

**EQUALIS**

---

Catalogue of initiatives

# **The Changing Business Landscape**

**Attracting and retaining  
young employees**

**April 2026**

This catalogue was developed as part of the project “The Next-Generation Workplace: Bridging Business and Young Talent”. This English translation was published in April 2026.

Thank you to the Danish Industry Foundation for its support of the project.

## EQUALIS INDUSTRIENS FOND

Thank you to our partners on the project.



## FOREWORD

*by Charlotte Kjeldsen Krarup, Development Director at the Danish Industry Foundation*

Denmark is facing a structural challenge. In recent years, we have been experiencing a growing shortage of qualified labor – especially outside the largest cities and particularly in industrial Denmark. At the same time, a new generation of employees is entering the labor market with new expectations of what constitutes an attractive and responsible workplace. In this intersection lie both challenges – but also a great untapped potential. The exchange of experience between young people on the threshold of the labor market and experienced professionals generates innovation and energy.

Working purposefully with the attraction and retention of the workforce of the future is a fundamental prerequisite for competitiveness. Especially in small and medium-sized enterprises, where employees are often the company's most important asset.

Therefore, it is crucial that Danish SMEs – which have fewer development resources and are often located in areas characterized by depopulation – also receive the knowledge and tools to create inclusive and attractive workplaces and gain a share of the talent pool. This is the ambition of this catalog, which is based on the analysis "***The Changing Business Landscape: Attracting and retaining young employees***".

The analysis documents that young people seek workplaces where they feel they can be themselves, be listened to, and develop. And it shows that concrete initiatives – such as clear communication about values, well-thought-out onboarding processes, visible career paths, and an inclusive work culture – make a real difference. This applies both to the well-being of young people and to the company's ability to retain and develop its employees.

The catalogue you are now holding translates these insights into practical tools and inspiration that can be used in both large and small companies – regardless of industry and geography, and it has been developed in close collaboration with young people and companies and based on research and studies.

We hope that the catalog will inspire – and strengthen Danish companies – regardless of size and geography in the effort to become a workplace where more young people have the opportunity to contribute, thrive, and succeed.

## ABOUT THE CATALOGUE

The catalogue specifies initiatives that you in your company can implement to strengthen and create awareness of your work with diversity and inclusion, thereby positioning yourselves as an attractive workplace for a diverse group of younger employees.

The initiatives presented are specifically targeted at what companies can do to attract and retain younger employees, but they can also benefit other employees. The actions are categorized according to an employee journey. An employee journey visualizes the employee experience from attraction and recruitment to the termination of employment. The goal is to identify critical points in the employment process where it may be relevant for companies to pay special attention to opportunities and challenges<sup>1</sup>. Within each phase of the employee journey, various processes and actions occur – both one-off and recurring – that employees experience.

The catalogue guides you as a company through the phases of attraction and recruitment, onboarding, workplace culture and career development, and offboarding, as illustrated at the bottom of this page, and highlights initiatives that are relevant to address in the various stages of the employee journey.

The catalogue is based on knowledge collected and published in the analysis “*The Changing Business Landscape: Attracting and Retaining Young Employees*”. Furthermore, the catalog is based on proposed actions developed in collaboration between a youth panel and company representatives, as well as on research and studies in the field. Find the analysis [here](#).

Throughout the catalogue, perspectives on and initiatives for diversity and inclusion work are presented from five companies with an interest in the agenda of attracting and retaining young employees. These perspectives provide insight into the companies’ motivation for working with the area in relation to younger employees and show how initiatives can be implemented in practice.



<sup>1</sup> Harvard Business School: [A Guide to Employee Journey Mapping](#)

## **Business perspective: Salling Group embraces diversity as a core value and wants to create opportunities for all young people to enter the labor market**

Salling Group works actively to create diversity in its workforce composition. They want a workplace where all young people have the opportunity for attachment to the labor market, social relations, and development as needed.

