierarchies, and therefore are sometimes met by resistance”.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE The analysis provides each business unit with a picture of the present situation in terms of diversity and inclusion, and helps to prioritise improvement efforts. In addition it serves as the basis for a workshop in the business units’ management team resulting in business-unit-specific actions and targets in line with the group vision. Since there are different challenges and opportunities in different countries, targets and actions need to be local. And in a decentralised company like Skanska it is important that the ownership lies with each business unit. Having that said, in order to secure learning across all units, all inclusion advocates and human resources managers have been divided into smaller learning communities, which meet regularly to share analysis results, actions and targets.

As Veronica Rörsgård describes it: “The fact that we are on many different home market gives us a competitive advantage as different markets are strong in different aspects of diversity and inclusion. Our ambition is to take the best from different business units to achieve great progress.”



Katarina Grönwall

Senior Vice President,
Communications, Skanska

Katarina Grönwall has worked at Skanska since 2009. She is responsible for external and internal communications as well as brand for the Skanska Group and reports to the chief executive officer. Prior to Skanska she spent 10 years as an executive partner of Sweden’s largest corporate communications agency, Hallvarsson & Halvarsson. She has also worked for the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises, where she managed two political campaigns connected to Swedish referendums.

