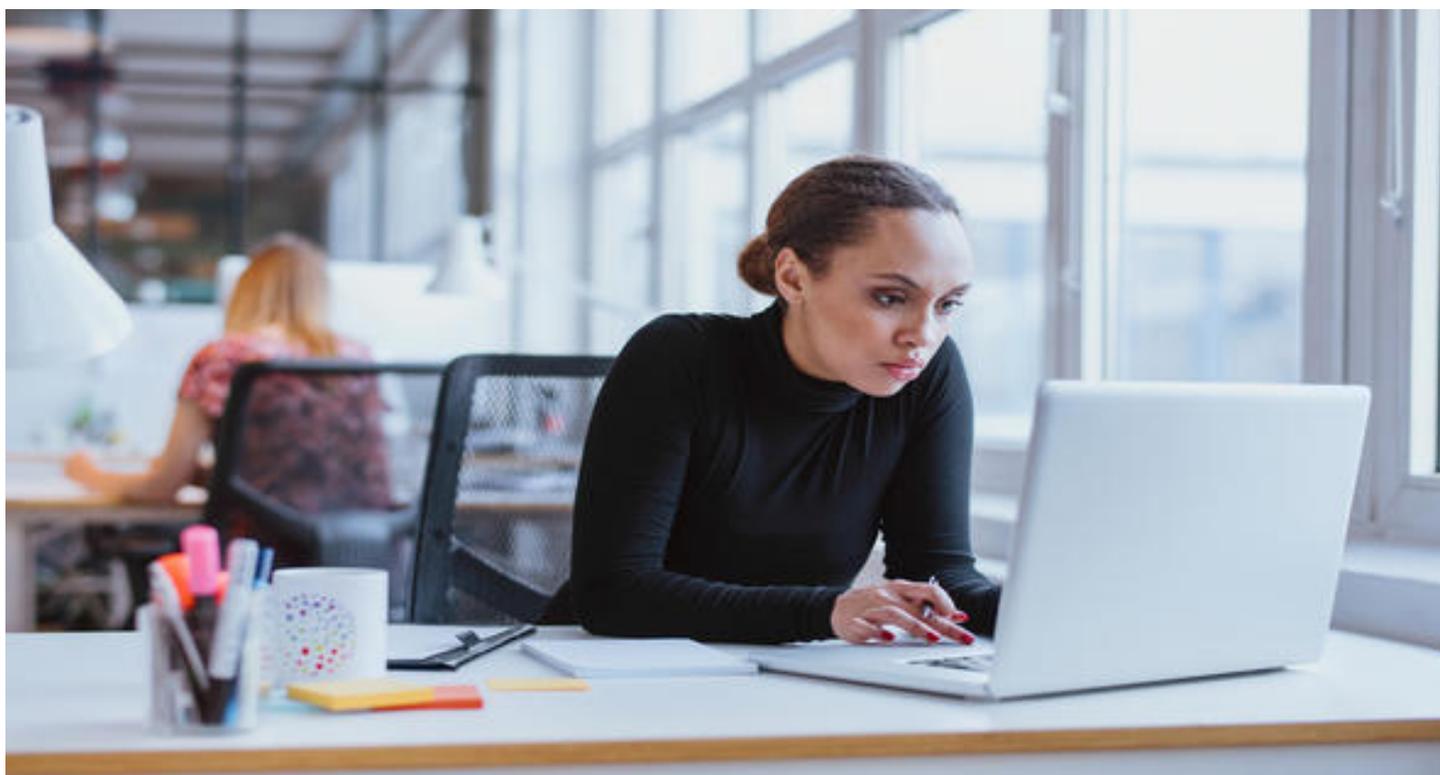


Diversity as a core corporate value in Prezi: encouraging women's employment in tech



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Supporting work–life balance and addressing women’s underrepresentation in the labour market: approaches and good practices in the ICT sector

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Conceived as a start-up project supported by Kitchen Budapest and Hungarian Telekom in 2008, Prezi is now one of Hungary's most successful tech companies. Its main product is a cloud-based presentation software platform that was designed to replace traditional linear presentation methods with a new, conversational storytelling tool. Prezi has maintained a very strong commitment to diversity since its inception. The company views diversity as a key to creative ideas, an inspirational working atmosphere and ultimately to the company's success. Prezi is probably just as well known for its high-quality product as for its inclusive, motivating, progressive working environment.

Prezi has numerous parallel initiatives that support work–life balance. The company's success in creating a truly employee-friendly, inspiring work environment lies in multiple initiatives that, taken alone, are not necessarily large-scale. The combination of many small to medium scale initiatives ensures a progressive, inclusive, friendly working environment. Flexible working hours, an uncapped holiday policy, a corporate daycare, a compensation system, which guarantees that there is no gender pay gap; and programmes that support girls to acquire ICT-related skills are just a few examples of the policies that comprise Prezi's open, inclusive corporate culture.

Another important lesson is that cooperation with other ICT businesses from Hungary can be a key asset in developing gender-related and work–life balance–enhancing initiatives. Gradual implementation of different practices and constant openness and responsiveness to employees' needs are also key to success. Prezi's case demonstrates that once a series of diversity initiatives are kick-started, they became part of the internal culture that helps to keep these initiatives alive.

Country information — policy in context

Gender equality in Hungary lags behind other countries in the region. Traditional female roles prevail in the general and political discourse, and women's status in the labour market remains far behind that of men. The unstable institutional context, corruption and features of the electoral system are also obstacles to stronger participation of women. Policy instruments, such as child-care services and incentives for employers to support part-time working or encourage businesses to tackle gender-based discrimination are in short supply, and even those that are in place have not proven to be effective enough to improve gender equality.