### **Efforts for young people's attachment to the labor market**

For Salling Group, young people make up a significant part of their approximately 42,000 Danish employees, and 500 trainees are trained annually within the group. Therefore, attracting and retaining young talent is a central part of the organization's strategy, and dialogue with young people is integrated into the daily work. The retail chain Føtex has, for example, established a 'Youth Board' of young employees who are in ongoing dialogue with management about how they can create good workplaces for young people. Additionally, there is the opportunity as a young part-time employee to participate in workshops, such as when Salling Group held their first 'Youth Day' in 2024. A day consisting of workshops, inspirational talks, and team building for young people in part-time jobs.

Salling Group is furthermore part of Ungeløftet – a collaboration between private companies, municipalities, and civil society that focuses on young people aged 18-24 who risk ending up with a low attachment to the labor market. Salling Group is working to strengthen ongoing youth initiatives and helps, for example, young people get started with part-time jobs, employs young people in basic vocational training as well as basic integration training, and is increasing the number of work experience placements.

*“All these initiatives are intended to underscore our commitment to understanding and supporting our many young colleagues and to being able to shape and embrace the labor market of the future.”*

Charlotte Holm, Head of Attraction & Diversity, Salling Group

### **Structural efforts and everyday initiatives must ensure diversity**

Salling Group is also working on other initiatives aimed at increasing diversity, equality, and inclusion. This work is particularly motivated by a desire to remain relevant and evolving through a curiosity about societal developments, including the needs of young people.

In connection to this, gender diversity is a key focus area for Salling Group. As part of the efforts to increase gender diversity, a major mapping of the gender-specific barriers encountered by current and future female leaders was initiated in 2024. As a result, Salling recently introduced its managers to a series of conversation cards focusing on different types of bias (expectations and assumptions we have about the people around us).

Salling Group also works actively with diversity in relation to employees on the edge of the labor market and with various forms of employment. Therefore, there are many ways to be employed at Salling Group, and the organization has specially designed jobs and training programs across all levels and functions. Salling Group works closely with municipalities, the state, and civil society to tailor employment on special terms, including flex jobs, sheltered jobs, and corporate interns. Likewise, Salling Group enters partnerships with relevant actors such as the Glad Foundation, where a large part of the teams in the pilot period of the Flex Education is affiliated with Salling Group. In this way, the organization works with the ambition that all young people, regardless of background, should be able to pursue a career at Salling Group.

## ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT

Which initiatives are relevant when you want to attract and recruit younger employees to your company?

Attraction and recruitment involve, among other things, the company's brand and values, and how these are expressed in practice. When younger candidates in the labor market are job hunting, a large proportion of them will be aware of company's general work with diversity and inclusion (EQUALIS, 2025). As a company, it is therefore highly relevant to clarify any work with diversity and inclusion in the attraction of younger employees; that is, in the part of the company's work that involves capturing the attention and interest of younger candidates.

### **Show that – and how – you work with diversity and inclusion**

It is essential for younger candidates in the labor market that their future workplaces focus on diversity and inclusion, and they are concerned that they walk the talk (EQUALIS, 2025). As a company, you must, in other words, reassure potential applicants that the company's focus on diversity and inclusion is grounded in concrete goals and initiatives and is not an expression of 'pink washing'<sup>2</sup>. Younger candidates research company websites, annual reports, social media, etc., to learn more about who you are as a company. It is therefore essential to make it clear here what you specifically do to promote diversity and inclusion.

#### **How can this be done?**

- Present relevant data to clarify your efforts regarding diversity. This could be by visualizing data on well-being (e.g., from data on employee well-being surveys), different types of employment (what percentage of employees are apprentices, in flex-jobs, etc.), or gender distribution in management.
- Describe your specific initiatives that support the efforts to promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities, and which realistically point toward the goals you have set.<sup>1</sup> Companies in industries known for a lack of gender diversity, in particular, can benefit from publishing their action plans and data on their efforts to increase gender diversity to demonstrate that they are actively working on diversity and inclusion.
- Expand communication about the company and job postings across more platforms, including the social media channels where potential applicants are active. For example, on Instagram or TikTok.

---

<sup>2</sup> When a company or organization uses a cause for its own benefit without actually supporting it.

