

Sue Cooke

“You’ve earned a right to have a seat at the table”: Sue Cooke speaks on the expectations placed on women leaders and the equity the industry should be aiming for

Coinslot: With IWD gaining traction year on year, are you seeing a shift in trends as far as prospects for women in businesses are concerned and are attitudes noticeably changing in favour of a more equitable dynamic?

Sue Cooke: I believe that significant headway has been made in certain industries in recognising both the expertise and value of having more women in business and at the forefront of driving strategic decisions.

Only 30 percent of women are in leadership roles in the UK. So, whilst this is an improvement, until we are 50/50, there’s a long way to go to be able to say that attitudes are changing in favour of a more equitable dynamic.

After all, the fact of the matter is that we are still speaking about

SUE COOKE MANAGING DIRECTOR TOUCHTUNES/SOUNDNET

Touch Tunes/Soundnet’s recently-appointed MD **Sue Cooke** may be relatively new to the amusements industry, but the former director of operations, client management and customer services for EMEA at PlayNetwork is no stranger to the challenges facing women in business. However, as her breadth of experience, business acumen and innovative approach proves music to the ears of TouchTunes’ customers, it’s clear that any part of the industry still failing to recognise the value of diversity, equity and inclusion in leadership roles is liable to lose out. “Mindset is everything,” says Cooke, noting that those in positions of power would prove themselves stronger leaders if they embrace change and challenge existing prejudices, adding “a better world with more diverse opinions from half the world’s population can only be a good thing.”

women in leadership positions in business in 2023! My question is why?

Coinslot: Last year, contributors to Coinslot’s Women in Business feature gave the industry a ‘can do better’ report. So, have we done better? Where are we seeing progress and how can we break the glass ceiling in more resistant areas?

Sue Cooke: This is a tricky one for me to answer as I have only been in this industry for a short time. However, having been to some of our key industry events over the past few months I would concur that the attitude of ‘man & boy’ still prevails within the industry and whilst there are considerations for women to be in positions of power/leadership and there certainly is some movement towards a more equitable power dynamic, I would say that compared to the UK statistic for women in business, our

Opening up the process

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Tired talk

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industry doesn't compare as favourably.

How can we break the glass ceiling? Hire more experienced women with business acumen, experience in different industries and forward thinking. There's an element of 'calculated risk' in making an appointment of that nature as it speaks to changing an industry that hasn't changed significantly over the past few decades. TouchTunes did and I'd like to think it's working well (so far)!

Coinslot: Returning to some of the questions we posed last year, it would be interesting to see what's changed over that time. From a personal perspective, do you still see gender challenges in action, and how do you manage them now?

Sue Cooke: Yes, when you walk into a room and you are the only female executive present, you automatically bring you're 'A-game'.

You've earned a right to have a seat at the table and a voice and as such, you represent at the highest level. How do I manage them?

By bringing my breadth of experience to the conversation and not shying away from giving my opinion, which gives a perspective that may not have been considered before.

Coinslot: Last year we asked contributors about their personal aspirations and visions for the future. Have your horizons and ideas changed over the year?

Sue Cooke: Visions for the future remains the same. Be at the forefront of our industry, leading innovation, and creativity in the deals we broker and the relationships with our customers.

Ensuring we have the best teams in the business (music, operations, sales, customer service) to deliver this vision. Personally - well that's

another story and this is a short article!

Coinslot: We wanted so hard to keep the focus for International Women's Day solely on women in our industry. But it is difficult to ignore the elephant in the room ... men! As industry works its way towards equality and equity, what positive contribution can men make to this process and how do you think they can engage to help drive the momentum on?

Sue Cooke: In positions of power, I would suggest that men open up the recruitment process. Ensure 50 percent of candidates are women. Be open-minded. Mindset is everything and it takes a strong male leader to 'buck the trend' and hire outside of the usual parameters.

"It's a man's world, but he couldn't do what he does without a good woman behind him" is an old adage. Time now I feel for the woman to stand beside the man or

even in front of him.

Coinslot: And finally, the perennial question: how would you like the landscape to have changed for women in business when we revisit the subject this time next year?

Sue Cooke: 50 percent women, 50 percent men! Why not? Isn't it getting tiring talking about this topic? Women account for almost half of the world's population (49.7 percent), so why can't we account for half the leadership in business positions?

Let's put the old stereotypes to bed and build a stronger, more powerful framework, where a woman can have the same opportunities to thrive that men are given automatically.

A better world with more diverse opinions from half the world's population can only be a good thing. Ask me again as we approach IWD in 2023.