The Design of Everyday Men

March 07, 2019

Rotman student clubs, WIMA and WIMen co-hosted a design sprint with Deloitte and GATE to design a workplace for "everyday men."

The problem statement:

How might organizations enable and reinforce men to bring their whole selves to work?

The starting point for this design sprint was Deloitte's report, "The Design of Everyday Men," which investigates men's relationships to work, family, and masculinity in a world where default gender roles are changing.

The insights from this study and other background materials inspired 14 teams of over 42 students to innovate how work is organized in order to create space for new forms of masculinity, and greater equality for all.

The ideas from this sprint are summarized in the following brief.

WIMA \ WIMEN   gender AND THE economy   Deloitte.

Winners: Kyle Christian, Yi Shi, Asli Zayim, and Tanya Adityan
Judges: Alex Morris (Doblin), Brent Chamberlain (CIBC), Jennifer Laidlaw (CIBC), Carolyn Lawrence (Deloitte Global), Patricia Daley (Deloitte) and Barry McInerney (Mackenzie Investments).

The Finalists

Three teams were nominated for the finals. Their ideas sought to help men and organizations overcome the barriers preventing men from bringing their whole selves to work.

All three ideas are listed below.

#ShowMEn platform

A digital, integrative platform that would encourage men to bring their full selves to work by giving them a place to share personal photos and stories, as well as participate in team reward initiatives (e.g., fundraising challenge on Mother's Day). This platform would encourage open communication and mentorship across departments, teams, and leadership.

The year of the shark

An internal campaign that would seek to eradicate "dinosaur" behaviour within senior leadership and the C-suite (e.g., upholding traditional views regarding work-life balance and paternity leave) and encourage "shark" behaviour that would embody more inclusive ideas on what's acceptable and expected at work in terms of gender roles. It would include awareness, recognition, and accountability components.

The journal of corporate f@!* ups

An e-newsletter that would be distributed organization-wide aimed at enabling men to feel comfortable sharing and embracing failure at work. It would include three components: 1) compelling stories of failure by fellow employees, 2) reinforcing mechanisms, and 3) role modeling by senior management.

💡 Winning idea

WIMA \ WIMFN   gender and the economy   Deloitte.

Additional recommendations

In addition to our finalists, 11 other teams pitched their ideas. These teams identified three areas of opportunity to help encourage men to bring their whole selves to work. Many of the barriers men face at work stem from traditional notions of masculinity and success; these include isolation, fear of failure, lack of mental health considerations, and fear of retribution for prioritizing work-life balance. The ideas outlined below attempt to eliminate these barriers.

Redefine "success" for male employees:
- Instead of reinforcing traditional ideals and stereotypes regarding men at work, organizations can shift the definition of "success" to incorporate not only work metrics (e.g., sales, NPS, etc.) but to also incorporate other metrics that include more personal goals (e.g., mentoring, work-life balance, etc.).
- Organizations can also develop reward schemes that encourage employees to take more "me time" and participate in activities outside of work.

Cultivate and endorse a culture of communication and inclusivity:
- By including visual life indicators on email signatures, business cards, and internal communications, organizations can create safe spaces for employees to share personal information that they feel highlights who they are as individuals.
- To increase "psychological safety" for employees (meaning, they feel OK to express fear, anxiety, joy, etc.) specific rituals can be embedded in the company culture, such as learning as a team and encouraging self-growth through personal development sessions led by fellow team members.

Re-imagine the "ideal worker" through role modeling:
- By identifying and supporting senior leadership that model ideal behaviour (e.g., taking paternity leave, utilizing flex-work, openly discussing failure), organizations can show employees that "It's OK" to also take part in these types of behaviours and activities.
- Organizations can utilize town-hall meetings, training sessions, or digital platforms to model the new worker ideal that incorporates bringing your whole self to work.

Thank you to all of the participants, coaches, and judges!

If you'd like to learn more about the student clubs who co-hosted this event, you can visit GATE's website here.