Younger applicants may be deterred from applying for a job at a company where either the industry or the company itself has a poor reputation regarding the diversity and inclusion agenda. In addition to communicating your specific initiatives and efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, it may therefore be relevant for you as a company to increase awareness of your workplace and give applicants a glimpse into your company's work culture. This can create a sense of security and motivation, thereby increasing your appeal to the young target group.

### **How can this be done?**

- Host open house events where younger candidates can visit and see the workplace, learn about the job content, and gain insight into the workplace culture.
- Register your company for job and career fairs at relevant educational institutions or similar. This provides an opportunity to connect with young people, spread the message about your company's work, and hear their input.
- Bring company communication to life by, for example, using videos that visualize what it is like to be at the workplace. This could, for instance, be a video where an employee in the department seeking a new colleague introduces the department and the opportunities the job involves. It could also be a more general video presenting the workplace.

### **Rethink the format of recruitment processes and job postings and make them concrete, transparent, and accessible**

Younger candidates place particular emphasis on how their future work tasks can make a difference – both in daily life and at a societal level. They express that job postings can be perceived as abstract, jargon-filled, and difficult to decipher regarding the specific work content when they, as applicants, do not have extensive professional experience and understanding to draw upon (EQUALIS, 2025).

At the same time, traditional job postings and application processes that invite applicants to apply with a CV and cover letter can make it difficult for companies to attract a larger and more diverse group of young applicants (EQUALIS, 2025). For example, expectation bias, where our own immediate impressions of a person become overriding in the assessment of them (Luthra & Muhr, 2024), can mean that young people refrain from applying for a position if they do not expect to fit in among the company's employees. Similarly, expectation bias toward an

applicant who stands out from the rest of the employees can prevent a company from proceeding in the hiring process with that applicant.

It is therefore relevant for you as a company to consider whether rethinking the format of your job postings and recruitment processes can contribute to creating motivation and increasing diversity among your applicants.

### **How can this be done?**

- In job postings, be clear about the role the future employee will take on and how this fits into the company's overall purpose and vision.
- Design a job posting that includes a task reflecting the content of the position and screen applicants based on their task performance rather than their CVs.
- Minimize bias in the screening and selection of candidates for interviews and use data actively to guide towards greater diversity. This can be done in a number of different ways. For example, in job advertisements, you can ask potential applicants to omit information such as age, name, or similar characteristics from their applications to avoid the influence of unconscious bias in the initial screening of candidates. Subsequently, it is relevant to select candidates with diversity parameters in mind, ensuring, for example, an equal gender distribution in the actual job interview process.
- Prepare a job specification for the position for which you are seeking a new employee, clearly stating which qualities you value most in an applicant. The job specification can then be used as a framework for evaluating the applicants, so that they are assessed according to the same parameters as far as possible.
- The job advertisement can advantageously include a telephone number for an employee who is not involved in the recruitment process. This gives the applicant the opportunity to call and ask questions without having to worry about the call and questions regarding the position weighing negatively in the application process.

### **Create the conditions for equal opportunities and inclusive spaces as early as the job interview**

For younger candidates, the job interview can be a nerve-wracking event, where a lack of experience means that the young candidate may feel they must prove their worth in a short amount of time and cannot ask questions or have expectations that companies can meet their needs. This can mean that younger candidates experience an uneven power balance in the job interview (EQUALIS, 2025). At the

same time, research shows that expectations and assumptions (so-called biases) risk affecting the recruiters assessment of the candidates (Luthra & Muhr, 2024). This can further distort the perceived power dynamic.

To create an interview for younger applicants where everyone is given equal opportunities to perform their best, it is relevant for you as a company to focus on how your job interviews are organized and conducted.