The gender gap in Hungary

According to international statistics, women's participation in politics is extremely low in Hungary – even relative to its regional competitors. Hungary ranks 103rd out of 144 countries according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2016 Gender Gap survey. Hungary's ranking in terms of political participation is not showing signs of stagnation; it is declining – Hungary ranked 55th on this list in 2006. The WEF gender gap indicator comprises four subcomponents: political empowerment, economic participation, education and health.

Women in the labor market and female leaders

Women's status in the labor market in Hungary has been particularly vulnerable to external shocks. A larger share of women has become unemployed or inactive compared with men because of the transition to a free-market economy beginning in 1989 and the global financial crisis in 2008. In 2016, the proportion of employed women was still more than 10 percentage points lower than that of employed men. The employment gap is particularly large for women of maternal age and older. According to Juhasz (2014), policy instruments implemented by the government to offset the burdens associated with child-rearing are far from sufficient.

Hungary has much room for improvement when it comes to gender equality. Neither the overall institutional context (quality of governance, rule of law, checks and balances), nor the labor market policy measures have contributed to improvements in women's employment status in Hungary. Against this background, it is easier to understand why the case of Prezi is particularly remarkable. It shows how much a single business can do to set an example to other employers in terms of diversity management and equal treatment of employees irrespective of gender, race, age or other characteristics. Prezi can be an inspiration not only for other businesses, but also for employees of any gender who can see that gender equality in businesses is in most cases simply a matter of leadership commitment and, therefore, people should rightfully expect their employers to stand up for equality in all respects.

Introducing work–life balance measures: good practice

Prezi, now one of the most successful tech companies in Hungary, began life as a start-up project supported by Kitchen Budapest and Hungarian Telekom in 2008. Its main product is a cloud-based presentation software that was designed to replace traditional linear presentation methods with a new, freemium storytelling tool. The software enables ideas to be presented in a non-linear way, allowing users freestyle navigation through content. The word prezi in Hungarian is short for 'presentation'.

The company reported 85 million users in 2017 and now operates out of the two headquarters in Budapest and San Francisco.

Prezi maintains a very strong commitment to diversity. It views diversity as a key to creative ideas and an inspirational working atmosphere and ultimately to success. Prezi is probably equally well known for its high-quality services, as for its inclusive, motivating, progressive working environment. Improving its employees' work-life balance is part of Prezi's overarching diversity strategy, and the company has many different initiatives underway that support its employees to live and work to their full potential, whatever their life situation.

Prezi is implementing a range of parallel initiatives supporting work-life balance. The company's success in creating a truly employer-friendly work environment lies in multiple medium-sized and smaller initiatives. Their combination ensures a progressive, inclusive, friendly working environment. The following measures all contribute to this:

- Uncapped holiday policy – employees at Prezi are free to use as many holidays as they wish.
- Flexible working hours for all – Prezi ensures flexible working hours.
- Flexible working hours for parents – mothers and fathers coming back from parental leave are free to decide the day of their return to work. They can also choose whether they work full or part-time during the three years' parental leave.
- Company daycare – Prezi opened a kindergarten in its Budapest office that employees can use for a fee.
- Kids in the office – this policy allows parents to bring their child to the Prezi office. Kids can be taken into meetings as well.
- Recruiting practices encouraging diversity – Prezi encourages diversity among its employees via its recruiting practices. Recruiting diverse staff is crucially important for the company. Job opportunities are announced with no explicit requirements other than those referring to skills and competences. Recruitment is not targeted in terms of gender, age, family background or ethnicity, thereby allowing for the most variable collection of backgrounds and motivations among the applicants. In addition to this, when HR recruiters are sourcing candidates their goal is to put together as diverse pool as possible. Merit and good performance are, however, the key selection criteria during the interview process.
- Preventing large wage gaps with a transparent payment system and fixed payroll calculation – Prezi has a detailed salary scale, with level of experience and type of expertise determining employee wages. This practice aims to prevent gender-based wage gaps and ensure compensation is based on performance and value-add, regardless of

gender, age, etc. Note that the salary scale allows employees to be aware of pay ranges (not exact pay).

- Coding girls – Prezi participates in a worldwide initiative encouraging girls to learn coding skills by providing extra-curricular training in coding and software development. The trainers were Prezi employees and the venue the company's office in Budapest. The training was based on a programme developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Processing). Feedback from the participants confirmed that breaking negative social prejudices, shared by the participating girls, about their ability to code was a greater challenge than learning the logic of coding itself – an unexpected and very useful lesson for the Prezi trainers as well (more information).
- Skool initiative – Prezi supports the Skool non-profit initiative, which provides free technology training for 8 to 18 year old girls in the form of financial support, volunteer trainers and by offering its office space as a training venue.

Prezi considers itself a community-driven company with a strong commitment to social values that guide Prezi's mission and shape its culture. Diversity is implicit in all three of Prezi's values (We Picture, We Team, We Care).

Lessons to be learned

- The most important lesson from Prezi's case is that small-scale but achievable initiatives can be very effective in creating a truly open, tolerant and inclusive workplace.
- Cooperation with other businesses in the sector can be a key asset in developing gender-related and work–life balance–enhancing initiatives.
- Gradual implementation of different practices and constant openness and responsiveness to arising needs for new measures is key to success.
- Prezi's case proves that once a series of diversity initiatives are kick-started, the system functions with a degree of autonomy, without the need for significant further efforts to improve work–life balance. Nonetheless, there is always a need to improve and breathe life into a company's already existing work–life balance and gender-related policies.

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Further information

Prezi



Open Community Initiative



Skool project



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Work–Life Balance innovation at Prezi

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