### **How can this be done?**

- Assemble a diverse hiring committee with employees of different genders, ages, seniority, or other background characteristics. This reduces the risk of affinity bias, which is the tendency to better like people who resemble ourselves.
- Include questions in the job interview that invite the younger applicant to articulate their wishes and needs. This creates the best conditions for ensuring the match between the applicant and the company is aligned – from both sides. For example, these could be questions such as *'how can we as a workplace help you succeed in this position?'* or *'are there specific conditions that need to be present to create a good everyday life for you as an employee?'*
- Address how feedback is given and handled in the workplace, including how any errors in daily work are tackled, already during the job interview. Ensuring that the company/hiring party does not appear flawless can help create a more inclusive and equal conversation for younger applicants who cannot yet demonstrate extensive experience in the labor market.
- Use data and follow up on who applies, who you select for an interview, who moves forward, and who ends up being hired in the individual departments of the company. This allows you to gain insight into any underrepresented groups at the various stages of the recruitment process – and thus become aware of where you need to have a special focus to promote equal opportunities and diversity.

## **Business perspective: Development, well-being, and equal opportunities are not just demands from the youth – they are desires across generations**

The consulting and auditing firm Deloitte believes that the wishes and needs of young people are shared by most in the labor market – regardless of age.

With approximately 300 new graduates each year, representing half of all new hires, and an average age of 29, Deloitte considers it vital to be able to attract and retain young employees.

*“We wanted to contribute to the work [on EQUALIS’ analysis catalogue of initiatives] because of EQUALIS’ focus on building bridges and engaging in dialogue with young people. For us at Deloitte, it is important to talk with the target group and not about them.”*

Nikolaj Malchow-Møller, Head of People and Purpose, Deloitte  
Denmark

As an employer of so many new graduates, the ambition is to become the business world’s best talent developer with a focus on lifelong learning. Therefore, Deloitte collaborates closely with a number of higher education institutions, where they, among other things, give guest lectures. This aims to bridge the gap between education and the business world by demonstrating to students how they can use their knowledge and skills to contribute and learn more at a company like Deloitte.

Deloitte has a fundamental desire to learn more about the employees of the future. Therefore, the company contributes to the public debate on future generations with initiatives such as the annual Gen Z survey, which, with 22,800 respondents in 44 countries in 2024, examines the development of different generations attitudes toward work and the world around them. In addition, they collaborate with the think tank Kraka on the project ‘Small Great Nation’, which uses socio-economic analyses to uncover how we can pass our country on in better condition to future generations.

### **An inclusive workplace relies on values and concrete initiatives**

For Deloitte, inclusion is about all employees being able to be themselves in the workplace and feeling like part of a respectful and developing community. Specifically for young employees, they work with advisory boards where younger staff can provide input to the company’s management. According to Deloitte, this

helps ensure that the workplaces and societies of the future are designed according to the wishes and needs of current and future generations.

The work on employee inclusion, however, applies to all employees and is supported, among other things, through leadership training in overcoming bias (expectations and assumptions) and promoting safe leadership spaces. Similarly, a culture ambassador corps and employee networks have been established, which provide sparring to senior management on inclusion and minority groups and raise awareness through Deloitte's own annual D&I week. In 2025, the theme of the D&I week was 'community'. The purpose was to focus on the importance of working continuously with diversity, equity, and inclusion and to confirm Deloitte's continued prioritization of the agenda - among existing, young, and future employees alike.

## **Business perspective: Early engagement with young people strengthens innovation and diversity at Grundfos**

At Grundfos, an early effort for diversity already during young people's educational paths and a sustained engagement with youth create good workplaces in the future. Therefore, the company works with diversity and inclusion initiatives ranging from the engagement of children in primary school to the top management levels internally.

### **Future engagement and development starting from primary school**

If innovation is to be secured in the future, it requires, according to Grundfos, a diverse workforce that also includes young talents. Therefore, Grundfos' engagement with young people starts early in their educational journey. The company has, among other things, close cooperation with several vocational schools, local primary and lower secondary schools, as well as youth organizations with a view to promoting young people's curiosity in science and technology and supporting the labor market's future talents within Grundfos' fields of interest.

*“We are a values-based company, and we believe we have a responsibility to contribute to the societies we are a part of. We do this by engaging in a wide range of initiatives and collaborations with a special focus on water, climate, and people.”*

Astrid Nørgaard Friis, Head of Group Sustainability, External Relations & Communications at Grundfos

Grundfos also invests in young people after they have completed their education. The company has, among other things, helped establish a learning program for international youth in the water sector with a view to knowledge sharing and engagement in the water agenda across national borders. This initiative aims both to strengthen the individual professional development of younger employees and to strengthen innovation in the water sector as a whole.

Internally, Grundfos works on engaging young employees through active involvement in the company's development. The "Future Employee Resource Group" is a network led by young employees that develops ideas for initiatives for the workplace of the future.

### **Inclusion is a shared responsibility – and it requires action**

Grundfos aims to be a workplace where everyone can be themselves and has equal opportunities to contribute with their unique set of skills and personality. From top

management, there are therefore high expectations for the company's leaders and employee's ability to contribute to the work of promoting diversity and inclusion.

To support this work, Grundfos continuously measures employees experience of leaders' ability to include and create equal opportunities. In addition, the company has established various networks where employees can join communities, discuss potential issues, and develop concrete ideas and initiatives that can be presented to top management. In daily work, each individual department focuses on inclusion and equal opportunities by, among other things, following guidelines at internal meetings for how the meeting host can frame the discussion so that everyone provides their input.

## ONBOARDING

Which initiatives are relevant when you want to ensure good onboarding processes for your younger employees?

Younger employees may be concerned about whether their own abilities are sufficient in a workplace and simultaneously worry about whether companies have the resources to receive them as recent graduates (EQUALIS, 2025). Your efforts to create an inclusive workplace during the onboarding phase should therefore involve structured onboarding initiatives that provide new employees with equal opportunities to integrate both professionally and socially in the workplace. This can, among other things, involve giving them insight into 'hidden knowledge', understood as the social and professional norms that exist in the workplace on a daily basis, and which existing employees take for granted.

### **Standardize the onboarding process for new employees and create fixed frameworks for questions and feedback during the initial period**

Many managers are aware that at the beginning of an employment period, a social and professional knowledge gap can exist for newly hired employees (EQUALIS, 2025). Nevertheless, there may be a risk that younger employees do not have equal opportunities and conditions for starting at the workplace if the company does not have a standardized and structured onboarding process (Luthra & Muhr, 2024). A process that keeps the knowledge gap in mind.

#### **How can this be done?**

- Give all younger, new employees the opportunity to gain insight into the company's social rules of conduct before they start. This can be done either via an information email or at a voluntary introductory meeting before the first day of work. The email/meeting can include information about, for example, dress code guidelines, greeting policies, when arriving at or leaving work, when lunch is eaten, etc.
- Arrange fixed "Q&A sessions" for new employees or designate time slots when specific colleagues can be contacted by phone. This ensures that the new employee does not feel like a nuisance when they have questions about both practical and professional topics.
- Schedule feedback sessions where new employees can get answers to questions and provide input to the team and their immediate supervisor but also receive advice and guidance.
- Create a "success" plan with all new employees that clarifies the expectations for effort and responsibility at different times after hiring. For example, what is a new employee expected to be capable of in the position one month after hiring? Six months after? One year after?

## **Be mindful of creating equal opportunities for career development early in the employment process**

Younger employees at the start of their careers are interested in opportunities for advancement and career development. They often already have this interest when starting at their workplace (EQUALIS, 2025). At the same time, there can be differences in how career ambitions are expressed by men and women (EQUALIS, 2024b)<sup>3</sup>. To support equal opportunities for younger employees' career development in the company in the long term, it is essential that you as a company start the conversation about ambitions and development opportunities early in the employment, e.g., as part of the onboarding process – and that this conversation is based on a structured framework.

### **How can this be done?**

- Implement a session about career development as part of the onboarding process for all employees. Specifically, this could be an initial career development meeting with the immediate manager, aimed at creating clarity and aligning expectations regarding opportunities for advancement within the company.
- Put leadership ambitions on the agenda at 1:1 meetings with the immediate manager by generally focusing on inquiring about and being curious about younger employees' ambitions, for both men and women.
- Assign the new hire an experienced professional sparring partner. The professional sparring partner is responsible for answering day-to-day questions and discussing the professional content of work tasks with the new hire.

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see [\*"The Business World's Future Leaders – an analysis of younger men's and women's ambitions, motivations, and barriers to leadership."\*](#)

## **Business perspective: “DE&I in everything we do” – at RMC, diversity, inclusion, and equality are continuously integrated into existing and newly developed processes**

At the consulting firm Rambøll Management Consulting (RMC), the work with diversity, equality, and inclusion is about anchoring initiatives in internal processes and being clear about how the company relates to and works with the area.

### **Focus on diversity and inclusion is already practiced in the onboarding process**

At RMC, the focus is on ensuring that individual employees are offered working conditions and social frameworks that make it possible to feel valued, welcomed, and accommodated as a whole person. This focus becomes clear to new employees as early as the onboarding process. As part of the process, new hires must undergo training in diversity and inclusion. This training is continuously followed up with courses and events where employees gain further knowledge on topics such as psychological safety, inclusion, culture, and behavior.

### **Anchoring in culture and policies to ensure DE&I**

It is not only important that new employees are made familiar with the work for equality and inclusion at RMC – but that the work runs like a common thread through the company's initiatives and is part of the workplace culture.

To anchor this work and support the desired culture, equality, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into the company's foundation, where they manifest through HR processes, policies, and guidelines. An example of this is HR policies regarding flexibility. RMC has developed several of these types of policies; all with the aim of including employees with young children, single parents, or employees in the final stage of their working lives in the best possible way.

*“Among other things, we believe that the opportunity for flexibility, as well as clear policies for it, is crucial for the employees experience of being met in the life stage they are in, and that it helps to normalize a working life that can look different depending on the individual's situation.”*

Lene Kjær, HR Director at Rambøll Management Consulting

In addition, the work with diversity and equality at RMC is actively supported by data. Measurements are taken, among other things, on the parameters of gender and age within areas such as recruitment, resignations, promotions, salary, and well-being, with a view to understanding where RMC can strengthen its initiatives and take action to ensure equal opportunities for all.

## **WORKPLACE CULTURE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Which initiatives are relevant when you want to ensure a good framework for well-being and development for your younger employees?

Diversity and inclusion are expressed in practice through the workplace culture and the career development opportunities that (younger) employees encounter when they join the workplace as employees after the onboarding period (EQUALIS, 2025). In this context, it is relevant to implement initiatives that support inclusive workplaces where there are genuine opportunities for all employees to thrive and develop, regardless of their experience and seniority in the labor market. This requires, among other things, transparency in career development processes and systematic follow-up via data, so that you as a company can monitor the career patterns of younger employees and act on any differences across employee groups.

### **Create clear frameworks for the distribution of responsibility, work tasks, and career development**

Opportunities for learning, development, and responsibility are a major motivating factor for younger employees in the workplace. At the same time, it is essential for many younger employees that clear frameworks are established and that there is clear communication between them, their colleagues, and managers regarding the distribution of responsibility and mandates (EQUALIS, 2025). To create the best conditions for equal career development for all, it is essential for you as a company to create clarity regarding these matters.

At the same time, the first manager in particular can be decisive for how the younger employee views their own opportunities for career development and their future working life (EQUALIS, 2024b). Working actively with the management of younger employees and creating good conditions for equal career development for everyone therefore contributes to younger employees being able to see themselves staying in your company in the long term.

### **How can this be done?**

- Work actively with the opportunity for competency development (e.g., courses and continuing education) or peer-to-peer training and make these opportunities available to all younger employees.
- Conduct systematic development reviews where feedback is given to and received from the individual employee. Incorporate questions related to employees' ambitions and career plans into these conversations.
- Create transparency through job hierarchies, job profiles, and standardized promotion parameters, which can clarify the expectations for profiles at different job levels and what is required to advance. Use data and continuously follow up on what promotion and career patterns look like across employee groups.
- Reward what the company wants to see more of. Many salary increases are linked to KPIs or specific performance data points, which often relate to financial or professional performance. Performance reviews can advantageously be expanded to also encompass social or cultural behavior that promotes other behavior in the workplace, and which helps ensure inclusive work environments and makes a difference for the general workplace culture – something many younger employees appreciate (EQUALIS, 2025).
- Place younger employees in teams with experienced managers who have managed younger employees before and who have an eye for the younger employee's development and well-being. This can be crucial for the younger employee being able to see themselves in the company in the long term.

### **Incorporate flexibility into the employees' workday**

Younger employees perceive flexibility as part of having an inclusive workplace. Flexibility is perceived as crucial for younger employees to achieve a work-life balance – and thus for them to feel included and accommodated in the workplace (EQUALIS, 2025).

Flexibility can take several different forms and can be particularly relevant for, for example, employees who are parents and for employees who do not thrive in an open-plan office eight hours a day.

### How can it be done?

- Provide break activities at the workplace that ensure flexibility without the employee leaving the premises. This could, for example, include the opportunity to exercise at the workplace or designated rooms that can be used for quiet reflection or relaxation.
- Establish fixed time slots for scheduling meetings that fall outside of shoulder hours, when parents, for example, need to pick up or drop off children.
- Include options for flexibility depending on the individual employee's needs. The possibility of working from home and working during shoulder hours may be relevant for some employees and can be made available to the extent possible.

### Focus on creating good conditions before, during, and after parental leave

Especially younger employees who plan to have children are concerned with the flexibility and frameworks that companies can provide in connection with parental leave and life with small children. This is considered crucial to being a skilled and ambitious employee who does not have to compromise on mental well-being and time with family (EQUALIS, 2025).

How a company handles family formation and parental leave influences the sense of connection employees in these situations feel toward the workplace. Taking parental leave and the periods before and after are key focus areas in efforts to strengthen younger employees' sense of inclusion and equal opportunity in the workplace. In this regard, it is essential for you to consider how you can best support your employees on leave — before, during, and after.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [\*EQUALIS' tool "The Parental Leave Wheel" and "The Good Return from Parental Leave - how can the company and the person on leave jointly create a good framework before, during, and after parental leave?"\*](#)

### How can this be done?

- Equip managers to support employees on parental leave. Pay special attention to the return period, as this is when there is a high risk of experiencing stagnation or perceiving parental leave as detrimental to career opportunities and development.
- Make advance agreements regarding the frequency and type of contact the employee desires during their leave. For some, regular updates can provide a sense of security and strengthen their sense of belonging. Initiate a 'return-to-work' meeting if the employee feels the need for it.
- Invite employees on leave to salary reviews and performance appraisals if these occur during their leave, ensuring they do not feel left behind or excluded from the workplace and their opportunities there.
- Conduct conversations with employees who have returned from an extended period of absence about their experiences. These can be both more general conversations that provide input for the overall guidelines for returning after absence, and personal conversations that follow up on the individual employee.
- Develop a general policy for returning from parental leave, which, for example, could include options for temporary reduced hours or extra flexibility. However, be aware that the use of these options does not become a barrier to development and responsibility for the returning employee.

**Create clear frameworks for social interaction in the workplace.** The social environment in the workplace is important for younger employees and has an impact on their motivation for work. At the same time, perceptions of what constitutes acceptable language in the workplace can challenge the social culture. Younger women in particular experience that the language used by older colleagues can give rise to discomfort or conflict (EQUALIS, 2025).

The collegial community and interaction are therefore an area that is important to work on when you as a company want to support diverse and inclusive environments.

#### How can this be done?

- Establish a code of conduct for how you interact with each other in the workplace. This could, for example, be a greeting policy, an alcohol policy with guidelines for alcohol consumption during working hours, or behavior at social events. At the same time, it is important that you clarify what consequences violations may entail.
- Develop a well-being handbook that, for example, contains the company's code of conduct and information about the steps the company takes to ensure employee well-being. For instance, make it clear who employees can contact if their boundaries are crossed or if they experience social challenges in the workplace.
- Appoint well-being representatives among the employees whose purpose is to keep management informed about social (well-being or) lack of well-being in the workplace.
- Create opportunities for social interaction in the workplace and consider activities of various types that can embrace different interests, requirements for participation, times of day, physical abilities, and the like.
- In workplaces where employees work from different locations or work alone, you can organize cross-organizational networking events at regular intervals to ensure a sense of social belonging to the workplace.

## **Business perspective: A workplace where everyone is given the opportunity to succeed is, according to Jorton A/S, the path to greater diversity and attracting young talent**

The construction and civil engineering company Jorton makes a point of supporting and developing all employees, regardless of their background. They do this based on a belief that cohesion, openness, and security are the way to create attractive workplaces.

### **Curiosity about the young generation**

At Jorton, there is a great curiosity about the perspective of young people. It is considered an important task to both understand and attempt to meet the desires and expectations of the youth.

*"The generation I grew up in clicked their heels and did what they were told without questioning the meaning behind it. We also had expectations, but these were kept quiet. Today, young people want to know why we do what we do."*

Ingerid Jovall Rødtnes, Work Environment and Apprentice Manager  
at Jorton A/S

This has resulted in a focus on the company's internship and apprenticeship programs, which constitute a large part of the hires in the construction and civil engineering industry. Therefore, specific work is being done on how apprentices can best be included in the workplace. For example, apprentice training days and apprentice evenings are organized with the aim of creating community and strengthening relationships and cohesion across the board. Additionally, work is being done to give apprentices more autonomy in the future – for example, by letting them act as contact persons for new apprentice applicants.

### **Room for everyone and good social frameworks**

With a special focus on internship and apprenticeship programs, Jorton is pleased with an increased interest from young women and a rise in the number of female apprentices. Additionally, the company focuses on including young apprentices who come from socially or academically challenged backgrounds. Jorton is mindful of individual considerations, such as the need for flexibility and extra skill development. In this regard, the philosophy is that there must be room for everyone to learn and have an opportunity to contribute to the community.

To ensure this, young people are typically offered an internship before they are given an apprenticeship, so they have the opportunity to evaluate Jorton as a workplace. During the apprenticeship, they are assigned an apprentice coordinator as well as a professional mentor who guides them through their development process. These mentors also serve as the point of contact for inquiries of both a professional and social nature and provide a sense of security in the process.

For interns who are offered an apprenticeship, a meeting is held between the new employee, their mentor, and the apprentice coordinator. The purpose of the meeting is to align expectations between Jorton and the apprentice, so both parties understand what is expected of each other. This structured process is intended to strengthen the sense of security for the new employee.

## OFFBOARDING

### **Which initiatives are relevant when you conclude an employment relationship in your company?**

The employee journey does not end with the resignation but continues until the last day at the workplace. Offboarding is a valuable opportunity to create a good conclusion, strengthen the relationship with former employees, and gain insight into your own corporate culture and framework through their feedback. By ensuring a structured departure, you can help former employees become ambassadors for the workplace and potentially return at a later date with more experience.

### **Be curious about why employees leave the company and what you can learn from it**

All companies will experience having employees who change positions – either internally within the company or externally to another company. The end of an employment period is an ideal opportunity for you as a company to learn more about which areas you can continue to work on to be an attractive workplace in the future.

#### **How can it be done?**

- Conduct exit interviews with employees leaving the workplace. An exit interview is an opportunity to ask the individual employee about specific development opportunities for the company, experiences with specific projects, working methods, and initiatives that can potentially be adapted. Over time, the interviews can contribute to creating a data foundation that the company can use in the development of the workplace.
- Use existing employee data from HR systems to gain insights into whether there are patterns regarding which employees leave and when. For example, is there a pattern of specific employees leaving in connection with parental leave? Use this knowledge to develop initiatives that support the well-being and retention of employees in these groups.

## **REREFENCES**

Luthra, Poornima & Muhr, Sara (2024). *Leading Through Bias: 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusion at Work*. Palgrave Macmillan

Think tank EQUALIS (2024a). *Den gode tilbagevenden fra barsel – hvordan kan virksomhed og barslende i fællesskab skabe gode rammer før, under og efter barsel?*

Think tank EQUALIS (2024b). *Erhvervslivets kommende ledere – en analyse af yngre mænd og kvinders ambitioner, motivationer og barrierer for ledelse*

Think tank EQUALIS (2024c). *Data Driven Theory of Change: A Strategic Framework Towards a Greater DE&I-Impact for Danish Businesses*

Think tank EQUALIS (2025). *The Changing Business Landscape: Attracting and retaining young employees*